



PostCARD

Director's Note

Dear Families and Friends of CARD,

The new year is upon us and CARD at the University of Florida is happy to welcome two new staff members to our team. John Polefko and Kevi Sirgo both joined us in December just before the holidays. You will see more about them in this newsletter.

We hope you will have an opportunity to visit our new office in 2007 if you have not already. Our move this fall was not without adventure. Unfortunately we were without phones and computers for a while and our staff did an amazing job of keeping in contact with families and professionals by cell phone and email from home. Nevertheless, we understand that it was frustrating for all and we apologize if you were unable to reach us for a while.

The 14th Annual CARD Conference was held in Ft. Lauderdale this year on January 20-21, 2007. There was also a free pre-conference day for teachers and adult service providers on Friday January 19th. Conference speakers included Dr. Sally Ozonoff from the M.I.N.D. Institute in California, Dr. Peter Gerhardt from Rutgers University in N.J., Dr. Robert Naseef from Philadelphia, Patti King-DeBaun from the University of Utah, and Michael McSheehan from the University of New Hampshire. There were sessions on communication, Aspergers Disorder, challenging

behavior, transition to post-school life, advocacy, sleep disorders and many more including sessions in Spanish. We hope you were able to attend and meet other families and professionals, and that it was a positive experience for you. If not, we will do it all again next year.

We are planning two workshops for educators this spring. Families and other professionals are always welcome. One will address including students with autism and related disabilities in general education and that will be held on April 23 in Ocala at the Central Florida Community College Webber Center. The second will address Challenging Behavior and Positive Behavior Support and will be held in Brooksville, FL on April 13, 2007.

Our work with school-aged children and collaboration with public and private schools in our region continues to grow in positive directions. The new, one-page, Technical Assistance forms that are available on our website under the Contact Us menu have been well received and seem to be arriving in our fax machine every day. We believe they are helping us to facilitate positive teamwork for families and schools.

Sincerely,


Greg Valcante



CARD Office Hours

The CARD office located at 1405 NW 13th Street in Gainesville is "closed" until 12 PM on Mondays for staff meetings. Computers for making visual supports are available during normal business hours on Tuesday to Friday and after noon on Mondays. For an appointment please call Kathy Robinson at 352 392-4171 or 800 754-5891 ext. 9.

CARD Website

Go to www.card.ufl.edu for information about:

current news about autism & related disabilities

support groups

professional development

fact sheets

past issues of the PostCARD

CARD conference information
and more!

Calling All Siblings!!!

The UF CARD has Sibshops in Gainesville, Ocala and Brooksville this year and all 3 locations have space for new siblings! Sibshops are specially designed workshops for children, age 7 to 13, whose brother or sister has a disability. This program is free and we meet once a month on Saturdays (from 10 am to 2pm) for fun and sharing and making new friends. If you are interested in this opportunity for your child, please call Melinda Morrison at 352 256-6820.

[Melinda Morrison](#)



A “Helping Hand” to recharge your battery....

My best friend and I always talk about the “autism clock” and how fast it ticks, making every second of our children’s lives seem like a year, making their education about life even more urgent. Their years are measured by successes and failures, but above all change. So, each year, I reflect on that change to see if my principles need adjusting, and each year when I write the New Year’s editorial for my newsletter, they seem to say the same thing: “(1) There is real power in prayer and total faith in God; (2) We must always start with the end in mind, constantly daring to dream; (3) The “road traveled” constantly changes, so adjustments will always be necessary; (4) A positive frame of mind is key, and a good support group can help maintain that balance; (5) Autism is a developmental disability—it is not an illness; (6) Autism is a label to be used to secure services—Autism is NOT our children; and, (7) Our children are children first, and are living with Autism second, therefore, being a parent to the child and not the disability is key to their success

While my faith has definitely increased and been the ultimate source of my strength, studying my sons instead of this thing called “autism” and understanding them enough to implement the “best practices” that fit their individual needs has taught me patience and tolerance and brought them much success. Knowing them well, has given me the ability to see a real future for them. And traveling this road with others is the support I have come to rely on whenever my “battery” is failing and I need to be “recharged”.

So I invite you to join me at ‘Helping Hands’, a support group for parents of children with Autism Spectrum Disorders that welcomes parents of all special needs children. We meet on the last Wednesday of each month from 6 to 8 p.m. in conference room A at the Ocala Public Library, 2720 East Silver Springs Boulevard, Ocala. Meeting dates are as follows: March 28 and April 25. Please contact me, Sylvia Miller, at 352 687-2257 for more information.
[Sylvia Miller](#)

Staff Update

Mark Lewis, Ph.D., our new Executive Director, is a Professor & Associate Chair for Research in the University of Florida Department of Psychiatry. Dr. Lewis’ research is currently focused on the neurobiological basis of abnormal repetitive behaviors. His research program in this area involves clinical studies of individuals with developmental disorders who engage in such abnormal repetitive behaviors as stereotyped motor activity, self-injurious behavior, and compulsions.

Tanya Murphy, M.D., our new Clinical Director, is board certified in child and adolescent psychiatry, general psychiatry and has a Masters degree in Clinical Investigation. She is currently Division Chief of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. In addition Dr. Murphy is the director of the University of Florida’s Child Clinic for Anxiety, Tic and Autism Spectrum Disorders and is actively involved in teaching psychiatry residents and medical students in the specialized areas of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, various other anxiety disorders, tic disorders, Asperger’s Syndrome and Autism. She is conducting research in the areas of pediatric psychopharmacology and infection-related childhood neuropsychiatric illnesses.

John Polefko, M.Ed. is a certified information technology professional with extensive experience in technology management, education and training, and working with individuals with disabilities. John began his career as a special education teacher and technical assistance specialist and has since held positions at the University of Florida as a systems administrator, technology manager, and information security manager. John has experience with a variety of operating systems and technologies, and has a particular interest in technology usability, accessibility, and effectively using technologies as tools for communication and collaboration, as well as technology security and security awareness.

Kevi Sirgo is our new office Receptionist and Intake Coordinator and the first person that people are likely to meet when coming to our office. We are very happy to have her on our team.

Save the Date! UF CARD Open Family Fishing Day - April 28, 2007

We are teaming up with the University of Florida Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences Fishing For Success program to host a fun family fishing day. We hope that our CARD families will come out and get to know each other! We also will be raising awareness of autism by handing out materials to the general public participants.

During this event your family will have the opportunity to fish together in a safe and fun setting at the 6 heavily stocked "catching ponds" on the grounds of the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences. Anglers can expect to catch bluegill, sunshine bass, and

channel catfish up to 10 lbs, and volunteers are on hand to help with baiting hooks and releasing fish. There is a casting contest for the kids, where the winners have a chance to win prizes such as fishing poles and tackle boxes. Loaner poles and tackle are provided for those that need it and the events are topped off by a free lunch and a prize raffle (also free), where numerous fishing related items are given to the kids.

Please call or email Steve Caton to pre-register - scaton@ufl.edu or 352 392-5283.

Book Reviews

**Adolescents on the Autism Spectrum:
A Parent's Guide to the Cognitive, Social, Physical, and Transition
Needs of Teenagers with Autism Spectrum Disorder**

Author: Chantal Sicile-Kira

All about change, emotions, mood swings, puberty and beyond! The years that seem to make us feel like everything is ten times worse than it is. And that is just how we feel as parents imagine what your child must feel like?

The author covers topics like teaching privacy, relationship boundaries, modesty and masturbation. She explains the health risk that ASD adolescents face in the "middle years". This book is loaded with very useful information. A must read for parents/guardians or anyone interested in helping make the transition years a little bit smoother.

**A "Stranger" Among Us: Hiring In-Home Support for a child with
Autism Spectrum Disorders or Other Neurological Differences**

Author: Lisa Ackerson Lieberman, MSW,LCSW

This book is highly recommended. The process of bringing a "stranger" into my home to help provided support for our children has always been a source of high anxiety for us as a family. "The Process" involved determining what support we really needed, which as it turns out has changed with time and circumstances.

The authors covers topics like privacy, duties, responsibilities, questions to ask and how to ask them, and evaluating job performance, just to name a few. The book also includes forms to use for each step of the process. **Amparo Perales**

Research Opportunities

Family Training Research Project

Volunteers are needed for an intervention study for children with autism and their parents. The purpose of the study is to help fathers of children with autism learn to interact with their children during play sessions. Fathers will also learn how to train mothers to use the same interventions. The study lasts for 8 months and is done in your home. This study is funded by the National Institutes of Health and approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Florida Health Sciences Center. For more information you can contact the primary investigator, Jennifer Elder, R.N., Ph.D, Associate Professor, College of Nursing 352-273-6359.

Study of Motor and Cognitive Development

Children ages 2 to 6 years old and diagnosed with autism or developmental delay are needed to participate in a study of their motor and cognitive development. Problem solving skills and motor abilities will be assessed. Parents will be interviewed. Children will receive a small gift for participating. The study has been approved by the University of Florida Health Sciences Center Institutional Review Board. For more information please contact Dr. Radonovich at 352-392-7928 or kradonov@psychiatry.ufl.edu.

Study to Identify Contributing Genetic Factors for ASD

Are you a parent of the child who has Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)? Are both biological parents available to participate in the study? If so, please help us to identify contributing genetic factors for ASD. During the study, the child will receive a comprehensive evaluation for the developmental, adaptive and cognitive function and behavioral characteristics. The evaluation will consist of three sessions that will be three to four hours each. We will collect blood samples from each member of the family (biological mother, biological father, and the child) for genetic study. Feedback will be provided to the family summarizing the results of evaluation at the end of study participation. For more information please contact Soo-Jeong Kim, MD-Primary Investigator, Department of Psychiatry, University of Florida/ at 352-392-7322 or soojkim@ufl.edu

New on Our Website

Making and Using Visual Supports

This Quicktime video has been popular and a favorite of families and teachers for some time. A good introduction to the construction and applications for low-tech visual supports to be used at home and at school; it is now available to be viewed on our website. Just go to the Resources menu and click on Visual Supports. You can download Quicktime from there also if you need it.

CARD Technical Assistance Request Form

This simple one page form is available on our CARD website for teachers, parents, or other professionals to request CARD consultation. You can find the form by clicking on the Contact Us menu and choosing TA Request Form. Just print out and complete the form, have it signed by an administrator and fax it to us at CARD. We will contact you as soon as possible to set up a mutually agreeable date and time for consultation.

Support Groups

Autism Spectrum Disorder Focus Group

Palatka, FL

Contact: Cheryl Brenner 386/467-3820

A support group for parents to network with one another, share stories and give each other ideas on helping their children succeed. Occasional trainings are provided to help parents learn how to help their children. This month parents will be able to observe parent/child games developed to improve communication and sensory issues. Childcare is provided. Meetings begin at 6PM.

Location:

William D.Mosely Elementary School Media Center
1001 Husson Avenue

Palatka, FL

(Park in rear of school)

Scheduled Meeting Dates: 3/13 (dates for future meetings will be discussed)

welcome to show up at 6PM to meet and discuss their concerns.

Parents of children with any disability are welcome.

Location:

CARD Offices

1405 NW 13th Street

Gainesville, FL 32601-4058

Scheduled Meeting Dates: 3/9, 4/13, 5/11, 6/8

Support Group for Adults on the Spectrum

Gainesville, FL

Contact: Robin Byrd 352/846-3700 or byrd@mbi.ufl.edu

This is a discussion group for adults with ASD. Please feel free to bring your lunch!

Location:

CARD Offices
1405 NW 13th Street
Gainesville, FL 32601-4058

Scheduled Meeting Dates: 3/29, 4/26, 5/31, 6/28

Events Highlight

9th Annual Family Cafe Conference

June 8-10, 2007

Orlando FL

Contact: <http://www.familycafe.net>

The Family Cafe is happy to announce that registration is now open for The 9th Annual Family Cafe Conference, June 8-10 at the Shingle Creek Resort and Golf Club in Orlando.

This year's conference promises to be the best yet, with dozens of informative breakout sessions, an expanded Exhibitors Hall, multiple Keynote Addresses, Saturday Night Family Entertainment and The 9th Annual Governor's Summit on Disabilities, hosted by Governor Crist. We hope to see you there!

If you would like to receive email updates about trainings, presentations, and support groups in our area please email Carole Polefko at cpolefko@ufl.edu.

Special Parents of Exceptional Children Support Group (SPEC)

Gainesville, FL

Contact: Pam Kissoondyal 352/318-3155

A local parent-formed support group SPEC (Special Parents of Exceptional Children) meets at the CARD office each month.

The informal meetings are from 7PM-9PM, but newcomers are

Tech Tip Built-in Accessibility Features in Windows and Mac OS X

In the last issue the Tech Tip was about changing font colors in Microsoft Word to make things easier to read on the computer screen. The next two Tech Tips will continue this theme. In addition to program-specific ways to improve access to the computer (Microsoft Word for example), it's good to know operating system vendors are including powerful accessibility features, and are increasing and improving those features with each new operating system release (Windows Vista and Mac OS X 10.5 for example). Accessibility features include screen zoom, high contrast and other display settings, speech recognition, and much more. Take a look at these websites for complete information.

Windows – this page includes features information, tutorials, links to case studies, and more - <http://www.microsoft.com/enable>

Apple – complete list of features, templates, and links to resources - <http://www.apple.com/accessibility>

[John Polefko](#)

Next Tech Tip - 'How to override internet browser display settings.

Recent Library Additions

The following list of some of our new library additions includes new releases as well as replacements and copies of favorites.

- *Asperger's and Girls*
by Tony Attwood and Temple Grandin
- *Going to the Grocery Store*
by Cindy Bailey
- *Going to the Dentist*
by Cindy Bailey
- *Going to the Doctor*
by Cindy Bailey
- *The Social Skills Picture Book*
by Jed Baker
- *Building Social Relationships*
by Scott Bellini
- *Making Sense of Art*
by Sandra Dávalos
- *Just Take a Bite*
by Lori Ernsperger
- *Unwritten Rules of Social Relationships*
by Temple Grandin
- *Overcoming Autism*
by Lynn Kern Koegel & Claire LaZebnik
- *Special Diets for Special Kids*
by Lisa Lewis
- *Simple Strategies that Work*
by Brenda Myles et al
- *Special Children Challenged Parents*
by Robert Naseef
- *It Takes Two to Talk*
by Pepper & Weitzman
- *Toilet Training for Individuals with Autism and Related Disorders*
by Maria Wheeler
- *Life and Love: Positive Strategies for Autistic Adults*
by Zosia Zaks
- *It's All About Attitude: Loving and Living Well with Autism*
Kathy Almeida & Gayle Nobel

Website in the Spotlight

I'm excited to share with you a website that is packed with literally hundreds of links to literacy activities that are free to anyone to download and print. The website is created by Cherry Carl who retired after 35 years as a teacher and Language Arts Specialist. You can visit her home page at <http://teachers.santee.k12.ca.us/carl/> to read more about her and to see all the wonderful activities there are to choose from for readers on all different levels.

Another great website is <http://www.region2library.org/home.htm>. This website is designed by Elisa Wern, our local Assistive Technology expert from FDLRS Springs (Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resource System). Here you will find links for free shareware for on-line or printable activities, a link to WORDTALK - A FREE downloadable add on that will READ AND HIGHLIGHT the TEXT you create in Microsoft WORD - PC ONLY. There are also links to Boardmaker™ activities, Classroom Suite™ activities, PowerPoint activities, Social Stories, Inspiration™ and Kidspiration™, links to pre-K resources, and information about evaluation and consideration of assistive technology.

The last website I'll share with you is called Kid's Health at <http://www.cyh.com/SubDefault.aspx?p=255>. It is very "kid-friendly" so older kids can easily navigate it. It answers all kinds of questions that kids might ask about their health and bodies in a very positive way. Topics include: Your Family, Your Body, Your Food, Your Health, Your School, Your Feelings, Your Safety, Nearly Teens, Simply for You and Fun and Games. I think this is a great resource for parents who want to answer questions in their own way but are looking for ideas on how to answer that would be understandable and meaningful without being overwhelming. It may even help provide some scripts for social stories about going to the doctor or going to a new school. See what you think.

If you need help finding specific information on the web please call me at 352 392-4171 or 800 754-5891 ext. 9 or email me at krobinson@mbi.ufl.edu . I'll be happy to help! [Kathy Robinson](#)

CARD UF/Gainesville Staff

Robbin Byrd, B.S. **CARD Consultant**
Kurt Clopton **Computer Consultant**
Margie Garlin **Program Assistant**
Donna Gilles, Ed.D. **Associate Director**
Julie Gonzales **Student Assistant**
Brittany Gudaitis **Student Assistant**
Mark Lewis, Ph.D. **Executive Director**
Kirsty MacIver, M.S. **CARD Consultant**
Leannis Maxwell **Program Assistant**
Melinda Morrison, RN, BSN
Sibshop Coordinator
Tanya Murphy, M.D. **Clinical Director**

Ann-Marie Orlando, M.S. CCC-SP/A ATT
CARD Consultant
Carole Polefko **Public Education Coordinator**
John Polefko **Computer Consultant**
Kathy Robinson **Visual Supports Specialist**
Kevi Sirgo **Receptionist/Intake Coordinator**
Greg Valcante, Ph.D. **Director**
Art Wallen, M.S. **Associate Director**
Cathy Zenko, M.S., CCC-SLP
CARD Consultant

Parent Partners

Cheryl Brenner **Putnam County**
Heidi Jennison **Hernando County**
Pam Kissondyay **Alachua County**
Sylvia Miller **Marion County**
Amparo Perales **Marion County**
Trish Thoburn **Alachua County**

Cover Photograph Greg Valcante

Training News

Fall of 2006 was a very busy training period for CARD. We hosted 2 regional teacher workshops for the Florida Department of Education, Potty-training for parent groups in Gainesville and Ocala, and professional development workshops for Citrus, Gilchrist, Hamilton and Levy County Schools with great success. On October 27, 2006, Scott Bellini, Ph.D. from Indiana University kicked off our regional workshops here in Gainesville to a crowd of 100+ people. His workshop: Building Social Relationships: A Systematic Approach to Teaching Social Interaction Skills to Children and Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorders was

very informative, entertaining and inspiring. On December 4, 2006, Jeffrey Strully, executive director of the Jay Nolan Community Services in Los Angeles came to Gainesville and presented his workshop: Journey Toward a Desirable Future. Jeff shared his knowledge, experiences and passion for creating meaningful lives for adults with disabilities. In April, Cheryl Jorgenson, Ph.D. from the University of New Hampshire will present: "Supporting Membership, Participation, and Learning of Students with Autism and Related Developmental Disabilities." This workshop will be in Ocala at Central Florida Community College (CFCC) Webber

Center on April 23, 2007. Please check our website's homepage for a flier and registration form. Don Kincaid will be giving a presentation on Positive Behavior Support in Hernando County on April 13th. Check our website for details.

We now have our training request form online. You can find it under the Contact Us drop down menu on our website. If you have training needs, please download the form and fax it to us and we will fill your request to the best of our ability. We need at least 5 people registered to attend before we can allocate staff to conduct training. **Cathy Zenko**

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