



# PostCARD



UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA / GAINESVILLE

## Director's Note

Dear Families and Friends of CARD, I hope you are well and that parents of school-age children are enjoying summer break. 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.

Once again, 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 another 9% 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 not had to lay off any of our personnel but have lost Michelle Hite (moved to South Florida) and 3 student assistants (graduated) that we do not have funds to replace.

Again, the good news is the support we have received from our community. Thanks to the generous contributions of some kind individuals and businesses, the budget cuts will be offset to a degree. In February, March, and April, CARD was the beneficiary of fund raising events put on by the STAR (Students Together for Autism Research club) at Eastside High School in Gainesville, by

Palm Gainesville Chevrolet and by the UF students and community Stomp the Swamp event. 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 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](mailto:cpolefko@ufl.edu).

Sincerely,  
**Greg Valcante**  
Director

### Tips for Supporting People with Autism Spectrum Disorders in the Community

USF CARD has created downloadable brochures we thought you might find useful.

Topics include:

- Airports, Airplanes, & Autism
- Autism & The Hospital ER
- Autism & The Faith Community
- Autism Fits: Your Piece of the Puzzle
- Tips for Emergency Responders

[www.card.ufl.edu/mk](http://www.card.ufl.edu/mk)

## 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](http://www.card.ufl.edu) for information about:

**workshops**

**research**

**current news about autism & related disabilities**

**support groups**

**professional development**

**fact sheets**

**past issues of the PostCARD**

**CARD conference information**

and more!

Want to stay informed about workshops in our area and receive other useful information? Subscribe to our bi-monthly eCARD by sending your name and email address to [card-info@ufl.edu](mailto:card-info@ufl.edu).

## 10 New Additions to Our Library

- 1 *Autism through a Sister's Eyes* by Emily Hecht and Eve B. Band
- 2 *Changed by a Child* by Barbara Gill
- 3 *The Myth of Laziness* by Mel Levine
- 4 *A Certain Kind of Love* by E. Deborah Wright
- 5 *The ADHD-Autism Connection* by Diane Kennedy, Rebecca Banks, and Temple Grandin
- 6 *My Baby Can Dance: Stories of Autism, Asperger's, and Success Through the RDI Program* by Steven E. Gutstein
- 7 *Friends at School* by Rochelle Bunnett
- 8 *Families, Professionals and Exceptionality: Positive Outcomes Through Partnership and Trust (5th Edition)* by Ann P. Turnbull, et al
- 9 *Arnie and His School Tools: Simple Sensory Solutions That Build Success* by Jennifer Veenendall
- 10 *Does Your Baby Have Autism?: Detecting the Earliest Signs of Autism* by Philip Teitelbaum, et al

Please visit our office or call us if you are interested in borrowing a book from the Ralph G. Maurer Memorial Library.

## Book Review

*The Speed of Dark* by Elizabeth Moon

*The Speed of Dark* is a novel. It's not a "how to" book or a biography or a non-fictional account of any kind. However, it is one of the most insightful books on autism that I have ever read. In *The Speed of Dark*, author Elizabeth Moon who is the mother of a young man with autism, has given us a story and a character, Lou Arrendale, that teaches the reader more about autism than most text books do.

*The Speed of Dark* takes place in the near future when a "cure" for young children with autism has been developed by medical science but Lou and his friends are the last generation of individuals with autism who have not received that cure. They were born too early. However, there is now an "experimental treatment" available that may "cure" adults with autism also. Lou and his friends are faced with the dilemma of whether or not they want to take the treatment and wonder about how they might change (and will they still be themselves) if they do. To complicate the situation, Lou's supervisor at work is trying to force him and his co-workers with autism to take the experimental treatment or face losing their jobs.

*The Speed of Dark* is a mystery, a science fiction story and a character study all rolled up into one hard-to-put-down novel. Told almost entirely through Lou's eyes, we learn not only about how he faces the difficult decision about the experimental treatment but also about his struggles and successes with everyday life events like going to the grocery store and laundromat, falling in love, and coping with vandalism and law enforcement. Lou's observations on life and the way people talk and interact are the most revealing. He says things that strike me as brilliant. "I do not know how other people learn things but the way I learn them works for me."

At one point Lou wonders "What would a normal person feel? I remember a science experiment from middle school when we planted seeds in pots at angles. The plants grew upward to the light, no matter which way their stems had to turn. I remember wondering if someone had planted me in a sideways pot, but my

teacher said it wasn't the same thing at all. It still feels the same. I am sideways to the world, feeling happy when other people think I should feel devastated."

*The Speed of Dark* gets my highest recommendation. It was the most enjoyable learning experience I have had in a long time. And what can be better than learning so many new things while reading a great story. It is available for loan from the CARD library (hopefully in your local public library) and for purchase on-line and in bookstores. **Greg Valcante**

## The Reading Corner

*Daniel Isn't Talking* by Marti Leimbach Fiction

This inspiring novel follows a mother coming to terms with her son's autism diagnosis and her amazing spirit and devotion as she fights to do what is best for her child. Leimbach based this novel on her own personal experiences with her son. The result is a highly moving, passionate, and informative novel.

*Rules* by Cynthia Lord Juvenile Fiction

A lovely story narrated by Cynthia, a 12-year-old girl coming to terms with her conflicting feelings (love, jealousy, embarrassment) regarding her brother David, who has Autism. A heartwarming, excellent read for both parents and siblings.

*Born on a Blue Day: Inside the Extraordinary Mind of An Autistic Savant* by Daniel Tammet Autobiography

Tammet's autobiography is a fascinating account that offers readers a glimpse into the mind of a high functioning autistic savant with Asperger Syndrome. Tammet writes, with honesty and insight, a story that is both intriguing and engaging.

*Louder Than Words: A Mother's Journey in Healing Autism* by Jenny McCarthy Non-Fiction

In an honest and open voice, McCarthy shares her journey through the diagnosis and treatment of her son, Evan.

**Kristin Mercer**

## Success Stories



On June 5, 2009 Fort Clarke Middle School had their 8th Grade Graduation ceremony at Westside Baptist Church. One of the students who was present was Eric Rifkin, who proudly received his certificate and the President's Silver Award for academic performance.

Eric has been included in General Education classes since kindergarten and has also had many people help him along the way to achieve academic success.

One of the most important people in this process has been Sharon Pederson. Sharon has been Eric's Paraprofessional since grade 2 and will be continuing with him into high school. She has dedicated herself to helping children be successful in inclusive environments.

Do you have a Success Story you would like to share? We would love to hear it! Please email it to [cpolefko@ufl.edu](mailto:cpolefko@ufl.edu).

## Parent Partner News

### Columbia County News...

I am very excited to tell you about the "goings-on" in Columbia County. I recently started a Autism Support Group in Lake City. We meet the 2nd Monday of every month at the public library from 6:30-8:00pm. We had 13 attend the first meeting, and look forward to even more in the future.

On June 6th the support group held a yard sale at Atlantic Coast Bank. We were able to hand out information on CARD and raise some money. Thank you to all involved for a great event. **All proceeds will benefit CARD.**

In the past month I was invited to speak at the local Women in Business luncheon and the Early Learning Coalition-Advocacy in Autism-presentation. Both events were well received and I have been asked to speak again.

In July I will be speaking to the local Rotary Club. With community awareness on the rise, we are sure to reach more children and families in need of our services. **Jaime Bracken**

### Who are Parent Partners?

Parent Partners are parents of children with ASD who are employed by CARD through the Maren Foundation Endowment to assist staff in responding to requests from families. They share their experiences and can relate to the needs of new CARD families looking for help. Their knowledge is especially helpful because they are paired up with families in their counties and are familiar with services in their area.

### Current Parent Partners:

Jaime Bracken  
Columbia County

Kristin Mercer, Ed.S.  
Alachua County

Cheryl Brenner  
Putnam County

Sylvia James Miller  
Marion County

Margie Garlin  
Hernando County

Amparo Perales  
Marion County

## Websites in the Spotlight

This month our focus is on free downloads and games for learning.

**A free text-to-speech for Microsoft Word: WordTalk**  
[www.wordtalk.org.uk/Home](http://www.wordtalk.org.uk/Home)

"For people with reading and writing difficulties, having text reinforced by hearing it read aloud can be very useful. Specialised programs have existed to do this for a long time, and in many cases are extremely helpful and highly appropriate and should be seriously considered, perhaps in consultation with professional advice where necessary.

WordTalk is a free text-to-speech plugin developed for use with all versions of Microsoft Word (from Word 97 upwards). It will speak the text of the document and will highlight it as it goes. It contains a talking dictionary to help decide which word spelling is most appropriate.

Sitting neatly in your toolbar it is highly configurable, allowing you to: \*Adjust the highlight colors \*Change the voice and the speed of the speech \*Convert text to speech and save as a .wav or .mp3 file so that it can be played back on an iPod or mp3 player."

**Teaching Children with Autism Categories, Free Card Games**  
[creativespectrum.blogspot.com/2008/06/teaching-children-with-autism\\_24.html](http://creativespectrum.blogspot.com/2008/06/teaching-children-with-autism_24.html)

This web-site/blog has a very nice set of picture cards that can be printed and used for playing several different games to teach categories. There are instructions for playing the games as well as links to other fun activities for teaching children with Autism.

[www.gamequarium.com](http://www.gamequarium.com)

The site that swims with learning fun! There is too much here to explain it all. Visit the site and see for yourself all the great links to learning games. This site was recommended to me by the reading resource teacher at my daughter's school.

If you have questions or would like information about other websites for learning games, please feel free to contact me at 352-372-4171. **Kathy Robinson**

## Remembering Noah



Noah Adam Voelker  
July 11, 1989 - February 2, 2009

<http://endeavorrecreation.wetpaint.com/page/Remembering+Noah>

## Support Groups

### Autism Spectrum Disorder Focus Group Palatka

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. Meeting Location: William D. Mosely Elementary School Media Center 1001 Husson Avenue (Park in rear of school)

### Helping Hands Parent Support Group Ocala

<http://phpf-fountain.org>

A support group for parents of children with Autism Spectrum Disorders that welcomes parents of all special needs children. Meeting Location: Ocala Public Library, 2720 East Silver Springs Boulevard

### Special Parents of Exceptional Children (SPEC) Gainesville

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. Meeting Location: CARD Offices, 1405 NW 13th Street Meetings will resume in the fall. Please call Pam for details.

### Support Group for Adults on the Spectrum Gainesville

Contact: Robin Byrd 352 846-3700 or [byrd@mbi.ufl.edu](mailto: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

### Citrus Autism Society (CASS) Inverness

Contact: Marianne Bryant 352 726-9242 or [mbryant34450@yahoo.com](mailto:mbryant34450@yahoo.com)

This is a social group for families and especially children to get to know each other and make friends. Meeting Location: Key Training Center (off HW 441), 130 Heights Avenue Please call Marianne for upcoming meeting dates.

### Noah's Endeavor: Adapted Athletics & Recreation Gainesville

<http://endeavorrecreation.wetpaint.com/>

Contact Will & Shelly to receive emails about fun events for children with various physical and mental disabilities in the Gainesville area. Current and past events have included swimming, bowling, soccer, baseball, basketball, and painting.

Location: Locations Vary

### Special Students of Hernando Hernando County

[www.specialstudentsofhernando.com](http://www.specialstudentsofhernando.com)

A community resource and support group for any parents, guardians, caregivers, providers, or educators that have or interact with children who have ANY disability. We are not a disability specific group.

### Kids Abilities Network of North Central Florida Online Group

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/KidsAbilitiesNCFL/>

This is a local group where families with special needs can communicate and share information. All parents, caregivers, associates, and other loved ones who have interests in activities for children and young adults with special needs (and their siblings) are invited to join and share.

### Autism Support Group Meetings Lake City

Contact: Jaime Bracken at 386-397-1882 or [jbracken@ufl.edu](mailto:jbracken@ufl.edu)

All interested persons welcome. Meetings are held the 2nd Monday of every month from 6:30 - 8:00PM.

Location: Columbia Co. Public Library, 490 NW Columbia Ave

### Autism Community Support Group Brooksville

Contact: 352 346-1677 or 352 584-1263

Meetings are held the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of every month from 6:30 - 8:00PM.

Location: Baycare Behavioral Health, 7074 Grove Road, Brooksville 34609

If you have a support group in your area or know of one that is not listed here please send an email with the meeting details and contact information to [cpolefko@ufl.edu](mailto:cpolefko@ufl.edu). Thanks!

## Sibshops

- Who:** For children 7 to 12 years old whose brother or sister has a disability
- What:** 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
- When:** Sessions will take place on Saturday or Sunday afternoons. Specific dates to be announced.
- Where:** Two different groups (one in Gainesville and one in Ocala) will meet in various fun locations.



For more information about Sibshops or to register please call Melinda Morrison at 352 846-3701.

## Tech Tip Best Web Browsers

Most folks on the web today are still using Internet Explorer by Microsoft (version 6 or 7), but there are other browsers that may work better for you. According to <http://www.consumersearch.com/web-browser-reviews>, “Firefox remains the most-recommended web browser for Windows, Mac OSX and Linux users,” and I agree with that recommendation. ConsumerSearch compiled browser reviews from many notable tech sources and listed the top browsers in specific areas. One recommendation: do NOT upgrade to Internet Explorer 8 if you have an older computer. Happy browsing! **John Polefko**

	Pros	Cons
<b>Internet Explorer 8</b> Best IE revision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellent tab features</li> <li>• Minimizes crash problems</li> <li>• Privacy option</li> <li>• Good security</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slow installation and operation</li> <li>• Uses a lot of CPU and memory</li> </ul>
<b>Firefox 3</b> Best browser overall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fast</li> <li>• Very customizable</li> <li>• Uses fewer system resources than most</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• So many options can be confusing</li> <li>• Crash on one tab crashes all</li> <li>• Many other features require add-ins</li> </ul>
<b>Google Chrome</b> Fast Browsing and Search	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fast and simple</li> <li>• Stable</li> <li>• Private browsing option</li> <li>• Enables offline use of Internet apps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No ad blocking</li> <li>• Minimal options</li> <li>• Skimpy bookmarking</li> <li>• Uses a lot of system resources</li> </ul>
<b>Opera 9.5</b> Best for older computers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doesn't bog down older computers</li> <li>• Excellent history of searching</li> <li>• Synchronizes across computers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No ad blocking</li> <li>• Not the fastest</li> <li>• No private browsing</li> </ul>

## Research Studies

**Pragmatic Language Study** The goal of this study is to evaluate the relationship between social language skills and emotional outcomes for children with ASD.

**Who's eligible:** Children with ASD between the ages of 7 and 17 who have adequate verbal abilities (expressive language greater than or equal to the 48-month level) and average intellectual abilities (IQ greater than or equal to 70).

**How long will it take:** One visit for 2 to 3 hours.

**What'll be done:** Comprehensive assessment of language ability, nonverbal IQ, and direct observation of the child using ADOS.

**Compensation:** None, but parents will receive summary report.

**Mail Survey** The goal of this study is to determine genetic factors associated with ASD related behaviors.

**Who's eligible:** Children between ages of 6 and 18 with diagnosis of ASD.

**What'll be done:** Rating scales will be sent to the parents via mail. Upon completion of questionnaire, saliva collection kit will be sent to the child to collect saliva sample for future genetic study.

**Compensation:** \$10 gift card plus a brief report summarizing the rating scale results.

**Contact information for either study:**

[kimresearch@psychiatry.ufl.edu](mailto:kimresearch@psychiatry.ufl.edu) or 352 392-7045

## CARD UF/Gainesville Staff

Robbin Byrd, B.S. **CARD Consultant**  
Liz Duda **Student Assistant**  
Susan Hill, A.R.N.P. **CARD Consultant**  
Mark Lewis, Ph.D. **Executive Director**  
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**  
Krestin Radonovich, Ph.D. **Assistant Professor**  
Kathy Robinson **Visual Supports Specialist**

Greg Valcante, Ph.D. **Director**  
Art Wallen, M.S. **Associate Director**  
Cathy Zenko, M.S., CCC-SLP  
**CARD Consultant**

## Parent Partners

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Amparo Perales **Marion County**

Cover Photo Greg Valcante

## FREE Special Education Law and Advocacy Training!

The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council is offering one-day Wrightslaw Special Education Law and Advocacy Trainings presented by Peter Wright, Esq. The workshop is designed to inform parents and guardians of their children's educational rights under the law and how to advocate on behalf of their children.

Subjects covered will include:

- Special education law, rights and responsibilities
- Tests and measurements to determine progress or regression
- SMART IEPs
- Introduction to tactics & strategies for effective advocacy

Participants will receive a copy of Wrightslaw: Special Education Law and From Emotions to Advocacy: The Special Education Survival Guide.

Dates:

August 5 - Weston, August 7 - Tampa  
August 10 - Gainesville, August 12 - Chipley

For more information please visit [www.fddc.org](http://www.fddc.org)  
or call 850 224-6222

There is NO CHARGE to workshop participants for attendance or materials. Parking charges apply at the Tampa location. Parents, families and guardians of Florida students will be given priority registration. Couples share one set of books.

Sponsored by United States Department of Health and Human Services Administration on Developmental Disabilities, and The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Inc.

Non-Profit Org.  
US POSTAGE  
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Gainesville, FL  
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center for autism &  
related disabilities



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