

WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY IS APRIL 2, 2009

April 2, 2009 is World Autism Awareness Day (WAAD). The Autism Society of America Chapter-Kern Autism Network takes this opportunity to raise awareness about autism and encourage early diagnosis and intervention.

“Autism is the most common of the Pervasive Developmental Disorders, affecting an estimated 1 in 150 births (Centers for Disease Control Prevention, 2007). Roughly translated, this means as many as 1.5 million Americans today are believed to have some form of autism. And this number is on the rise.” (Autism Society of America)

“Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs) are developmental disabilities that typically last throughout a person’s life. They include autistic disorder, pervasive developmental disorder-not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS, including atypical autism), and Asperger syndrome. People with ASDs have significant impairments in social skills and communication.” (The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention “Fact Sheet”)

Fifteen years ago a group of parents and grandparents in Kern County first met to discuss how to help their children who were affected by autism. From this group has grown The Kern Autism Network (KAN), an organization dedicated to helping families deal with all aspects of autism as it affects their lives.

KAN hosts workshops throughout the year. This year topics have included Visual Structure in the Home, Occupational Therapy in the Home, How to Understand IEP Goals and Objectives, and Behavior Therapy. Our April 18 workshop will address Transition Planning for High School Students with Disabilities.

Our March workshop, “Growing Up on the Spectrum,” was a panel discussion of adults living with autism and Asperger’s Syndrome. An Adult Support Group for Individuals on the Spectrum, ages 18 and up, will begin meeting April 4 to encourage new friendships within their community.

KAN also holds an annual conference in February. Our 2009 speakers were Chantal Sicile-Kira and Fred R. Volkmar, M.D. Sicile-Kira is an international speaker, author and advocate who has been involved with autism spectrum disorders for over 20 years as both a parent and a professional. She served on the taskforce on Transitional Services & Supports reporting to the California Legislative Blue Ribbon Commission on Autism.

Dr. Volkmar is the Irving B. Harris Professor of Child Psychiatry, Pediatrics, and Psychology and Director of the Yale University Child Study Center, Yale University School of Medicine. Dr. Volkmar was the primary author of the

American Psychiatric Association's DSM-IV autism and pervasive developmental disorders section.

A recent survey of California families and individuals on the spectrum revealed a lag of 2.4 years between the time parents first suspected something was wrong and the time their child received a diagnosis of ASD. Fifty-three percent of these families reported that outside of school, their children played with no one. ("Autism in California Survey," Autism Society of California, March 2009)

The Autism Society of America Chapter-Kern Autism Network provides support, information and education to families, professionals and the public throughout Kern County. We work towards cooperation, coordination and the creation of services between individuals and agencies.

Please call or visit our website if you would like information about workshops or the support group. Let us know what topics would interest you for our workshops or conference. New members are always welcome.

Autism Society of America Chapter-Kern Autism Network
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Autism Facts and Quotes

On December 18, 2007 the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 62/139 declaring World Autism Awareness Day (WAAD) to be celebrated April 2, in perpetuity. This UN Resolution is one of few official disease or disorder-specific United Nations Days and will bring the world's attention to autism, a pervasive disorder that affects tens of millions.
(www.worldautismawarenessday.org)

"[People with ASDs] often have repetitive behaviors and unusual interests. ASDs can often be diagnosed in children as young as 18 months. Symptoms of ASDs vary from person to person and range from mild to severe."
(The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention "Fact Sheet")
(<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/>)

"You find children with autism everywhere. It looks remarkably the same. There is no social class difference."
(Dr. Fred Volkmar, 2009 Autism Society of America Chapter-Kern Autism Network Conference)

"Number one, people with disabilities don't have all weaknesses. They also have strengths. For the most part, they have strengths. The disability is a relatively

small part. First and foremost, they are a human being, a human being that has overcome an obstacle.”

(Dr. Robert Koegel, 2008 Autism Society of America Chapter-Kern Autism Network Conference)

“The window of opportunity for learning never closes. A lot of people in their 20s and 30s were misdiagnosed. Or they thought they were weird. When they were given the label, most of them felt a sense of relief because then they knew where to look for help. They learned things when they were older that they never mastered earlier.”

(Chantal Sicile-Kira, 2009 Autism Society of America Chapter-Kern Autism Network Conference)

“Problems in diagnosis are relatively common. ... The problem is we have no test for autism. Although we are getting there. We are now seeing children as young as three months that we are worried about. The good news is we can get them services earlier.”

(Dr. Fred Volkmar, 2009 Autism Society of America Chapter-Kern Autism Network Conference)

“What really makes a huge difference in all of the ASD disorders is educational, speech and language therapy, behavioral approaches. There is overwhelming, important, good, scientific information with that. It makes a huge difference in functional outcomes.”

(Dr. Linda Copeland, The Evidence on Complementary & Alternative Medical Interventions for Autism, Kern Autism Network Workshop, April 19, 2008)

“Our kids get picked on. Some of our kids are lucky enough to be placed in environments where they are cherished and loved and nurtured. But the majority are picked on. Until they educate more people, until teachers know more about this, our kids continue to be picked on. ... If we can intervene earlier to stop the teasing and bullying, we could save these kids and make them wonderful citizens in our society.”

(Jeanette McAfee, 2007 Autism Society of America Chapter-Kern Autism Network Conference)

“I have discovered that people with developmental disabilities will have up to seven times more contact with law enforcement than a member of the general population. Don't we want to know about people who will have seven times more contact with us?”

(Dennis Debbaudt, 2007 Autism Society of America Chapter-Kern Autism Network Conference)

“All kids with autism are different. The real advocacy you can do is understanding what his particular deficits are and what services he needs to meet those.”

(Bryna Siegel, Ph.D., The Developmental-Behavioral Approach to Treating Autism: Applying Principles of Development and Motivation, Kern Autism Network Workshop, July 9, 2007)

“Autism In California Survey,” March 2009

“A total of 713 parents and 18 individuals on the spectrum participated. A total of 643 or 90% of the participants completed the survey.”

Co-Morbid Conditions

“Over half (54%) of the parents indicated that their child had a co-morbid condition.” Thirty percent of these indicated Feeding Issues/Picky Eater, and 21 percent indicated allergies.

Medical Insurance

“38% of families indicated that their insurance company denied coverage for an autism related treatment.”

“63% of the parents say that they advocate for themselves or have no need to advocate. 36% have given up and decided not to fight.”

Family Finances

35% of families reported that someone in the family does not work.

“76% of the families reported that they feel that their job is at jeopardy because they have a loved one with ASD. 79% are most concerned that they have to leave work to take care of problems and 69% felt it was the frequent meetings associated with ASD. 58% report difficulty in finding child care.”

Autism Society of California
www.autismsocietyca.org