

January, 2009

Volume 2, Issue 1

Autism Monthly NJ

Welcome!

Welcome to the new version of Autism Monthly NJ. We are hoping that by updating our look and technology we can better send you current information about events, conferences, and issues that are important to you.

If you have information you would like included in our e-zine, or know of anyone that would like to be added to our listserv, please email me at dgoldberg@familyresourcenetwork.org or click the "Join Our Mailing List" button on the right side of the newsletter, under "Quick Links".

Please consult our website for more information at www.autismfamilyservicesnj.org.

From all of us at AFSNJ, we hope you had a great holiday season!!

Sincerely,

Dana Goldberg
Family Resource Network and
Autism Family Services of NJ



Autism Family
Services of
New Jersey

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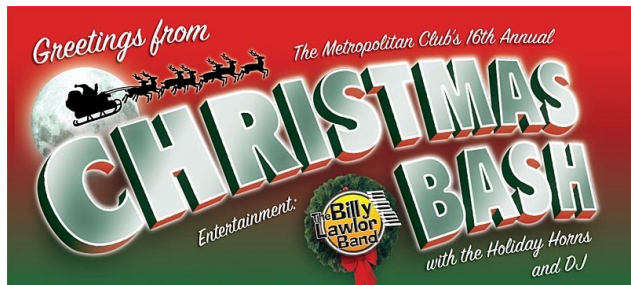
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Quick Links

- Autism Family Services of New Jersey
- The Family Resource Network
- The Family Support Center of NJ

[Join our Mailing List!](#)

Christmas Bash with the Billy Lawlor Band a Success!



For the 16th year in a row, over 500 people, dressed to impress, gathered at the Spring Lake Manor at the Jersey shore on a snowy night in December to celebrate the holiday season. Billy Lawlor, the front man for the Billy Lawlor Band, organizes this event each year to honor local charities and this year Autism Family Services of NJ was one of the chosen beneficiaries.

The night started with a lavish display of tray-passed hors' d'oeuvres, an open bar, and of course dancing to the excellent music of the Billy Lawlor Band.

Upcoming Workshop: When Autism is Not Alone: An Examination of Co-occurring Conditions

Co-sponsored by Autism Family Services of NJ and The Autism Center at UMDNJ

Monday, February 9, 2009

Presenter: Dr. Gahan Pandina

9:00 - 11:30 Clinical, 1:30 - 4:00 Public

Continental breakfast and afternoon snack ½ hour prior to session

[Click here to download the registration brochure.](#)

This activity has been approved for AMA PRA Category 1 Credit(s)[™]

Equivalent to 2.5 contact hours

Contact is commensurate with participation

For further information contact:

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Sleep Challenges and Tips

By Tina Vitelli, contributing writer

It is very common for parents to encounter sleep disorders in children with autism. Although there are some variances in the exact prevalence (considering age, frequency, duration, and patient populations) the estimated prevalence of pediatric insomnia ranges from 50-83% in children with neurodevelopmental disorders including autism.

Serotonin (a neurotransmitter that helps regulate sleep, appetite, speech, body temperature, and sensory integration) regulates the release of melatonin, the body's natural hormone that helps regulate sleep. Serotonin imbalance often accompanies autism.

Sleep challenges commonly include refusal to go to bed or leave bed in the morning, getting out of bed repeatedly, tantrums at bed-time, early waking, and/or hyperactivity at night. Following are some easy tips to implement to establish an improved sleep pattern for your child.

Behavior Modification

Children with autism tend to create and find comfort in routines. Establish a time to start getting ready for bed to initiate your routine and an end time for which the child should be in their bed. As an incentive to start the routine and provide positive reinforcement, consider incorporating a reward in the process. It may be a bedtime snack (be sure to avoid foods high in sugar) or reading a favorite book. A typical routine may include 60 minutes of activity including the following: bath; pajamas; brush hair and teeth; get in bed; read a story; and finish with lights out. Maintaining a consistent routine will help the child associate sleep and the routine and will hopefully help the child become more comfortable at the idea of falling asleep and staying asleep.

Non-Graduated Extinction

This method involves ignoring any sleep disruption after going through the bed-time routine and placing the child in bed. You will need to be strong and ignore the child by not talking to him, getting additional drinks or snacks, or adding additional activity time. Once put to bed, the child should repeatedly be returned to bed if they leave. If they get up, he/she should be put immediately back into bed. You should expect some tantrums and resistance at first; however, if they are consistently put back to bed they will begin to accept the routine and become comfortable with it and the resistance will subside.

Graduated Extinction

If you find it difficult to resist trying to comfort your child when they have an outburst at bed time, you might find comfort in a more gradual approach. After implementing a bedtime routine, if he/she gets up, tantrums, or cries, ignore the outburst for five minutes. If the outburst continues after five minutes, try to comfort your child for 5 minutes and then leave their room again.

The key to success with any method is that the child should never be allowed to get up, receive a reward, or have you stay with them due to their tantrum behavior. General tips for a restful night include:

- Establish a relaxing bedtime routine
- Limit periods of high activity to before dinner and establish post-dinner activities to be a relaxing time such as reading or coloring.
- Avoid feeding children large meals less than 2 hours to bedtime
- Avoid anything with caffeine less than six hours before bedtime
- Set the bedroom temperature so that it's comfortable for your child
- Make sure the bedroom is dark; if necessary leave only a dim night light on

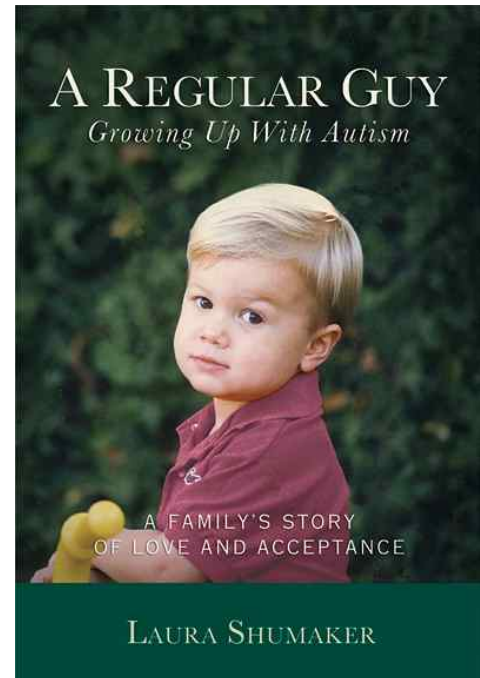
- Keep the noise level low

A Regular Guy: Growing Up With Autism - A Family's Story of Love and Acceptance

A Regular Guy: Growing Up With Autism is a memoir about life with an autistic son, Matthew, written from a mother's perspective. It answers the many questions that people have about autism through the story of Matthew's life, from the tender years of diagnosis to young adulthood. *A Regular Guy* illustrates the many ways in which family, friends and strangers are touched by Matthew's profound desire to be a regular guy, and how his brutal honesty and social awkwardness bring out the best and worst in people in touching and humorous ways. In turn, *A Regular Guy* leads readers to love and accept Matthew, quirks and all, and inspires them to understand and tolerate the differences in others.

"The book's lyrical writing and emphasis on love, support and resilience have earned praise from doctors," says Jackie Burrell from the Contra Costa Times. "Meanwhile, bookstores have been snapping up the self-published book, and several major publishing houses are interested."

To find out more about the author, Laura Shumaker, and about the book, please visit www.laurashumaker.com.



Task Force on Adults with Autism Needs Your Input

In September 2007, Governor Corzine signed legislation establishing the New Jersey Adults with Autism Task Force (NJAATF). The purpose of the NJAATF is to develop a comprehensive and actionable plan for meeting the various needs of adults with autism living in the State of New Jersey. The link below is a survey which will provide valuable insight in forming the recommendations included in this plan.

[Click here to view the survey.](#)

If you reside in New Jersey and are:

- 1) an individual with autism over 12 years of age, or
 - 2) a parent or guardian of an individual with autism over 12 years,
- please consider taking a few minutes to answer the survey.

This is an anonymous survey and because of the many databases the Task Force is using to distribute it you may receive it more than once, please respond to the survey only one time.

Quoting the Task Force, "We ask that you complete the survey by Saturday, February 28, 2009 in order for the results to be compiled for our final report. However, the survey will remain available online until May 30, 2009 as we will continue to collect information for future considerations."

Federal Inter-Agency Autism Coordinating Committee Earmarks Research Dollars

The Inter-Agency Autism Coordinating Committee, functioning under the National Institutes of Mental Health, has been responsible for assigning dollars for research from the Combating Autism Act of 2006. Last month, the IACC approved millions for the study of a wide variety of environmental factors suspected of having a link to autism, including parental age, infections, heavy metals, neurotoxins, occupational exposures, and other biological agents. Of the money allocated, \$16,000 will go toward the study of the effect of vaccines, vaccine components, and multiple vaccine administration.

The IACC in effect will fund the design of an eventual study of the health outcomes among vaccinated and unvaccinated children in the United States. There is a growing consensus now that most autism cases arise from an unknown combination of environmental agents probably interacting with certain genetic predispositions.

[Please click here for more information.](#)

New Online Autism Resource

Looking for a place to buy all of those useful yet unusual and rare items to help your son or daughter with autism? Web searches can be daunting, and most stores at the local mall are not equipped to handle your needs. With that in mind, two grandparents in Denver, CO, have created an on-line supermarket to meet your needs. The Autism Community Store is an web-based resource featuring items from biomedical and nutritional supplies to toys and reinforcers, teaching supplies to personal hygiene items, all gathered with children and adults with autism in mind. For more information, visit the site at www.AutismCommunityStore.com.

Become a Fan of Autism Family Services on Facebook Today!

One of Autism Family Services of NJ's main goals is awareness about our programs and about autism in general. What better way to share information than on the largest social networking site?

We have recently created a Fan Page on [Facebook](#) which will give you the opportunity to send us messages, talk to other parents and families who have children on the spectrum, and find out about upcoming events. Click [here](#) to view our page and become a "fan" of Autism Family Services of NJ. You can also create a free Facebook profile if you do not already have one.

HOLD THE DATE!

AFSNJ's beachside fundraiser, the Seaside Soiree, will be held on Friday, September 11th at the Ocean Place Resort in Long Branch. Each year this party gets bigger and better, so mark your calendar! More details will be forthcoming.



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