



PostCARD

Director's Note

Dear Families and Friends of CARD, I hope you are well and that you have found some vacation time this summer. I know that summer can be a very difficult time for families with children who are out of school and the CARD staff at the University of Florida are working hard to keep up with the many calls from families and schools that are coming in each day. We have not had an opportunity to put together a newsletter for some time and are excited to finally get this out to you.

The biggest hurdle we are facing at CARD this year is the budget cut that we have been given by the Florida Legislature. Unfortunately, our operating budget has been reduced by 13% this year so that will have implications on what we are able to do for our constituents. I am happy to report that we have been able to retain all of our personnel. In order to keep all of our staff on board, we had to reduce our travel budget significantly. As a result, we will try to meet families and constituents in our office when possible, to combine trips so we can see more than one family or school on a given day and to meet families at the Psychiatry Clinic if they have appointments there. We will not be able to attend IEP meetings this year. Instead, we will offer a training workshop on how to fully participate as a team member in your child's IEP. We will also meet with families individually to help them prepare for IEP meetings whenever possible. We realize that this

will be a disappointment to some but with the number of individuals with autism and related disabilities who seek help from CARD increasing and our finances decreasing there is no way to continue to do everything as before.

Now for the good news! Thanks to the generous contributions of some kind individuals and businesses, the budget cuts will be offset to a degree. In February, many families came to Westside Park in Gainesville for the first annual Autism 5K Race/Walk to benefit CARD. This event was entirely organized by the STAR (Students Together for Autism Research) club at Eastside High School in Gainesville and over 300 participants attended. In the final analysis, STAR raised over \$6,000 for CARD. More recently, The 1st Annual Charity Car Show sponsored by Palm Gainesville Chevrolet in Gainesville was a huge success. Thanks to the efforts of Mr. Mark Wyant and his staff and volunteers, the car show, auction and lunch donated by Cowboys Barbecue raised \$10,000 for CARD. We have already used some of these funds to provide scholarships for families to attend the Autism Society of America Conference in Orlando. We have also received some contributions from individual families that are greatly appreciated. It means so much to us to be able to continue to work with all of you. There is no way we can adequately express our gratitude.

Please be sure to monitor our website calendar for events of interest. We also



CARD center for autism & related disabilities

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA / GAINESVILLE

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!

send out email bulletins about CARD workshops, and the events of other organizations in our area about once every two weeks. If you are not receiving our email notices and would like to do so, please contact Carole Polefko at cpolefko@ufl.edu.

Sincerely,
Greg Valcante
Director

Sibshops

Who/What: A program especially for children whose brother or sister has a disability

Where: Gainesville, Ocala, Brooksville, Palatka

Why: Sibshops are a series of games and fun activities that allow kids to meet others who experience some of the same family issues and to communicate about their experiences and feelings in a supportive environment

For more information and to register please call 352 273-0581 or 800 754-5891 ext 0



Pilot Kids

This summer was an eventful one, and I'm not just saying that because I got roped in to doing community service with kids living with autism again. I'm an older sister to two brothers living with it, so dealing with it every single day doesn't make dealing with it on my off days something I look forward to. I worked directly with kids one summer at my brothers' school as a sort of peer buddy, and the kids I worked with (not my brothers) really taught me to appreciate how much my own brothers have learned and how easy they really are to live with. It also taught me that I never wanted to do it again, but this summer was different. As a photography student I had the chance to go from camp to camp with the "Pilot Kids" and capture their first time experiences on film. Then I created a presentation of what real happiness looks like and that presentation is now being shared with our community.

The "Pilot Kids" summer program, a pilot program put together by Sylvia Miller, made quite a stir amongst parents and guardians of children living with autism and related disabilities in Ocala. For one week twenty-five carefully picked students were admitted into regular summer day camps at three different locations that were separated by age group. The children had the opportunity to be in a mixed environment where, in all honesty, no one could tell kids with disabilities from kids without. Many children made new friends and proudly told their parents all about their adventures.

The oldest children, ages eight through twelve, were at the Discovery Science and Outdoor Center where they learned all about animals, their droppings and the nature cycle. These campers spent a great deal of time working in groups, exploring and playing outside. Children ages five to eleven camped out at the Tusawilla Youth Center and spent their summer days swimming, playing games, and making friends with their peers. The five through nine year olds spent their time at the Herbert Coleman Center in Jervey Gantt Park and had a fun-filled trip to Easy Street where friendships were obvious and fun was nonstop.

Since the "Pilot Kids" had never experienced summer camp before Ms. Miller recruited a special education teacher who grew up with a brother with autism and now works with children with autism, six behavior paraprofessionals from Marion County Schools, students studying communication disorders and special education from UF and local high school students doing community service. It was their job to "chaperone" each of the children and help them learn how to fit in and make friends.

Ask any of the parents of "pilot kids" what they thought of the program and they will all say that the "Pilot Kids" summer program was a successful inclusion project. Sylvia Miller says that she is definitely going to do it again next year, only bigger and better. Many parents, who were too nervous to have their children become "Pilot Kids", now can't wait for next year to sign them up. The best news of all is that the regular camp staff enjoyed having the children included so much that they also want to do it again next year, saying that they now believe they can do it with more children and less people to help. As for me, I learned that the way my family lives (an inclusive and regular life where autism is just a label that doesn't limit any of the typical things we do) can be done anywhere and with anything. The "Pilot Kids" Summer Program was based on that principle and the "pilot kids" were accepted and treated just that way. And I am super proud of the program coordinator because she's my mom. **Naddie Miller**

Note: The "Pilot Kids" Summer Program was a collaboration of the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities and The City of Ocala Recreation and Parks Department, both participating agencies of the Autism and Other Disabilities Workgroup, and it was sponsored by Kids Central, Inc. and Marion County Children's Alliance.

Endeavor Adapted Athletics & Recreation

Over the summer, the Boys & Girls Club of Alachua County hosted Endeavor basketball weekly at the northwest location. Currently, Endeavor participants are participating in weekly bowling nights at the Reitz Union. Indoor adapted aquatics activities will be announced in the near future. Top Kickers adapted soccer, through the Gainesville Soccer Alliance will be beginning on Friday September 5th. Contact Shelly Voelker at 352 275-9505 for more information.

Calendar of Events <http://tinyurl.com/5nxwxa>

Endeavor Photos <http://picasaweb.google.com/ShellyValbums>

Boys & Girls Club of Alachua Co. www.myboysandgirlsclub.com

Gainesville Soccer Alliance www.gainesvillesoccer.org

The article below was written by Lauren Concepcion for the KETOGATOR CONNECTION, vol 11, issue 3, August 2008.

Athletic Endeavors

Like many kids around this time of year, Noah Voelker is a very busy young man. He participates in activities like soccer, basketball, baseball, and swimming. Also, Noah often goes to the Boys and Girls Club in Gainesville where he enjoys playing with other kids. Surprisingly, he still manages to find time to relax and paint.

With such an impressive list of pursuits, few people reading this would have imagined that Noah is affected by cerebral palsy, deaf-blindness, and epilepsy. In fact, he depends on the aid of his parents, Will and Shelly Voelker, and a wheelchair for transportation. This does not stop him, however, from staying active and involved. For many years now, Noah has enjoyed the same sports that children without epilepsy do. His parents would have it no other way.

Mr. and Mrs. Voelker both strongly feel that children's disabilities should not prevent them from participating in whatever activity they choose. With patience and persistence, almost any child regardless of their disability could be out on the baseball diamond next to Noah.

If your child is a fan of soccer, the Gainesville Soccer Alliance conducts a Top Kickers Adapted Soccer program. They also encourage children of all abilities to join their camps. These directors have great experience working with children of all skill levels. Though only available during the summer, another great program is Adapted Aquatics hosted by the City of Gainesville Recreation & Parks Department. This is a great way to get active and get out of the heat.

If you think your child would be interested in participating do not hesitate to give it a try. The most important part is giving them time to adjust and learn a new skill. Also, keep in mind that for all of these programs, siblings, friends, and parents are encouraged to attend. Soon enough maybe your child will be just as busy as Noah!

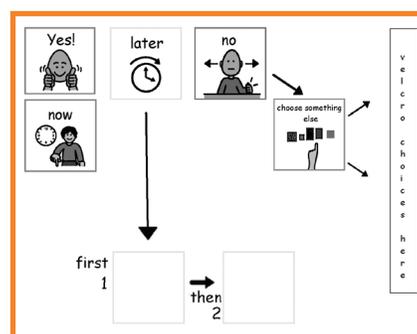
Lauren Concepcion

The ABA Corner Using Plan A, B, C Thinking

There are times when individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders and Related Disabilities request to access all sorts of items, activities, and events of interest. This discussion is focused on the types of requests that become rigid obsessions where only one kind of "thing" will satisfy the requester. A typical example involves a child requesting to purchase or rent a particular movie or video game, and being singularly focused on this outcome. Life is good if the movie or video is available and obtained, but difficulties can surface if something goes awry. This is just one small example of the larger general difficulty that many people experience when their repetitive and stereotyped patterns of behavior, interests, and activities surfaces.

The suggestion offered here involves teaching individuals to use Plan A-B-C thinking to build problem-solving flexibility. This requires having the learner go through the exercise of thinking about and constructing alternatives to pursue IF their main choice is not available. This would take the form of asking the individual to answer the question "If the video/game you want is not available, what other video/game would you want?" This becomes Plan B. You can continue this until you have at least 3 alternatives; some learners benefit from creating a set of visual alternatives that illustrate Plan A, Plan B, and Plan C.

Many individuals known to us at CARD have used this approach to teaching flexible thinking with success. Please provide feedback to share any experiences you have had with this sort of teaching, and good luck to anyone who can apply this to their learner's situation. Art Wallen



Staff Update



Michelle Hite came to us in November, 2007 from the Tampa Bay area. Michelle is a certified Speech Language Pathologist and a graduate of the University of South Florida. She received her Bachelor's degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders and her Master's degree in Speech Language Pathology. Her career experiences include working for All Children's Hospital, in an ESE preschool classroom in Pinellas County Schools, and in an elementary and middle school in Hillsborough County Schools. Michelle's areas of interest include communication development, literacy, social skills, and Asperger's Syndrome/High-Functioning Autism. Michelle brings experience in the area of social skills instruction, including running social skills groups for children ages 7 – 14 years, as well as assessment and treatment of literacy difficulties associated with Asperger's Syndrome/High-Functioning Autism.

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. 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)

Helping Hands Parent Support Group

Ocala, FL

Contact: Sylvia Miller 352 624-1360

A support group for parents of children with Autism Spectrum Disorders that welcomes parents of all special needs children. Meets last Wednesday of each month from 6PM-8PM.

Location:

Ocala Public Library - Conference room A
2720 East Silver Springs Boulevard, Ocala, FL
<http://phpf-fountain.org>

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 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

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. Meetings are the last Thursday of every month at 12:00 noon. Please feel free to bring your lunch!

Location:

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

Citrus Autism Society (CASS)

Inverness, FL

Contact: Marianne Bryant 352 726-9242 or mbryant34450@yahoo.com

This is a social group for families and especially children to get to know each other and make friends.

Location:

Key Training Center (located off HW 441)

130 Heights Avenue, Inverness, FL

Scheduled Meeting Dates (6:30 PM): 8/29, 9/29, 10/24, 11/21, 12/19

Caleb's Club: An Asperger's Friendship Social Skills Group

Dunnellon, FL

Contact: Jennifer 352 489-3906 or 352 572-3282 or Tim at 352 572-3282 or xlsguru@bellsouth.net

Social skills networking for your children with high functioning autism or Asperger's Syndrome age 10-16.

Location: Locations Vary



Kellam Bartley (middle), winner of the first annual Autism 5K Race/Walk to benefit CARD poses with event organizer, Lauren Rowe, from STAR (Students Together for Autism Research) club at Eastside High School in Gainesville, and CARD Director, Greg Valcante. There were 300 participants and over \$6,000 raised.

Tech Tip Screen Captures

A screen capture is a digital image of your computer screen at a moment in time. The capture can be the entire screen, a portion, or just the active window. This can be useful in many situations.

In XP, press the PrtScn key on the keyboard. Open Paint (or any image editor), click Edit–Paste. The screen capture appears in your image editor and you can then save it as a gif, jpg, etc. Hold Alt when pressing PrtScn to capture the active window only.

In Vista, click on Start and type “snipping” into the search box. You should see the Snipping Tool listed above. Open that and click and drag the mouse to select an area to copy, release the mouse the area you selected appears in the Snipping Tool for you to save.

In Mac OS X, for the entire desktop, press Command-Shift-3, the image will be on your desktop; to get just a portion of the desktop, press Command-Shift-4, select the desired area, when you release the mouse it saves to your desktop. Better yet – try the Grab utility for more options including a timed screen! [John Polefko](#)

Websites in the Spotlight

www.ideallives.com/index.php

Ideal Lives can help! IdealLives.com is designed specifically for you – a parent raising a child with special physical, emotional, or educational needs. This website wants to be your one-stop destination for practical information, success strategies, and moral support - all from the comfort and convenience of your home computer.

www.ideallives.com/articles.php?a=read&aid=260

This is a page from the Ideal Lives website about Autism Awareness month, articles and links to items like a free Autism Awareness poster.

www.freedigitalphotos.net/

Thousands of royalty free photos for websites, PowerPoint presentations, newsletters, forums, blogs, schools and homework are also available.

www.luvnhugsbooks.com/bracelets/who%20should%20use.html

Bracelets sold on this website are a constant visual aid that say I need help® on one side and on the other side they have universal icons for the bracelet wearer to be independent by pointing to and expressing their feelings, needs, school schedules. Because the bracelets are worn and accessible they become an efficient, easy and understandable way to communicate.

www.autismspeaks.org/community/family_services/100_day_kit.php

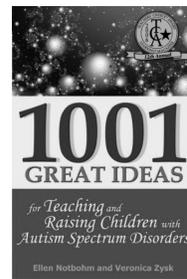
The Autism Speaks 100 Day Kit is created specifically for newly diagnosed families, to make the best possible use of the 100 days following the diagnosis of autism. The kit contains information and advice collected from trusted and respected experts on autism as well as from parents of children with autism. There is a week by week plan for the next 100 days, as well organizational suggestions and forms that parents/caregivers can use to help with the paperwork and phone calls, as they begin to find services for their child.

If you have questions about these websites or need further information please feel free to contact me, Kathy Robinson, at kkebrob@ufl.edu or 392-4171. [Kathy Robinson](#)

Book Review

1001 Great Ideas for Teaching & Raising Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders

by [Ellen Notbohm](#) and [Veronica Zysk](#)



Ellen Notbohm is a parent of a son with autism, a columnist for major publications on autism related subjects, and a communications consultant. Veronica Zysk has been an autism professional for many years, the head of a National Autism Organization, an administrative VP for Future Horizons, and managing editor of the Autism Asperger's Digest.

This book was very easy and fast paced to read. Not only does it give you an overview of autism spectrum disorders, it offers countless common sense and immediate strategies to deal with the challenges of a person with autism, as well as resourceful internet websites. It also provides an index, making it useful as a quick reference.

One simple and fun idea for increasing vocabulary is by playing a game in a semi-dark room and giving the child a flashlight to illuminate the objects that you call out. Other ideas in this book include everything from hair cuts to Special Education Law. The book also explains the purpose of the ideas and why they work.

As a parent of an 18 year-old daughter and CARD Parent Partner, this is the first book that I recommend to new families or teachers to read. However, I would also recommend it to families that have been working with someone on the autism spectrum disorder as a refresher course because as our children get older we may need a little reminder of what worked with them and also you'll pick up some new and helpful strategies and resources. [Cheryl Brenner](#)

CARD UF/Gainesville Staff

Robbin Byrd, B.S. **CARD Consultant**
 Margie Garlin **Program Assistant**
 Jordan Ginsburg **Student Assistant**
 Brittany Gudaitis **Student Assistant**
 Susan Hill, A.R.N.P. **CARD Consultant**
 Michelle Hite, M.S., CCC-SLP
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 Mark Lewis, Ph.D. **Executive Director**
 Margaret Maddox **Student Assistant**
 Leannis Maxwell **Program Assistant**
 Melinda Morrison, RN, BSN
Sibshop Coordinator

Ann-Marie Orlando, M.S. CCC-SP/A ATT
CARD Consultant
 Carole Polefko **Public Education Coordinator**
 John Polefko, M.Ed. **CARD Consultant**
 Kathy Robinson **Visual Supports Specialist**
 Liz Duda **Student Assistant**
 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**
 Pam Kissoondyal **Alachua County**
 Kristin Mercer **Alachua County**
 Sylvia Miller **Marion County**
 Amparo Perales **Marion County**

Cover Photo of Nicholas Mercer at the 1st Annual Charity Car Show sponsored by Palm Gainesville Chevrolet **Greg Valcante**

Training News

For the new school year we are introducing a new family information workshop on IEP's. This training will be available in several locations around our 14 counties and eventually on our website for families and caregivers to understand the nuts and bolts of their child's IEP and how to participate in the IEP meeting. We expect this training will give you the tools you need to have a successful IEP meeting and to work collaboratively as a part of the IEP team.

In the spring, we had another productive meeting with several of the Exceptional Student Education (ESE) directors from our region and will continue to expand profes-

sional development for educators in the 2008 - 2009 school year.

This fall, we will also introduce a new training series on Literacy that will bring awareness and support to educators and parents who want to learn more about literacy learning for their students. There will be two separate series; one for younger children focusing on early literacy skills and one for older children focusing on more advanced literacy skills, including reading comprehension.

In addition to our face-to-face meetings and workshops, we are diligently exploring alternative technologies for providing training to

all our constituents. We are not able to travel as much as in previous years because of our budget, but this does not diminish our desire to provide our families and providers with as much training and assistance as we have in the past. We just have to get more creative in our delivery options. Therefore, we will be offering training that you can watch on our website as well as interactive web sessions where you will be able to have your questions posed to the actual presenter. Please be patient with our new efforts to provide you with the best support we have to offer during this time of budgetary restraints.

Leannis Maxwell

Save the Date! 16th Annual CARD Conference*January 16 -18, 2009*Hilton Palm Beach Airport*West Palm Beach, FL

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