A4 UPDATE
Autism Aspergers Advocacy Australia

December 03
Issue 11

Feature

By Judy Brewer Fischer

Happy Anniversary A4 Members!

It is a year since I first put 'finger to keyboard' to update A4 members on what was happening in autism and Asperger's advocacy around the nation. That update started with the paragraph "thank you for your support in joining our new organisation. Together, we hope to make a real difference to the profile and understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorder in Australia, and to influence decision making and decision makers at the national level."

Now, in this Christmas edition, the A4 editorial committee has asked me back to reflect on A4's work this year and to look to the future of our dynamic and ever evolving organisation.

So, have we made a difference? Yes, I am sure that we have, and we have certainly learnt a lot about advocacy in the process. We have learnt that advocacy is not just about writing letters and lobbying politicians; it is about empowering all our ASD families to do more. It is about making sure that the information we use and distribute is accurate and backed up by evidence. We all know there is a plethora of theories and remedies out there, and we have a responsibility not to add to the confusion that parents face when they first confront Autism Spectrum Disorder. Part of this involves listening to what is said about ASD in the public arena and making sure the 'experts' are helping and not hindering our understanding of this confusing and complicated condition.

Largely through the tireless work and literary skills of Bob Buckley, A4 has certainly made its presence felt in the corridors of power, and we have won over many allies to our cause including Members of Parliament, Senators, and senior bureaucrats. Of course we have rubbed a few up the wrong way as well, but I suspect that is a necessary part of getting our message across.

Our membership continues to climb, and we are starting to form a better structure for our organisation that allows us to utilise the many talents of our members. This is evidenced by the steering committee, by the work of the website group in establishing us in cyberspace, and now the editorial committee, who have professionalised the way we communicate with our members. These achievements take on an extra dimension when you consider that in A4 we are all volunteers, almost all of whom live in a family with the extra demands (and joys!) that living with ASD places on our lives.

And so to calendar year 2004. Well, my New Year's wish for A4 is that all of our members gain the confidence to start contributing much more to our quest. I hope that this is the last time that I am asked to write for the update, because there will be so many other people putting their hand up to do so. I dream that we will come together en force in Canberra next year for the Biennial Autism Conference and for the much-awaited Walk With Parliament event. But in the interim, I am counting the days until our big advocacy weekend next March 6 & 7, when many of us will meet face-to-face for the first time, and where we will work together to gain the skills and confidence we need to change the future for our families. This will be your chance to play a bigger role in A4 and to have your say in planning and shaping our organisation. Please do your best to be there…..we need you.

Finally, on a personal note, this year has been a very big one for me and a very challenging one. Due to overload and some extra family pressures, I handed over the A4 convenor's role to Bob last August. However it was not long before I went from the 'frying pan into the fire' and became immersed in my role as Chair of the Federal Government's National Family Carers Voice – an advisory group on policy issues that confront families caring for family members with disabilities. I am determined that ASD will have a much stronger profile in carer issues than previously, and you can help me here by ensuring that you return the national carers survey that is included with this update.

On the home front, things are indeed ‘on the up’. Our son Harrison turned 10 recently and is growing into a wonderful, caring and intelligent young man. My feelings towards him are changing from resentment to admiration when I see the courage it takes for him to deal with enormous anxiety that is fed by the tasks of everyday life. That is not to say that his behaviour is not very difficult to cope with much of the time, but I have learnt to try to put myself in his shoes more as he tries to deal with the confusion and fear that autism brings. But, what a journey it has been. Just like A4, Tim, Dominic, Harrison and I have indeed come a long way.

So, Merry Christmas to all A4 families – you are an amazing group of people and on behalf of Bob and the team, I thank for your wonderful support this year.

Inside This Issue

Note

There will be no January issue of the A4 Update. The next issue will be out towards the end of February. All reader’s contributions and inclusions for the February issue must be sent to edit@a4.org.au by February 9 for the next Update. All contributions are welcome.

From the Convenor

By Bob Buckley

As we approach the end of 2003 I find myself pausing to think about the past 12 months. For me, this was a challenging years. Thanks for your support and encouragement.

Especially, thanks to you, A4's members, who are **the** key parts of this effort. Without your contributions there would be nothing. Together, we are putting ASD on the national agenda. Yesterday, someone said to me "if at first you succeed, then try to not look surprised". In our first year we have been noticed, we have established a national voice for people with ASD and their closest associates. Some see us as too vocal, too radical, etc. Others feel we are too moderate. Hopefully, we have a good balance. Let's try to not look surprised.

Of course we strive to do much more. We need more people involved and pushing their own agendas. People with passion cause progress.

The Health Minister(s) responded to the first batch of autism questions on notice. The responses so far can be down loaded from http://www.a4.org.au/documents/QoN2003.doc

I urge you to take a look at what our government thinks about autism/ASD, keeping in mind there will be an election next year. Personally, I am disappointed by the Ministers' responses. The government seems disinterested in how many people, mostly children, are being diagnosed with ASD and hopes state governments accept responsibility.

Already Senator Allison has asked some follow-up questions. For example:

“ Given that important allies such as Britain and the United States of America have responded to increasing rates of autism through targeted services and increased research, does the Government plan to join with a ‘Coalition of the Willing’ to combat ASD.”

The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs is developing a National Agenda for Early Childhood. The agenda includes things like "supporting families and parenting", "collaborative partnerships" and "national leadership". I for one am waiting to see how such an agenda can coexist with the Health Ministers' strategy of perpetual ignorance, disengagement from those who care and leaving it all to the states.

Nor can one expect much from Labor. One Labor adviser said the Ministers' responses on autism were expected and they didn't see the point in taking it any further. A shadow minister said Labor couldn't have policy for every rare disorder. We have to work on ASD awareness among decision-makers.

I'm looking forward to the many opportunities we have to improve outcomes for people with ASD and their supporters. If you can, start planning your trip to the Walk with Parliament next year and the Biennial Conference.

Wherever you are, whatever you are doing, I wish you season’s greetings, a wonderful transition to 2004 and the best year ever.

Editorial

A4 Update Format

The online membership form has been updated so people can change how their Updates are delivered.

The A4 Update will be sent to all members in PDF unless you request either of the other two options (Ms Word or the link). If you are already members, you can change how you receive the Update by completing the first three fields then clicking on the "submit" button. We welcome your feedback about the format, and indeed any other issue.

Member’s contributions

Do you have a story that you would like to share? The A4 Update is looking for member’s stories about their personal experiences concerning advocacy, whether as an advocate for someone with an ASD or as someone who has an advocate. Stories about other issues concerned with ASD are also welcome.

Submission from ACA

A Submission on Autism Spectrum Disorders to the Dept. of Family & Community Services’ Review of Recognised Disabilities by the Autism Council of Australia Ltd. Visit the Autism Council of Australia Ltd site and download a PDF version of this submission: http://www.autismaus.com.au/

Job Vacancies

We are still looking for members to be our state correspondents for the A4 Update. This would involve a monthly round-up state related ASD issues. This is a great way to become more involved in A4. If you are interested please contact us at edit@A4.org.au for further information.

Autism Council of Australia

The ACA is making great progress and we are now at a point where we are inviting any person who shares our vision for the autism spectrum community to join the ACA.

Membership is open to individuals and groups and information on the ACA and also membership can be found at http://www.autismaus.com.au/.

We are trying to build a unified, national organisation to represent autism spectrum people and their families at the national level, act as a clearing house for information, provide policy advice, and also fund research.

We would also be running workshops and other information activities, especially in areas that do not usually receive information or support.

Contact Details for the A4 Update Team

A4 Update Editorial Team

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Letters to the editor

Yes … we still want your feedback. Tell us how we're doing, what you want more of, what you want less of, what's missing, etc. Email us at edit@A4.org.au with 'your say'.

National/State Round-up

Complaint concerning ABC Radio

A4 received correspondence from the Investigation Section of the Australian Broadcasting Authority regarding the complaint about the ABC National 'Health Report' of 28 July 2003 (download here).

It is anticipated that the investigation and completion of the written report will take at least 3 months. The ABA advised that A4 will be provided with written advice once the investigation is concluded and a determination has been made.

Attention Carers

(Yes, ASD families, this means you!!)

Would you like to tell the Government more about your needs? The National Family Carers Voice (NFCV) has been established to do just that.

To accurately inform the Minister for Family and Community Services about the issues that directly affect your lives you will find a survey form at the National Family Carers Voice web page at:

http://www.facs.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/aboutfacs/programs/disability-nfcv.htm

Or, forms can also be obtained by contacting the NFCV Secretariat. The survey will take about 10 minutes to complete.

National Family Carers Voice Secretariat
CE3 TOP
Box 7788
Canberra Mail Centre ACT 2610

1300 653 227 - local call cost
(asking for extension 441849)

1800 672 682 – TTY
(for deaf or hearing impaired people only)

Questions regarding the survey can be directed to the NFCV Secretariat.

NB This survey has been distributed to many different disability and carer groupings. If we want ASD issues to have a higher profile with the Minister for Family and Community Services, and with the Federal Government, we need to deluge the committee with our responses. Do it now!

FaCS Review of Carer Allowance

by Bob Buckley

Update 9 reported a question from Senator Jacinta Collins (ALP, Victoria) asking about the review of carer allowance. Senator Collins asked "Can the minister confirm that the government's review of carer allowance will see the government's test of eligibility for the payment—its child disability assessment tool—applied to permanently disabled children for the first time: that is, children who qualified for the payment under previous rules?" The Minister accused Senator Collins of trying to run a scare campaign.

Subsequently, the government's discussion paper proposes:

1. The "child disability assessment tool" would be applied to children with Asperger's and PDD-NOS; and
2. Autism diagnosis would only be accepted if it were done by a multi-disciplinary team or a psychiatrist.

Children with a diagnosis of Asperger's Disorder or PDD-NOS under the DSM-IV are by definition permanently disabled children. Children with autism that was diagnosed by a paediatrician or a psychologist are also permanently disabled. Clearly Senator Collins was correct in her concerns. The Minister was unjust to accuse her of running a scare campaign; but was clearly able to avoid answering the question at the time.

A4 wrote to the review about their proposed changes to the access criteria. If this affects you and you are interested, download A4's submission from www.a4.org/documents/CarerAllow.doc

Our submission will be more effective if the people affected by this policy write a short letter and send it to the Minister, your local member and your senators explaining how difficult it is to get a diagnosis and saying they will have to keep applying for the allowance even though their child is permanently disabled.

Information about the review - including a discussion paper can be found at: http://www.facs.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/aboutfacs/programs/lord.htm

Victoria

By Meredith Ward

Aaaah ! Christmas already. This year has gone so quickly – it must be a sign that I'm getting old! This is a brief update because it is so close to the previous one – but nothing ever stops especially advocacy for our children with ASD.

On the 9th December, a delegation met with the Leader of the Liberal Party of Victoria, Mr. Robert Doyle – or Robert as he prefers to be called, and Victor Perton Shadow Minister for Education, to discuss the need for a partnership between the Liberal Party of Victoria and the ASD community to build strong effective policy for our community.

The delegation included myself representing the Autistic Family Support Association (AFSA - a Victorian statewide parent support group) Judy Brewer-Fischer representing A4, Amanda Golding representing Autism Victoria (the Victorian Peak ASD body representing service providers and parents), and parent Jo Heard (A4 editor!).

After giving us a very generous hearing, Mr. Doyle agreed to develop policy in consultation with a reference group from the ASD community. This long-term strategy will build upon the community consultation already taking place between Shadow Ministers, like Victor Perton and Helen Shardey. It enables the ASD community to have direct input during policy development. Hopefully future Early Childhood and Education Liberal Party policies will encompass the needs of the entire autism spectrum community.

Below is an extract from the document presented to Mr. Doyle and Victor Perton.

… "Innovative policy would reflect a transparent and responsive Autism Spectrum specialist service continuum for the entire Autism Spectrum Disorder community. Services in Victoria are non-existent in some areas, grossly inadequate in others, disjointed and difficult to navigate forcing families to search for a way to have their needs met. It is our vision to have Early Childhood, Education, Health and Community Care policies cross the boundaries of "Departmental silos" and allow the specialist service system to revolve around the individual and their families. This would provide the support, information and whole of life services required enabling children and adults to develop, grow learn and live in a happy and safe environment giving them the best opportunity to reach their full potential" ….

Mr. Doyle advised that Victor Perton would have an outline of policy prepared in time to unveil at the Oaks Advocacy weekend being held at Beechworth in March 6 & 7th 2004. (See notice under diary dates) We anticipate consulting with Victor at Beechworth regarding this initial policy outline. We will keep you posted on future developments.

Being Advocates means we also work with the Government of the day as best as possible in making life better for the ASD community. Alas, today I received a reply from Sherryl Garbutt, Minster for Community Services declining to meet with AFSA representatives. However, the Minister has advised me that the Ministerial Advisor and the Director of Family and Community Support branch of Community Services will meet with us in the near future. This meeting will be to discuss the new early childhood intervention services "Output" based funding formula. I should have further news for the next roundup.

Until then, have a safe an happy festive season!

Tasmania

From Rosemary Rush of Hobart

The Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services is in the process of developing a Draft Framework and Strategic Plan for Disability Services for 2004-2008. Regional consultation forums were held in early December. An extension has been made for feedback on the Draft Framework until 22nd December 2003. The Framework is due out in February 2004 at which point work will begin on a Strategic Plan. This will also be developed in consultation with the community and is due to be completed by May 2004.

The new draft is consistent with the five strategic policy priorities outlined in the Commonwealth State Territory Disability Agreement. Draft framework can be accessed on: www.interact.dhhs.tas.gov.au/consultations - type 'framework' in the keyword field and click on search. The consultation is called Disability Services – Strategic framework. Comments can be made via the website.

Awareness

25 Adopted Boys Find A Home In One House

So, you think you've "got it tough" with your one or two ASD kids?

By Janet Kornblum, USA Today

http://www.usatoday.com/life/2003-11-25-silcock-boys_x.htm

Listen to Father to 25 Boys by Dave Nachmanoff

Huntington Beach, Calif. — Ann Belles was only 5 in 1968 when her mother took her to see Oliver, the movie musical about orphan boys based on Charles Dickens' Oliver Twist. But in that darkened theatre, her fate was sealed.

"I walked out of that movie saying, 'I'm going to adopt orphan children.' I dreamt about it. I thought about it. I got books on orphans. I was consumed by it."

Many of us forget our childhood dreams. Today, Belles, 40, lives hers.

She and her husband, Jim Silcock, 41, have adopted 25 boys — boys who have been abandoned, abused, rejected and usually labeled unadoptable; boys from across town and across the world; boys with disabilities from autism to mental retardation to attachment disorders; boys now ranging in age from 3 to 25 who represent a panoply of ethnicities.

This is the Silcock family: a mom with a dream; a dad who is quadriplegic and has a love big enough to make his wife's dream his own; and their children: 25 boys who had nowhere else to go.

"I tell people that it's like any other family — except extremely large," says Hunter, 16. When Hunter, who uses a wheelchair and has cerebral palsy, joined the Silcock family five years ago, he was considered borderline retarded. Today, he tests as gifted and has appeared on TV in three episodes of Boston Public.

The Silcock family is not like any other family. "There are obviously people all over the country who adopt individual children and groups of children with special needs," says Adam Pertman, executive director of the not-for profit Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute in New York. But "it is unusual for anybody to adopt this many children."

The news last month about a New Jersey family accused of starving their adopted foster children has focused attention on the nation's foster care and adoption system. Sometimes the system is abused, Pertman says, but more often, “financial incentives from state and federal governments are helping to increase special-needs adoptions.”

The Silcock family “is the good side of that bad story,” he says.

Adoption of children in foster care, where many of the Silcock boys come from, is on the rise. About 130,000 of the 540,000 children in foster care nationwide are waiting to be adopted. About 50,000 a year actually get adopted, says Carol Emig of the Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care.

In the past five years, thanks largely to increased federal financial incentives and state initiatives to adopt, 33 states and Washington, D.C., have doubled their adoptions from foster care, Emig says.

But experts note that many children — especially those who are older and disabled — remain unadopted. “There is no line at the door for kids with special needs of any age,” Pertman says. “People want healthy infants first and then move on from there.”

Not Belles. She tells agencies to give her the child who has been rejected by everyone else.

“We're not willing to compete for a child,” she says. “There are plenty of children who don't have any opportunities to be matched with more typical families.”

Some of the children came from families that couldn't cope with their needs. Many came from parents who caused their disabilities.

One of the Silcock boys was nearly drowned by his parents and left brain-damaged. Another boy was taken from his family after doctors discovered 13 bones that had been broken but never set. One boy had never touched grass because he spent his first years in the hospital.

Five boys come from overseas — Belles and Silcock flew to Eastern Europe to adopt one. Even though these boys may not have significant physical disabilities, they came with emotional and learning difficulties — and no familiarity with U.S. customs. After Halloween, some of the boys assumed a knock on a stranger's door would yield candy every time. Many of these boys went “from the Stone Age to The Jetsons” in the USA, Belles says.

Though entering a large family is not for everybody, Belles says, it can actually make things easier. “Some kids, especially kids with attachment disorder or kids who are older, can come to our family and just kind of slip in. They don't need to bond with us right away. They can bond to the dog. They can bond to another sibling. They can feel safe.”

Though some people question whether one family can — or should — take on this many kids, experts say there is no magic number. What is important is assessing each family and each placement very carefully, says Sue Badeau, deputy director of the Pew Commission and the mother of 20 adopted and two biological children in Philadelphia.

“Have some families gotten bigger than they should have gotten and have some children been inappropriately placed in large families? Absolutely. Does that mean no family should ever have a large number of children or that no children thrive in large families? No. I don't think it's an either/or kind of extreme.”

Those who know the Silcock family say it works.

Says Joan Thompson, a nurse to one of the boys: “They grow and blossom when they come here. You just see the difference.”

Neighbor Margaret Lysaght says the five vans and constant remodeling of the now-4,000-square-foot home are sometimes small nuisances, but she doesn't mind. “Those kids need a break, and she's doing it for them. When I see those kids out there getting ready to get on those buses, they all look happy. ... And I've never heard any crying or screaming or any sign of abuse or neglect.”

But it's not like Belles and Silcock work miracles with their boys, Belles is quick to say. “Their disabilities will not go away. But we have seen kids talk who couldn't talk before and walk who couldn't walk before. It has a lot to do with the dynamics of the family. Everybody pulls their weight.”

Walk into the Silcock home, and at first blush you might think it's an institution: Wheelchairs fill the garage. Pictures that line the walls of the wide, clean hallways are careful portraits showing each boy at his best.

Boys with every imaginable disability inhabit the nine bedrooms. And nurses, teachers and aides buzz around the home, cleaning, tending to the boys, organizing medicines or putting in yet another load of laundry.

On the typical fall morning, four boys gather around a wide-screen TV to play a video game. Five Nintendo Game Cubes are scattered throughout the house. Isn't that excessive? Silcock explains: “You get 20 guys and one Game Cube, what do you think will happen? There's going to be a war, and it's going to be Lord of the Flies. The strongest guy will take it.”

Then Jonathan, 18, marches in and ends the game. “Mom told me to turn off the TV,” he says.

And then, in what seems like a choreographed performance, boys grab backpacks in the front hall and run or wheel each other out the front door.

Vans are loaded. Children are put into buses and strapped in. It's time to go to school. Most attend public school; eight have classroom aides.

Three boys linger at the breakfast tables. Phillip, 10, from a Siberian orphanage, sits next to 7-year-old Justin, who is immune-compromised and whose kidneys are failing. He's the only boy who can't attend school. Phillip wipes Justin's face, then picks up a spoon and coaxes him to eat just a little bit more before Phillip has to leave.

Older boys routinely help younger ones, be it with their food or companionship, cleaning their rooms or doing homework.

If they have a really big problem — such as getting in trouble at school — the kids go to mom and dad who “better” hear about it from the boys rather than the teachers, Silcock says.

One day at a time by 8:15 a.m., the suburban house on the quiet cul-de-sac in this Southern California beach town settles down. The adults tend to business, cleaning or grocery shopping. They also attend parent-teacher conferences, organize medical care and discuss the progress of individual boys with aides.

School hours and weekends — when the boys are shuttled to venues from soccer games to Disneyland — are also when Belles and Silcock run their business, Supported Living Services. They arrange services for adults with disabilities who want to live in their own homes. They have 11 clients and are able to generate a “good income,” Belles says.

In addition, the family receives financial help through the federal Adoption Assistance Program, an incentive program designed to encourage parents to adopt children with special needs, though it applies only to children younger than 18 adopted domestically. The Silcocks receive an average of $1,100 a month from AAP for each of 13 children who are eligible.

That money pays for everything from nursing, counseling and physical therapy to adaptive equipment and specialty clothing.

Belles has some inheritance money, and she and Silcock apply for grants. Most of the boys — except those from overseas — also qualify for California Medicaid (called Medi-Cal), which pays for most of their medical care. Belles is lucky, too, that she bought her home in 1989 before California housing prices were out of her reach.

But even with a variety of income sources, Silcock says that he has, on occasion, gotten cash advances on the credit cards.

Article continues: http://www.usatoday.com/life/2003-11-25-silcock-boys_x.htm

Schafer Autism Report (Dec 2 2003 Vol. 7 No. 239)

Research

Study Shows Benefits Of Living With Disabled Family Members

By Robin Martin

When Kelly Willett first attended BYU, she wasn't as happy as she expected to be.

Willett realized she missed serving her brother, Mason, who has mental and physical disabilities.

Because of Willett's experiences with Mason, she said she believes information found by BYU researchers is important.

Faculty from the School of Family Life conducted research that shows children with disabled siblings are doing better in some social skills than kids in normal families, said Susanne Olsen, associate professor of marriage, family and human development.

“This study is an example of how research being done is adapting to the changing social view,” Olsen said.

The researchers tried not to focus the research on the idea that it is an overwhelming negative experience to have a disabled child in the home.

They focused on what the siblings gain from the experience, in addition to the challenges, Olsen said.

As part of the study, children were asked open-ended questions such as, “What is the hardest thing about living with your [disabled] brother or sister today?” Then they were asked to write in a diary about their experience that day.

“Looking at the entries we found about 22 percent will say 'nothing,'“ Olsen said. “So I don't think it is an overwhelming negative experience for them.”

Willett said she also has gained social skills because of Mason.

“I am used to taking care of Mason and looking out for him,” Willett said. “When I interact with other people I don't just think how I can benefit, but what I can do for them.”

Another benefit Willett attributes to Mason is the unity of her family.

“We are his only social interaction, and he depends on the whole family,” Willett said. “He wants you to be happy. The only time I have seen Mason upset is when our family is fighting.”

Erica Iverson, a nutrition science major from Argyle, Texas, also has a younger brother with disabilities. Her brother, Daniel, 6, is autistic.

“Daniel came and turned our world upside down,” Iverson said. “The most positive thing our family has gained is how close we are.”

Iverson said she believes the only way someone can have an understanding of what it is like to have a disabled sibling, is to experience a disabled individual in their life.

“People say, 'Oh I'm glad I'm not them,'“ Iverson said. “But others who have experienced an individual with disabilities say, 'Wow they are really blessed, their family is really close.'“

Olsen said the family can receive help and support from various groups.

“The resources a family has to draw on will make a difference on how well they adapt to having a child with a disability,” she said. “Resources such as a good family support system or a social support system, such as a religious group, help families adapt better.”

Willets said having a family member with a disability has been a great blessing in her life.

“People are so blessed to have a person with a disability in their lives,” Willett said. “A lot of people don't realize that, because they are ignorant to what a disability is and how it affects family life.”

One of the biggest blessing Willett said she has in her life is her brother Mason.

“I think at BYU more people see it [having a disabled sibling] as a positive experience because of the religious culture,” Willett said.

Willet said she believes the reason the social view is changing is because, “People with disabilities don't want to be singled out. They want to be integrated into the workforce and society; they don't want to be looked at as a disabled person.”

http://newsnet.byu.edu/story.cfm/46933

Schafer Autism Report (Nov20 2003 Vol. 7 No. 233)

Diary Dates

A4 invites you to a weekend of Autism Advocacy

Where: The Priory Beechworth (NE Victoria)

When: 6 & 7 March 2004

What: Saturday → a day of advocacy information and workshops, with topics including: ‘How to best access your local representatives and members of parliament’, ‘Education Advocacy’, and ‘An Agenda for National Autism Advocacy’.

Saturday night → a chance to relax and meet other ASD families over a drink and casual BBQ

Sunday morning → the inaugural AGM of A4, your chance to have a say in the future of our national organisation.

To be kindly hosted by Oaks Inc (PO Box 556 Beechworth 3747) Email: ourautistickids@bigpond.com

Registration form attached.

Autism Association ACT Biennial Australian Autism Spectrum Disorder Conference

Autism Spectrum: Pathways To Understanding

Canberra
Friday, 1 October - Sunday, 3 October, 2004
Venue: Rydges Lakeside Canberra

The conference will be preceded by a day of focused workshops on 30 September, also at Rydges Lakeside. Expressions of interest in attending or offers to present a paper or poster presentation are now being sought.

Keynote Speakers

Professor Christopher Gillberg
Dept of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (Göteborg University, Sweden)

Dr Jeannie McAfee
[Author: *Navigating the Social World*; see Dr McAfee's internet site here.]

Dr Tony Attwood
[Author, trainer and diagnostician; see Dr Attwood's internet site here.]

Expressions of interest are invited from people who have an ASD, parents, professionals, and researchers who are interested in attending the workshops, the conference or both. Please e-mail the conference team at Autism ACT and let us know.

Offers of the following are invited: Papers or presentations - session duration 45 minutes - 60 minutes including a Q/A period;

If you wish to offer a paper, a presentation or a poster presentation, please contact Autism ACT and indicate your interest, and if available, a subject/title. When available, it would be appreciated if you could forward a précis, preferably via e-mail, for inclusion on the site and in the program. It is hoped that following the conference, proceedings will be published.

December Profile

Our December Profile is on Judy Brewer Fischer. Judy is one of the founding members of A4 and was responsible for the first Update.

NAME Judy Brewer Fischer (Yes, it's complicated)

BORN Private information, but I will say that I am a Leo, and that I have a big birthday coming up next year....

LIVES On a farm near Boree Creek in the Riverina of NSW

FAMILY Long-suffering husband, Tim, sons: Harrison 10, Dominic 7, and lots of cows, sheep, cats and guinea pigs.

INVOLVEMENT WITH A4 Had a flash of inspiration to set up a national ASD advocacy group during the Adelaide Biennial Autism Conference of 2001. The name came to me while driving along one day trying to find something that was both meaningful and visual.

OTHER ORGANISATIONS Include, OAKS (Our Autistic Kids), National Family Carers Voice, Landcare, Rural Australians for Refugees, and most importantly, the Essendon Football Club....premiers 2004

DREAMING OF A more inclusive and compassionate Australian society

LISTENING TO Music of the sixties, particularly The Who

READING Autism books of course, but also ploughing through Don Watson's book on Paul Keating, called "Recollections of a Bleeding Heart" - a great insight into politics

RELAXING What's that?

EATING Lebanese food whenever I go to "town" - difficult to get in Boree Creek.

LIKES Farming, family and football.

DISLIKES Drought

IDEAL WEEKEND Anything that involves being at the MCG and yelling "go bombers"

LAST HOLIDAY I suspect it might have been an autism conference, seems to be a pattern here!

OAKS INC
Our Autistic KidS
ourautistickids@bigpond.com

INVITE ALL A4 MEMBERS TO A SPECIAL ADVOCACY WEEKEND

6 & 7th March, 2003, at Beechworth, Victoria

SATURDAY **"Breaking Down The Barriers"** A day of advocacy information, discussion and training. Topics to include: accessing your MPs and local representatives, education advocacy, public speaking, media skills. The final panel discussion on autism advocacy will include key people from A4, ACA, AFSA and Autism Victoria, who will explain their roles and how they can assist our families.

SATURDAY NIGHT – A chance to relax with other ASD families over a drink and casual BBQ in the beautiful grounds of the venue, "The Old Priory"

SUNDAY MORNING – The Inaugural General Meeting of Autism Aspergers Advocacy Australia (A4). This is YOUR chance to have a say in the future of our national organisation. Be there if you care!

COST: $45 day seminar (including lunch, morning & afternoon teas)
$20 evening BBQ (drinks at bar prices)
$60 full day (day seminar & BBQ)
No charge for Sunday meeting (morning tea provided)

Great accommodation available at "The Old Priory" www.oldpriory.com.au ph: 03 5728 1024 or Contact Beechworth Tourist Info on 1300 366321, but be quick as a long weekend in Vic!

Please return this section **BY 21/2/04**, with cheque/money order payable to "OAKS" to:
OAKS A4 WEEKEND, P.O. Box 556, BEECHWORTH 3737

Names of attendees:	Day Seminar	BBQ	Full Day	Sunday	$Total

Contact Details

Name:

Street Address:

Suburb:

City/Town: **Postcode:** ☐☐☐☐

Contact Numbers: **H** **W** **Mob**

E-mail: