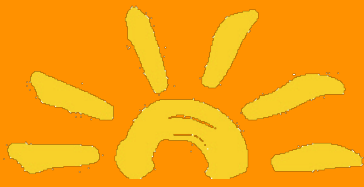


April 2010



NEWS of HOPE




Project **HOPE** Foundation
A small foundation doing big things for children with autism

A Special Addition for Autism Awareness Month



April is **Autism Awareness Month**. The staggering new rates make it hard for anyone to remain unaware of autism, which now affects 1 in 110 children, 1 in 70 boys. These children are often lost and alone in a world of isolation, struggling with the ability to communicate, to interact, to process sensory input, and to behave appropriately. Autism impacts the entire family, resulting in a divorce rate estimated at 85-93%.

Inside

Morning in the Life of a Mom

Take a peek inside a “typical” morning of a mom of a child with autism that is anything but “typical” for most of us.

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Meeting Someone with Autism

Discover how simple interactions help families dealing with autism.

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We are proud to announce that Lindt Chocolate has selected Lisa Lane as a recipient of this year’s **Lindt Unsung Heroes of Autism** award. Lindt Chocolate accepted nominations from across the country in an effort to recognize individuals who have demonstrated a commitment to serving those dealing with autism. Lisa will be honored at an awards ceremony being held on April 1st in New York City, where she will accept a donation of \$5000 on behalf of Project HOPE Foundation. Congratulations to Lisa for bringing national attention to the efforts Project HOPE puts forth on behalf of all children and families living with autism.

Thank You HOPE Invitational Golf Tournament Sponsors!
April 18th Pre-Tournament Dinner & Auction • April 19th Golf Tournament
See our sponsors at projecthopesc.org. It’s not too late to add your name!



Morning in the Life of a Mom

Every morning is chaos for parents as they prepare kids for the day. *Isn't it?*

Peek at a weekday morning in nearly any household and you'll see some level of chaos as individuals get ready to face the day at school and work. For a parent of a child with autism, the challenges are unique. Let's view a "typical" morning from the view of a mom with an 8-year-old with autism who recently joined Hope Academy.

7:15 I've got to wake John up. He was up again for his regular 3-hour stretch from 1:00 – 4:00 A.M. I know I should have gotten him up earlier, but we've both been up all night again and I'm exhausted.

7:30 Bathroom time is taking forever. I should probably put him in a pull-up to be sure he doesn't have an accident. But will the kids make fun of him? I want him to be independent, but we have got to get going!

7:45 Thank goodness nobody can see that I am feeding him potato chips for breakfast. It's all he will eat, and I can't send him to school hungry.

8:00 Major meltdown! John will only wear red shirts with the tags cut out. I wish he could tell me why he insists on red. Really, I just wish he could tell me anything!

8:10 O.K., we're on our way, and he is well into meltdown #4. Let me think. What have I done wrong? Did I put the wrong shoes on him? Was the wrong C.D. playing? Did I take a different route? Did I do something out of order? Who knows? All I know is that I've only got 5 minutes to settle him down.



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What are the signs of autism?

Some children show symptoms of autism almost from birth. For others, the child has a period of appropriate development and then loses skills. This regression may be swift, almost overnight, or it may occur over a period of weeks or months. Always investigate concerns if a:

- 6-month-old child does not show expressions of joy
- 9-month-old does not participate in reciprocal (“back-and-forth”) play, sounds, or facial expressions
- 12-month-old does not babble and use gestures to communicate (pointing for requests and for showing, reaching, waving)
- 16-month-old has no meaningful words
- 24-month-old does not use meaningful phrases (not just imitating from a video or repeating something that was just said)
- Child of any age loses verbal or social skills

Autism rates are 1 in 110 children.

You meet *someone* with autism every day.



What can you do to be more aware?

As with all children, every child with autism is different. However, as parents of children with autism and as practitioners in the field, we wanted to offer a few general words of advice to those of you who ask, “What can I do?”

If you have a child with autism in your extended family or in your circle of friends ...

- Ask about the child. Often people are not sure what to say to parents who are dealing with this crisis and so they say nothing. Try a simple: “How are things going with Johnny?” Be attuned to the parents’ mood. Sometimes they may want to celebrate a small victory; sometimes they may need to acknowledge the difficulties they are facing.
- Any time you can spend with the child is a gift to the family. These children are usually not invited anywhere. Their interactions are often limited to only a few people. If you feel comfortable taking the child for a brief outing, those moments can be priceless – for the family, who will benefit from the respite; for the child, who will benefit from the interaction; and for you, who will benefit from seeing the world through another’s eyes.
- If you are not ready to go on an outing, offer to sit and “play” with the child. That might mean watching a



video together, sitting side-by-side at the computer, or repeatedly pushing a ball back and forth. Sometimes unexpected connections happen during those seemingly simple interactions.

- In interacting with the child, get down to eye level with him. Our children with autism usually make limited eye contact so it is important to be ready for those glimpses.
- In communicating with the child, remain patient. Often these children have limited conversational ability. Instead of trying to guess what the child wants to say, simply wait ... with a look of interested expectation on your face. Give him the time he needs to get out whatever words he has.
- Remember that some parents are sensitive about terminology. Many prefer the term “child with autism” rather than “autistic child” because that wording puts the child first.
- Bear in mind that these parents may have difficulty with the common small talk among parents about their children. It is hard for families freshly dealing with this diagnosis to join into normal child-related conversations.

If you see a child with autism in a public place ...

- If the child is having difficulty, a smile of encouragement to the parents may be the lifeline they need.
- Remember that a child who appears to be tantruming may be a child with autism overwhelmed by sensory input.
- If appropriate, a word to the parent acknowledging some accomplishment (“He has a beautiful smile.” or “She looked right at me!”) can be momentous.



A Resource

Are you concerned about the development of a child in your life?

Are you struggling to start a conversation about the possibility of autism?

Do you love someone with autism but feel ill-equipped to understand his symptoms and therapies?

Do you want some insights into the mind of someone with Asperger’s Syndrome?

Do you want to increase the awareness of a friend, family member, childcare provider, pediatrician, or Sunday School teacher so that person can better relate to your child’s challenges?

Consider a \$25 investment in the DVD, **Understanding Autism: A Resource for Families, Pediatricians, and Caregivers**, which provides 75 minutes of educational information and videotaped footage.

Viewers have commented:

“...an outstanding resource for both lay and medical people ... shows the personal and emotional side of autism.”

“...a “must see” for anyone whose life has been touched by a child with autism.”

Understanding Autism can be purchased for \$25 through www.amazon.com.

Our Partners in *HOPE*

The generosity and expertise of others helps us achieve much. Here is a glimpse of the partnerships for which we are so thankful:

- Hope Academy became a top-tier mission for **Advent United Methodist Church**, who has housed this program since 1997.
- **Extended Stay America** selected the Hope Reach clinic in Woodruff as the recipient of its “Week of Caring,” resulting in a major refurbishment of the facility.
- With the help of **Webspeak Media**, we launched a new, comprehensive website that includes interactive capabilities (www.projecthopesc.org).
- In conjunction with **Emergent Pictures**, Project HOPE developed a thank-you video for SC legislators in appreciation for funding of the PDD Waiver that helps select families access intensive therapy for their children with autism.
- We began an innovative project known as *Hope Unleashed*, in partnership with **Dogs for Autism**. We will use dogs as tools in therapy sessions, teach children with autism to handle dogs, include children with autism in activities with peers, and develop a distance workshop for families who want to use their own dogs to help their children with autism gain skills.
- The **Upstate Mass Choir** created a musical fundraiser, entitled “A Night of Hope,” to benefit Project HOPE.
- Through the Service Learning Program of **Mauldin High School**, a dozen high school students are mentoring in Hope Academy classes every day this semester.
- In the Nurturing Developing Minds: Developmental-Behavioral Pediatric Update conference, sponsored by the **Greenville Hospital System**, Hope Link distributed the *Understanding Autism* DVD to attending pediatricians and health care providers.
- In February, Project HOPE participated in the **Upstate Autism Professionals Forum**, to facilitate collaboration among service providers.
- Hope Reach Supervisors will be teaching classes in Applied Behavior Analysis at **North Greenville University** as adjunct professors, which will include up to 8 interns to help provide services to upstate families.
- As a community partner with the **United Way of the Piedmont**, Hope Reach has participated in the BMW Lunch and Learn series and the Denny's Agency Fair.
- Hope Academy's inclusion-based philosophy is the subject of three research projects through **Furman University**.

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8:15 We're late, but we're here at Hope Academy. Please, Lord, let this school be the one. I don't think I can take one more failure. I know all the things “wrong” with my child. I don't need anyone to tell me that. Please let someone see all the things that are “right” with him.

8:30 I got him to class. The teacher actually looked happy to see us. Do I dare hope that this time will be different?

9:50 There goes my phone. I guess they need me to come get him. Oh, well, this is the longest he has ever lasted.

9:55 Pinch me! They just called to tell me that John introduced himself to his classmates and held the flag this morning. I've got to call everybody I know!

Thank you, Advent United Methodist Church, for giving the gift of hope by providing a home to Hope Academy.



Ways we serve

Project HOPE leads the way in serving children with autism and their families through programs that: Help families, Open minds, Promote inclusion, and Expand potential. **Hope Link** helps families deal with the challenges of autism by providing information about autism spectrum disorders, including symptoms, therapies, interventions, services, funding options, and coping skills, assisting over 1,000 families since 1997. **Hope Reach** opens minds by providing 25-40 hours per week of intense Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy focusing on language, behavioral, social, and cognitive skills to over 60 children. **Hope Academy** promotes inclusion by providing children with autism the opportunity to learn in classrooms with typical peers and a typical curriculum, serving over 1,000 children since its inception in 1997. **Hope Alive** is an innovative approach to expand potential of children, youth and young adults with autism who are not best served through the traditional model of grouping people with wide-ranging disabilities as a single unit.



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