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Fall 2010

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West Virginia Autism Training Center

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THE WEST VIRGINIA AUTISM TRAINING CENTER

@ Marshall University

FINISH THE RACE

+ PLUS

The Benefits of Yoga for Individuals
with Special Needs

Creating Structured Work Systems

in this issue

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“The WV Autism Training Center provides support to individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders as they pursue a life of quality”



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THE WEST VIRGINIA

AUTISM

TRAINING CENTER





Many exciting things are happening at the West Virginia Autism Training Center (WV ATC) and we are pleased to present them in our new magazine format. We are so appreciative of the articles, stories and poems submitted by parents, siblings, educators, our Positive Behavior Supports trainers and by individuals on the autism spectrum. The stories from the family's perspective of their involvement in our Family Focus Positive Behavior Support (FFPBS) intervention highlights the positive outcomes that can be achieved. Those outcomes are highly individualized and are based on the personal choice of the individual on the autism spectrum and their families. Our FFPBS intervention process was recently highlighted in an article in the Autism Advocate, the magazine of The Autism Society. The theme of the issue was health and well-being. We were excited to be included in this particular issue to make the point that while we are always focusing on reducing challenging behaviors and strengthening adaptive behaviors of the individual with an autism spectrum disorder, we also focus on supporting the individual and their family in their pursuit of a life of quality. Quality of life goals are unique for every family and their child, but the one thing they have in common is the need for a plan of support to attain them. Assisting the family and their team put that support plan into action is one of the most critical and exciting aspects of our work.

We are currently involved in a five year strategic plan for the WV ATC. We looked carefully at our mission statement, developed our values and vision and are now putting a plan of action in place. Our entire staff and our advisory board are involved in the planning and one thing that is evident is the passion to expand our direct services. We will work tirelessly to do that within the constraints of our funding. It is clear that there are more individuals on the autism spectrum to serve with limited funding resources. Still, our focus in the upcoming five years will remain on providing meaningful direct services that are of high quality and that produce quality of life changes.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue of our new WV ATC magazine. Plans for the next edition are already underway. I encourage you to submit articles, stories or announcements. Please email them to our editor, Kay Scott at bscott@marshall.edu.

In closing, I want to thank the hardworking staff of the WV ATC. The educational, office support and program staff are dedicated and committed to fulfilling our mission. That mission is "To provide support to individuals with autism spectrum disorders as they pursue a life of quality". Information on the progress of our five year strategic plan will be available soon on our website.

Barbara Becker-Cottrill, Ed.D.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barbara Becker-Cottrill". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Executive Director
The WV Autism Training Center

The Benefits of Yoga

FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

By **Susan McKinley**, Director, Tangible Alternatives

Benefits for Children

Yoga is a wonderful outlet for wiggles and giggles. For kids with spectrum related needs this is the perfect place to find joy in moving. These are the kids who seem to be in constant motion. They enter a room with a flurry of bouncing, running, tapping, spinning, and flapping. Yoga gives kids with spectrum related needs a place to engage all of that energy. In yoga there is time to stretch, enjoy the power of movement, and to find new ways to stimulate their minds.

During yoga there are opportunities to use sound effects for many of the animal-named poses, chances to follow directions, and to imitate physical movements while engaging and encouraging imagination. Increased body awareness can lead to a reduction in self-stimulatory and self-injurious behaviors. Yoga also is a great way for adults and kids to enjoy each other and build rapport for time off the mat. A positive, failure free, environment also provides consistent structure and routines that are soothing for kids who need to know what is next and what is expected.

Often class ends with relaxation poses and attention is directed towards what is going on inside. Movements are slowed and little bodies are shown how to unwind and to



start to find calm spaces inside themselves. Beginning a relaxation practice early in a child's life can be a building block to better sleep routines and self-coping skills for school.

Benefits for Teens and Adults

Teens and adults bring a whole new set of challenges to the mat and individuals with autism spectrum-related needs are no exception. The teen and early adult years are well known as periods of great physical and emotional change. This time period is often marked by changes in behavior, social interaction, and physical activity. Stress and frustration can increase with the challenge of changing social roles and expectations.

Yoga gives a neutral space to learn about your body and to stretch your expectations. The core philosophy of yoga meets each student at their level in a supportive way. Yoga can provide positive opportunities to become more aware of what the body can do in a non-threatening and self-focused way. Yoga in a small group provides an opportunity to belong to a community without the pressures of social demands. Both independent practice and yoga in a group setting offer the comfort of poses and routines that are structured and consistent.

Benefits of yoga for teens and adults include better postural control, body awareness, self-awareness, an



understanding of stress relieving techniques, and improved self concept. Techniques taught in yoga can be used in home, school, and work settings to focus and calm the mind and body. This can reduce tension and the need for stress related behaviors. Teaching self-awareness can also lead to better communication and better understanding of physical and emotional comfort levels. Each person who spends time on the mat realizes that they have special needs with or without diagnosis. Yoga gives each individual time to enjoy who they are and time to focus on what they can do.

Susan McKinley is the director of Tangible Alternatives, a company that provides quality of life services for individuals with special needs, their families, and their caregivers. She teaches yoga for individuals with diverse special needs and loves it! You can reach her for more information about yoga and stress management at (304) 523-7670 or at www.tangiblealternatives.net

The WV Autism Training Center now has 3 new titles on Yoga for Children with special needs in its library. They are:

Integrated Yoga: Yoga with a Sensory Integrative Approach, Nicole Cuomo 2007, Jessica Kingsley Pub.

Yoga Therapy for Every Special Child: Meeting Needs in a Normal Setting, Nancy Williams, 2010, Jessica Kingsley Pub.

Yoga for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders: A step-by-step Guide for Parents and Caregivers, Dion E. Betts and Stacy W. Betts, 2006, Jessica Kingsley Pub.

Registered families of the Autism Training Center may check out these titles. For more information or to check out a book, please call the Autism Training Center and ask for the librarian at 304-696-2332.

Making a Difference: Hats Off to Matt!



▲ *Matt and Lisa Christopher, co-owner of Golf USA in Morgantown*

Matt Marino is finding several ways to stay busy following his high school graduation a few years ago. In addition to working and being involved with many church activities, Matt came up with the idea to raise money for a local agency. He spoke with Phil and Lisa Christopher, owners of Golf USA in Morgantown and asked if he could provide background music for the store's patrons during the holiday season as a means to raise money via tips. His earnings will be donated to Chestnut Mountain Ranch in the Morgantown area. Matt is an avid golfer and enjoys using the golf simulator at the store.

Matt went through the Family Focus Positive Behavior Support program in 1999.

Steven Houchins



▲ *Steven Houchins, age 11*

Creative, curious, lonely
 Relative of Alex, Sheridan, Mom
 Lover of Wii games, Kirby, Mom's spaghetti,
 Who dreams to be an inventor,
 Who wanders about the world,
 Who feels lonely,
 Who needs more friends,
 Who fears leaving mom and dad,
 Who (tries to) give love
 Who enjoys video games
 Who would like to make friends,
 Who wishes to be kinder to people
 Who plans to be a better person



I am

I am imaginative and young.

I think about Turtles.

I see Turtles.

I hear Turtles walking in the leaves.

I am imaginative and young.

I pretend I see Turtles.

I feel the Turtle's shell.

I worry about Turtles.

I cry about cruelty to Turtles.

I am imaginative and young.

I Understand Turtles.

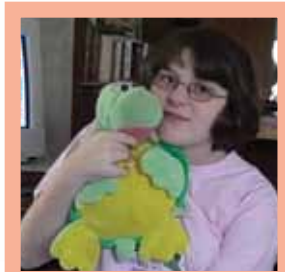
I saw the Turtles.

I dream about Turtles.

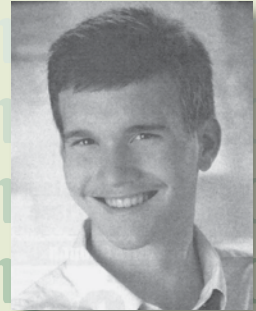
I help Turtles.

I am imaginative and young.

~by Annie Prince



Congratulations
Congratulations
Congratulations
Congratulations
Congratulations



Congratulations

TO
**DOMINIC
RODIGHEIRO!**

Dominic played the part
of Crazy Wolf in the
"Aracoma Story --
Spirits & Legends"
at
Chief Logan State Park.

You are our **STAR!**



Help Find the Genetic Factor in Autism Spectrum Disorder

The John P. Hussman Institute for Human Genomics at the University of Miami Florida is conducting research into the genetics of autism. The WV ATC is an outreach site for this important study. The purpose of the study is to identify genes and environmental factors that contribute to or cause ASD. We are conducting research studies to identify those genetic factors and hope to gain valuable insight into how autism develops in order to develop better diagnostic and treatment approaches and the possibility of prevention.

Please join us in our research efforts. Researchers and families working together can make a difference.

If you are interested in participating or learning more about the study in the WV, OH and KY area, please contact Scott Short toll free at:

1-866-308-3032 or sshort@med.miami.edu

“In 2009 I attended a 5-week summer session of the Asperger Program at Marshall University in West Virginia. While participating in the program, I took one semester of Physics 201 and 202. Spending the summer at a University with other Asperger students taught me that I can go to any college I want, and be successful. I am confident that I can be a valuable contributor to the community of my peers, in spite of my mild disability. In fact, I have also found that I am a natural leader; I usually take the lead in school projects, while taking input from other group members so that they all are included in working on the project. From my experience, I have learned that all types of people can contribute to the community and pursue excellence in a way that benefits not only themselves but everyone willing to accept them.” ~ Alexander

THE COLLEGE PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS WITH ASPERGER SYNDROME

By **Marc Ellison**, Interim Associate Director of Training & **Rebecca Hansen**, Interim Coordinator for CPSAS



▲ *Kerrie Harris and Victoria Wells*



▲ *Jay Murphy and Justin Depamphilis*

The College Program for Students with Asperger Syndrome is becoming more active than ever during the summertime! This summer we invited six high school students, two transfer students, and five incoming freshman to attend summer session three. Six of our current students also took a summer course to move forward in their path toward graduation. Students from Maryland, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Missouri, and Ohio took courses in history, communication studies, music appreciation, calculus, forensic studies and geography. Our students received not only excellent academic scores, but took home with them the ability to be more confident and prepared for life in a college setting. One of the high school students who participated in the summer program had this to say about his summer experience.

Summer is a perfect time to get a jump start on classes and the flexibility that summer sessions provides gives staff more opportunities for social development. In addition to the Junior Experience summer program, we strongly encourage incoming freshman to take a summer course to ease the transition into college life. If a student needs to focus solely on one more difficult subject, summer sessions are excellent opportunities for individualized attention from faculty and staff. The change in lifestyle from high school to college is dramatic and by attending a summer session, students are able to rid themselves of any stereotypes that they may have about coming to college. We look forward to upcoming summers with more and more students taking advantage of this wonderful opportunity to get ahead.



FINISH THE RACE

By Rich McKnight, Father

My son Ryan was diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome at age eleven, in the middle of his fifth grade year. He had already been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) while in kindergarten. As any parent that has a child about to start junior high knows, the anxiety is already very high, even without the challenges associated with of Asperger's syndrome and ADD. Dealing with a child on the spectrum can not only be terrifying but also very frustrating. Fortunately, God puts people in your life when you need them most. These people came in the way of the WV Autism Training Center, a team of exceptional teachers, a principal at Suncrest Middle school, and a track and cross country coach.

Ryan began his sixth grade year in regular classes with the exception of mathematics and reading. He also decided that he wanted to run cross country in the fall. He finished his first meet in absolute last place out of hundreds of runners with his fellow teammates cheering for him the last 100 yards of the race; but he finished the race. He ended the season finishing races in the top 60-75% of his opponents and in the spring he joined the track team where he ran on a track relay team that finished in third place in the county. He started his academic year about the same way that he started cross country, but he

finished the race. He went on to make the "Honor Roll" in 4 out of 6 grading periods and was recognized by his science teacher as, "one of my best science students." He worked so hard in mathematics (and continues to do so) that he has been placed into regular mathematics for the upcoming year.

Socially, Ryan started his year much like cross country and academics. But again, he finished the race. He went on to have a few friends, a "girl friend", a cell phone, and attended all sixth grade dances. I was giddy to watch him at spring track practice actually talking to kids, "hanging out" and hearing kids say, "Hi Ryan!"

You ask: "How did this happen?" You must never give up! Finish the race, even if you have to walk, even if you have to cry. Don't give up and don't give up on your child. They will show you what they can do for themselves. All they need is the right people around them. I thank the WV Autism Training Center, the entire sixth grade team at Suncrest Junior High, Coach Ellis and the junior high track and cross country teams.

But most of all I thank my son. He never gives up.

Community Integration and the Road to Success

By **Barbara Hunt**, PBS Trainer

Abbie is a delightful young lady who attends elementary school and lives with her parents and younger brother. Abbie and her family are participating in the Autism Training Center's Family Focus Positive Behavior Support (FFPBS) program.

This family has worked very hard and demonstrated that obstacles can be successfully overcome. Abbie experiences life as any other typical 9 year old: she attends school, church, and takes part in cheering and scouts. Most recently Abbie participated in the Powder Puff Derby with her local scout troop. This year, Abbie won several prizes including: Best Paint, 2nd Place Semi Finals in her Pack Race, and placed 16 out of 200 girls in the overall competition.

Abbie's successes are achieved through the efforts and support of her family and the community. Abbie's mother stated, "Scouts is a good organization for children

with special needs" and her father reported that scouting "...is family time, and helps Abbie's self esteem."

Last year Abbie won the Local and State Powder Puff Derby. Since Abbie won both contests she received two trophies. During the last award ceremony, Abbie gave one of her trophies to her friend, another scout who had not placed in competition. This amazing unselfish act of an 8 year old prompted Mrs. Farnsworth, the Event Coordinator, to send an e-mail message to the troop leaders sharing the story. Mrs. Farnsworth wrote: "Abbie's face literally glowed with happiness at doing this for someone." Many were inspired by Abbie's actions.

This year, as Abbie competed at the local Powder Puff Derby, her parents, her brother, and grandparents were there to encourage and witness Abbie's joy as she continues to learn and grow in her community.



▲ *Abigail (Abbie) Adams*



A BUDDING YOUNG GRANT WRITER

By **Barbara Hunt**, PBS Trainer

Jackson Wilson is 17 years old and a junior in high school. One of his goals was to create a Facebook page in order to improve his social contacts and to make some discoveries.

Jackson accomplished the goal to create his Facebook page and while searching on the internet, discovered a place to apply for grants. He independently made an application for a grant from the Honoring Our Ancestors Program; an area of study in which Jackson has great interest. He is a current member of the geneology and historical society. Jackson requested the grant to purchase book shelves, paper, toner, fund classes, and to purchase additional books for the society.

Jackson completed and submitted the application on line. Much to his delight, Jackson was notified he would be awarded a check for \$300.00. Jackson chose to surprise members of the genealogical society with the check presentation during one of their meetings and his story was highlighted in the newspaper.

Based on his experience, Jackson would like to offer the following suggestion for grant applications:

- Ask for a smaller amount, since you may be more likely to be approved
- Be very descriptive and add much detail about your program and how you plan to use the grant
- Be honest, don't state anything that would be questionable

Congratulations to Jackson! We are all very proud of you!

Jackson participated in WV Autism Training Center's Family Focus Positive Behavior Support Program in 2009-2010.

Olivia's Day

at the Airport

By Sarah Kunkel, PBS Trainer

I have known Olivia for almost a year now. She is a wonderfully sweet and kind 8th grader who has many aspirations in life. She would like to be an orthopedic surgeon, volunteer to help animals in need and own a lake house in Georgia once she graduates from college. Another interest of hers is to work in an airport. She loves to travel and enjoys exploring different airports every chance she gets. Knowing this, her team contacted the Morgantown Municipal Airport with hopes that she could stop by for a short tour of the facilities and perhaps watch a plane take off from one of the terminals. Little did we know when we made the request that the staff at the Morgantown Municipal Airport would have something else in mind. They planned a grand tour fit for Olivia's larger than life personality.

Upon arrival at the airport, we were ushered over to the pilot's lounge where Olivia and her sister were presented with gifts. Then without a second to spare, one of the pilots took Olivia out to the airfield to show her the airplanes and prepare her for their pending flight in his plane. After taking umpteen pictures of the planes, the rest of us were ushered into the tower to watch Olivia's maiden flight. While we received a short education about traffic control, Olivia was enjoying making laps around us in the plane. We would occasionally hear her over the radio sounding like a pro. Upon completing the flight, Olivia was able to join the Young Eagles, which is a youth based program created to encourage young people to explore their interest in aviation.

With Olivia's feet back on the ground, we took another slew of pictures on the airfield. Then we were off for a tour of the airport's fire truck, where Olivia gave the fireman a lesson in chemistry. Following the chemistry lesson, we had a wonderful lunch at the airport restaurant. The airport staff who accompanied us to lunch thoroughly enjoyed the company of Olivia and her younger sister, Lauren. By the end of lunch, they had discovered Olivia's love of singing and insisted on a concert, which Olivia was happy to provide in the impromptu concert hall located in the director's office. As the tour came to an end, Olivia and her sister received even more gifts and an invitation to come back at any time.



Olivia Gross ►

Creating Structured Work Systems

By Andrew Nelson, PBS Trainer

Take a moment and consider what supports you use to structure your day or environment. Perhaps you use a palm pilot, pocket calendar, date book, or cell phone calendar to keep track of your schedule. At work or home, do you make a list of tasks you would like to accomplish? Do you order this list based on deadlines or importance? Is the list on paper, Post-it notes, a calendar or your computer desktop? Next, consider what would happen if all of the supports you use to structure your day suddenly vanished. How would it feel to have no idea what was expected of you or what important events you were anticipating in the future?

Many of our friends on the autism spectrum live with this struggle every day and may not know what is happening next, when something is ending, or what small steps need to be taken to complete a larger task. Structured work systems are tools that help break learning into small predictable components and provide clear expectations and predictable routines to promote increased engagement and on-task behavior (Tien & Lee, 2007). Below are some basic tips for designing and implementing a structured work system. These basic tips are pulled directly from the easily accessible **Autism Internet Module** on Structured Work Systems. Please visit the **Autism Internet Modules** website for free detailed information on structured work systems and other effective techniques at www.autisminternetmodules.org.

Individual work systems promote independence by organizing tasks and activities. These systems clearly communicate four important pieces of information: **what** activities to complete, **how many activities** to complete, **how the individual will know when the work is finished**, and **what will happen after** the work is complete (Mesibov et al., 2005). Work systems highlight important information and help limit distractions. These systems can be used in any setting and to

support any individual with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Any parent, family member, or educator can create a structured work system.

Before beginning, *always consider the individual and the environment* and list the strengths of the learner. Consider the reading abilities, matching skills, transition skills, level of independence, organizational skills, etc, of the individual for whom we are designing a structured system. Also, we need to ask how our system will fit into the current environment. Will it be a portable system or stationary at a table? Can this system be used in multiple environments to help with generalization? Our goal is to access know our learner's strengths and needs and how we are going to build an effective system in their current environment(s).

Once we know the learner and environment, we have to actually *create a work system*. Work systems can be used to teach color matching, letter recognition, spelling, vocational skills, independent play, and limitless other skill sets. Once it is decided what we want the individual to accomplish through the work system, we can develop a material list and plan by actually completing the activity ourselves. Completing the structured system can help us decide where materials will be stored, what materials will be used, and what the individual will do with the materials when they are finished. Once we have broken the system into small steps we can gather items and begin setting up materials.

Finally, we have to *teach and monitor* the structured work system. This can start by choosing a teaching strategy such as prompting, chaining, or video modeling. Then we carefully decide how to **reinforce** the individual's performance during the structured work task. There may be a need to heavily reinforce small steps of the task at first and then fade once steps are mastered. Consider embedding highly preferred activities and choices within or at the end of

Common Steps in a Structured Work System

- Views list of activities to complete
- Obtains the first activity
- Places the work in the work area
- Completes the activity
- Places the activity in the area designated for finished work
- Moves on to the next task

the work system to serve as bonus motivation for work completion.

This article is only an overview of structured work systems strategies. If you are interested in learning more about this topic or other autism-related topics please take the time to visit the Autism Internet Modules site: www.autisminternetmodules.org. Samples of Structured Work System activities can be found in the "Tasks Galore" book series available through TEACCH at www.teacch.com/materials.html. Also, if you are participating in the WV ATC's FFPBS program as a parent, teacher, or team member ask your education specialist about further training in this topic.

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The Group that became “Friends”

By **Pat McCoy** and **Bonnie Marquis**, PBS Trainers

Social interactions. They lead us to the core of human connection, and are central to developing bonds essential to our health and happiness. Having adequate social skills is the single biggest predictor of job success (*Science Daily, 2009*). We know from the work of Tony Atwood and many others social skills can be successfully taught to people with Autism Spectrum Disorders and ATC is excited to have brought together several clients to form what we call the “Friends Group” in Kanawha County. Serendipity played a small part, as we had several teen age boys beginning the Family Focus Positive Behavior Support process with a diagnosis of Asperger’s and living in the same area. With the addition of several new PBS Trainers, there was a perfect opportunity to work on social skills in a relaxed, but structured, environment.

The group began in late October 2008 with six boys, ages 10 to 14. Five of the boys were

registered clients with Autism Training Center and the sixth was a sibling and welcomed as a typical peer. The group initially met six times on a weekly basis after school at a local library. The goals for this group, in general, were quite clear: increase the social skills and awareness of the participants. Pat McCoy developed a questionnaire completed by the parents and boys to gain information about their attitudes and perceptions related to friends and social issues. Specific goals for the group were developed as the PBS Trainers grew to know the boys and as dynamics of the group emerged.

Activities were selected that might be considered “fun”, with a purpose. The group played games that identified emotions, shared feelings, encouraged listening and observation, and required team work. Worksheets, role-playing, discussions, and brainstorming about various topics were also incorporated into the lesson plans. The

PBS Trainers involved observed notable changes with individual participants as well as the group as a whole. The group evolved from one where participation often needed to be coaxed and risks were rarely taken to one where the boys expressed genuine pleasure at the opportunity to meet and interact with their peers in a relaxed and safe environment. Leadership skills have emerged and friendships are developing within and away from the group.

As the group progressed, parents noticed a positive change in their teens. One parent suggested that his son “had a place to be” within the group. Another commented that her son was better able to handle a potential “meltdown” and express his feelings without anger. It is our hope that the boys, in addition to the formal group time, will continue to meet on their own and further develop the friendships they have made.



Miss Ability

Baylee Hudson was crowned "Miss Ability 2010" at Stepping Stones annual "Miss Ability Pageant" in Morgantown. Women and children of all ages who have a disability come together for an evening of fun and entertainment. Each contestant receives a crown and trophy by the many sponsors of the event, with one contestant receiving the "Miss Ability" title. Baylee is pictured here with her proud parents, Dave and Kim Cain. Baylee received PBS services in 2008.

GIVE NOW!

Donations to support the Autism Training Center can be made on-line at: www.marshall.edu/coe/atc

WV ATC FAST FACTS

- WV ATC serves the entire state of WV
- WV ATC serves individuals of all ages
- WV ATC provides training in autism for approximately 1000 people annually
- WV ATC services are at no cost to registered families
- WV ATC, through Marshall University, provides autism teacher endorsement course-work

NEW ATC EMPLOYEES

The WV Autism Training Center is happy to announce that we have four new employees since the publication of our last newsletter. We have hired an Administrative Secretary, Administrative Associate, PBS Trainer and a Transition Specialist for the College Program. Our PBS Trainers have been successful with the implementation of the Family Focus Positive Behavior Support (FFPBS) process and have reported wonderful success stories from across the state. We continue looking forward to improving the quality of life for West Virginians and families affected by Autism.



Ben Childers




Elizabeth Coffey



Kelly Preston



Kerrie Harris



First Statewide Association for Positive Behavior Support Network Conference

“Plant the Seeds of PBS Everywhere”

By **Gloria Sage**, Program Coordinator, ATC and **Bonnie Marquis**, PBS Trainer

The WV Association for Positive Behavior Support Network held its first statewide conference on April 14-15, 2010 in Bridgeport, WV, with over 150 participating.

The WV Association for Positive Behavior Support Network is a statewide group of individuals and organizations dedicated to promoting PBS for individuals, in schools and communities, and within agencies. The theme of this first conference was *Plant the Seeds of PBS Everywhere*, with the goal of educating individuals, families, administrators, educators and service providers about the philosophy and application of positive behavior support within these settings.

The conference hosted two nationally known speakers, Dr. Don Kincaid, who directs the Florida Positive Behavior Support project at the University of South Florida, and Susan Barrett, who coordinates the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports Initiative in Maryland. In addition, the conference offered three strands of breakout sessions featuring presenters from throughout WV that participants

could select from: Individual/Family PBS, Person-Centered Planning, or Agency Wide/Community PBS. There were also a variety of posters displayed from agencies and programs throughout the state.

On the evening of April 14th, the APBS Network hosted a silent auction that included items from WV crafters, WVU, Marshall University, professional sporting organizations, golf and vacation packages and other items for bidding. The money raised from this auction will be used to help fund our 2011 conference.

Perhaps unique to this conference, was the opportunity to experience hands on application of PBS principles rather than merely passively learning concepts. Throughout the conference, behavioral expectations were posted clearly where all participants could see them. Participation was encouraged and rewarded with raffle tickets. With every evaluation form participants returned, they increased their chances of winning an array of prizes. During the breakout sessions, participants were encouraged to set personal goals and use natural

supports and reinforcers to help maintain motivation and increase chances of success. Individuals and groups were guided in defining how they would know they had been successful. The power of articulating a goal was amplified with strategies for ensuring commitment and follow-through. The feedback from participants was highly positive and a frequent comment was “I’ve never been to a conference like this before.” The WV APBS Network hopes to make this a yearly event and plans are now being made for the 2011 conference.

The WV Association for PBS Network wishes to thank the WV Developmental Disabilities Council for its support which made this conference possible.

For more information about the WV Association for Positive Behavior Support Network, go to <http://www.as.wvu.edu/wvpbs/index.html>.

To review conference presentations, go to <http://sites.google.com/site/wvpbs1stannualconference/>.

INTERNATIONAL GROUP TAKES AUTHOR'S DEBUT NOVEL GLOBAL



Never has a mute character had so much to say. *There Are No Words*, the debut novel for autism advocate Mary Calhoun

Brown, will be featured as an "Outstanding Book for Young People with Disabilities 2011" by IBBY (The International Board on Books for Young People). One copy of the book will be on permanent display in Norway, while a second copy will travel the world. The traveling expedition will launch at the Bologna International Book Festival.

There Are No Words is the story of Jaxon MacKenzie, a twelve-year-old girl who is autistic and non-verbal. One night she falls into an old oil painting in her grandparents' parlor and is transported to 1918 where she can speak for the first time. This unlikely hero then attempts to save her grandfather's best friend from the worst train wreck in U.S. history, and ultimately she must decide whether to stay in the past where she can speak

or move on to her own future without words.

Brown said, "It's a story about the true value of friendship and how a little bit of kindness can impact so many lives. My goal with *There Are No Words* is to demystify hidden disabilities, like autism, for a time like this one-- a time in which a child on the autism spectrum is born every 20 seconds."

Autism will affect more children this year than cancer or Down's Syndrome or diabetes combined. Peer education, acceptance and friendship are needed for this generation to support understanding and stop the bullying that goes hand-in-hand with those who have developmental disabilities."

Reviewers recommend *There Are No Words* for "all ages," and the book was recently honored at the Nashville Book Festival.

Brown offers a free curriculum guide to educators who assign *There Are No Words* to their classrooms. She is available for classroom visits in person and via Skype. Inquiries can be made at www.marycalhounbrown.com.

Books are available from the author's web site, at **Amazon.com** and **Barneandnoble.com**.

On-line Autism Endorsement Coursework

Marshall University offers two on-line courses needed for the autism teaching endorsement. Courses available include:

Fall, 2010 CISP 527
Introduction to Autism

Spring, 2011
CISP 662, Instructional
Characteristics of Autism

Also, available during the fall and spring semesters, CISP 664, Practicum in Autism.

To learn more:
www.marshall.edu/coel/atc

To register:
www.marshall.edu/registrar

Register early,
classes fill quickly!



Saturday, April 30, 2011
Ritter Park, Huntington, WV

Hunter Carr Shows Market Lambs at the Tri-County Fair



Hunter Carr shows market lambs at the Tri-County Fair in Petersburg WV. He placed 4th with his lamb. Hunter is very active in 4-H and FFA. He participates in livestock and poultry judging, as well as showing animals that he has helped raise from his family's flock of sheep.

A Cookie & a Smile

By **Debbie Hypes**, Mother

When I sat down at the computer to write this story, my six-year old son followed me (he loves the computer) and asked "what you doing?" I said, "writing a story on Ms. Shirley, your special school cook." He smiled, bent over and kissed my arm. My son is autistic. But he certainly knows how to communicate. As they say in the ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) realm, my son is now verbal, but English is his second language. His first language is what I like to call "special sensitivity." You know, like kisses, hugs, little pinches, etc. And this particular kiss spoke volumes.

Shirley Keenan is the "new" school cook at Zela Elementary School where my son, Roger, attends Kindergarten. I'm sure it was no easy task to step into the kitchen where the last school cook retired with an excellent reputation. But it didn't take long to realize that this woman was a pro. Not just with the food, but with the children.

Permit me to digress just a moment so you can better capture the meaning of 'special' to my son. Since Roger developed ASD, at around 15 months old, and lost speech, eye contact, stopped responding to his name etc., he also quit eating solid foods, actually most any food. Anything with smell, texture, crunchy and other sensory overload characteristics was out of the picture. And when he ate, even at home, it was "on the fly." He was assessed at a feeding and swallowing clinic and, while they did an excellent job of assessing his behaviors in relation to eating disorders, the implementation of the behavioral approaches was "above our heads." So basically we had this lengthy, well-written, technical report with no one to show us how to practically apply it to help our son. That was until he started school at Zela Elementary and met Ms. Shirley. My son senses 'special' people and loves to please them. I'm not saying they weren't special at the feeding and swallowing clinic when they tried to get him to eat his Mom's favorite homemade cookies, but

something between Ms. Shirley and my son Roger clicked from the very beginning.

Roger had attended Zela since September 2009 and was eating next to nothing (which was the norm at the previous school he attended during the 2008 -2009 school year). When Ms. Shirley realized he had an eating problem, she went out of her way to encourage him. One day when he was at the cold lunch table, she came by and offered him a cookie and a smile. A token of love. And he accepted it. And to everyone who knew his eating issues we were ecstatic when he ate it. Since then Roger has switched from cold to hot lunch and recently added breakfast.

Now you need to know that all along some of Marshall University's ATC (Autism Training Center) staff, Zela Elementary staff, Board of Education staff and many other therapists, health care providers, friends and family, had all been working intently on this eating thing for two to three years. And the improvement had been slow at best. But the one who 'broke the ice' and opened the way for us to reach him in the eating arena was Ms. Shirley. He's now eating at the table at home.

I had to step away and cry when I saw him eat his first pancake on Sunday morning a week ago. His first one since he was 14 months old when he used to love to eat pancakes and many other foods.

Roger's twin sister Rebekah says there isn't anything Ms. Shirley can't cook. She says if you want to know how to cook, just ask Ms. Shirley. Even groundhog. Of course this is a six-year old opinion, but she's pretty picky about who works with her twin brother. Besides, one day he did ask for groundhog (especially after what the groundhog did to us this winter...).

It seems I constantly hear this reference made to ASD kids, that no two are alike ...well, no two fingerprints are alike, no

two snowflakes are alike, no two irises of the eyes are alike and now they say no two tongue prints are alike. Well I can tell you, no two cooks are alike. There is no one as special to my son as Ms. Shirley. A special boy meets a special cook who gives him a special cookie. Now that's a special story.

P.S. Dad Roger says if Ms. Shirley has any extra peanut butter candy she wants to get rid of, he's ready to dispose of it...

Note: This story was written by Debbie Hypes, Roger and Rebekah's mother. Roger is currently being served by Marshall University's Autism Training Center.

MOVING?



We want to keep in contact

If you move or
change your contact
information, please
don't forget to let
the WV ATC know.

Please call
1-800-344-5115
to make changes
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Developing Talents:

Book reviewed by **Erin Lash**,
PBS Trainer, WV ATC

CAREERS FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH ASPERGER SYNDROME AND HIGH FUNCTIONING AUTISM

By **Temple Grandin** and **Kate Duffy**. **Publisher:** Autism Asperger Publishing Company, 2008.

Developing Talents, covers all aspects of the search for suitable careers for individuals on the autism spectrum. The book explains how parents can identify talents and interests in young children with autism and how to cultivate these talents and interests into careers. The authors present practical strategies for parents on how to utilize school and community resources to develop their child's interests.

Grandin and Duffy outline strategies for successful job interviews and how to develop a competitive portfolio. This book illustrates how to prime for a successful job interview.

Other topics covered include:

Specific strategies on how an individual with ASD can address sensory issues in the work place. **Developing Talents** details practical, proactive strategies for dealing with auditory, visual and tactile issues that are specific to workplace environments.

Also included are strategies to promote organizational skills vital for success in the workplace. Practical, effective strategies for organization, ranging from monthly calendars to various types of electronic messaging systems are outlined.

The common theme throughout this book is the need for individuals with ASD to have appropriate social skills to succeed in the workplace. The authors recommend strategies on reading body language of co-workers, how to make small talk and how to navigate within one's comfort zone.

Developing Talents also lists numerous texts and websites specific to career resources. The book also offers detailed descriptions of various careers and insider advice on how to succeed in each career.

Developing Talents is a must read for parents or anyone working with an individual with ASD from preschool to adult.

This book is available in the Autism Training Center's lending library. Registered families may check out this book by calling 304-696-2332.



▲ *Zachary communicates with staff at Boone Memorial Hospital*

When my son, Zachary Covert, of Madison, WV was a student at Scott High School, he entered a customized training program called Building Bridges.

This modified curriculum, in conjunction with Boone Memorial Hospital, taught Zachary to do a specific part of a job.

Zachary's Customized Job

by **Richard Covert**, Father and WV ATC Advisory Board member



Memorial Hospital, in Madison. When he arrives at the hospital, his face lights up as he greets everyone.

Zachary works with the janitor at the hospital and his day starts off with a positive attitude. He uses his Picture Exchange Communication

Every morning Zachary gets up, gets dressed and he and his job coach, Mary Davis, head out to do his volunteer job at Boone

System (PECS) book to show his coach and the janitor what supplies he needs for his work that day. Then his job coach and the janitor help him get the necessary supplies and he completes his work for the day.

With the support from Mary Davis, the Boone Memorial Hospital janitor and his PECS book, Zachary has a purpose and he starts each day feeling happy and excited to be doing an important job.

Zachary has been a client of the WV Autism Training Center since 1992.



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www.marshall.edu/coe/atc

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