



## ASAC NEWS

Hello ASAC members!! In an effort to reach more of our members and supply you all with up-to-date and timely information, ASAC presents its first official newsletter!

We hope you will enjoy all articles and information on local, state, and national news, as well as, what is in the works for our regional autism chapter and satellite support groups.

For those of you in the outlying parishes, we have established groups in St. Landry and Iberia parishes, with the goal of establishing a support group in each

of the parishes we serve. It is our hope that if you are not able to make the meetings on the first Tuesday of every month, in Lafayette, at Alesi's on Johnston Street, at 6:30 pm, you will still get the support and information you need in your local areas.

In St. Landry Parish, contact Bambi Polotzola, 337-585-3715, or via email at bam-bi4chas@bellsouth.net.

For those in Iberia Parish, your contact person is Darrel Thibodeaux, 337-577-0986, or his wife, Anne Porche, you can reach Anne via email at aspiemom51294@yahoo.com. You can also find the contact

information for the board of directors on the ASAC website under Contacts. Although we are now using an answering service to help us with the incoming calls, we are still available to you, this just helps us keep track of the calls we receive.

Please do not hesitate to contact ASAC using the new phone number, 337-369-2885. Please visit the chapter's **NEW** website at [www.acadianaautism.com](http://www.acadianaautism.com).

### Autism Society of Acadiana (ASAC)

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### Be Sure to Read

- New ASAC website—page 1
- Registration for 2008 Walk for Hope—page 2
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- ASAC and SERTOMA—page 4

## A Message from Theron Pitre, Chairman, ASAC Board of Directors

Our membership has grown so much lately, I don't know if that's a good or bad thing. Good, because we are able to reach out to more families who need support and bad because the number of diagnoses of Autism has grown so much. In 1985, Mrs. Laura Robertson began this group along with other parents and professionals, including Carolyn Tate, who still remains very active today. They were able to recognize the need for a local support group; their vision to look ahead has helped so many of us today who need guidance, information and support.

Over 20 years later, families from all of Acadiana are still able to get support needed to help our loved ones with autism because of its mem-

bers who have continued to make themselves available for others. As we continue to move forward, I am grateful to have this opportunity to serve you, and I will continue to work as hard as those others have had in the past to help meet the needs of our organization and its members.

We have a lot of work to do and new challenges to overcome; I want to encourage everyone to be a part of your support organization. Acadian Society for Autistic Citizens of ASA has grown and has a new name that we hope will be able to spread the word even more. **Autism Society of Acadiana** is still **ASAC** and that will never change. We will begin an intense membership drive hop-

ing to encourage everyone to update the records that we currently maintain. We want to form a strong support system and voice to strengthen our role as a regional chapter of our national organization, the Autism Society of America.

Please, as you receive the request to update your membership, return the postcards back to us; this will help us provide each of you with current and better information, a quarterly newsletter, such as the one you are reading today, and we can assist you with stipends when needed with the funds set aside for that purpose.

Most of all, remember this is your support organization,

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and, with each one of you participating, our voices can be heard.

Thank You,

Theron Pitre

Chairman,

ASAC Board of Directors

## 2nd Annual WALK for Hope, 3/29/08, Parc International, Lafayette

It is almost time for our 2nd Walk for Hope!! We are once again using Parc International in downtown Lafayette as our location for this event. This is a very wholesome, family-oriented event! Your paid registration allows you to participate in the Walk, all of the activities immediately following the walk itself, and you will also receive a t-shirt if you register before March 20th. You will also be able to enjoy the live music, courtesy of Dollar Short, free food and beverages, and of course there will be lots of door prizes!! JC of KTDY has

once again agreed to MC our Walk for us!

Click on the link to Firstgiving to either sign up as an individual or join a team. If you are the team captain and are forming your own team, please create the page for your loved one with autism and then make sure everyone knows your team name so they can join your team's fundraising efforts.

Information is provided on how to get technical support on the homepage of the online registration for the Walk for Hope through Firstgiving.

Prizes will be awarded for the largest team of walkers, the team who raises the most money and the school team which raises the most money, also.

Please join us as we work to raise awareness of autism in Acadiana!! For questions on the walk event, call the general ASAC chapter number,

ASAC proudly sponsors Boy Scout Troop 16 for all boys, including those with autism and Asperger's Syndrome. For more information, contact Darrel Thibodeaux, 577-0986.

## PIECES TO THE PUZZLE: Bright Lights to Brighter Futures

ASAC proudly presented our first gala event, "Pieces to the Puzzle: Bright Lights to Brighter Futures" on December 15, 2007. This event was held in Opelousas at Evangeline Downs Clubhouse.

The evening's entertainment included: door prizes, a cash bar, a silent auction and live music. ASAC also awarded its first minigrants to educators, schools and clinics in the

Acadiana area. A volunteers recognition program saw special awards presented to: SERTOMA, for the Civic and Community AWARD, VALERO Energy Corporation for The Corporate Award, and the Laura Robertson Award was presented to Vickie Nettles. The winner of The Grand Prize, 2 tickets to the 2008 CJ and Debbie Ray SailAway was Barbara Guillory of Erath.

The silent auction raised \$2,630 which

was used to help offset expenses of the event.

ASAC will soon be planning its next Pieces event—we hope to see you there!!



## Stipends—Money to help you attend programs and conferences

ASAC is providing stipends to pay for the cost of programs and activities to benefit the person with autism in your family. We believe everyone should have the right to access programs that are recreational and/or therapeutic in nature, such as day camps, swimming, TOP soccer, Challenger Baseball, and horse-riding therapy, to name a few.

ASAC will pay the program directly, but we do need you to fill out a form for our records. The cost of the activity or program cannot exceed \$150.00 per year.

We also provide a certain amount of stipends for workshops and conferences that are related to autism, treatments, interventions, or therapies. ASAC members will receive priority over non-members. Persons will be considered members who have records on file with the chapter. There will be several membership options offered. In one option, dues will be assessed for ASAC only. Another option will assess dues for ASAC and ASA. The third option is open to everyone, to participate in activities and the support groups without officially joining as an ASAC or ASA member.

These options will be explained at the upcoming general support meetings. Please feel free to contact ASAC, 369-2885, if you have any questions.

In 2007, ASAC dispensed 106 stipends to families in Acadiana!! We were able to do this through our fundraising efforts and generous donations from private individuals, businesses, and the Acadiana community at-large!!

## What IS RDI? (excerpted from RDI handout by Vickie Poston Roy)

### 1. What is RDI?

RDI is a systematic, developmental approach intended to help people with autism develop and maintain rewarding relationships with other people and to function in a dynamic world.

### 2. Who developed RDI?

RDI continues to be developed by Drs. Steven Gutstein and his wife Rachelle Sheely of the Connections Center in Houston, TX. Dr. Gutstein is the author of Solving the Relationship Puzzle. Their website is [www.rdiconnect.com](http://www.rdiconnect.com).

### 3. How is RDI different from other treatment approaches?

RDI addresses what Dr. Gutstein sees as the core deficit of autism—the inability to function in dynamic systems which disrupts the critical ongoing feedback system necessary for a caregiver and their child to establish an effective intersubjective relationship with each other. RDI directly addresses the child's desire to remain in a static system and the inability or difficulty to function well in systems that constantly change.

RDI is parent-based therapy, where parents are the most important and primary therapists. The role of the RDI provider is to function as a consultant to the family providing guidance and suggestions to the parents, as well as assessing the child's developmental level and customizing the RDI program.

Contact information for Ms. Vicky Poston Roy, PhD., CCC-SLP, 225-930-0208, or 802-9430. [www.accesstobettercommunication.com](http://www.accesstobettercommunication.com) or [vposten22@hotmail.com](mailto:vposten22@hotmail.com).

## National News from ASA

Lee Grossman, President and CEO of ASA, who has a son with autism, announces ASA's goals and objectives for 2008.

a.. Early Autism Diagnosis - ASA will call for routine autism screening in America for all children at 12, 18 and 24 months so that they can get appropriate treatments and support in the crucial early years

b.. Treatment-Guided Research - We need to translate information on treatments that work into a body of knowledge on practical, effective interventions that families can utilize today.

c.. Advocacy and Awareness - ASA intends to put autism on the

platform for the 2008 US Presidential and Congressional campaigns, starting with our Vote 4 Autism Today Initiative. You can download a PDF copy of our Questions for the Candidates by visiting the ASA website, and click on the "In 2008, Vote for Autism!" icon.

ASA will send out national alerts to its members when our efforts are needed to help pass or defeat legislation which would affect individuals with autism spectrum disorders.

One of the benefits of your ASA membership is a subscription to the Autism Advocate. Each issue usually has a specific theme, from employment, to edu-

cation, to community programs, or recreation and leisure activities. Another benefit for ASA members is the ASA e-newsletter, ASA-NET. To sign up or renew your membership online, visit ASA's new interactive website, [www.autism-society.org](http://www.autism-society.org).

We exist as an ASA chapter. Just as ASAC needs your support, so does ASA!! If you have any questions, please contact ASAC via email, [asa-cofasa@yahoo.com](mailto:asa-cofasa@yahoo.com), or 369-2885.



## LaCAN, Waiver Slots, and Advocacy

ASAC urges all its members to join the grassroots organization, LaCAN, Louisiana Citizens for Action Now, whose goal is to get needed supports in place for individuals with disabilities to access services and programs in their own homes and communities. Almost 12, 000 individuals with disabilities and their families are currently waiting for services.

Each region has a LaCAN team leader. The person to contact for our region is Linda Ledet at Families Helping Families in Lafayette, 1-800-378-9854 or 984-3458 or visit [www.lacadvocates.org](http://www.lacadvocates.org).

Due to the effective advocacy actions of LaCAN members, the past legislative session ended with 1500 "slots" being allotted for waiver services, where the family's or individual's income is

"waived" or not counted, under a certain amount, in order to receive services and supports.

Join LaCAN! Experience the power to effect change!



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## Autism Society of Acadiana

ASAC  
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Lafayette, LA 70509

Phone: 337-369-2885  
asacofasa@yahoo.com

www.acadianaautism.com

<Postage>

### Speakers for ASAC/Lafayette Meeting:

<Mailing Address of recipient>

Feb- Steve Jankower, atty, special  
needs trusts

March-Michelle Bienvenu—Haven Hills  
project

Visit ASAC's new website for announce-  
ments of the meetings for the St.  
Landry Chapter of ASAC and the Iberia  
Chapter of ASAC!!

\*\* Acadian Society for Autistic Citizens follows the Options Policy of the Autism Society of America. We do not endorse any one particular therapy over another and provide information on various treatments and therapies for informational and educational purposes only.

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## ASAC, A New SERTOMA Affiliate!

ASAC continues to benefit from its association with Sertoma, (**S**ervice to **M**ankind) an international civic organization dedicated to improving the lives of those with communicative (speech and hearing) disorders. From the very beginning, when Dr. John Oller first contacted us over three years ago, and a group from ASAC volunteered for the 2005 AirShow, we have forged a bond with a group of fantastic and caring people who are ready and willing to support ASAC and our families!

We experienced their generosity once again, when Sertoma sponsored the first conference of its kind in Louisiana in April of 2007. Sertoma Secretary and ASAC Board Member, Dr. John Oller, was the principal organizer and planner of Autism 07, the

Sertoma International Conference on Autism Spectrum Disorders. Professionals, family members, and persons with autism who had the opportunity to attend the conference, were amazed at the wealth of information presented on treatments, strategies, and suspected causes of autism. We cannot thank Dr. Oller and Sertoma enough for all they have done for us!!

ASAC is now the first autism chapter to be accepted as an affiliate of Sertoma International! The official certificate was presented to ASAC at the 2007 Walk for Hope by Sertoma President, Mr. Ron Chauffe. This was only the beginning of a great partnership that will increase our means to serve individuals with autism and their families.

Sertoma also sponsored a verbal behavior workshop presented by Holly York of The Einstein Academy, on June 15-16, 2007 at the First Baptist Church in Lafayette. The workshop was mainly geared to increasing communication of those persons with autism who have low or no verbal communication skills. Participants also learned about the principles of verbal behavior. You may contact Holly York through The Einstein Academy, [www.theeinsteinacademy.com](http://www.theeinsteinacademy.com)

We eagerly look forward to future opportunities working together with Sertoma for the benefit of people with autism and their families in Acadiana.

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