



HEAD OFFICE

October saw a flurry of activity in regards to planning for our AGM on the 28th October 2017. I find that the preparation for the AGM gives me an opportunity to reflect back on the amazing work that the A;SA team has achieved over the past year. We tend to get busy in the role of 'being busy' and preparations for the AGM make me realise what a power team A;SA is made up of. Yes, there are things we can do much better, but there are also real things that we have achieved that have made a tangible impact on the communities within which we work. Just to share some of the figures, from our annual report:

Almost **5000** individuals have attended our workshops!

Gauteng - 1371

Northern Cape - 839

North-West Province - 420

Eastern Cape - 597

Kwa-Zulu Natal - 385

Free State Province - 378

Mpumalanga - 647

Limpopo - 223

We have also supported **1183** families and persons with autism in the past year!

Our presence at National, Provincial and Regional disability forums and advisory committees is increasing across the country. This is also seen in the increase in consultations we are invited to by government, to ensure that no person with autism is left behind.

We have a long, long way to go, but for now all I can say is that I am so very proud of the A;SA team! Well Done Team A;SA!

October also saw the launch of our Access to School Campaign. We are appealing to all families who are being turned away from the education system to please contact me with the details. I realise that schools are often fearful of the unknown and worry that they don't have the capacity to assist our children to access the curriculum, but the time of accepting 'no' or 'wait' is over. Children with autism have a fundamental right to beneficial education and we need to stand together as a community to ensure these rights are realised. If you know of a family that is unable to find a school (for a child older than 7 years), please email me with the following details:

- Name of Parent
- Contact phone number
- Residential address

- Name of Child
- Date of Birth of Child
- Does the child have a formal diagnosis of Autism/Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Who did the diagnosis?
- Where did the diagnosis occur?
- Nearest government school to you
- Have you applied at this school for your child? What happened?
- Nearest Special School to you
- How far is this school from you?
- Have you applied to this school? What happened?
- Is your child on a waiting list for a school?
- How long has your child been on this list?
- Have you been to the District or Provincial Department of Education to discuss placement for your child? What happened there?
- Has the department of education been in contact with you? What have they been saying to you?
- What else have you tried to get your child placed at a school?
- What does your child currently do during the day?
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Until Next Time!

HEAD OFFICE: VICKY LAMB

The last month has been rather busy! Training requests have come in from all over Gauteng, and what an honour it has been to have met some really inspirational people who are doing great work!

We have also recently started the teens and young adults social groups in Johannesburg - this started off with the first one being a small get together at one of the parents houses where the teens and young adults were able to socialize in a no pressure environment. Many of the parents attended too - and so the day turned into a parent social gathering as well. More of these to come in the near future - but keep the afternoon of the 8th of December open...



Shortly after this, I was contacted by a mom who wanted to host a meet and greet for parents at a venue in Melville. This was an incredibly successful event, and we had not only parents attend, but friends of parents as

well who were interested in learning more. We also had teachers attending - they wanted to know more about autism from a parent's perspective. Just as our teens and young adults group won't be the last one, there will certainly be more of these to come in the future as well.



BRANCH NEWS: FREE STATE: SELINAH JELE

I conducted a workshop in QWA-QWA at Thiboloho special school on the 19 October 2017. It was so great, especially after discovering that the majority of the staff members at the school who consist of clinic sister, classrooms assistant, community health worker: Occupational therapist, Speech therapist, psychologist, educators from and around QwaQwa, HOD from Inclusive education Welkom & Bethlehem and parents attended, were either not aware of what Autism was defined as or what effect

the condition has on the parents of children suffering from Autism.

I discussed the main areas of difficulties and how this may affect everyday living, looked at both common autism myth and autism facts and to identify early signs for possible autism assessments. The response was positive and yet sad, as many of them realised how challenging it can be however they were encouraged to celebrate who are caring for autistic children. Now even QwaQwa has the opportunity to make a difference.



BRANCH NEWS: MPUMALANGA/LIMPOPO MARY MOEKETSI

I attended a youth strategy at the office of the premier in Limpopo, I was asked to bring a young person with ASD to the meeting , I took Kamogelo Mabuella , Kamogelo is a 20 year old young adult who was diagnosed with ASD when he was 5years old, he has never

been to school, main stream would not accommodate him, LSEN would not accommodate him because he is low support. He ended up at the Enrichment centre at Mitchel House a private school in Polokwane.

For the youth who were there, some with disability some no disability, it was the first time to see a person with ASD, one of them said he understands what was wrong with one of the learners at the school that he attended, he told us the learner was bullied or ridiculed because he was seen not to be same as other learners.

What surprised them with Kamogelo was that he can read, speak English but cannot write, the biggest surprise was that he even has a diploma in computer but does not have a matric, (I had to explain about special interest for some people on the spectrum.)

There will be a road show about youth strategy in the five districts of Limpopo province, because of Kamogelo, a:sa is invited to attend the consultation so that we could share information about ASD with the youth in the province.

In Mpumalanga, there has been ASD awareness in Middleburg organised by Sine siphon senhlanhla, this is an organisation

formed by parents of children with ASD in Nkangala district.

Finally long waited event with Dr André Venter has happened will share photos in the next month news!

BRANCH NEWS: KWA-ZULU NATAL: ROSEMARY SHEZI

Heritage month went by so quickly and brought us to October Mental Health Awareness month. Intellectual Impairment and challenging Behaviours can be an addition to Autism for some affected. A Thank you goes to the Provincial and EThekweni District Department of Health, Mental Health Division for granting me an interview slot on Ukhozi FM to share challenges faced by parents with their children's condition. A great interview with Victor Molefe and support from program producer Bonga Ndaba. The listeners who called commenting and asking questions were very much encouraging and the tweets sent in as well showed how much knowledge and support families affected and afflicted need. Thank You Mrs Nomathemba Mzila and Nalini Padayachee let us keep the working partnership and support alive.

It was back to Osizweni in Newcastle at Vumanisabelo Special School for the Golden

Tips of Classroom Setup for ASD learners. Thank you for the enthusiasm shown again by the staff of the school, neighbouring mainstream schools and the inclusive and full service schools from Dan Hauser. A highly engaging and participative 3 days and the site visit and assessment day was indeed eye opening. A big Thank you to coordinator Ms Ntokozo Mhlongo and Ms Mbhele for availing themselves during the holiday week for preparations. Thank you so much for the warm welcome to the Principal Mr Banda and to his Deputy Mr Nyembe for technical support and willingness. To the highly passionate and committed official from the district Ms Fikile Mbatha who is always there and highly supportive, sincere gratitude Sontshikazi.

What a marvellous winding up of the month with the Autism and other Disabilities Awareness walk, Screening and High Tea by Nkazi Stimulation Centre in 16 Osprey Road Yellowwood Park Durban. Thank you so much to organiser and centre administrator Nonhlanhla for her tireless effort to make this occasion a success. The walk started at 9 am in Montclair Shopping mall down to Kenyon Howden Drive, up to Shoprite Shopping Mall in Montclair. A bubbly cheering leading crowd of Neuro - typical learners and siblings raised so much attention with their cheery songs as

they led the walk, tear dropping. A successful walk and support and the volunteers who helped, families, friends and colleagues, parents and the staff of Nkazi was so jubilant with their little ones. Thank You Mrs Ntombifuthi Mthethwa, founder and manager of Nkazi. One can say Thank you again Ntombi, former EThekweni District Department of Health Rehabilitation Services Manager 9 Occupational Therapist by Profession) for seeing the gap in the Early Intervention and stimulation services for our young ones and left your cosy comfortable office to serve our community! The work and progress one sees at Nkazi is amazing. Thank you Mr Mthethwa for your support on the day and for donating your home to be the centre. Shine KZN shine.

BRANCH NEWS: NORTHERN CAPE: ELFREDA BAARTMAN

Good day beautiful people!

We are heading towards the end of the year! October flew by like a kite in the night... however, reflecting back...i went to Prieska where I did my first family intervention, and while I was at it, I hosted a workshop with the clinic staff at Prieska clinic. As usual, not to brag though, LOL, I was invited back! The

clinic manager was so impressed, and everyone agreed that the training should be done again, this time with parents of children with autism. The family who needed intervention, insisted that I stay with them and it helped me a lot to be able to observe the child and to see how their routine works. I called a family meeting the night before I left and for the first time the siblings spoke about how they feel and how the community makes them feel. They said that they sometimes felt helpless, clueless, and a lot of frustration. most of the frustrations were caused due to the fact that their brother can't speak. I gave them some tips and suggestions on how to help him and how to help each other to get rid of the frustration. mom also needed a chance to get out with dad as dad is working out and only come home on weekends. We organised a date night for mom and dad, and it was super successful.

Back in Kimberley, I had a week long consultation, along with AGE IN ACTION, and DICAG, with DEPT. OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT and CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS about the way forward concerning GRANTS AND FUNERAL BENEFITS FOR THE ELDERLY. I am also pleased to say that I am part of the PLANNING COMMITTEE FOR DRAM 2017 (

DISABILITY RIGHTS AWARENESS MONTH) and the plans are huge!! I am mostly looking forward to representing AUTISM SA at the NATIONAL YOUTH CAMP.



Training with DICAG were super awesome and having the DIRECTOR OF CHILD LINE also there made it more special. she also introduced their WHITE BALLOON CAMPAIGN to us, which will be held on the 24 NOVEMBER 2017 12HOO AT HULANA PARK GALESHEWE KIMBERLEY.

The highlight of this month, for me, was to collect toys for a creche which classroom burned down. IT warmed my heart more when some of our AUTISM PARENTS also dug into their pockets and bought eating utensils for the kiddies of KIDS4SUCCESS who lost so much in the fire. I want to thank BOPELO

CHILDRENS HOME and the parents of PRIESKA who made a difference in these kids' lives by GIVING



Last but not least ...it was SUPER AWESOME to see my colleagues again at the AGM ON SATURDAY!

WELL FOLKS THATS ALL FOR NOW ...LETS WELCOME SWEET NOVEMBER! 🌸 🌸

ARTICLE CONTRIBUTION: PrAACTical AAC

<http://praacticalaac.org/praactical/the-power-of-aac-for-distance-communication/>

Today, we look to South Africa to learn from AT specialist Desirae Pillay who shares her thoughts on using AAC for communicating at



a distance. In an earlier post, Desirae shared her experience as an AAC parent. In the current post, she talks about things we don't always think about when supporting people with AAC needs.

The Power of AAC for Distance Communication

I am an Assistive Technology Advisor for a company in South Africa and a parent to a young adult, Savannah Pillay who is cerebral palsied and autistic. As an advisor, it is my job to know of all the communication options that are available which includes knowing about unaided AAC options. I am a big fan of gesture dictionaries as I have seen how impactful it can be especially when using a multi-modal communication system. I am also a fan of AAC software that not only has a robust vocabulary for communication, language and literacy development; but also includes options to use social media and distance communication.

This year as we celebrate AAC Awareness month, I am reminded of the power of communication in all its forms particularly in the form of distance communication. Many people today have cell phones and use email, SMS, WhatsApp and similar texting platforms to communicate. For our community who use AAC methods, being able to send messages without being in the same space as their communication partner can be so motivating and empowering.

When my daughter began her journey to communication I had no idea that she would ever understand the concept of email or WhatsApp or Facebook. I just wanted her to be able to communicate her basic needs to me. Yet, here I am today; working in job that entails some travel and my daughter is able to contact me by email (her preferred choice of distance communication) when I am miles and miles away from her. While she enjoys viewing Facebook posts of other people, she has not posted anything herself as yet. I am still thrilled that she can independently access Facebook and keep up with what her social circle are up to.

Savannah uses the Beeline page set in Grid 2. She loves sending emails to her friends and family as well as receiving emails. Her email setting is set to read with highlighting which enables her to listen and to follow the text being read on the screen. I initially thought that she would have a hard time

understanding how to accept communication in this form from a person she could not see; but to my surprise she enjoys this type of communication the most. An email gives her time to process the information she receives and to formulate her response.

Her thoughts and ideas are more clearly formulated and her sentence structure is better when she is not under pressure to communicate face to face. An interesting observation is that over time her spoken communication has improved. She uses more words and uses more core vocabulary.

In my work as an AT Advisor, I always encourage parents and educators to use distance communication as a motivator as one way to encourage communication. It is also a great way to learn the vocabulary and how to navigate in a page set without the pressure of dealing with a communication partner in the same room. Even if at the beginning, all that is being communicated is a greeting; it is a gateway for the communication partner to ask questions or give information that gives the AAC user an opportunity to respond to.

The communication assistant can use aided language stimulation to help the AAC user explore options of how they might respond:

For example:

Email received from Eric: Hi. How are you?

Communication partner can use Aided Language Stimulation and show the AAC user what they can respond with:

Communication Partner: "You can say 'Hello. I am fine. How are you?'"

Or

Communication Partner: "That was nice of Eric to email you. You can say 'Hi Eric. It is nice to hear from you. I am doing okay.'"

For families, often we have to trust the caregivers to relay information to us when we leave our children or loved ones. I hope this AAC month we also remember that children become adults who have the right to privacy which includes privacy in their communication. For adults with acquired disabilities they can benefit from distance communication with their loved ones during lengthy hospital stays or when they are unable to leave their home due to disability.

When selecting a high tech AAC system, please consider using a system that gives the AAC user access to distance communication and social media. They can still keep up with the news of their families and friends even if they cannot actively participate in the lives of their social circle anymore. That is important for rehabilitation and overall wellbeing. For new communicators, I ask if their peers have access to social media and distance communication. If they do, then the AAC user

must have access to the same platforms in the language they speak: AAC.

Happy AAC month.

EVENTS! WESTERN CAPE: ALPHA SCHOOL



ALPHA SCHOOL
FOOD FAIR

SATURDAY, 4 NOVEMBER 2017
9:30 – 14:00

ITALIAN FOOD ★ Braai Stall ★ Tuck Shop
CAPE MALAY FOOD ★ Sandwich Bar
Cake & Tea Garden ★ South African Stall

Arts & Crafts for Sale ★ Fun for Kids
Live Entertainment ★ Peace Garden Expo

SCRAPTACULAR FASHION SHOW @ 11:00am

Venue: Alpha School (Cnr of Palmerston Rd & Roodebloem Rd)
Tel: 021 4471212/3 Email: info@alphaschool.co.za

EVENTS! WESTERN CAPE:



SAVE THE DATES!

1-3 November: Hands On Autism 2:
Kimberley

15 December 2017 - 8 January
2018: Autism South Africa Offices
Closed



A VERY SPECIAL THANKS!

Thank you **ram** HAND-TO-HAND COURIERS™ for buying the most Casual Day stickers from Autism South Africa and for distributing the stickers countrywide for us!

What is happening in the rest of SA? Send your news to: director@autismsouthafrica.org

Until next time!

#ChangeYourMind