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August 2017

*Every cent raised is spent in our region
to help improve the lives of those among us
with autism and their families.*

#AUT2KNOW

10,000 SIGNATURES NEEDED TO SAVE STATE CENTER SERVICE OPTION!

Sue Jennings and fellow parents and guardians of seriously impaired individuals with autism and intellectual disabilities (formerly known as mental retardation) are taking on those who would close all Pennsylvania's state centers - SIGNATURES NEEDED ON PETITION!

[CLICK HERE TO SIGN THE PETITION](#)

Return your signed form with as many signatures as possible to:

Autism Society of Pittsburgh
4371 Northern Pike
Monroeville, PA 15146
info@autismsocietypgh.org

**Those in PA Government Supporting HB1650 to Close All
Institutions Must be Enlightened!**

When it comes to appropriate services, identical standards apply to seriously involved individuals with autism as well as those with intellectual disabilities. This also includes those diagnosed with both disabilities, who comprise a huge proportion of the seriously impaired (ie 30% of those at Western Center in 1990).

For many of them, their complex impairments unique in number, combination and severity, are most effectively and economically addressed in an institutional or congregate setting at various times in their lives. For some - as the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Supreme Court (Olmstead) pointed out - home or community-based services can never be appropriate.

Underscoring this, the Supreme Court pointed out that it is the state's responsibility, to the extent of resources available, to provide for those individuals appropriate care and treatment service options regardless of the setting - including institutional.

As primary caregivers, parents (and legal guardians) are the primary decision makers in choosing service options for their severely involved autistic and/or ID sons and daughters - as with any child - working with the treating professionals.

Those supporting HB1650 and the destruction of institutions like Hamburg and Western State Centers, have no accountability for the outcomes in the lives of those families affected, just like those so long entrenched in the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare (now DHS) who allowed Hamburg's buildings and out state centers to deteriorate, admissions to state centers to be denied, and the resultant costs to taxpayers and suffering families to skyrocket.

Commentary by Daniel A. Torisky

Chair, Autism-Pennsylvania Policy Work Group; Original member of Autism Society of America (1965); Past President, Autism Society of America; Founder and President Emeritus, Autism Society of Pittsburgh and Pennsylvania; Last President, Board of Trustees of Western (State) Center, Canonsburg, PA 1988-2000; Father of 4, including autistic/ID son - a family saved by his 5 days a week for 38 years at Western Center, a model state center that is no longer available to save other families.



NEWS OF IMMEDIATE INTEREST

What we've done, and are doing...

As we move through 2017, we are pleased to report that our region of the nation is consistently ranked at the top in providing autism awareness along with a continuum of appropriate service options that families, as primary caregivers, may access at various times throughout the lives of their sons and daughters with autism. Of particular significance is our ongoing training of law enforcement, legal and juridical professionals who encounter juveniles with autism who get caught up in our justice system - as perpetrators, witnesses, or as victims. For these professionals, in probation, corrections, plus police, public defenders, prosecutors and defense attorneys and judges at all levels, we develop instruction, buttressed by PowerPoint and audio/visual training films. We demonstrate ways for them to communicate effectively with those on the autism disability spectrum. Our training of magisterial district judges statewide, conducted

in collaboration with the Autism Services Bureau of the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, already has been completed.

- A. Much of our expenses this year will focus on prosecutors, defense attorneys and public defenders.
- B. This training has extended to other public and private areas of equal value to the public and private service providers involved. This includes training sessions for nurses, health care aides, educators, and in-services for regular education teachers.
- C. Librarians from Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh were trained on ways to interact with autistic visitors, involving development of curriculum and materials in advance of hands-on training.
- D. Special needs scouting initiative involves our staff developing an autism training module for Boy and Girl Scout leaders. We visited scout troop activities, lent assistance and helped to find responsible sectional leadership. We also continue to purchase identification materials for special needs scout troops.
- E. We have performed training of parent groups citywide, nursing students at Pittsburgh Technical Institute, paraprofessionals at Keystone Oaks School District and special education students at Duquesne University.

All this utilizes our fundraising and independent grant funds. Fortunately, individual year 'round donations from other sources have enabled us to sustain our existing programs that have continued to prove beneficial over the years - some since 1967, in fact. These include:

- **Support Group Workshops -**

We have hired new staff in order to resume our support groups in several parts of the six county Greater Pittsburgh and southwest Pennsylvania region and will also continue to serve as a liaison with area programs and service providers.

- **Autism Policy Work Group** - We continue to be the nerve center and initiator of "alerts" to a local and statewide autism community list of 22,000 autism families and supporters. We continue the ongoing education and enlightenment of elected and appointed officials locally and statewide.
- **Autism Resources.com** - We are in the process of restoring and upgrading this parent-fed information exchange, which lists local and statewide services and establishments recommended as accommodating to those with autism, serving as "The Autism Friendly Guide to Pennsylvania" - with linkage to the Autism Society of America's national autism resource system, which our exchange inspired.
- **Information and Referral** - Our monthly newsletters - in addition to our instant email "blasts" and Facebook - continues the production and dissemination of information on autism, guardianship, wills and trusts, identification, research, relevant news, statutory and regulatory changes, new and pending legislation, and other key issues affecting our autism community.

- **Developing** autism awareness curriculum for middle school students, teachers, and paraprofessionals with the support of Duquesne University Department of Education. Curriculum based on the documentary film "The Family Next Door".

The increased cost of sustaining and enabling these local initiatives to grow spurs us on, along with the skyrocketing increase in incidence of autism - now 1 in 68 births - and ever increasing numbers of individuals with autism of adult age. Serving them appropriately now does translate quickly into huge savings down the road in so many other associated service areas. Our driving imperative is to continue this work this year and beyond for those with autism and their families whose lives we exist to help and improve.

ASA-Pittsburgh's Initiatives Planned and Underway 2017 - 2018

1. **Transition U** - For transitioning adult age special needs individuals to incrementally higher levels of competence and copeability; includes autism and MR (intellectually disabled). Mary Wildman drafted a proposal for such a program. Not unlike the original Autism Society "continuing education" dream. Funding would enable Autism-Pittsburgh to prepare recommendation for physical site or sites in compliance with codes and regulations; as well as arrange cooperative agreements with Departments of Education, Labor & Industry, Human Services, Aging - all of which have influence and resources, and dogs in the is fight.
2. **Prospective Employer Training** - Commercial, business, retail, museums, libraries, job sites across the board. Adapting existing "traits of autism" and re-scripting existing training videos for given audiences.
3. **Legal First-Responder** - To compile and maintain an ongoing list of attorneys who are willing to provide initial free consultation and in some cases *pro bono* representation in the following areas: (a) guardianship, (b) wills and trusts, (c) other representation in court.
4. **Special Needs Job Placement (Autism/MR [intellectually disabled])** - Would solicit and receive applicant resumes, and provide (a) information and referral; (b) film snippet of each applicant being "interviewed"; (c) applicant visit(s) - accompanied by advocate - to job site for trial employment. (Expansion of existing Autism-Pgh Community Based Assessment (CBA Spectrum Plan). Could also offer to senior high school students with disabilities as part of their transitioning to employment.
5. **Social Behaviors IEP Curriculum** - An extension of our existing and highly successful Autism Juvenile Justice Training program, the development of additional training for special education students beginning at age 12. Autism-Pittsburgh would engage special education and other professionals who would prepare curriculum - to be legislated, if necessary - and then adopted in IEPs as mandatory by Pennsylvania Department of Education.
6. **Ongoing Legal Professional Training** - Continuing our Autism Juvenile Justice Training program and expanding it to include professionals in corrections, probation, parole, defense, and prosecution lawyers and judges at all levels.
7. **Continuing Education Scholarships** - Linking area businesses with promising candidates among high school graduates on the autism spectrum, by facilitating a mentoring program for further education, including academic, vocational, skill certification, STEM, college, and university. Referrals from school districts, Intermediate Units, private schools.

8. **Regional Support Groups - Resuming** monthly parent support group meeting/outings in the various counties throughout the region (i.e. establishing a Beaver County support group). Money would be needed for guest presenters, venue activities, etc.
9. **Waiver Support Broker Services** - Aid those who may need assistance with finding services and support in addition to filing the necessary paperwork required of the Pennsylvania waivers.
10. **Autism Society of Pittsburgh App** - Costs associated with maintaining the electronic communication enhancement app, which is used to advertise and promote upcoming events and communicate ongoing activities with app users.
11. **Autism Society of Pittsburgh Sponsored Therapy Dog** - Having a therapy dog that we will send out to various autism organizations to provide therapy and help train other therapy dogs (Jesse Torisky is volunteering his dog).
12. **Pittsburgh Indoor Sports Arena** - Utilize exceptional facility for a year 'round day program for autistic children and severely involved adults, offering a variety of physical activities. Includes partial scholarships.

2017 Pittsburgh Blues and Roots Festival a Huge Success - Thank You from the Autism Society of Pittsburgh!!

The return of the Blues Festival with Autism Society of Pittsburgh as the beneficiary was an enormous success!

This year's 2 day event on Saturday and Sunday, July 22nd and 23rd exceeded all expectations. Autism's own band "Spectrum" ranked right up there with the area's top blues and roots performers. Special thanks to Executive Director Jim Stewart, Pittsburgh's own "Moondog" Ron Esser, "leader of the band" John Vento and, of course, Blues and Roots enthusiasts, volunteers, and sponsors who made it such a success.

2017 SPEAK Camp Comes to an End - See You Next Year!

The Summer Program for the Education of Autistic Kids (S.P.E.A.K.) celebrated its last day on August 2nd with a DJ, dancing, and great memories. S.P.E.A.K. is an Extended School Year (ESY) program founded by the Autism Society of Pittsburgh in 1974 to ease transitioning between school years by preventing or reducing learning regression common to children with autism.

This year our program provided ESY services to 72 students from 23 school districts throughout the area. In addition to addressing each child's ESY goals, as part of their Community Based Instruction (CBI), students visited the zoo, science center, and went to the movies and bowling. S.P.E.A.K. also provides music therapy, speech services, swimming, art activities, and adapted physical education. Students boasted their talents at Family Day held at Dave & Busters where each class put on an outstanding performance for their family and staff.

Many thanks to Allegheny County Department of Human Services, school districts, parents and guardians for helping to make our program possible, and thank you to our caring, highly-skilled staff members for their hard-work, dedication, and professionalism.

Applications for next year's camp will be available in February 2018 so please contact us at 412-856-7223 or info@autismsocietyppgh.org to be added to our 2018 SPEAK application mailing list.

A Win for Parents and Families in Ohio

The "One-size-fits-allers" are trying to close institutions in Ohio but parents and guardians will have their say in court thanks to reality, VOR, and a sharp attorney.

[Click here to read the press release](#)

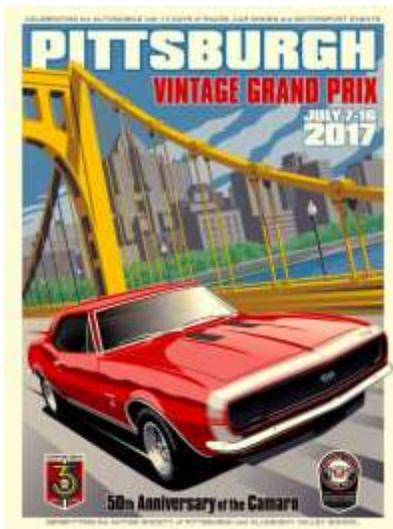
Inclusion for All Sucks

Many parents have spent their lives working to make severely involved autistic kids' disabling characteristics less disabling, hence progressively more "inclusionable", so they may join the community on the community's terms. You cannot make someone feel the way you feel they should. Please [click here](#) to read this blog from the Autism Society of San Francisco Bay Area about why inclusion for all is not always the best option.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

A Grateful Commentary on the 35th Anniversary of the Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix

By Dan DelBianco, Executive Director Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix Association



The 35th Annual Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix has come to a close as the checkered flag was waved on Sunday afternoon. We want to thank everyone involved for another successful year. Hundreds of thousands of dollars will be raised for the Autism Society of Pittsburgh and Allegheny Valley School. The final amount will be revealed when it is merged with the "Dancing with the Cars" event to open the Auto Show in February.

PVGP Chairman of the Board, Dan Taylor, was pleased with all 10 days of events and as the races concluded exclaimed "I hope everyone will stop for a moment and savor the taste of victory. Thanks to all involved in this great race." [Click here to see recent press coverage on the event and here for race results.](#)

The efforts of our volunteers were evident at all events. Rain or shine, our family of volunteers worked tirelessly to make each segment of each event a success while raising funds for charity. Thank you to everyone who attended our events including the Black Tie Gala, the Historic Races at PIRC, the Walnut Street Invitational Car Show, the Waterfront Car Cruise, the Downtown Parade & Car Display, the Tune-Up at Atria's, the Countryside Tour, the new Passport to Elegance Jet Center Party, the Forbes Avenue of Speed Parade and Race Weekend in Schenley Park.

The new "Passport to Elegance" Jet Center Party celebrated our 35th Anniversary and exceeded all expectations. Susan Gera, co-chair with Eric Zagrocki said "our mission was to plan a "can't miss" fundraising event in Pittsburgh unique to anything the PVGP has ever done. I am thrilled to say we not only accomplished that goal with this inaugural event, but based on guest responses have created a first-class experience unique to boundaries well outside just the PVGP and the Pittsburgh area. We are all looking forward to the excitement of what the next year will bring and am so proud to be a part of it."

Congratulations to our family of 1,000 volunteers, some of whom are still in Schenley Park breaking down the track and putting away the snow fence. Volunteers are the main reason we have become the nation's largest vintage race event and the only one run on city streets.

Thanks to the city of Pittsburgh for helping us to transform a tranquil park into a racing circuit for a weekend. We have already begun to restore the golf course and Schenley Park. PVGP Executive Director Dan DelBianco reiterated the PVGP's commitment to restoring and repairing the Bob O'Connor Golf Course - "we value the relationship we have established with First Tee of Pittsburgh and I speak for our volunteers and our Board of Directors that we appreciate the use of the facilities and are thankful to Marc Field, Jeff Duxbury and their staffs".

Hope to see you next year - our 2018 Race Week will run from July 6 through 15 with July 14/15 Race Weekend in Schenley Park. BMW will be the Marque of the Year and BMW O'fest is coming to town!

Top Notch Autism Referral

The Winter 2017 edition of the Kingsley Publishers collection of autism reference publications is available. Call 412-856-7223 for your complimentary copy. Limited supply.



EVENTS AND WORKSHOPS

We offer a range of services, including workshops and support groups, training and educational programs, fundraising events, and community awareness building activities. We stay up-to-date on relevant happenings throughout our local autism community.

Upcoming Events

Sensory Friendly Movies at AMC Lowes Waterfront 22

The Nut Job 2: Nutty by Nature
Saturday, August 26th at 10:00 am

Leap
Saturday, September 9th at 10:00 am

It
Tuesday, September 12th at 7:00 pm

LEGO Ninjago
Saturday, September 23rd at 10:00 am

Kingsman the Golden Circle
Tuesday, September 26th at 7:00 pm

Please visit www.amctheatres.com/programs/sensory-friendly-films for more information

Exceptional Adventures Events

Here We Go Steelers! Adult Dance
#4 Monroeville Fire Department
Friday, September 1st from 6:30 pm - 9:30 pm

Bingo Bonanza
Bridgeville Fire Department
Friday, September 8th from 6:30 pm - 9:30 pm

Casino Royale Adult Dance
Bridgeville Fire Department
Friday, September 15th from 6:30 pm - 9:30 pm

Grease Lightening Dance
#4 Monroeville Fire Department
Friday, September 22nd from 6:30 pm - 9:30 pm

Cookout!
Clever Park - McKees Rocks
Friday, September 29th from 5:30 pm - 8:30 pm

Please visit www.exceptionaladventures.com for more information



AUTISM RESOURCES

We know that parenting a child with autism comes with many challenges and a solid support system is essential. We have highlighted below two places to contact when faced with crisis situations as well as a link to a comprehensive list of suggested resources in our region.

Resolve Crisis Network

Crisis intervention services through UPMC available 24 hours a day 7 days a week to Allegheny County residents at no cost. Call 1-888-796-8226 or 1-888-7-YOU-CAN

IRES (Information, Referral, and Emergency Services)

Emergency assistance available from Allegheny County 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Call 412-350-4457 or 911, TTY 412-350-3467.

[Click here to download our complete resource list](#)



WAYS TO HELP

Our programs and services would not exist without the help of the caring individuals, businesses, and volunteers that support us. Contributions of any size are our lifeblood - vital to our existence

and effectiveness - providing the means for us to help children with autism, their families, and professionals who work with them.

To Donate

Please consider visiting [our donations page](#) today to make a contribution through PayPal or learn about other ways to donate.

To Volunteer

From time to time we need caring volunteers to help with our programs and fundraising events. If interested, please complete [our contact form](#) and we will be in touch when a volunteer opportunity arises that meets your interests and availability.



About Us

The Autism Society of Pittsburgh has comprised the local chapter of the Autism Society of America since 1967. We are volunteers, parents and professionals, working on behalf of children with autism and those of adult age on the autism spectrum throughout the Greater Pittsburgh area struggling with this neurological disorder of behavior and communication.

Our Goal

The goal of our Chapter is to help parents and professionals grow by providing as much relevant information on autism spectrum disorders as is known to us.

We cannot take your place. Parents are with their children for a lifetime: professionals for a career. Our efforts are aimed at helping both become as proficient as possible in evaluating and choosing the services, options and approaches that will enhance the growth and development of individuals with autism spectrum disorders.

Options, A Basic Right

The right of a family to learn about and then select options they feel are most appropriate for their family member with autism is as basic as the family itself. It is rooted deeply in the very foundation of our American democracy and is the guiding philosophy of the Autism Society of America. An advocacy organization such as ours that holds such a position is then compelled to devote its highest priorities to:

1. encouraging, expanding and developing excellence in a continuum of service options, and
2. providing unbiased information for ALL such options to parents, families and to the caring professionals who work with them to reduce or overcome autism's disabling characteristics.

Visit www.autismsocietypgh.org or call us for more information and resources.

Give us a call today!
412-856-7223

NOW AT TWO CONVENIENT LOCATIONS!

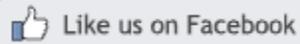
Monroeville Office:

4371 Northern Pike, Monroeville, PA 15146

Wexford Office:

11676 Perry Highway #1206, Wexford, PA 15090

STAY CONNECTED



Autism Society of Pittsburgh, 4371 Northern Pike, Monroeville, PA 15146

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Constant Contact 

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