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Our new look website is up and running. We would love to get your feedback. Please visit

www.autismspeaks.org.uk

Please send your comments to:

Philippa.stannard@autismspeaks.org.uk

APPGA Report

The All Party Parliamentary Group on Autism have published their latest report 'Policy into Practice' and the key findings won't surprise many families affected by autism. Their core concern is the gap between policy ideas and their implementation on the ground. The group aims to account for the difference between the policies debated in Parliament and what we hear about the impact of those policies from parents, professionals and people with autism.

Report on funding for autism research



New Philanthropy Capital last month published a report entitled 'A Life Less Ordinary' which stressed a real need for increased funding towards research into the causes of autism – especially as it is now believed that the annual cost of autism to the country is a staggering £28b. You can read the report on-line at www.philanthropycapital.org/html/Research/autism.php

Wirral Coastal Walk

The Wirral Autistic Society have very kindly done the printing of our flyers/leaflets for all three of our Walks – and have just agreed to do the same for both of our walks next year! We are absolutely delighted and want to thank them very much indeed for their generosity and on-going support. They celebrate their 40th Anniversary in 2008 and are planning numerous fundraising activities to raise funds for a respite unit. Some of the parents and service users are planning a Wirral coastal walk, if you live in this area and would like more information please visit their website.

Genetically Altered Mice Provide Model for Autism

A team of researchers at the University of Texas' Southwestern Medical Center has genetically engineered mice with a genetic mutation that has been found in some people with autism. These mice may offer researchers a new means for studying how specific defects in brain development might lead to autism. Visit www.autismspeaks.org/science/science_news/mice_autism_model.php to find out more.

Autism Speaks Inc Launches YouTube Channel



Autism Speaks in the States has joined with YouTube to create AutismSpeaksVids, a dedicated channel to help promote autism awareness online. AutismSpeaksVids will host exclusive expert interviews, autism media coverage, ground-level fundraiser footage, advocacy efforts and more. The channel will draw from the submissions of the online community to bring a broad and varied look at autism and the individuals and families it affects. Visit Autism Speaks' video channel, AutismSpeaksVids, at www.youtube.com/autismspeaksvids.

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Autism Research Conference – Cardiff

A date for your diary – 9th November is the first Joint Autism Conference between Autism Speaks and Autism Cymru at the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff. The day will feature an array of respected and outstanding speakers from the research world including **Professor Simon Baron-Cohen, Professor Anthony Bailey, Professor Anthony Monaco, Professor Martin Raff, Dr Dawn Wimpory, Professor Mark Johnson, Professor Declan Murphy, Lois Grayson, Professor Martin Knapp and Dame Stephanie Shirley**. They will be discussing the latest in research developments ranging from genetics to biological differences to the economics of autism! Delegates will have a chance to put questions to the panel.

For information on the conference, jointly hosted by Autism Cymru and Autism Speaks, or to book, contact jennie@autismcymru.org or call her on 029 2046 323. Alternatively, visit our website for more details: www.autismspeaks.org.uk or call us on 01491 412 311

Raising awareness through laughter

‘The Funny Side of Autism’ is a book being collated by Lisa Marston, single mum to two autistic boys of 10 and 7. The book is a compilation of short stories & pictures about the funny things autistic kids do and say.

Lisa says: “As hard as it can be at times, there are moments that crack us up. I want to share the innocence and humour of these moments and raise awareness through laughter. I am looking for parents, relatives and caregivers of Autistic children to submit to me funny stories and pictures.”

For more information, go to www.thefunnysideofautism.com or by email at Lisa@TheFunnySideofAutism.com

FUNDRAISING & EVENTS

Autism Speaks Local Group Network

We are very excited about our plans for 2008 – we are setting up an Autism Speaks Local Group Network, so that we can create a national awareness about our important work and raise more vital funds towards the research we support.

The groups will bring together our many supporters, Grandparents’ Network, people who might like to lobby on behalf of Autism Speaks, as well as others who are committed to finding the causes of autism.

We are committed to supporting our local groups with materials and guidance, whether it be securing local media coverage, advice about putting on events, lobbying MP’s or getting a local business or organisation (such as Rotary Club) to take us on as their Charity of the Year.

Already, we have had contact from supporters from Sandhurst, Marlow, Chippenham and Newcastle. If you live around these areas and feel you would like to get involved, or would like to help us set up a group in your area, we would love to hear from you.

There is so much that we can do – with your help. If you would like to get involved, please contact [Philippa Stannard](mailto:Philippa.Stannard@autismspeaks.org.uk) or phone Philippa on **0118 9016 876**.

The Alnwick Garden, Northumberland



Following the success of our walk in Alnwick, Northumberland, we are planning another in The Alnwick Gardens on Sunday May 4th. We do hope that all those wonderful walkers who came along in the rain on 13th May – will join us again in 2008.

As well as walkers and supporters, we are looking for volunteers – not just on the day, but leading up to the event! Please contact Lynn Hart at lynn.hart@autismspeaks.org.uk or on 01491 411569 if you would like to help.

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The Hydro Active Challenge



Three ladies ran the Hydro Active Challenge at Hyde Park on 16th September, to raise money for Autism Speaks. Leigh Cousins (left), whose seven-year old son has autism, joined Jane Westley (centre), Autism Speaks' Trusts & Foundations Manager and Philippa Stannard – Head of Donor Development. Between them, they raised over £600 towards research into the causes of autism.

We will be participating in the event again next year and hope to increase our running team considerably. If you would like to join us for the run – and then enjoy a picnic in the park afterwards, please get in touch with our Head of Events, Lynn Hart on 01491 411569 or lynn.hart@autismspeaks.org.uk

A Southern Walk



Following the success of our Windsor walks, we would now like to do a second walk in the South of England – either in Surrey, Bucks, or Berks, September or October time - but have yet to secure a venue. Do YOU know of a suitable venue? A large public site – with parking, loos, a refreshments area and disabled access, to accommodate up to 700. Please let Lynn Hart know at lynn.hart@autismspeaks.org.uk or 01491 411 569.

Thank you!



Once again, we have been overwhelmed by the fundraising of our supporters. Thanks go to Ian Stillie, who raised nearly £2,000 through corporate fundraising, raised by Ferrari Packaging.

PR & MEDIA

A message from Liz Roberts of our PR Team



In the frame

A huge thank you to those of you who have shared their stories with us about living with autism in the family. We have used these personal perspectives in a number of ways, from fundraising appeals to a story on our web or responding to enquiries from the media. You know better than most what autism means on a day-to-day basis.

We would really like to hear from you if you might be interested in being featured. It helps us enormously in spreading the word about autism and our work. Please be assured, expressing an interest doesn't commit you to anything.

Please read a piece by Vera Gibson, grandmother to her two lovely boys, Michael and Christopher, on page 4.

If you would like to explore the possibilities, please contact liz.roberts@autismspeaks.org.uk or call her on 01235 83 42 95.

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If you have any comments or would like to submit an article for our newsletter, please contact:

Autism Speaks
North Lea House
66 Northfield End
Henley-on-Thames
Oxfordshire RG9 2BE

Tel: +44 (0)1491 412311
Fax: +44 (0)1491 571921
Email: philippa.stannard@autismspeaks.org.uk

Vera and her autistic grandsons, Michael & Christopher

Our daughter's first child Michael was born on 11th December 2000. We were all absolutely thrilled that he had arrived safe and well and I had never seen Yvonne and John so happy.



They live in California so my husband and I immediately booked a flight and went to help out. I stayed for seven weeks and I was so grateful that I was able to do this as this is when the wonderful bond between Michael and myself started. Our son-in-law John celebrated his 40th birthday about three weeks after Michael was born and I remember him sitting with Michael on his lap and Yvonne beside him and a friend gave him a

present and he said thank you very much but I have all I have ever wanted. I was so happy that my daughter had such a caring and loving husband.

Michael appeared to be progressing well and on 21st August 2002 his brother Christopher was born. Once again we went to California to see our wonderful family. Christopher was a beautiful happy baby. We did notice a change in Michael's behaviour but we put it down to having a new baby in the house. About nine months later Yvonne, John and the children visited us. We looked after the children whilst John and Yvonne had two days in the Lake District. It was then that I noticed that Michael appeared to be in a little world of his own. On Yvonne's return I mentioned this to her and she replied that she was very worried about him and that he could have autism. I was devastated to hear this and although I knew very little about autism I knew it was serious. John had to travel back to the US before the family so I accompanied Yvonne and the children. It became more apparent that there was something wrong with Michael, he just would not sit in his seat and Yvonne and I took turns to walk around the plane with him. We both felt we had walked to San Francisco.

Yvonne and John went through a very long and anxious process of having Michael checked and some weeks later our dreadful fears were confirmed. To this day I still hear Yvonne's voice over the telephone saying "Mum Michael has autism". Once again I travelled to the US to try to comfort them. Yvonne and John soon set about seeking help for Michael. He received numerous intensive therapies, the house turned into a clinic and it was a constant buzz of people coming in and out. Any normalcy of a regular life was put aside. I was amazed at how well he was progressing, every visit we saw a different child coming out of his world. Now we are greeted with the royal welcome of kisses, hugs and excitement at the airport, just like any other grandparent..

But then another dreadful shock, Yvonne could see that Christopher was showing signs of autism. At first we thought she was just being paranoid because of Michael, but of course a mother knows and Christopher was diagnosed with high-functioning autism. I am happy to say that both boys are progressing well and are very happy children, but there are thousands of children in the World who are not as fortunate as Michael and Christopher because they do not have access to therapy.

For some time I have been worried that in view of the fact that as my grandchildren live so far away that I am unable to help as much as I would like so I was delighted when I heard from Autism Speaks asking if I would like to include a legacy in my Will for autism research. I now feel that a huge weight has been lifted and I know that by making a gift my grandchildren and others will benefit and experience the wonderful world that surrounds them.

Vera Gibson is organising a fundraising Social Evening with music and dancing with professional dancers Joan and Bob Hartley, on 19th January 2008 at the Woodchurch Community Hall, Church Lane, Woodchurch, Wirral from 7.30pm until 11pm. Tickets £8 with a buffet supper and please bring your own drinks.

For more information please contact Lynn at lynn.hart@autismspeaks.org.uk or telephone: 01491 411569.