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THE COMMUNICATOR

A Publication of the Autism National Committee

Introduction

In this first issue of the new year, we are pleased to share articles from presenters at our 2019 conference along with poems, news, and other articles. Topics this month include friendship, higher education, advocacy, a review of a new book, and more. Additional articles from the conference will be in our next issue.

It's membership renewal time! We hope that you have renewed your membership (see the form at the end) to support the work of AutCom, including our newsletter and a new website that is under construction. Membership is also a wonderful gift—still only $10 for autistics and $30 for others. Let's work together in 2020 toward a just world that embraces neurodiversity and in which everyone has a clear, effective voice that is heard and respected.

Autistics Speak about Friendship

At the recent AutCom conference in New Hampshire (October 1-2, 2019), a panel of autistics shared their perspectives on friendship. This can be a subject that many autistics find tricky to navigate, as you will see. The panel included Meaghan Buckley and Yasmin Arshad, who type to communicate, and Dr. JÂcqûelyn Fede, who speaks. They were asked to describe their friendships (i.e., how many, with autistic and/or neurotypical people, how they met), what they look for in a friendship, what kinds of activities they enjoy doing with friends, and what barriers there are in making and keeping friends.

Below are the responses from Meaghan and Yasmin. After their prepared statements, they responded to questions from the facilitators (Lisa Keller and Zach Rossetti) as well.

Meaghan

My name is Meaghan Buckley. I don't have many friends. Kind of like having no relatives. The reason that I haven't any real friends is because my brain works differently than yours. It is hard to make friends when you are struggling hard with just keeping your mind and body in control and not letting your impulses take over. I sometimes am excited to see people I know well, but I can't express my excitement for them because I can't really talk in meaningful sentences. I am so anxious all the time that I can't allow myself to relax and really take people in. If I look at them directly, I see only their faces as blank slates. Only their hair registers. You cannot make friends when you can't look someone in the eye.

The less time I spend with someone, the harder it is for me to relax and be myself around them. Unless they have autism as well and then it is easier to establish a bond of friendship because we understand each other. Quiet time is important or you can get overloaded with distractions with other people keeping you from using your self-control. If you want to be my friend, you have to

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Inside This Issue:

(Speaking About Friendship - Continued)

understand me and be willing to accept me as I am because I am not going to change and you shouldn't have to change, either.

What do you look for in a friend?

Friendship is all about illogical attraction despite or maybe because of differences.

What are some additional barriers to friendship?

Despite what people think, everyone with autism is not without feelings. We do not like to be alone.

Do you have any final thoughts?

To be our friends you have to be able to look beneath the surface and understand who we really are.

Yasmin

My name is Yasmin Arshad. I'm forty-four. I was born in Florence, Italy. I'm bilingual. I work at Gateway Arts; I've been an artist there since turning twenty-one. My art is frankly very obsessive, but it sells. I learned facilitated communication only three years ago. Before, I was very isolated and depressed.

I have, however, always had two very close friends whom I've known my entire life. They are twins, Olivia and Irene. Our mothers were friends before we were born, and we are the same age. We were best friends before I developed late onslaught (sic) autism. The parents stayed friends, so I continued to see them every year. The family adopted a boy who has Down syndrome and autism. Because of him, the twins realized I'm more than meets the eye. Right from the start, the two of them treated me as an equal, taking me out for dinner, shopping, or just everything. Once I learned typing as a way to communicate, our friendship really took off. Now, poetically, our friendship has become all my loftiest dreams and hopes combined. The twins take me everywhere. I've been with them on two trips! Most of all, however, our friendship means we encourage each other.

Olivia is fighting breast cancer that has now metastasized. No way to know if she will win the fight. Irene has a demanding family and a husband who doesn't appreciate her enough. I have my autism to deal with. They live in Italy, but we stay in touch via email. They appreciate my advice. I see them twice a year. It's hard to leave them. I realize that I would not have been so close to them if they hadn't already experienced facilitated communication with their brother. They don't actually do the facilitating, but they know it is really my own voice. So they believe in me and tell me all their thoughts. We laugh and cry together.

My experience is that most neurotypicals ignore me or treat me like a child. Communication is very hard for me. Even at work, most people pay no attention to me. I wish I could have a friend in this country. I realize I'm not easy to be friends with. The difficulty is I'm very obsessive. People get exasperated with my compulsions. Even other autistics! Not easy to have a friend like me who takes things all the time or mopes around muttering. My friends have to be very patient people for sure!

I perhaps only will have these two friends in Italy my whole life. But two friends as close as these means I'm not alone.

What do you look for in a friend?

A friend needs to be able to rise above my idiosyncrasies, as I must accept theirs. No judgement.

What do you like to do with your friends?

Anything. I love sleepovers because that's when we giggle most. Going to be honest. I'm not fussy.

What are some additional barriers to friendship?

Because I'm nonverbal, my real problem is approaching anyone. I usually just mutter nonsense, so the person doesn't know I'm being friendly. My art program people don't even consider me. My instinct is to say eliminate the barriers. But not easy as we autistics can be a handful.

Do you have any final thoughts?

Hope you hear my real voice and ignore my mumbles. My friends love me as I am.

Conclusion

As always, it is difficult to generalize about autistics. A universal constant seems to be that having friends is fine…up to a point. While JÂcqûelyn limits her exposure even to people she likes because she lacks the energy (or desire) to engage, Meaghan craves friends, but is restricted by her body's cooperation. She prefers friends who are either autistic like herself or neurotypicals who have a clear understanding of her behavior. Yasmin has grown up around neurotypicals and prefers their company, but her own behaviors frustrate her.

Because friendships inherently involve two (or more) people, the responsibility for friendship must be shared by neurotypicals as well. Authentic friendship consists of a voluntary and reciprocal relationship in which two individuals show mutual attachment to one another, frequent proximity and companionship, and evidence of enjoyment and affection (Bukowski, Newcomb, & Hartup, 1996; Buysse, Goldman, West, & Hollingsworth, 2008). To achieve such relationships, autistic and neurotypical students must learn together in school and spend time together after school so they can get to know each other and connect based on shared interests. Specifically, neurotypical students need to learn how autistics communicate best, prefer to interact, and demonstrate their intelligence and interests.

Ultimately, the panel challenged the common misinterpretation by neurotypicals that autistics prefer to be alone and without friends. Quite the contrary, friendship was desired, but it can be challenging…and exhausting!

Bringing Autism to a Vermont College

by Kristofor Medina

My name is Kris Medina and I would like to share some of my personal experiences with you. I have a disability called Autism, but I grew up with people supporting me with the right attitude: the brilliant attitude that believed in my ABILITY and not my disability. I was fortunate enough to live in Vermont where inclusion was the norm and not the exception. I attended Barre Town Elementary and Middle School where I was educated alongside my peers. When I was in second grade, I was introduced to supported typing by Alan Kurtz. I questioned if this could be real, if someone was actually attempting to unlock my voice. It was the beginning of the special life that I have led.

I loved learning as a child and grew up in a family where education was valued. However, none of my dreams could have been realized without lots of hard work and determination. After graduating 8th grade I went on to Spaulding High School in Barre VT, where a new challenge began. With the exception of some of the students who knew me, it was like starting all over. I don’t remember having much of a transition plan with the exception of a few visits to see the school and where I would be having classes. I was leaving my entire support staff who not only accepted me but celebrated my accomplishments. There were many new teachers and support staff that needed to be trained.

After graduating from Spaulding High School, I applied to three colleges. I decided to attend the University of Vermont in Burlington. I was awarded several academic scholarships to attend. I chose not to disclose my disability during the admissions process. Working at UVM to earn my degree was probably the most challenging yet rewarding thing of all time. It took a lot of planning and what follows are some of the steps I took to be successful at UVM.

My first and most important step was to establish a connection with the Access office at UVM. Using my self-advocacy skills were essential in the college environment. My facilitators were not provided by UVM. I used my community support and some respite funding to cover theses costs. I was the first student at UVM with a diagnosis of

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Bringing Autism to a Vermont College (Cont.)

Autism to use Facilitated Communication, which required me to first educate my advisor about what accommodations I would need in order to be successful.

I was well supported throughout these years. The ACCESS program worked with me to ensure that I was accommodated to get all of my needs met. I was lucky enough to have professors that wanted me to succeed. They would talk to me prior to the semester beginning, to understand what my accommodations may be and always stayed connected with a supportive attitude. I went to the University of Vermont for eight years and earned my Bachelor of Science Degree in English Literature. It took me eight years to get my degree because of my style of my communication. I was only able to take two classes a semester, due to the length of this process. Although it took me eight years to complete my education, I graduated from UVM in May of 2011.

I was fortunate to have one stable facilitator over the course of my college career. Pascal was my main man who worked by my side with mighty determination. Pascal was also my mentor and acted as my liaison between UVM staff. I created an introduction to my classmates to best describe my method of communication explaining to them that I have difficulty using my voice to speak. Sometimes what I want to say is not what you might hear. That is very frustrating for me. I can speak much better through typing with the help from an experienced facilitator. I have the same need/want to connect with others- I can't do this through speaking. I want others to take the time to type with me and to get to know me.

Before classes started I met with each professor and discussed what would be helpful to prepare for class. I asked questions and asked for the option to have meetings throughout the semester as needed. I explained to the professor how my alternative form of communication worked. I got a copy of the class syllabus and asked for time to review and prepare mentally for the course requirements.

A note taker in class (other than my support person) was assigned to take notes. I sometimes needed emotional support from my support person such as reminders to pay attention to the professor, etc. While typing my response the professor would talk to other students and then come back to me for my input when I was done typing. This was important to discuss before the course began to develop a plan with my input.

I took my tests in a quiet room where I could communicate without disturbing other students. Sometimes I needed additional time to complete the exam. The professor would inform me and my facilitator about the format of the exam, so that if other test-taking materials are needed, I can be prepared and practice before the day of the exam.

Depending on the assignment, more time was sometimes needed to complete a writing assignment. A homework schedule was carefully planned over the course of the week between me and my facilitator. Long-term assignments required additional planning to ensure that assignments were completed on time. I would look to my facilitator and other students for how to organize my time most efficiently.

I had hoped to be able to use the experiences and skills I have acquired to continue to use my voice to advocate for myself and others. I have been focusing on this goal full time and have put all of my efforts into self-advocacy and helping others advocate. Perhaps others think that they are alone in this world of chaos but conversing with other people with common challenges will invoke a different mindset. All of my life I have set goals for my personal gain. I have been very successful with academics and school.

I am proud of so many things in my life but typing to advocate is my biggest working accomplishment. Typing letter by letter at a slow rhythmic pattern takes great energy and focus. I could choose to spend my time engaging in much less demanding activities, but that would leave me feeling empty, so I must push through any obstacle that I may have to make this life full of importance with my words of advocacy.

For more information about me or if you have any questions please email me at kristoformedina@gmail.com

Advocacy Tips from Two Superstars

Presented at the 2019 AutCom Conference
by Graciela Lotharius and Mark Utter

Graciela Lotharius is an autistic, non speaking lover of life and family. She is an advocate for herself and other non speakers. **Mark Utter** is a writer who lives in Vermont. He is autistic and types to communicate. Find and watch his film "I Am in Here" at www.VermontPBS/made and check out his blog at www.utterenergy.org

The Story of Our Lives before We Had Access to Communication

Graciela

It is a hard thing to learn to be your own advocate without having the ability to speak loudly. Advocacy can be so many different things to different people. A lot of my advocacy is related to my needs because many years went by without a way for me to advocate for myself because all of my words were getting too stuck in my mind.

My need to be in more control of my life went unmet for a long time. Many lives are still stuck in this horrible abyss of silence. Life is a struggle when it is covered in a blanket of loneliness and lost words that have no way out. I was living in this abyss of silence for ten years.

During this time many of the lovely people in my life were trying to have the great feeling in their hearts that I was not as bad off as the doctors said I was, but it is hard to listen to the experts while believing in the potential of your child who cannot speak much and is having a lot of other struggles. Many parents get so starstruck by all of the experts and their assertions of incompetence and lifetime illness. A life cannot ever be what it is meant to be when it is seen through this lens of ignorance. Letting go of these ludicrous assumptions can be so hard for many parents.

Luckily my parents never stopped being open to my potential. Getting my freedom back from the hard ideas that I was not competent was the most amazing thing that has ever happened to me.

Mark

I have a body and mind connection disorder. Before I had access to facilitated communication, my living felt like I was on my own. Yet much attention was given to my body. If you can imagine being a glorified pet, that is what it was like.

I was in the world but experiencing it in my own way. People didn't know I knew everything that was going on around me. I found it frustrating that people found me stupid, and I was not.

The Joy of Accessing Communication

Graciela

My first lesson in learning how to work with a letter board went so well and almost had me in tears because I knew that it would make my life better. The hardest part was being great at it. I had many moments of despair when I was learning the ways of the letterboard. However, I was determined to persevere in order to be able to show my intelligence to everyone. It is what I had been wishing for and hoping for for so many years.

It is because of the time and intense practice that I have committed to my way of communicating that I am now able to be here doing this presentation. The many hours of hard work have been worth it.

Sometimes communication can still be a challenge. My body often acts one way while my mind has a totally different thought. Can you imagine this being your reality? It can be really difficult to get out my thoughts with my uncooperative body.

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(Advocacy Tips continued)

I need to get the people in my life to understand the difference between my loops that are just impulsive responses to stimuli in my environment versus the things I want to do or say. It is so hard for the people in my life to really easily learn the difference. Therefore, it is my responsibility to educate them and encourage them to think before they react or respond.

It is important for me to make my situation better if I can. It is not always easy to advocate for myself, but it is often necessary and makes me so much happier with my life.

Mark

Finding a form of communication has been a life saver. It was, and still is, hard to work with new people. It has happened that I have created a film about the importance of facilitated communication in my life.

How Our Lives Have Changed Now That We Have Access to Communication

Graciela

It is awesome to do the things that I really want to do in my life now that I can communicate about these things. Many things in my life have changed for the better. The things that I have access to now have changed the trajectory of my life and have the potential to do the same for so many others.

Now that I am free from the steel bars of the prison of silence my days are full of education and social interaction that was not happening much before I had access to communication.

Mark

My work now is focused on young people who type to communicate and other people with disabilities. Before I made the movie I thought it would liberate me. Oh, I didn't want to be someone with a disability, but I am. We have so much work to get done together to keep shifting the tides of society so we can be seen as important members.

Advocacy Tips and Reflections from the Superstars

Graciela

Because I am in the know about hard times that many like me have without access to communication, I make it one of my life's goals to do whatever I can to help more people get access to great communication. I think that without this lives will never be changed to help other prisoners inside their walls of silence have an opportunity to make their real selves shine.

Being in the limelight while advocating can be difficult because people like to criticize the many individuals who have it in them to do things that give the gift of life and freedom. Life is too short to listen to these naysayers. Instead, it is necessary to listen to your heart. What is it telling you? What are you going to do with this information? Will you heed the call or ignore it?

My advocacy is just getting started, but it is going to be much more than I can handle by myself. This is why it is important to have friends and a lot of really amazing allies on your side who are making a commitment to working together with you. It is also important to educate as many as you can when you can along the way.

Mark

It is essential for people to know how to say what they need and also to make changes that are hard but will make them stronger.

Hello, Stranger: My Life on the Autism Spectrum

by Barbara Moran and Karl Williams

Review by Anne Carpenter

Years ago I became acquainted with Barbara Moran when we both attended Autism National Committee (AutCom) conferences, so I had already met the author and found her to be a genuine and sincere person, with no guile and no hidden agendas. I was delighted to be able to finally learn more about her early life and growing up.

She had told me that she had been in the Menninger Clinic for many years, and in this book, she describes her experiences there in great detail: years of being locked away in an esteemed psychiatric institution without being treated with love or respect as nobody had any grasp of her behavior or her emotions. (She wasn't diagnosed with autism until her 40's!) This made for an unhappy childhood as her parents weren't any better at giving her the love and respect she deserved, so she floundered for years in a psychiatric hospital that offered little help or support for her challenges, including severe sensory processing difficulties, making it impossible for her to be around babies and small children because of the noise.

Moran pulls no punches. Everything she experienced in that inappropriate living situation is in her book for all the world to see, and it isn't cheerful reading. But it is important to learn about how an undiagnosed autistic child was treated at that time. In addition, the reader may be dismayed by how she compensated for her lack of friends and other close relationships: she personified furniture and other objects as a way to form some attachment to keep her from going crazy from sheer loneliness. For example, she found a long, oval-shaped antique table, named it Bertram, and gave it a male quality, much to the dismay of her parents and her sister, and she grew quite attached to Bertram over the years. She also adopted a red refrigerator with a monitor top from the 1930s and named him Rooney, which is Irish for "red." (See the photo in the book.)

Despite what would have made her stand out in so many unusual ways, she managed to forge ahead, working in a nursing home for many years, and she managed to keep that job, despite all of the difficulties she experienced. After she left the Menninger clinic, she was placed in a foster home, another poorly thought-out arrangement, but after several years, she finally got a place of her own and much-needed independence.

I found this book sad, honest, yet hopeful, as I could see a brave soul finally dig herself out of a hole that society wanted her to stay in. Moran has sold her charming pictures of smiling stop lights and multicolored trains, so one might think that this is a happy ending. But her diagnosis came late and by society's standards, that is considered to be many lost years "down the drain." But Moran continues to prevail!

This review first appeared in a publication by Autism Society of Michigan.

Freedom to Control Body

by Jim Mondro

The mind you have on your body does obey but mine doesn't. My mind really tries to be in charge but body of mine fighting it.

For me, people who are like me really easy just to let people do things for me. I try to do things for myself. I try my best, but I can't always do what I want. I eerily feel that my body doesn't be. this goes on for awhile. then my body comes into my mind, and I can control it.

The body is my most hard challenge. I want to get in charge of my motor control.

Question to Jim: What makes the difference between when you can control your body and when you can't? Jim's response: Just luck.

I jump up because of my body getting lost. I love typing. I know that I look like I don't like it but I do. Please don't stop.

My mind really not able to control body most of the time. Real freedom would be to control how I move.

Jim Mondro is 26 years old and non-speaking except for his friendly "Hi." His autism gives him great challenges in motor planning and body management. He enjoys being with people in the many different activities in which he is engaged.

New and Exciting

New Online Resource

The Great Big ABA Opposition Resource List
Compiled and updated by **Stop ABA**
Support Autistics - Advocating for Better Treatment of Autistic Individuals
https://stopabasupportautistics.home.blog/2019/08/11/the-great-big-aba-opposition-resource-list/

Books

- *Autistically Thriving: Reading Comprehension, Conversational Engagement, and Living a Self-Determined Life Based On Autistic Neurology* by Judy Endow, LCSW
- *Being Realistic Isn't Realistic: Collected Essays on Disability, Identity, Inclusion and Innovation* by Norman Kunc and Emma Van der Klift
- *Hello Stranger: My Life on the Autism Spectrum* by Barbara Moran and Karl Williams (see review in this newsletter)
- *In Way Of Music Water Answers Toward Questions Other Than What Is Autism* by Adam Wolfond
- *Leaders Around Me: Autobiographies of Autistics who Type, Point, and Spell to Communicate*, edited by Edlyn Vallejo Pena, Ph.D.
- *My Random Thoughts and Feelings: Speaking Out from Autism* by Todd Washburne

New Organization

Communication FIRST is "the only nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting and advancing the civil rights of the more than 5 million people of all ages in the United States who, due to disability or other condition, are unable to rely on speech alone to communicate. Our mission is to educate the public, advocate for policy change, and engage the justice system to protect and advance the human and civil rights of our historically marginalized community." https://communicationfirst.org/

Training

Conversations that Matter, by Norman Kunc and Emma Van der Klift of Broadreach Training and Resources, is an online values training platform consisting of over 100 short videos (5 to 15 minutes) of conversations with the leading voices in the field of community living and disability rights. Videos can be viewed on a computer, a tablet, or a smartphone. They add four NEW videos every month.
https://www.broadreachtraining.com/what-is-conversations-that-matter

> "There is no such thing as a value-free way of working with others. The challenge is to keep ourselves honest and to consider what values we actually use in our work and not just the values we say we use."
> Herb Lovett, *Learning to Listen - Positive Approaches and People with Difficult Behavior*

In Memoriam

We recently learned of the death over a year ago of an early AutCom Board member, Wade Hitzing, 1941–2018. Ellis Wade Hitzing was a distinguished psychologist and nationally recognized advocate for people with disabilities. He wrote and spoke passionately of the need to fully integrate people with special needs into society. His original focus in psychology was applied behavior analysis, but he later described himself as a "recovered behaviorist."

In the early 80s, Hitzing issued an influential report, "The Need to Shift from a Facility-Based to a Home-Centered Service System." About that time he met Herb Lovett, president of the newly formed Autism National Committee (AutCom), and they frequently engaged in an informal joint consulting practice promoting positive and respectful services and supports for all people with disabilities. After Lovett died in 1999, Wade Hitzing honored Lovett's memory and service goals by joining the Board of AutCom and serving for eight years. Leadership roles he had in supporting people with developmental and intellectual disabilities included the Positive Behavior Approaches Committee for TASH.

Renew Your Membership! See the form on page 11

Letter to Sesame Street

Joan Ganz Cooner, Co-Founder & Chair, Executive
Committee, Sesame Workshop
August 12, 2019

Dear Ms. Cooner:

As president of the Autism National Committee, or AutCom, I am writing on behalf of the Board members and the general members to condemn Sesame Street's decision to use the character Julia and its powerful platform with children and adults to promote the Autism Speaks 100 Days Kit and Screening Checklist, both of which provide stigmatizing assumptions and perspectives of autism.

We are deeply concerned that promoting these resources, while done with the best of intentions to provide helpful information for parents, will send parents to resources that are flawed and lacking in broader, more progressive and enlightened information and views of autism. The financial interests of Autism Speaks contribute to strong bias in their resource documents, which are designed to increase donations rather than to question and challenge many current and flawed assumptions about autism. Such bias includes likening autism to cancer, comparing having an autistic child to losing a child to death, and assuming that if a child does not demonstrate clear understanding of something or display observable interest in others, that there is indeed no such interest. Autistics, including adults who have significant support needs and who communicate using a device such as Julia's (although much more complex apps than her limited eight programmed choices--half of which are nouns) many times over have told us that this thinking is harmful and seriously flawed. For these and many reasons, we have grave concerns about Julia being used to lead parents to such resources.

As you know, early quality television programming for children built the foundation for the success of Sesame Street. Beginning in the early 1960s and throughout the 1970s, indeed, until his death in 2003, Fred Rogers advocated for the rights of children—all children—to receive quality television programming that was free from commercial influence. He collaborated with leading educators of the day, incorporating their suggestions into his show, Mr. Roger's Neighborhood. He appeared before Congress about the value of funding PBS. He placed an emphasis on inclusiveness, kindness, understanding and education, saying "Those of us in broadcasting have a special calling to give whatever we feel is the most nourishing that we can for our audience." He added, "We are servants to those who watch and listen."

When Sesame Street was launched, it was under this aegis of inclusion and understanding. Over the years, Sesame Street has represented tolerance of and kindness to individuals who are "different." Julia, the autistic character developed between Autistic Self-Advocacy Network, or ASAN, and the See Amazing project, is just one example. Julia shows kids and parents that autistics do have abilities that often go unnoticed.

Autistics are amazing people, with rich inner lives and a unique way of looking at the world. They come in all different sizes, shapes, colors and abilities—just like neurotypicals. The messages of Autism Speaks and, now, Sesame Street, only serve to perpetuate the myths about autistic people and their feelings, empathy, and intelligence.

Like ASAN, we at AutCom (whose Board members include several autistics and do not take any fiscal compensation) call on Sesame Street to recognize the damage they are doing, end their promotion of the Autism Speaks resources, and commit, once more, to producing and promoting only content which increases the inclusion, acceptance and well-being of autistic children. Remember that we are servants to those who watch and listen.

We are having our 2019 AutCom Conference on November 1-2 in Concord, NH, and we invite you to send a representative to attend. Our theme this year is "More Power to Us: Civil Rights for Autistics." Most of the presenters and about a third of the attendees will be autistics, including many who use augmentative and alternative methods to communicate. We hope that someone from your Sesame Street/Sesame Workshop will come to hear the perspectives of autistics.

Sincerely,
Lisa Keller, MS-CCC/SLP, President, AutCom –
Autism National Committee
info@autcom.org

My Soaring Spirit

by Eric Loening

The great oak stands apart and sheds its leaves. It gives up its wondrous flare to the ether anxious to praise the atmosphere that surrounds it. The phase will soon pass and the oak will slumber under a mantle of snow. Few will suspect how thrilling this is to me as I watch it unfold.

Eric lives in Greenfield, NH, and has been typing since the early 90s.

Thumbs Up and Down

Thumbs Up

SLP Neurodiversity Collective and its mission "to provide free public access to pro-neurodiversity focused therapists, to advocate for the disabled populations we serve and for our therapists, and to provide education about therapy practices and methodologies which are developmentally and relationship based, non-trauma inducing and which respect human rights, dignity and sensory preferences." https://slpndc.org/

Petition for "No ABA Mandate for SLP Autism Board Certification!" https://www.change.org/p/american-speech-language-hearing-association-asha-no-aba-mandate-for-slp-autism-board-certification

Continuing demands by advocates and human rights organizations, including the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, for the Judge Rotenberg Center in Massachusetts to end its use of electric skin shocks

Global work by autistic environmental activist Greta Thunberg to bring attention to and progress in resolving the increasingly devastating effects of climate change

Thumbs Down

Efforts by ASHA (American Speech, Language, and Hearing Association) to mandate that Speech Language Pathologists (SLPs) working with autistic individuals obtain the ABA-focused Board Certified Specialist in Autism Spectrum Disorders (BCS-ASD) certification.

Continued widespread use of restraint and seclusion rooms in schools and facilities for non-emergency situations

Save these Dates!

Trainings and Conferences

Innovations in Education 2020: Opportunities Are Endless, March 14-15, 2020, Atlanta Marriott Northeast/Emory, Atlanta, GA—Innovations in education for students with sensory movement differences. http://www.innovations-in-education.com/

2 Day Introductory Workshop in Supporting Communication: Developing Frameworks for Support and Learning to be a Facilitator, March 30-31, 2020, 9:00 - 4:00, 201 ABC Goldstein Student Center, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY. https://ici.syr.edu/events/introductory-workshop-spring-2020/

Inclusion: Embrace the Adventure, a conference hosted by Inclusion Connection, April 27-28, 2020, 9:00 - 4:00, Candeo Church, Cedar Falls, Iowa. http://www.inclusionconnection.org/

AutCom Opposes Linking Gun Violence and Mental Disabilities

AutCom has signed onto the Joint Statement on Gun Violence Prevention Policy and Mental Health Disabilities by Members and Allies of the Coalition for Smart Safety. Excerpt: "Our country is faced with a rise in hate crimes targeting marginalized communities and an increase in racially motivated mass shootings in recent years. Hate and racism are not mental health disabilities, nor should they be treated as such. There are no medical providers, procedures, or medications that exist that can treat a person's hatred. Gun violence is not clinical in nature— it is a societal problem . . . We will not accept or support any legislation that sacrifices the civil rights of people with disabilities in exchange for the appearance of action on gun violence. Effective reform can and should be accomplished without compromising the civil rights of people with disabilities. We call upon all of our legislators to condemn this dangerous rhetoric and refute any related legislative proposals that will put the lives and freedoms of Americans with disabilities at risk." Read the entire statement at the following link:

http://www.bazelon.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/11-8-19-Coalition-for-Smart-Safety-Joint-Statement.pdf

Principles of the Autism National Committee

As a member of the Autism National Committee, I endorse for all autistics and those with related disabilities the development of high-quality community services, including education, residences, jobs/job training programs, and of individualized support services in all locations for both individuals and their family members; of state-of-the-art communication options for all individuals with unique communication and social needs; of adequate supports to every family to assist them in maintaining their family member with a disability in their home at least throughout the childhood and adolescent years; and the dissemination of available knowledge of those aspects of the disability requiring special support and understanding; the promotion of research to provide parents and professionals with greater insight into the unique needs of individuals with autism and related disabilities; and the use, development, and promotion of positive, respectful approaches for teaching every aspect of life.

Moreover, I oppose the use of institutions to separate people from their communities and deprive them of dignity, freedom and the level of independence they can achieve in supportive community living; the use of procedures involving pain, humiliation, deprivation, and dangerous drugs as a means to alter and control individualsí behavior; the increasing use of bizarre technology to control self-injurious and aggressive behavior; the widespread ignorance of the basic social and communicative needs of people with autism; and the widespread disregard for the individual's unique, basic and human needs. I object to programs which disregard the skills, preferences and basic human needs of the people they serve, and I believe that there is no longer need or any justification for using painful and abusive procedures.

- -

AutCom Annual Membership Form

Join any time. Renew each January (except for Lifetime Members).

Name ____

Address ____

City __________________________ State _____ Zipcode ________ Phone ________________

Email ____ Newsletter by email ___ or print ___

I want to _____ Renew my membership _____ Become a member

I am a/an _____ Autistic person _____ Family member _____ Friend

_____ Student _____ Professional (field) ______________________________

Enclosed is my membership fee of: _____ $10.00 (autistic person)

_____ $30.00 (regular membership) _____ $10.00 (student membership)

_____ $75.00 (supporting membership) _____ $500.00 (lifetime membership)

I am enclosing an additional $ _______ donation to speed up the good work!

As a donor, I want to be listed ____ by name ____ anonymously.

Send this form or a copy and a check payable to Autism National Committee to
Anne Bakeman, AutCom Treasurer
3 Bedford Green, South Burlington, VT 05403

Autism National Committee
3 Bedford Green
South Burlington, VT 05403

Time to Renew or Join Today!

Annual membership begins in January
Membership form on page 11

THE COMMUNICATOR is a publication of the Autism National Committee, Inc., a 501 (c) (3) charitable organization founded in 1990 to protect and advance the civil rights of people with Autism/Pervasive Developmental Disorder and related disorders of communication and behavior. Contributions of articles, information and letters are welcomed. The Communicator does not carry advertising or fund raising announcements, and we reserve the right to edit all submissions. Your comments are actively sought. Send them to
communicator@autcom.org

Attention AutCom Members

Consider requesting extra copies of this newsletter in print to share with your legislator, DD Council, local Arc chapter, families who might want to join AutCom, your child's teacher, and others. Email Barbara Cutler, bccutler@aol.com, to request additional copies. Be sure to include your mailing address.

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