



KindTree Productions, Inc.

REACHING OUT -REACHING IN

Autism Association of Oregon - Lane County Chapter

CALENDAR

Autism Rocks
at
**Art & the
Vineyard**

Art, Wine and
Great Music
At Alton Baker Park
July 2 - 4
11:30 am - 8:30 pm

Art by People with Autism
See page 4

**AUTISM
RETREAT**
August 27-29

Cabins on
Siltcoos Lake
food, fun, music
We're all family here
See back page/ registraion form
enclosed

1st Friday Art Walk
Downtown Art District
4 - 7 PM

Autism Rocks Art Show
July 2?, August 7

Autism Support Group
2nd Monday of the
month, 4:30 - 6 PM
St. Mary's Episcopal Church
689-2228

For all high functioning autists
Facilitated by C. N. Applegate
NO GROUP in July

This August marks KindTree's 8th Retreat. I'd like to take a moment to remember...

We started out with just 8 people with autism. They came with their caregivers, and even with KindTree volunteers, we still had less than 25 folks. It took a lot of effort to get it started, and Steve and Michelle had lots of help (check out the article about Roy Settlemyer on page 4). It was all about being ourselves, relaxed, hangin'.

This summer we'll have nearly 100 people at Baker Camp, but it's still about being ourselves, relaxed, hangin', - in a bigger place, with more things to do, more people to meet, more kinds of fun.

Our local Autism Community has grown along with us - more things to do, more people to meet, more kinds of fun.

At KindTree's Autism Forum in 2002, we began looking for ways to work more closely together with other autism non-profits as well as schools, service providers, and people with autism. From that beginning came the just established Autism Society of Oregon - Lane County Chapter. The purpose of the chapter is to coordinate delivery of services for a diverse autism community of all ages and across all reaches of the autism spectrum; to

advocate for, serve, celebrate and educate the autism community; to collaborate on services without duplicating efforts; to support and work with other autism organizations; and to build and nurture a viable community for young autists to grow up in and for our adults to thrive in.

Look for an online calendar to coordinate activities statewide, local resource people for guidance and answers to your questions, joint projects and fundraisers, and more. To participate, please call 689-2228 or contact ASO@kindtree.org. Information is on the web linked from www.kindtree.org. Now is a great time to get more involved - like you've been wanting to.

People did get involved at our Forum this past May. We had some great discussions. Thanks to all who came and helped make it a success. And to Molly and the Hilyard Center staff for always making it easy for us.

We met a few new artists at the Forum this year. You can see their work at Art & the Vineyard July 4th weekend at Alton Baker Park. Autistic artists market their work at the First Friday Art Walk downtown, and at www.kindtree.org. Their work is so great.

So come see us, buy some cards, have a great time. It's Summer. Yeeha!

Tim Mueller

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Mary-Minn's Stim Page

(Here are personal stories about autism. If you would like to see your musings on this page, please email Mary-Minn at sirag@mindspring.com.)

Developing a cultural understanding of autism.

In August of 2000 I met my first fellow autists, at KindTree's autism retreat. My memory flashed on friends who probably had been struggling with autism their entire lives but didn't know it. I say "struggling" because living with autism without an autism community is like living undercover in an alien culture.

My first autism retreat, where I was invited to speak about my autism, was a spiritual awakening for me. I was phobic of public speaking. Being an exhibitionist and show-off did not make me a public speaker. Though I had acted and sung solos from second grade through college, I could not speak coherently in a group situation.

My first talk is veiled by a merciful amnesia. I think I rambled and derailed a lot. Keeping on track while keeping going--and in real-time, no less--was next to impossible for me back then. Steve Brown, who was KindTree's president back then, had the sagacity to facilitate it the following year, which made for a better talk.

Even more profound than my debut into public speaking was meeting those first autists. I felt a telepathic kinship with all the autists there, except one little boy who was having difficulties.

Like many "new" autists, I was nervous about being around "low functioning" autists. Though, unlike many "higher functioning" autists, I don't remember being afraid of being lumped in with the "lower functioning" ones, I wondered if I'd know what to do with or say to them. I feared most being excluded for not being autistic enough! I was to learn later that I was not the only "new" autist to see myself as uniquely "higher-functioning" and to hold inordinate stock in my level of "functioning."

What struck me during that retreat was not how "high-functioning" I am in my hyper-verbosity, but how variously functioned each of us is, in our human complexity. (And that goes for normies as well as auties.) What matters more than such measurables as IQ and "skill set" are self-awareness and ability--and willingness--to advocate for oneself.

I have become friends with other autists in KindTree's autism support group, which I have been attending for the past four years. This support group is the first one I have ever been able to stand, let alone derive any nourishment from, both during and between meetings. It is crucial to have a good facilitator, to keep discussion flowing. I find the camaraderie of a good support group crucial to coming to terms with any predicament or condition.

Before KindTree, I had always craved community but become too disgusted and disillusioned with group dynamics ("politics" I called it) to swing it. KindTree not only toler-

ated my tweakiness but embraced me through my freakouts and shut downs. This was the first group of people who could work through conflict in a spirit of kind-hearted adventurousness.

Through my involvement with KindTree, I landed various human-service joblets -- teaching beading to adults with developmental disabilities, conducting workshops for Voc. Rehab. clients, and working with kids and adults on the spectrum. Through helping these folks learn to accommodate their disabilities and to advocate for themselves, I started to learn to administer to myself, as well. I started to see some of my indelible "character flaws" as faulty solutions to my cognitive and sensory scrambling. I am learning to apply my logic to these difficulties of mine.

I had always wanted to be useful without being exploited and taken for granted, but got precious few strokes for my efforts until I got involved with KindTree and then the autism community. Part of this is that prior to KindTree, much of my time was focused on things that were next to impossible for me--my disabilities, as it were--not on my talents. My self-esteem was so eclipsed by these seemingly insurmountable shortcomings that I was hard-pressed to see any talent in myself.

Since becoming involved in KindTree and in other reaches of the autism community, I have been learning how to work around my limitations and better exploit what abilities I do have. I am developing a cultural understanding of autism.

Editors note: Mary-Minn isn't the only person to find their autism community through KindTree. Pictured below are TR Kelly and Karen Biggs at our Autism Forum 2004. Both of these women have lived unaware of their autism, while all too aware of their difficulties in the normal world. We're glad they found us. Welcome home.



REACHING OUT -- REACHING IN



CAN A T-SHIRT MAKE YOU THIS HAPPY?

NOW in Forest Green, Black and Natural
in kids' sizes, too

\$15 each plus shipping

And See our Note Cards at www.kindtree.org

People all over the world are wearing "Autism Rocks" - England, Canada, California, Idaho, Iowa, New York, Oregon. We also have other products with an "Autism Rocks" logo - long sleeve shirts, a cool hooded sweatshirt, mugs, mouse pads, hats, boxer shorts, WOW. All at www.kindtree.org

DO We Have Computers to Give AWAY? Almost For FREE?

Adding a New \$15 Fee for Recipients

KindTree's Computer Exchange program has grown and we had to rent a storage unit. So we are trying a small fee. Sorry.

We still have machines from 233 - 500mhz needing modems, sound cards, drivers. We can always use more mice, too. Mac Renewal is helping us find machines. Thanks, guys.

We need help installing Windows 98 and adding other software. Johnathon is helping, so is Impact Arts School. But we need you, too. PLEASE call 521 7208 or computers@kindtree.org and volunteer. This is a great program to be part of.

REACHING OUT - REACHING IN is a publication of KindTree Productions, Inc. Editor: Tim Mueller. Please direct your letters to the editor, subscription requests and payments, (\$5.00 a year donation) and address changes to: KTP, 2096 1/2 Arthur St. Eugene, OR 97405, or e-mail to Autism@kindtree.org. Phone: 689-2228 or 521-7208. Serving the Autism Community, we are: Mary-Minn Sirag, President, Michelle Jones, Vice-President, Tim Mueller, Secretary/Treasurer, Board of Directors and Volunteers. *Together we can make this work for all of us.*

You can deprive the body,
but the soul needs chocolate.

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Autism Community Calendar

July 7 - 10 in Seattle, WA. The ASA 35th National Conference and Exposition on Autism Spectrum Disorders. ASA Members at \$315. www.autism-society.org/2004_Conference

July 16 - 17 from 8-2

Garage sale to benefit Bridgeway House at 2965 Pearl Street, 344-8542. See www.bridgewayhouse.org for lots of classes and group discussions, even a sports camp!

July 23 - 24, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

FEAT of Oregon Verbal Behavior Workshop: maximizing communication for children with autism. Meridian Park Hospital Education Building, Tualatin, OR

July 12-July 29

Three Week Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Summer Camp, Autism Training and Support, 689-2327, www.autismtraining.com

The ASD Summer Camp Program is for students with high-functioning Autism or Asperger Syndrome who fall typically in the average or above average range of intellectual functioning and have enough verbal ability to participate in social groups and activities. Students must have Autism Spectrum Disorder as their primary diagnosis and have no severe behavioral challenges. Each student will be considered on an individual basis. We offer a supportive, relaxed atmosphere with staff trained in understanding the unique issues of students with ASD.

August 7 8 am - noon "Riding for a Better Way of Life" FAB fundraiser at Alton Baker Park, Eugene. A day of fun and bike riding for the whole family. Chose between an easy 5 mile or more challenging 25 mile ride. 284-5070 for more info. Fullaccess.org

August 27 - 29 KindTree Autism Camp / Retreat. See poster on back page.

October 10 Autism Rocks Family Pre-Halloween Benefit. More details later...

Mother spearheads effort to buy tracking equipment

By MARTA HEPLER-DRAHOS

Record-Eagle, Traverse City, Michigan staff writer

Like many children, Andre Krist often wandered off when no one was looking. But unlike his peers, Andre never knew when he was lost, and therefore made no effort to be found - turning the episodes into nightmares for his frantic mother.

"He was autistic and severely multiply handicapped," said Michelle St. Amant of Traverse City. "He was a wonderful kid but he was very fast. I'd lose him constantly in the store, he'd tend to wander away from the house."

Last year St. Amant learned about **Project Lifesaver**, an emergency response system that uses high-tech ankle- and wristbands to help locate lost people with autism and other mental dysfunction disorders. Using a receiver or mobile locator, police can activate a tracking system and find victims wearing the bracelets up to seven miles away, with ground or air crews.

Editors note: Project Lifesaver is not yet operating in Oregon.
Find out more about **Project Lifesaver** at: <http://www.projectlifesaver.net/>

Art & the Vineyard, July 2 - 4

We are working with Big Green Productions and the Maude Kerns Art Center in Eugene to be part of the annual 4th of July weekend "Art and the Vineyard" Festival in Alton Baker Park, Eugene. We will operate a booth at this 3-day event. A fund raiser for Maude Kerns, this event draws thousands of people to hear the music, drink the wine, view and purchase works of art. It's a lot of fun for over 25,000 art lovers.

KindTree will display "Autism Rocks" line of beautiful Note Cards and Prints, some matted and framed. All the artwork is done by people with autism. This year will see new artists **Kendall Stewart**, **Carl Kinney**, and **Thomas Blampied**, along with favorites **Frank Flanders**, **Renee Curtiss**, **Melissa Dahl** and more.

in the "Special Attractions" area - a part of your Autism Community.

Art by Carl Kinney

Roy Settlemyer Passes

KindTree as well as the community at large would like to give a warm thank you and fare thee well to Roy Settlemyer, who passed from this world a few weeks ago. Roy was a dedicated family man, musician, and case manager who spent his life working for people in need.



Roy and his wife Kylene with Mark Hendrickson at an early Autism Rocks Art Show

He worked closely with people with developmental disabilities. The positive difference he made in all our lives by his loving dedication is an inspiration.

I met Roy in 1992 when his daughter was one of my housemates. He along with KindTree friend Cheryl Nel Applegate gave me my first job working with people with developmental disabilities. My fascination with Autism grew along with my experience. A measure of his influence is Autism Rocks, born a few years later and still going strong. Roy was a strong supporter of KindTree from its inception and always valued its dedication to human rights.

Roy was a fine example of how a person with love in his heart and a dedication to service can influence a community.

Happy Journey Roy, we will see you at the gate.
Steve Brown, KindTree Founder

Essays Wanted for New Book About Autism:

Statistics indicate that individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder come into contact with law enforcement an average of seven times more than the average individual...

This is a request for case studies where individuals with High-functioning Autism or Asperger Syndrome engaged in, or were exploited by others for the purpose of, criminal activity. Please include any descriptions of problematic encounters with law enforcement, emergency personnel and the criminal justice system where training of these professionals. All contributions will be treated with confidentiality, respect and sensitivity.

Nan Lester, Director of the Asperger Advocacy Coalition and Graduate Teaching Fellow with the Department of Counseling Psychology and Family and Human Services at the University of Oregon is researching a book for the Autism/Asperger Publishing Company addressing the special vulnerabilities of individuals with high-functioning autism and Asperger Syndrome in encounters with First Response Personnel such as Police, Paramedics, Fire, Emergency Room professionals, and the criminal justice system.

The book will analyze a series of case studies where training of these professionals would have significantly impacted the outcome for these individuals. The objective is to illustrate the importance of inclusion of Autism Spectrum Disorder to the differential diagnosis, or "what is ruled out" to the Mini-Mental Status Exam (MMSE). This is the standard exam that First Response personnel administer to an individual who is exhibiting atypical behavior that may be indicative of impaired mental status. Currently, there is no recognition of ASD as a possible consideration of symptoms that include agitation, paranoia, physical reactivity, aggression, communication differences, mental confusion, oppositional behavior, etc. Inclusion of the diagnosis would require mandatory training of ASD characteristics for personnel administering the MMSE. In addition to awareness of the special sensitivities of individuals with ASD, a shift in policy to include ASD may significantly impact adult diagnostic intervention.

For more information, and to contribute your confidential case study, please contact Nan Lester at 541-345-3467 or e-mail at nlester@darkwing.uoregon.edu

Asperger Advocacy Coalition Moves to BWH

Plans are underway for the Asperger Advocacy Coalition to relocate to Bridgeway House. The final meeting of the AAC at Autism Training and Support will be held Tuesday, June 8 at 7pm. Announcements will be made regarding educational speakers featured at Bridgeway House and coordinated by the AAC beginning in July. This move represents the unity and shared vision of our growing autism community, as well as the AAC's effort to provide support and education to families and individuals across the autism spectrum. Donations will be accepted for all AAC activities held at BWH, with 100% of the proceeds going to Bridgeway House. For more information regarding the Asperger Advocacy Coalition contact Nan Lester at 345-3467.

Yes, Autism Rocks!

This month, which is Autism Awareness Month, I'm hiding my eyes and those of my autistic 8-year old son from the media.

National headlines that describe autism as an epidemic, or pandemic. Public service announcements liken autism to being kidnapped. A government Web site defines autism as a "devastating scourge." An autism "expert" decrees that autism is worse "than Sept. 11 and AIDS combined." An Autism Society Canada board member proclaims that autism is worse than cancer -- because people with autism have normal lifespans.

Have you -- like my son and me -- ever heard parents say how learning that their child was autistic was like experiencing a death in their family? Have you ever been at the playground when a mother classifies her children, standing right there beside her, as this one who is autistic but these other two who are -- thank goodness -- perfectly normal?

They say that autism entails difficulty taking another person's perspective, appreciating how another person might feel. But when I read or hear such hate speech I wonder: Exactly who has a problem taking another person's perspective? Who can't appreciate the feelings of others?

My son surely can. He understands quite well that there are so-called autism "advocates" who despise autism, who march thousand-fold against it. Oh, you say, those people don't want to get rid of my son, they just want to get rid of that part of him that's autistic. But research demonstrates that autistic traits are distributed into the non-autistic population; some people have more of them, some have fewer. History suggests that many individuals whom we would today diagnose as autistic -- some severely so -- contributed profoundly to our art, our math, our science, and our literature.

Most poignantly, many autistics affirm that it would be impossible to segregate the part of them that is autistic. To take away their autism is to take away their personhood. Despite our politically correct labeling, they are autistic; they don't "have" autism any more than homosexuals autistics don't want to be cured; they want to be accepted. And like other predecessors in civil rights, many autistics don't want to be required to imitate the majority just to earn their rightful place in society.

I'm a middle-aged psychology professor who holds an endowed chair at a major research university. But my son has taught me far more than I ever learned in my lab. Every time he walks by a poster avowing that autism must be eradicated, he teaches me grace. Every time he ignores one of the countless scholarly articles that tower above my desk, asserting he is disordered, he teaches me tolerance. Every time he embraces a world that so frequently rebuffs him, he teaches me unconditional love.

What if next year we celebrate the diversity of social interaction observed within and across all cultures? What if this "awareness" month marked a time to appreciate the variation that all humans demonstrate in their style and competence in communication? What if it heralded an era during which we marveled at the determined focus that in my occupation often wins indefinite tenure but in a precocious child gets labeled as diseased?

Then, neither my son nor I would feel compelled to hide.

By Morton Ann Gernsbacher, Vilas Research Professor and Sir Frederic Bartlett, Professor of Psychology, UW-Madison.

Just south of Florence on Siltcoos Lake

- *Cabins or Tent sites
- *Lakeside and Ocean Walks
- *Non-competitive Games
- *Family Oriented
- *Swimming
- *Crafts All Day
- *Healthy Food
- *Special Presentation
- *Jenaguru Marimba
- *Campfires

Saturday noon - Sunday noon:
Person with autism - \$75
Family / Caregiver each - \$15
Family maximum - \$120
Friday night extra - \$35/ group
Cabin fee - \$20
Tent - no charge



The retreat is designed around the needs of those living with autism. Parents and caregivers can bring their autistic charges and relax with them over the weekend, knowing that they are in a safe and nurturing environment. The retreat is a time for rejuvenation and solidarity. Autists are accepted and enjoyed for themselves, not forced into a procrustean neuro-normal mold. See the registration form or go to: www.kindtree.org.

This is some of the greatest autistic fun there is.

**August 27-29, 2004
Baker Camp, Siltcoos Lake**

KindTree

Summer Autism Camp/Retreat



Our 8th Retreat