

April 2004
Issue 2

Aut-Talk



Newsletter from Autism South Africa – the National Body for people with autism in South Africa

OUR NEWS

We are glad to say that Jennifer Kemp has joined Autism South Africa as Fundraiser at the beginning of February. Jennifer has more than nine years experience in fundraising, marketing and heading up projects. – we bit her a hospitable welcome.

Anna Atkins was voted in as Treasurer of Autism South Africa at the recent National Executive Committee meeting. We warmly welcome Anna to this taxing post.



AUTISM SAFARI **30th October – 2nd** **November 2006** **CAPE TOWN**

We had some very welcome overseas visitors in February 2004.

Pat Mathews (President of the World Autism Organization), Nuala Mathews (Irish Society for Autism), and Paul Shattock (Vice President of the World Autism Organization).

The reason for their trip was to visit the Cape Town venue. They were most impressed and are looking forward to our Autism Safari. They did however, change the date which is now 30th October – 2nd November 2006. Please be sure to make the changes in your diary.

Contact Details for Autism South Africa

P.O. Box 84209

Greenside. 2034

Tel: (011) 486 3696

Fax: (011) 486 2619

E-mail:

autismsa@iafrica.com

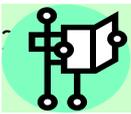
Web Page:

www.autism-sa.org

What I have learned so far from four year old Dylan

- I've learned that no matter how afraid we were of the final diagnosis that Dylan had autism, he was still the same little boy when we left the doctor's office as the sweet little guy we took in. Our world has changed but we walked out with our same little boy and our love hadn't changed.
- After exposure to all the things written about autism, good or bad – all the characteristics, traits and theories, you can still look at that little angel and think, "Yes, but he's also my child."
- Being saddened about his current limitations doesn't mean I'm not grateful for what he can do. That it's okay to be sad, and scared. It is scary!
- The future is something to think about but not dwell upon. Everything we do now is for his future; the here and now is keeping us busy enough. When I get too scared about the future, I remember that we just need to concentrate on today and keep moving forward.
- It doesn't matter if your spouse does not deal with your child's autism the same way you do. As long as you are both dealing with it, and support each other, that's all that matters.
- I've learned to find things to laugh at – every day.
- When I worry about him walking out of my embrace as I tell him I love him, I remember that we can know we are loved without being told, that we can show love, without being acknowledged for it. It shows in the little things. So he doesn't speak right now, that's okay; his smile tells me he's happy, that he knows he is loved.
- I've come to accept that a three year old can feel perfectly comfortable – occasionally prefer – sleeping with a two liter bottle of cool drink, a bobble bath bottle, two video cases, three books, a hairbrush, and a koosh ball, all beside him with a shoe on his pillow. My cooking spray apparently belongs in the toy box now.
- People will often, well intentioned; tell us to "not get our hopes up". We need to let them know that we **NEED** hope. We all need hope. It's a good thing.
- Even though I don't want our son to have autism, we get some gifts from it anyway. We are closer as a family, and we get to watch these wonderful little improvements he makes every day. We get to see what seems like little miracles. How many people can say that?

Written by Kimberly Mulford – Taken from "The Autism Experience".



EDUCATION

“When the head said ‘We’d be delighted to have him’ I felt it was the first time someone had positively wanted Joe”.

However, it is crucial that this good communication continues and that as many lines of communication between the school and home are kept open as possible. Young people with autism benefit from receiving consistent messages about their behaviour and this is only achievable if schools and families are able to work together. Lines of communication can include:

- Homework diaries or communication books.
- Meeting with teachers informally, for example when you are picking your child up from school.
- Meeting with teachers formally. If your child has a statement then you should be able to discuss concerns with the school at the annual review, but they should also arrange parents evenings more frequently.
- Annual reports and statement reviews. These should inform you not only of your child’s academic progress but also of how they are coping with all aspects of school life.

Attitudes and expectations

“At my old school some of the teachers were horrible. Now they are relaxed and cheerful”.

James.

As James puts it, the attitudes of teachers can make all the difference to a child with autism. Children and young people with autism are very able to pick up on the attitudes and expectations of these around them. However, they may have problems interpreting these. An eagerness to say what they think the teacher wants to hear rather than what they truly think can have very negative repercussions. It is important for children with autism to be clear about the expectations of those around them.

If this is not effective then it is crucial that the school and family are able to communicate. James was in the confusing position of being perceived as an extremely good pupil even though he was often struggling to cope at school. It would have been helpful if the school had made more of an effort to find out about how James was coping outside school hours. Young people with high-functioning autism or Asperger syndrome can be particularly good at bottling up their feelings and only releasing them in an environment in which they feel safe. It is a strange paradox, but if a young person with Asperger syndrome does become agitated or angry at school on occasion it may indicate that in the main they feel relatively secure there. It was James’ long-term insecurities that were preventing him from expressing his feelings.

JAMES’ STORY

James is 15 years old and has Asperger syndrome. He spent most of his primary education at a mainstream school and then moved to a school for children with complex or medical needs. Recently he moved to a school for children with autism where he is doing really well. The main reason for the move was that James was very unhappy at his old school. The teachers and other pupils found it hard to understand which areas James had difficulties in. James was often very anxious because he wasn’t sure what was expected of him. His anxiety was more apparent at home than at school where James appeared to be studious but withdrawn. The success of the move can be seen in his willingness to talk about the new school. Although the change in environment has taken a bit of getting used to, James is clearly much calmer and happier now. And this in turn is making it easier for him to learn and develop new skills.

Breaks

Unstructured breaks can be a nightmare for children with autism. Playground culture can make them vulnerable to bullying and if midday assistants do not understand their needs then they may be very poorly protected. A playground can be a very frightening place for a young person with autism. The high levels of stimulation available can be unbearably distracting and in turn cause great anxiety. However, all young people need time out and children with autism also need the opportunity to learn how to cope with unstructured time. What works for James is having plenty of short breaks between lessons.

Teachers could, however, try:

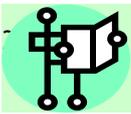
- Talking with the student and their family to establish at what times they might need time out.
- Work with learning support assistants and the young person to find a way for them to effectively communicate when they need a break.

Ways of giving time out during lessons could include:

Giving the young person a note to take to the school office. The note could just ask whoever receives it to thank the young person and send them back to their lesson. The few minutes outside the classroom may be all it takes for the young person to calm down.

Structuring all lessons so that any period of small group work (this is likely to be the period a young person with autism finds most stressful) is followed by some individual study.

During structured breaks such as the lunch hour, a midday assistant or learning support assistant could be asked to spend some time with them each day working on joining groups or playing with others. This need be no more than 10 – 15 minutes but it can serve a valuable double purpose. Besides giving the young person the opportunity and support they need to work with others, it may also signify to other children in the playground that the young person is being protected and is not a good target for bullying. - taken from ‘The Autism Handbook’ The National Autistic Society



Hollywood Reporter, March 28, 1989.

No one can possibly calculate the positive impact of the movie “Rain Man”. Although not typical of very many people with autism. Dustin Hoffman’s part offered the general public an introduction to a world most had never known. The following article from the Hollywood Reporter:

In a letter to film star, Dustin Hoffman, 12-year old Brent Aden wrote, **“after seeing the film, “...people care about autism now ... I feel good now. People say autism is OK. I’m free now. This is good Rain Man.”**

Brent has always been ashamed of being autistic, but “Rain Man’ legitimized his handicap,” “When he saw his hero Dustin Hoffman playing a man with autism it clicked in him that it was OK to be autistic.

Hurdy Gurdy House

Hurdy Gurdy House is a home specifically for individuals with autism, providing a “family home’ type environment within a tranquil rural setting just outside Cape Town. We have been running now for over two years, during which time we have learnt a lot. At present we have four permanent residents, aged between 14 and 25 years, supported by a total of ten staff, and a number of keen volunteers.

The house itself is divided into two sections, with one resident living in a secure unit, separated from the other residents, due to a history of severe violent episodes, which are settle gradually now. There still remains space for up to two more residents in the main house. The house operates all year round and also offers respite care when places are available. Structure, routine and constancy are vital and we try very hard to maintain these. Staff have been undergoing training and are implementing the TEACCH program based on individual requirements and capabilities. It is a very lively house with a real mix of residents – all of whom are fantastic in their individuality.

A structured daily routine encourages development of self-help skills, provides stimulation and channels energy! Residents are supervised or assisted with day-to-day self-care and home chore routines. We try to provide stimulation through arts, crafts, music and other sensory awareness, exercise and games. Facilities such as a swimming pool and garden provide extra daily activities.

If you would like more information about the house, then please get in touch via email at: hurdy-gurdy@absamail.co.za or telephone: 021-904-2312.

RESIDENTIAL AND VOCATIONAL THERAPY CENTRE FOR ADULTS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

Parents from the Association for Autism in Pretoria have been lobbying for many years to establish a facility for Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder. After about 30 years of hard work, The Transnet Foundation and Autism South Africa made funds available, and Lethabo Le Khutso was born in May 2002.

We cater for 8 permanent residents, and also for 8 daycare visitors.

Our vision is to provide a safe and happy Autism-friendly environment for Adults with Autism.

For more information, contact Anna Atkins at the office of the Association for Autism on 012 3291423, or e-mail afautism@iafrica.com.



2004

WORKSHOP PROGRAMME LED BY MR THEO PEETERS AND MS HILDE DE CLERCQ

Monday 26 th /Wednesday, 28 th April 2004 Pretoria	Diagnosis and Biological / Medical Aspects – Dr. Jean Steyaerts
Thursday 29 th / Friday 30 th April 2004 Cape Town	Diagnosis and Biological / Medical Aspects – Dr. Jean Steyaerts
Monday 16 th / Tuesday 17 th August 2004 Johannesburg	Communication: Theo Peeters and Hilde De Clercq
Thursday 19 th / Friday 20 th August 2004 Cape Town	Communication: Theo Peeters and Hilde De Clercq
Monday 23 rd / Tuesday 24 th August 2004 Durban	1 st part of Basics: Theo Peeters and Hilde De Clercq
Monday 18 th / Tuesday 19 th October 2004 Johannesburg	Asperger Syndrome: Theo Peeters and Hilde De Clercq
Thursday 21 st / Friday 22 nd October 2004 Cape Town	Asperger Syndrome: Theo Peeters and Hilde De Clercq
Monday 25 th / Tuesday 26 th October 2004 Johannesburg	Informal Assessment: 2 Collaborators from the Centre.
Thursday 28 th / Friday 29 th October 2004 Cape Town	Informal Assessment: 2 Collaborators from the Centre.
Monday 8 th / Tuesday 9 th November 2004 Johannesburg	Asperger Syndrome: Practical Guidelines for classroom intervention – 2 Collaborators from the Centre
Thursday 11 th / Friday 12 th November 2004 Cape Town	Asperger Syndrome: Practical Guidelines for classroom intervention – 2 Collaborators from the Centre

USE YOUR ABSA CREDIT CARD TO HELP AUTISM SOUTH AFRICA!

If you bank with ABSA, you can apply for a “Rewards” Credit Card and you can then accumulate points as you use your credit card. These points are then “cashed in” to purchase something from their extensive list of products.

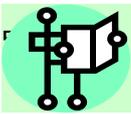
The Rewards Company who manage this promotion have selected **Autism South Africa** as one of three beneficiaries to receive “Rewards” points that people would like to give to charity.

For those of you who bank with ABSA, please consider helping **Autism South Africa** through ensuring that you have a “Rewards” Credit Card and then if you do not want to utilise the points you accumulate, please consider donating them to **Autism South Africa**.

We use these points to purchase items such as printers, TVs, video recorders etc for the schools around the country.

For more information on the ABSA “Rewards” system, please phone **0800 600 059** or visit their web page: www.absa.co.za

Thank you for your consideration.



Book Corner

Books available from HORIZON BOOKS

Unit 1 B Prime Park Mocke Road

Diep River

7800, Cape Town

Tel: 021 706-0949

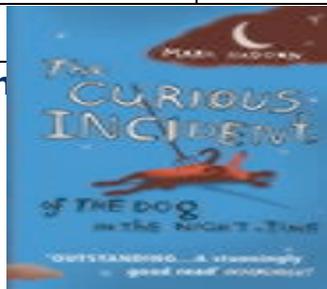
Fax: 021-706-0940

E-mail: Cheryl@bookpro.co.za



Description	Author / Product Number
<u>Autism – From Research to Individualised</u>	Gabriels R. - 1843107015
Autism & Asperger Syndrome	Howlin P. (2004) - 0415809689
Autism in early years	Cumine V. (2000) - 0853465992
Autism and Learning	Powell. S (1997) - 185346421x
Autism & ICT: Guide for Teachers & Parents	Hardy C. (2002) - 185346824x
Asperger Syndrome	Chmine V. et al (1998) - 0853464996
Asperger Employment Guide	Meyer R.N. (2000) - 0853027960
Asperger's Syndrome, The Universe & Ever	Hall. K. (2000) - 1853029300

The Curious Incident in the Night-time



Paperback - 224pp (01 Apr 2004) Vintage; ISBN: 0-09-945025-9

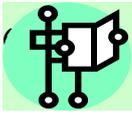
Prize information:

Shortlisted for the Whitbread Prize (Novel) (2003)

Synopsis

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time is a murder mystery novel like no other. The detective, and narrator, is Christopher Boone. Christopher is fifteen and has Asperger's, a form of autism. He knows a very great deal about maths and very little about human beings. He loves lists, patterns and the truth. He hates the colours yellow and brown and being touched. He has never gone further than the end of the road on his own, but when he finds a neighbour's dog murdered he sets out on a terrifying journey which will turn his whole world upside down.

Can be ordered from Exclusive Books. For more info go to www.exclusivebooks.co.za



Aut-Talk Ad – Page

Asperger Support Association for Parents

Christel Grant is in the process of starting up a new Asperger Support Association for Parents.

She would like to build up a database of information which would be helpful to all parents in South Africa with Asperger’s children, and to benefit parents by offering support by means of regular meetings and newsletters. She would like to help parents understand their child and to point them in the right direction.

All information received will be treated as confidential.

Christel has asked that you e-mail the following information to her:

1. Your child’s full history.
2. Your story (please feel free to change the names if you would like to stay anonymous).
3. Your child’s current age, gender and if you want to, which school he / she is attending.
4. Tell us everything from the time he/she was born up to date, the sad stories as well as the happy ones.
5. What therapies you’re tried, what worked and what didn’t and what you are still doing.
6. Aids you used at home or systems you implemented that worked, also the ones which didn’t work.
7. Books which you read, or internet sites you found helpful.
8. Information you are looking for or therapies you would want more info on.
9. Professionals you used and want to recommend.
10. Please mention whether you would like to meet regularly and/or receive newsletters.
11. Please mention the suburb and town where you live.

Contact: Christel Grant

Tel: 082-643-4125

Toon Boom

Nothing Keeps Villy from His Toon Boom Studio Express!

Willem (Villy, for short) Hattingh is an eager animator often making an animation a day with Toon Boom Studio Express. Just six-years old, this prolific animator has made Toon Boom Studio Express an essential ingredient to his developmental diet, pleasing and amusing family, friends and strangers on the Web!

Toon Boom has had a measurable impact on his schooling. “The key impacts include his greater concept of past, present and future tense, an otherwise difficult concept to teach. Apparently, since working with TBS, this area has improved a great deal. It also has ‘flexed’ his PC skills – we have heard that it’s had an effect on how confident he is with the PC’s in his “IT”: classes.

Willem’s got some fantastic animations – including an animated Toon Boom Studio logo, tributes to the Power Puff Girls and Kirby, as well as many other fun goodies. Check out Willem’s animation on the Hatting’s web site: www.hattinghs.com/willem.

For additional information visit Toon Boom on the Web at www.toonboom.com.

Write and Illustrate

Calling all writers and illustrators!

Wanted: 3 books with a distinct South African Flavor for the 0 – 5 reader.

Rewards: 3 prizes of R 10 000 each, 10 000 copies of your book printed and distributed to libraries country-wide.

ISIQALO BOOK COMPETITION

Interested:

Deadline 30 April 2004

Sappi, in partnership with Centre for the Book, is sponsoring a competition to encourage South African writers and illustrators to develop local literature for the younger reader.

16 pages in length

Submission requirements

Not previously published

In any South African language
Must be submitted in full colour with complete text

Submission Categories

A word-book that focuses on everyday life experiences of very young children; or

A storybook; or

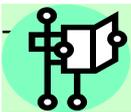
A wordless picture book

For further information, contact

Tel: 021-422-2501

Fax: 021-424-1484

E-mail: firstwords@nlsa.ac.za



Loving and Laughing with Autism – Compiled by R. Wayne Gilpin A collection of “real life” warm and humorous stories

My husband and I were thrilled when our son Andy learned to count. Once gaining this skill, Andy would repeat it time and again in any way he could. A little boring after the 400th time but we were still pleased with his new ability. Then we received our monthly phone bill for \$38.00 for calls made to South Bend, Indiana. We didn't know anyone in South Bend but the number was somehow strangely familiar. Then we realised that to dial South Bend from our Northwest Indiana home, you need to dial a “one” first. That made the phone number 1 234 5678. Andy had spent \$38.00 practicing his new skill every time my back was turned. I tried to call the number to apologise, but it had been disconnected. I wonder why?

Jayne Kranc – Indiana – USA

Alex loves singing and was in his sixth grade chorus. It came time for the Christmas recital. The group practiced for weeks and Alex, who has an incredible memory for songs, knew every song perfectly. To add to the excitement, the recital was to be held in the town square of Chapel Hill, N.C. in front of a large crowd. Finally, the big night came and Alex assumed his place in the group. The recital began and the chorus proceeded to sing its repertory. However, amazingly, Alex didn't open his mouth to sing but simply stood there with a big smile on his face! His mother Starla was obviously a little taken aback and anxious to find out the problem. After the recital she worked her way through the crowd to Alex's side. Before she could say a word, Alex said “Wasn't it good Mom?”. Did you like it? Her confusion only increased. Starla said, “But Alex, you didn't sing a word”. Alex looked up with that look of surprise and said, “I might not have looked like I was singing, but I was ... I was singing inside”. After a moment of reflection, she smiled, gave him a big hug, and took her “silent singer” home.

R. Wayne Gilpin

Alex was “Stimming”, rocking back and forth and waving his arms, as I was telling him the story of Pinocchio and how his nose grew when he lied:

“Alex you can stop stimming.”

“Dad, I'm not doing anything.”

“You were stimming.”

“Was not.”

Then, after a thought raced across his face and with a look of fear, Alex slowly raised his finger up to touch his nose.

R. Wayne Gilpin

“Who's Sorry Now”

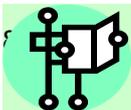
When John was in high school, there was an incident one day in which he mangled a teacher's eye glasses. It was of course, very inappropriate and unacceptable behaviour and could not be ignored. It seemed right that she should be compensated or the new frames that were required. It didn't seem entirely right that John should get off with no obligation while his parents paid for his destructive act. He should pay. Yet his earning power was practically non-existent - - until a snowfall conveniently arrived soon after the incident.

“John” I announced, “you are going to shovel snow because you must pay for those glasses your broke”. I showed him the sidewalks that were to be shoveled and he started in on the task. I was rather surprised at how cooperative and compliant he was. I had expected more resistance to this demand. Inside the house, while he shoveled away outside, I felt rather pleased. Not only that I had done the right thing, but it was easier than I had expected it to be. Later, I went out to look at the job he had done.

The sidewalks were acceptably cleared.

The snow had been piled into a small mountain inside the garage.

Beth Spasato – Nebraska.



CONTACT DETAILS FOR AFFILIATED REGIONAL BODIES AND SCHOOLS REPRESENTING PEOPLE WITH AUTISM IN SOUTH AFRICA

<u>AUTISM SOUTH AFRICA</u>	(011) 486 3696 / 0122 E-Mail: autismsa@iafrica.com
<u>ALPHA SCHOOL</u>	(021) 447 1212/3 E-mail: alphasch@xsinet.co.za
<u>AUTISM WESTERN CAPE</u>	(021) 557 3573 info@autismwesterncape.org.za
<u>VERA SCHOOL</u>	(021) 696 2844 E-mail: vera@vera.wcape.school.za
<u>SOCIETY FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS WITH AUTISM</u> (Johannesburg) THE KEY SCHOOL	(011) 726 2445 E-mail: keyschool@iafrica.com
<u>ASSOCIATION FOR AUTISM (PRETORIA)</u>	(012) 329 1423 / 3627 E-mail: afautism@iafrica.com
<u>UNICA SCHOOL</u>	012 460 6539. E-mail: autism@mweb.co.za
<u>E.C.A.A (Eastern Cape Association for Autism)</u>	(041) 581 0964 E-mail: quest3@freemail.absa.co.za
<u>P.A.C.K (Parents of Autistic Children Kwazulu Natal)</u>	(031) 701 0355 E-mail: paulpratt@mweb.co.za
<u>MICHAEL MACGREGOR</u> Adult with Autism	083 993 4590 E-Mail: davemac@wol.co.za
<u>AUTISM NAMIBIA</u>	092 6461 224561/2 E-mail: petaut@africaonline.com.na

If you would like to receive this newsletter on an ongoing basis, please complete our membership application and return it to Autism South Africa.

Name : _____

Surname : _____

Occupation : _____

Tel No : _____

Fax No : _____

E-mail address : _____

Postal Address : _____

Province : _____

Postal Code : _____

I _____ wish to become a member of [Autism South Africa](#), and enclose a cheque for R 25.00 membership fee.

Signature _____

BROCHURES AVAILABLE FROM ASA

- Parents Brochure R 8.00 ea
- Doctors Brochure R 5.00 ea
- Teachers Brochure R 5.00 ea
- Asperger Brochure R5.00 ea
- Sibling Brochure R 5.00 ea
- Dietary Intervention R 5.00 ea
- I am autistic – M MacGregor R 6.00 ea

DISCLAIMER

Information disseminated by Autism South Africa is for information purposes only.

The onus rests with the reader to explore and investigate the relevant information and alternatives for each individual.

Information sent out does not imply that Autism South Africa underwrites or endorses any particular therapy, intervention, method or medication. Autism South Africa assumes no responsibility for the use made of any information provided herein.