

KEEP IN TOUCH



News and Views from Irish Autism Action

Autumn 2008

IAA launch first Autism Helpline on World Autism Day - 2nd April 2008
Phone 1890 818 518



Pictured: Keith Duffy, Patron with Eleanor Dwyer of the Red Door School, at the launch of the Autism Helpline on April 2nd

Mission Statement

Irish Autism Action's mission is to raise the quality of life of individuals and their families affected by autism through ensuring the provision of the highest standards in education, care, support, employment and equality of living opportunities in partnership with families. 'Help us to be a voice for those who have none'

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Messages from our Chairman & Patron

Cormac Rennick

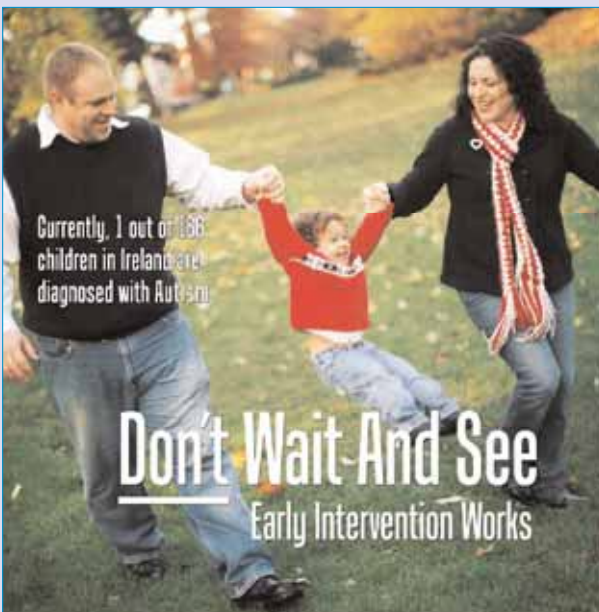
Friends,

World Autism Day 2nd April 2008 was a landmark day for Irish Autism Action. Our objective on the day was to celebrate the positives in the lives of families affected by autism. Our parent-led initiatives are making a difference.

The launch of our helpline and our updated website will provide more comprehensive and up to date information on autism. The alliances that we have established such as Autism Speaks and our Pobal project, being undertaken with Aspire, Gheel, Tuiscint and Cork Association for Autism, are testaments to the way forward. If we are to be the groups that will most influence the standards and quality of provision, we must work together in a co-ordinated way.

In this issue you will read about many exciting plans and opportunities. You will be provided with progress reports on our strategic objectives but most importantly of all, you will read how a small organisation, in terms of full time staff, is enabling families to be empowered in facilitating the best possible future for their children.

My sincere thanks to all our staff and volunteers for making this organisation as strong and as influential as it can be in representing the autism community in Ireland.




Keith Duffy
Patron, Irish Autism Action

www.autismireland.ie
Lo-call 1890 818 518

 Irish Autism Action
Raising Standards
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Keith Duffy

Hi. Keith here!

The 2nd of April, World Autism Day, will stick in my mind for a long time. It started at 6am with the Celuplast Lifecycle. Eamon and the gang, thanks for a great fundraising event! On the day we met with lots of our corporate sponsors who have been so generous to this charity. You will see lots of photographs in this issue acknowledging the great day. From a personal perspective, the launch of our Autism Helpline is very special to me. When Mia was first diagnosed, we did not know where to go for help. One of my pledges when I became patron of Irish Autism Action was to make sure others would not have the same experience. We now have in place the following:

- ▲ An information officer in our Solas Centre
- ▲ Comprehensive information on our website
- ▲ Entitlement booklet available from both our National Office and Solas Centre
- ▲ A National Helpline

As you probably know, I have been busy touring with Boyzone but we still managed to make time for a wonderful event at the Keith Duffy PGA Golf Classic sponsored and hosted by Jim Mansfield and the Mansfield Trust on June 5th. Many thanks to the Mansfields for the outstanding hospitality and generosity. Also thanks to my friends in show business who turned up in force to support the day. Finally, I cannot mention the golf without expressing thanks to Ken Doherty and Bernard Flynn for the 2nd Golfing with the Stars for Autism event in Mullingar. Keep an eye out for upcoming events in this newsletter, because without your generosity Irish Autism Action could not survive to do the important job



 Irish Autism Action
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World Autism Awareness Day

World Autism Awareness Day 2nd April 2008

Every GP gets the Message!

As part of World Autism Awareness Month (April 2008) IAA, supported by O2 Ireland, extended World Autism Awareness Day into Autism Awareness Month. Throughout the month of April, IAA ran a national advertising and public awareness campaign and distributed information to every GP surgery in the country. Information leaflet shown below:



IAA Admobile



As part of World Autism Awareness Day, IAA employed the services of Admobile, which contained posters from our awareness campaign.

We had one Admobile parked outside the conference of the

British Psychological Society at the RDS. The admobile was visible to all of the conference delegates coming and going from the venue on the 3 days.

The second Admobile accompanied the Celuplast cycle along its journey from Lucan to Enniscrone and also came to Mullingar on the day of the Golfing Event 'Golfing with the stars for Autism'. The Admobile drove through the streets of Mullingar while staff from the Saplings School in Mullingar got their buckets out in the afternoon to collect money! Thank you to the girls from Saplings for helping us out on the day.

Autism Helpline

Also on April 2nd, IAA launched a new helpline for parents of children with autism. The Helpline number is 1890 818 518 and is in operation from 7pm to 10pm, Monday to Friday.

The establishment of the helpline is a direct response to calls from parents for a support service that would put them in touch with other families affected by the condition with a view to sharing experiences and advice.

* The Iris O'Brien Foundation is resourcing part of the operational costs of this helpline.



National Ad Campaign

Pictured is a copy of the advert that appeared in 22 national and regional newspapers and magazines throughout the month of April. Irish Autism Action also ran an awareness advertisement on 10 radio stations throughout the country during that month.



BPS Conference RDS Dublin



Cormac Rennie Chairman, gave the opening address at the 3 day conference of the British Psychological Society at the RDS on April 2nd.

Pictured below is a representative of the BPS being interviewed by Ciara Doherty from Newstalk, who covered all of the IAA events that took place as part of World Autism Awareness Day on April 2nd.



Research

Irish Autism Action are supporting the first national research programme into the incidence of autism, which was also launched on World Autism Awareness Day. The research is being conducted by Dublin City University, led by Professor Anthony Staines in conjunction with the European Autism Information System and IAA. The outcome of this research will, for the first time, provide information relating to the rate of autism in Ireland. It will also offer a comparative analysis across all European countries. Expected outcomes include a breakdown of the prevalence rate for each specific disorder in the autistic spectrum range, the link to birth rate and the ability to plan around the future need for services.

News from our Groups

Autism LifeCare Trust – Launched April 21st 2008

Many young people with autism in Ireland today find that opportunities for second and third levels, vocational training, further or continuing education are severely limited across the spectrum. It was evident from the Task Force Report (2001) that the education provision for pupils in this age category with autism was very limited and not much has changed since then. The less able autistic adolescents or adults experience considerable anxiety due to the fact that there are lengthy waiting lists for the very few post-eighteen autism-specific services. Autism LifeCare Trust was established to address the needs of adolescents and adults with Autism because they belong to a group who are marginalised and extremely vulnerable. Access to autistic-specific services are very problematic, especially for those over eighteen years of age.

Individuals do not 'grow out' of autism, nor does it just go away on its own. The much improved behaviour and skills seen in the current generation of students completing Setanta School (in South Dublin) will inevitably erode without maintenance. Both young and older adults on the autism spectrum need ways to maintain the skills they have and to continue to learn. If the state does not provide effective adult service and supports, they will be failing a generation of individuals wasting considerable financial resources, years of time and effort invested by these individuals and their families and the tremendous dedication of many of the staff in Setanta who prepared them for a life of independence and productivity.

The adults who will need to be served and supported in the coming years are from two differing populations. On one hand, students who will leave Setanta School now and over the coming years will have received individualised communication, recreation and leisure, self-help, community, and social skills programming. While these individuals have a range of functioning levels, they tend to have moderate to very significant needs for support. These young people with ASD can often demonstrate impressive performances, but it must be stressed that these performances have taken place within the context of the high degree of structure and support provided within the school they attend. Once they enter adult service, the appropriate type, level and quality of supports must be in place for this group to continue to function as well as they do while in the educational program. Our concern is that the good behavioural status seen in exiting students

greatly reflects the strong systems of supports they have been receiving and that skills will deteriorate and behaviours will decline when educational supports are replaced by the greatly reduced support level available in our adult system.

The second population is perhaps even more diverse. This group consists of adults who range in age from 21 through their 50's or 60's or beyond. While in school, they may have had a variety of educational classifications, such as learning disability or social-emotional disturbance or they may not have been identified at all. Whatever their educational history, what they have in common are impairments that put them somewhere on the autism spectrum. Many are diagnosed with Aspergers Syndrome. More have relatively high cognitive functioning, their adaptive skills (skills needed for independent living and working in the community) may be surprisingly limited in at least some areas, such as appropriate social skills. These individuals may develop significant needs quite suddenly, through the loss of natural supports such as death of an aged parent or loss of a job long held.

They are often found at home, having failed to obtain or maintain employment. These individual may also have to cope with the issues involved in being newly identified with an autism spectrum disorder. Even young adults who may have had appropriate services in school and functioned relatively well, frequently finding it much more challenging to make friends, keep a competitive job and maintain their independent living skills once out of the structure of a school programme. Services are struggling to address the employment needs of this group. These services are short term and staff have little experience or education in meeting these needs. Our adult services are not designed to meet the needs of these individuals who need specialised lifelong support.

For many adults with autism, there are two key areas where there has been an increase in recognition and diagnosis over recent years and this can be observed at both ends of the autistic spectrum. There is now good evidence that a significant number of those adults who traditionally resided in long stay hospitals, day centres and particularly those who present with behavioural challenges to service, fall within the autistic spectrum. Often these individuals have associated severe learning disabilities.



News from our Groups

Autism LifeCare Trust (contd)

Autism LifeCare Trust was set up by the families of students attending Setanta School and friends of Setanta School to address the specific needs of persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder over the age of 18 in the South Dublin/Wicklow area.

The aim of the Trust is to advocate for and develop with other autism appropriate services and supports for adolescents and adults with autism by providing information, training, skill building, person centred planning, transition planning, supported living and employment opportunities that focus on the needs of the Adolescents/Adults with Autism

The objective of the Trust is to work in partnership with the Dept of Education, the Dept of Health, other state bodies, service providers and others to develop supports and services for people with Autism that will enhance their quality of life and secure their future.

Our first project is the development of an 11 bed supported living accommodation project for adults with autism in the Stillorgan area of Dublin South. This project got the go ahead in January and involves us working in partnership with Respond and Autism Initiative who will be responsible for the development of this service. Our second project is working with Autism Initiative and other service providers regarding the development of an Outreach Support to young adults who wish to go on to further education and training in the Dublin South area. Our third project is creating personal networks for people with autism and supporting families to plan for the future through life long planning, so their son or daughter with autism can achieve a good life that is safe and secure.

We are also engaged in lobbying our policymakers for recognition of Autism as a unique disability by all government bodies and the establishment of a National Autism Strategy that will address and fund the needs of this population.

Geraldine Graydon, Projects Co-ordinator

Autism LifeCare Trust. Email: graydon@esatclear.ie

Barn dance raises a whopping €65,000

A BARN dance in Curracloe raised a phenomenal €65,000 in one night for two worthy Wexford causes. Wexford Community Workshop and Cottage Autism Network are sharing the amazing proceeds, based on their membership.

Both organisations were presented with their cheques at a reception in the Crown Bar on Monday night. This year's total brings to €165,000 the amount raised by the barn dance for various local charities over the past four years.

Initiated by Curracloe farmer, Michael Cloney on whose land the event is held, the organisers comprise his family, including his sister, Anne Forde and Wexford businessmen, Kieran McGuinness and Sean Salmon who became involved two years ago.

There was a turn-out of 1,600 people at the recent barn dance held on July 26 with everyone getting into the spirit by dressing up as cowboys and cowgirls for a hog roast and dancing to music by Theresa and the Stars and D.J., John Furlong. The organisers have already set the date for next year's barn dance - July 25 2009.



Funding concerns for school leavers

As the pupils prepared to leave Setanta School in Stillorgan at the end of June 08, we parents were faced with the daunting task of securing for them appropriate adult placements. This task has been made all the more difficult due to the fact that the HSE has not seen fit to allocate any funding for the appropriate day/residential services that our children need.

At a meeting last September in Beechpark, Marian Halpen, Disability Manager for the HSE, stated that all school leavers receive a service when they left the school. However, the students who left Setanta in June 08 are being told that there is no funding for any child or any definite adult placement either with a result that no transition programmes can commence. This has very serious implications for these young adults as they transition from childhood to adulthood. The parents find themselves in a myriad of meetings where their children are being reduced to simply "Euro and Cents". At no time have their needs been taken into account. At no time does any parent leave these meetings with a sense of reassurance, knowing that their young adult is going to be placed correctly or that they will be "safe" and secure for the rest of their adult life. Instead we leave the meetings confused, upset and very angry. Our young adults are the most vulnerable of all the citizens in this country.

The parents have only one goal when it comes to their young adults with autism: they want them to be happy, to be fulfilled and to have access to further education, training and employment and so they can grow and mature into the wonderful adults we know they can become. But alas, because of the lack of planning and recognition of Autism in Ireland for the past 30 years, funding and autistic specific services have not been put in place. Autism was first reported in this country over thirty years ago. There are approx 55,000 people in Ireland who have Autism, yet this population is being ignored by the Dept of Health & Children and the Health Service Executive. This is a national disgrace and needs to be rectified. We need a National Strategy for Autism now.

Geraldine Graydon (Autism LifeCare Trust)

Contact: 087 2717471

News from our Groups

Strokestown ABA (Article submitted by Cathy Dalton)

Early Intervention for young children with Autism opened its doors in October 2006. Strokestown is situated on the N5, within close proximity to Leitrim, Longford, Ballyhaunis, and many other surrounding areas. The facility is designed to provide a productive and structured learning environment for each child's needs. Our long term goal is to ensure that each child reaches their full potential and to integrate the child back to their local pre-school or mainstream school, depending on the child's age. Strokestown ABA School is a non-profit making organisation and a registered charity. Each child is fully assessed by a specialist consultant to ensure an appropriate programme is implemented. Any skill gaps identified will be corrected and mastered competently by



using the tailored programme. A Specialist Consultant oversees each child's programme to ensure that we are achieving the expected outcome. We maintain ongoing monitoring and all records are maintained for quality control purposes.

Each child has his/her own tutor who receives training to promote learning in the specific area the child needs to develop. All our staff are degree-trained and they bring their own unique qualities to the school. We also



provide holistic programmes that look at the whole person in relation to their environment. We have a very strong belief that if a body is balanced and regulated our children's drive to learn is greatly increased. The children's happiness and wellbeing is our top priority, as we have found that this has developed their competence and maximises their learning. We also provide training to parents or family members to help ease the pressures while enjoying the rewards of raising their children in the wider community. We ensure that all parents learn desirable skills for their children to learn in their own home, providing the balance between home and school. We have 2 children attending the facility and currently have a waiting list policy.

For further details contact Catherine on 090 66 30582

Visiting strictly by appointment only.

ABACAS - KILNAMANAGH, DUBLIN 24

MARK O'SULLIVAN
Featured in
'BOYZILLIAN WAXING'
LEGS, CHEST & BACK
OUCH!!!!!!

Viewed at:
AN SIBHIN - DUNSHAUGHLIN
6TH JUNE @ 8 PM

ALSO STARRING WERE:
SURPRISE GUEST BRAVES
HAVING THEIR HEADS SHAVED!

FUNDRAISING FOR PLAYGROUND
FOR ABACAS - KILNAMANAGH
A.B.A. SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

Mark O'Sullivan (brother of Sharon O'Sullivan tutor at Abacas in Kilnamanagh) had a 'Boyzillian Waxing'. He had his legs, chest and back waxed, all to raise money for a playground for the children in Abacas (Kilnamanagh). Two other men also had their heads shaved!

GOLF DAY - FORREST LITTLE

Abacas Kilnamanagh held its third Golf Fundraiser at Forrest Little Golf Club on Thursday 12th June 2008. The tee was booked from 12pm until 3pm.

The golf was followed by a meal when golfers finished their round. Presentation of prizes took place in the clubhouse at 7pm.

All funds raised provided support for the children during the year.





News from our Groups

Drogheda ABACAS Valentines Ball (Sponsored by DHL)



The Drogheda ABACAS School 5th Annual Valentine Ball with main sponsors DHL was held in the City North Hotel in February this year. The Ball is the highlight of the local social calendar and this year's glittering event was no exception. Tickets were sold out months in advance and it is the continued support of our guests, supporters and sponsors which make this event such an enjoyable success. Special guests on the night were Brian Ormond, Michelle Heaton and Pippa O'Connor. The organising committee put huge efforts into the decoration such as the giant sculpted hearts and cherubs. There were some fantastic auction items such as a weekend in Washington donated by AOL and a weekend for 12 in Derrybawn House donated by First Equity and local auctioneer Anto Woods created a bidding frenzy amongst the very generous guests. Dancing till dawn followed, with many people staying over in the hotel and rumour has it the sing song in the bar lasted till dawn!



St. Catherine's Barnacoye Co. Wicklow

Congratulations to Ann-Marie Kelly from Newtown who won €10,000 for the charity of her choice in the Lyons Tea Charity Giveaway. Ann-Marie's chosen charity was Barnacoye School. Her son Cian attends the school and he is pictured right.

Ann-Marie's entry was chosen by a panel of esteemed judges, as they felt her chosen charity had made a visible difference to her family's life. As a mother of an autistic child herself, Ann-Marie demonstrated in her letter, the hope and promise the school provides to parents in her situation.

The charity giveaway by Lyons is one of the nicest competitions to be run in Ireland and so different from the usual "me me me" type competition. Over a 12 month period, Lyons will give away €120,000 to the charities nominated by the winners.



Tools for Learning, Bray, Co. Wicklow



Tools for Learning opened an ABA Preschool for a small group of kids with autism in June 2008. The school is based at their centre in Bray, The All Trust Centre.

They hosted a Charity Fashion Show in order to raise funds for the school at The Esplanade Hotel in Bray on 15th May. Avoca Handweavers and some great local boutiques showed their clothes. Rosana Davison, former Miss World, was one of the models. There was also a champagne reception and prize draw on the night. For further information on the pre-school, please contact them at info@toolsfrlearning.ie



Bluebell School Co. Limerick

Glenn Keating (6) and Greg Ryan reached the No1 spot in January 2008 in the Irish download charts with their single in aid of Bluebell School in Limerick. The song is called 'The Munster song'.



News from our Groups

South Tipperary Autism Support Group



Traffic outside O'Keeffe's / Hearn's Hotel, Clonmel came to a standstill for the South Tipperary Autism Charity Gala Fashion Show on Wednesday April 9th. Tickets as usual were at a premium. Hosted by Mary Condon, Chairperson of South Tipperary Autism Support Group, Clonmel and Maura Keirns Lonergan, Event Organiser, over 250 glamorous ladies enjoyed a Cheese & Wine Reception before the Fashion Show began. All Clonmel and its environs were there. There was great style - all the local ladies were in their finery. The cause was a very worthy one: two local charities very close to both organisers hearts, both mothers themselves of Autistic children who attend Scoil Aonghusa Special School in Cashel, for moderate to severe learning disabilities.

The money raised will enrich the social lives of these special children, as the proceeds are to be distributed between the Social Insurance fund for the buses for the wheelchair children and special needs children in Scoil Aonghusa, Cashel and the Autism Support Group in Clonmel. These special children need social outings, as part of their "challenging behaviour" is the lack of social and basic living skills.

Liam and Declan saw some excellent items go under the hammer in the Charity Auction. Seanie looked after the Draw with some excellent prizes up for grabs. Organisers believe that they have raised over €5,000. They hope that this money will help to enrich the lives of these special children.



St Paul's Special School

In March 2007, a groups of children from Abbots Lea School for children with autism (in Liverpool), visited St. Paul's Special School in Beaumont as part of the East-West Project in which both schools were partaking.

During their visit, the children participated in a practical activity i.e. horticulture, cookery, art or pottery.

In their pottery session, the Abbots Lea children joined the St. Paul's children and sketched out an underwater scene, which they then created out of clay. There was great social interaction and co-operation during this work as it involved quite a lot of discussion as to what would be found on the sea bed and how it could be made. They even had Sponge Bob Square Pants included. It was a very enjoyable experience for all involved and St. Paul's now have a very colourful ceramic sea-scene adorning their corridor as a memento of Abbots Lea's visit.

The children who partook in the horticultural activity enjoyed getting their boots on and spades and forks at the ready. Off they went, chatting away, to dig a big hole in which to plant a plum tree in honour of the visit. All went well. Hopefully they will have a fruitful relationship for years to come!

(Article by Miriam Downey)



News from our Groups

School Setanta Parents Association

FETAC Awards Ceremony – the presentation of the first FETAC Level 1 and Level 2 Certificates by Mary Hanafin, TD. Former Minister for Education & Science – to eight students from Setanta School for Children ASD. Setanta School in Stillorgan caters for students between the ages of 12 to eighteen who have ASD. In 1998 the school was one of the first schools in Ireland to be given recognition as a school specifically for students with ASD. The degree of ASD varies from pupil to pupil who attend the school.

“As parents of the 8 young adults from Setanta School in Stillorgan who received their FETAC Awards, it is hard to put into words just how proud we are of our children. This is the first time our childrens’ efforts and achievements have been put into a certification process. Before this, unless a child with a disability was capable of attending a mainstream Secondary School they received no validation of all their time in our School system as the vast majority of Special Schools in Ireland are Primary Schools. Unless they have been granted Post-Primary Status, pupils over the age of 12 in many cases do not have access to a post-primary curriculum.

The 8 young adults who received their awards are the first students from Setanta School to do FETAC Level 1 and Level 2.

We hope in the future that all our learners from Setanta School will be able to avail of this wonderful system. We would like to express our sincere thanks to all the staff and parents from Setanta School, especially our Principal, Loman, Vice-Principal Pat, Class Teachers Carmel, June & Catherine for delivering the programme. We would also like to thank all the staff and tutors of Dun Laoghaire VEC for their support and for giving our children a chance to show the outside world that they are capable of achieving goals. A special thank you to the SESS Unit in the Dept of Education and Science for their help and advice”.

Mr. Stan McHugh, Chief Executive of FETAC congratulates the students and their tutors, stating that together they lead the way nationally - they are the proof that life long learning and success is there for those who try.

Evelyn Moran (Chairperson Setanta School Parents Association)



Daniel Ashall, Sean Crowley, Joseph Rickerby, Andrew Graydon, Gretta Moran, Dominic Byrne, Gary Bathe, Barry Whelan and the former Minister for Education & Science Mary Hanafin TD, the CEO of FETAC and the CEO of Dun Laoghaire VEC.

Ireland's First National Diagnostic and Assessment Centre

Solas Centre Celebrates its 1st Birthday



On Monday 28th April 2008, Irish Autism Action, along with their corporate partner O2, celebrated Solas' 1st birthday. Solas is Ireland's first dedicated diagnostic and assessment centre for children and families affected by autism. Since its establishment in April 2007, over 250 children have come through our doors requiring assessment from the multi-disciplinary team. The Solas Centre has reduced the waiting list time for the diagnostic assessment of children from 18 months to 3 months. There is also a large population of older children and adults in Ireland who have either been diagnosed inappropriately or never diagnosed or assessed and we will also provide a service to these people and their families.

To date, the partnership between Irish Autism Action and O2 Ireland has raised over €250,000 and O2 employees have provided hands-on support to facilitate the opening of the Solas Centre.

Like children, the Solas centre is developing all the time. In September 2007 we were able to appoint Sarah Rennick as our Information Officer to provide parents with post diagnostic advice and information to all families affected by autism.

In April 2008, to coincide with Autism Awareness Day, Ireland's only autism helpline (1890 818 518) was launched by O2 and Irish Autism Action and to date the helpline has received over 450 calls. Helpline hours are 7pm-10pm Monday to Friday.

Parents seeking further information or a consultation can contact the Solas Centre at 01 8531572 or e-mail solas@autismireland.ie

Solas would like to take this opportunity to welcome Anna McLeod from Release to the team. Anna joined our multi-disciplinary team in April 2008 to take over speech and language assessments

for Solas from Jennifer Wetter who is co-ordinating the Speech Therapy classes for Release in Dundalk. For more information about Release, visit their website www.release.ie

Lastley, we would like to welcome Sheena Cormican to the Solas team. Sheena will be the administrator for the Solas Centre. We wish her the best in her new role.



A big thank you Naoise!

A very big thank you from all at the Solas Centre to Naoise Delaney, Clontarf.

Naoise donated money she received from her Confirmation to two charities and picked the Solas Centre as one of the beneficiaries. She donated €250 and chose the Solas Centre as one of her friends has autism and she left she'd learnt a lot from them.

Your kindness is greatly appreciated!



Recent Fundraising Events

For further information contact:
Colette Charles, Fundraising & Events Co-ordinator, Irish Autism Action,
41 Newlands, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath
Tel: 044 93342576. Email: colette@autismireland.ie Web: www.autismireland.ie

Masquerade Ball

The second annual Keith Duffy Masquerade Ball took place in the Great Hall in the Royal Hospital in Kilmainham, Dublin. The evening was hosted by the lovely Caroline Morahan and entertainment was provided by Paddy Casey and Trevor Page. There was a large attendance, with many bidding for fabulous auction items on the night.



The night was a fantastic success and €294,000 was raised for Irish Autism Action.

Many thanks to Keith and O2, without whom the night could not have been such a success. We're looking forward to the 3rd Masquerade Ball in 2008!

Saplings Mullingar Valentines Ball

This year's ball took place on February 16th in the Annebrook Hotel in Mullingar. All proceeds raised on the night went to fund the Saplings School in Mullingar. A great night was had by all!



The Croagh Patrick Climb

My name is Tommy Roe. This year I climbed the Croagh Patrick Mountain seven days in a row in order to raise money for Irish Autism Action. It was a tough challenge as the weather conditions were terrible during that week; hail, rain, high winds, thunder and lightning. Despite this I completed the challenge and celebrated St. Patrick's Day knowing that I didn't have to face the reek again on the 18th. All the money I raised went to Scoil Abalta, a school specifically for children with Autism in Galway City.

This cause is very close to my heart because when I was small my Mum and Dad noticed that I didn't respond very much to talk or noises. They thought that I had a hearing problem but knew I did hear noise. I did not crawl like my sister had done, I bum shuffled and crawled along my right side. I did not walk until I was two years and didn't speak English. I had made up my own language which only my family understood. Having been seen by pediatricians and many psychologists from the age of 16 months, I was diagnosed as having a moderate mental handicap. My parents were advised to put me into a home for the mentally handicapped when I was three. When



they refused, they were told that they were depriving me of an education and a proper start in life. I flapped my hands and my co-ordination was bad. There was no physiotherapy for me. My parents brought me down to the beach where they started me crawling on the large stones, then on the sand, until I started to walk. I started mainstream school at 6 and my parents spent a lot of time teaching me at home.

When I was 14 and the time for me to start secondary school had come, the local school did not have the people to help or teach me and I was not accepted by them. So I had to move away from home to go to a school which catered for children with special needs. Their needs were different to mine.

When I was 22, I was diagnosed as having Autism. My diagnosis is Asperger's syndrome which is a form of Autism. My mum and dad were given information which helped greatly. When I was young back in the 1980's, Autism was not understood or known about as it is today. If I were diagnosed when I were younger and had the help of professionals who understood Autism, it would be a lot easier for my family and I. This is why I took up the Croagh Patrick Challenge to try and raise money to make it easier for other children and their families who now have opportunities to be diagnosed early and taught in a way we understand from an early age.

Irish Autism Action gives families great help with getting their children diagnosed. Autism is a little bit better understood now and thankfully most people have heard of the condition and realize that we're not all like 'Rainman'! The waiting lists are still too long. The government needs to take action and make provisions for us now. Since my diagnosis I have been trained and have a great job as a radio technician, I scuba dive and am a member of PADI, I have my own car and am getting ready for my driving test. My driving instructor has been advised about my condition from my parents and he is working with me. I need more lessons and I need to be taught in a different way than most other people but we both know this and are getting on with it. I have a lot of talent and a very good memory especially for numbers. Nobody needs a

Recent Fundraising Events

The Croagh Patrick Climb (contd)

telephone book in our house when I'm around. Every day I'm still learning and relearning. I know that I find some things more difficult to learn than the everyday normal person, such as learning new skills, and taking instructions need to be made very clear to me so I don't make any errors in my understanding. When I do learn something I learn it very well and take pride in doing it.

The amount raised from the climb of Croagh Patrick is €8,182. I presented the cheque to Scoil Abalta at their Keith Duffy Fundraising Ball in the Clayton Hotel in Galway. The Ball was brilliant. It was the first ball I was ever at and Keith Duffy, Garreth O'Callaghan and Michele Heaton were there along with lots of sporting personalities. I got to chat to them all and they were very nice. Thanks to all who sponsored me in the climb-people were most generous with their sponsorship. Hopefully a greater awareness and understanding of Autism has been achieved by everybody's special effort.

Art Ireland

Venue: Main Hall, RDS, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4.
Date: March 27th - 30th 2008



Art Ireland is an annual art fair exhibiting painting, sculpture, prints and photography for sale. Nearly one hundred artists and galleries took part.

Ten paintings were donated to Irish Autism Action for auction on the night. Also there were 2 raffles; one for a Guggi painting worth €20,000 and a second raffle for a weekend away in Lough Rynn Castle Hotel in Co. Leitrim.

The night was a great success and 10% of all sales on the evening were donated to Irish Autism Action.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to Maria McMenamin for asking us to be the charity of choice.

For further information on Art Ireland, visit their website on <http://artireland.ie>

Pictured above are Kevin and Keith meeting with Maria McMenamin of Art Ireland on World Autism Day.

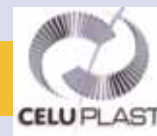
Ashbourne Fashion Show

Over 300 fashion lovers ascended on the Marriott Hotel Ashbourne for a sneak preview of all the latest spring/summer trends from The Ashbourne Town Centre. The night was a huge success, raising much needed funds for Irish Autism Action and Keith Duffy also joined in the fun. Guests were treated to a Jolie champagne reception and canapés. Current Miss Ireland Blathnaid McKenna and former Miss Ireland Sarah Morrissey were amongst the models who strutted their stuff on the catwalk.

A fantastic prize for the Best Dressed Lady ensured guests donned their glad rags for a chance to win the coveted prize. Keith Duffy presented the prize to the delighted winner. There was also a raffle on the night with prizes including many vouchers from stores in The Ashbourne Town Centre, a Newbridge Silver Handbag, 4 beautiful Hot Diamonds jewellery pieces, dinner for two in The Marriott Hotel and a Daydream Spa Package.

Guests on the night included Keith Duffy, Sarah Morrissey, Blathnaid McKenna, Pippa O' Connor, Expose's Karen Koster and former 'You're a Star' contestant Andrew Grafton.

After the show, guests enjoyed some original sounds from Andrew Grafton, and Ciara Delaney also performed with her band, ensuring that guests partied til the early hours! A fantastic night was had by all and everyone went home with a wonderful goodie bag. The amount raised for Irish Autism Action on the night was €5,000.



Celuplast Lifecycle



On the 2nd April 2008 (World Autism Awareness Day) 14 cyclists from Celuplast company in Baldoyle, Dublin, set off from the Spa Hotel in Lucan with their destination being Enniscrone, Sligo on 5th April - all in aid of Irish Autism Action. The journey which covered, 280km stopped along the way in Mullingar, Carrick-on-Shannon, Sligo and Enniscrone over the four day period.

Along the route, there were bucket collections held to help raise both funds and awareness of autism. The four day cycle managed to raise €30,000. The funds raised through this event will go towards funding the national helpline launched by Irish Autism Action on World Autism Day. The helpline provides impartial and confidential information, advice and support for people with an autistic spectrum

Recent Fundraising Events

Celuplast Lifecycle (contd)

disorder, their families and professionals. The number is Lo call 1890 818 518.

Irish Autism Action wishes to express their thanks to the 14 cyclists for their hard work and help to raise the awareness of autism. Also thanks to all who contributed to our collections and those who have supported us and continue to do so into the future and particularly those in the Leitrim area!

For further information, please check out our website: www.autismireland.ie

Golfing with the Stars for Autism, Mullingar



This year's event took place on Friday April 4th at both the Mullingar Golf Club and the New Forest Golf Club in nearby Tyrellspass. The weather was on our side and the rain stayed away for the most part of the day!

42 teams took part, with a shotgun start kicking off the event at 12 noon.

When the teams finished up around 5pm, they were served a hearty meal at Mullingar Golf Club.

That evening, an exciting auction took place with some fantastic lots on sale, such as Mohammad Ali signed shorts, Rickey Halton boxing gloves, a signed Irish rugby jersey and



a Ken Doherty signed snooker cue. A raffle was held also with first prize of a weekend for two in Lough Rynn Castle in Co. Leitrim.

The guests were then bussed into the Annebrook Hotel in Mullingar town centre, where they were entertained by Ken Doherty's good friend Don Baker and his band.

The event was a fantastic success, with proceeds raised to be divided between Irish Autism Action and Saplings School for Autism in Mullingar.

Special thanks also to Gunther of Après Match fame, who acted as auctioneer on the night.

Hilton 'Small Change, Big Difference'

The 'Small Change, Big Difference' campaign invited all Hilton guests to add an optional €1 onto their room bill.



The campaign ran in the 6 Irish Hilton hotels from October 2007 to January 2008. The amount raised was €9,665 and will this money went towards the cost of setting up Irish Autism Action's autism helpline.



Pictured presenting the cheque to Kevin and Keith is Yvonne Brady of the Hilton Foundation

Dublin Docklands Fun Run 2008

The Annual Dublin Docklands Fun Run was held on Tuesday May 20th 2008. It started at Grand Canal Square at 7.45pm and was 8 km long.

The proceeds raised from this event went to Irish Autism Action. Thanks to all those who walked or ran the event for us. Pictured below are Kevin and Keith meeting with Carmel Smith from the Docklands Authority on Autism Awareness Day.



Recent Fundraising Events

The Keith Duffy PGA Golf Classic

Earlier this year, we were honoured to be chosen by the Mansfield group to be chosen as their Charity of Choice. Our sincere thanks for Jim Mansfield for this.



As a result of this, the Mansfields hosted the inaugural Mansfield Trust Golf Classic & Gala Dinner at the exclusive PGA National Golf Course, Palmerstown House Estate in Co. Kildare on June 5th. (Check out the PGA Golf Course on <http://www.palmerstownhouse.com>)

Not just for golfers, the event was attended by celebrities from the worlds of music, sport and TV, such as Brendan O'Carroll, Paul McGrath, Christy O'Connor Junior, Lee Sharpe, Ken Doherty, Keith O'Neill, Brian Ormonde and of course, Keith Duffy!

We were blessed with fine weather on the day and the teams enjoyed their game from midday until 6pm.

The evening consisted of a champagne reception gala dinner and exclusive auction and the entertainment was provided by Aslan and Michelle Heaton.

The day was a great success and the proceeds will be divided evenly between Saplings, Kill and Irish Autism Action.



Fundraising Oireachtas Walk

A special Oireachtas walk for Irish Autism Action took place on Sunday 13th July at 12.00 noon on the Spinc Way, Glendalough, Co. Wicklow.

The organising committee including Liz Mc Manus, TD, Jimmy Deenihan, TD, Chris Andrews, TD, Senator Ivana Bacik, Senator Ciaran Cannon, Ciaran Cuffe, TD.

It was also a special occasion as it marked the first ever Oireachtas charity walk organised by members of Dáil Éireann. It is hoped that it will become an annual event and take place in different parts of the Country.

If you require any further information, please contact 01-6183352 or 01-6184023 or email: j.deenihan@eircom.net

Leopardstown 2008

On July 16th, IAA and Red Door had their annual race meeting at Leopardstown Race Course.

The evening kicked off at 5.30, with a champagne reception for guests as they arrived. Racing commenced at 6pm, with the final race being run at 9pm.

Guests were treated to a 4 course banquet and had private tote facilities throughout the evening. That night, there was a charity auction and raffle, with prizes including a trip for 2 to the Prix de L'Arc in Paris.

A great night was had by all! Proceeds raised were split between IAA and the Red Door School, Sandyford.

Pictured are a number of the 'punters' eagerly waiting on their horses to come in and the Beat Club, who provided the entertainment on the night.



Variety Club of Ireland



Our sincere thanks to Kevin Wall, Chief Barker and all in the Variety Club for the generous donation of five Variety Coaches to our schools. The first coach was presented to Saplings School, Kill, Co. Kildare at our recent Mansfield Trust

Event on the 5th June at the PGA Golf Course in Kildare.

United for Children

In late 2007, 4 charities – Jack & Jill Foundation, Angels Quest, Baby Max Wings of Love and To Russia with Love formed an umbrella group called United for Children. Irish Autism Action have joined the group, which now makes 5.

Two projects Irish Autism Action have already commenced in the group are:

- Childrens Respite Service – Irish Autism Action and Angels Quest are to examine how they can work together to develop a number of autism specific children's services.
- To Russia with Love – Irish Autism Action and To Russia with Love will collaborate on a trip to Russia in January 2009 to assist in diagnosing orphaned children and to provide autism specific staff training in an orphanage. It is only in the last 12 months that autism has been recognised and acknowledged as a separate disability in Russia. Irish Autism Action hope that our patron Keith will lead the trip.

Upcoming Fundraising Events

RAYMOND WEIL announce their partnership with IAA

RAYMOND WEIL's Marketing Manager in Ireland, Greg Molins, is confident that the Swiss watch brand's sponsorship will contribute to the worthwhile charity. "We examined many options when we decided to embark on charity sponsorship, but the IAA was a clear choice for us. The theme of time is key to both RAYMOND WEIL and Irish Autism Action. This is clear when discussing our watch brand, but time is also crucial to the autism charity, as their campaigns are all based around the urgency of catching the condition in time."

Greg continued, "The IAA doesn't receive any government funding and depend entirely on private donations and fundraising to keep the charity going. We have pledged to do all we can to help them in 2008".

The IAA CEO, Kevin Whelan, is also excited by the partnership. "We are delighted that a premium brand such as RAYMOND WEIL have chosen the IAA as their charity of choice – this is a great boost to the charity, and in raising our profile through RAYMOND WEIL we will be able to reach out to more families."



Raymond Weil are delighted to support Irish Autism Action through several events during 2008. The sponsorship will include the annual IAA Ball in December, as well as the PGA Golf tournament, which took place in June.

RAYMOND WEIL GENEVE

This year, thanks to Raymond Weil, the Ball will be an extra special event, with a 'Timeless Creations' activity preceding the black tie evening.

Timeless Creations is a moveable exhibition including commissioned works from artists such as Graham Knuttel and Guggi (headline artists), Carmel Mooney, Paul Timoney, Bernadette Madden, Helen Steel, Pauline and Holly Bewick and others which are to be confirmed.

The exhibition will have a large launch in Dublin in September and the exhibition will then take to the road and have individual regional launches on a smaller scale. They will be shown in high-end jewellers and can be seen by the public for one week in each location. IAA fundraising will also take place around each of the regional launches – get in touch if you have any suggestions or would like to help out in this regard.

The artworks will then return to Dublin where all of the pieces will be auctioned at the IAA Ball in December. This is a massively popular event and very important fundraiser for the charity, and we hope that the auction will be the central point of the Ball. The Ball is attended by patrons of the IAA Keith Duffy, Ken Doherty and others, as well as wealthy and influential people who spend hundred of thousands on raffle prizes and auctions at this event every year. 350 people will attend this event and artists may also attend.

Merlin Motor Group Golf Classic



This year's Merlin Motor Group Golf Classic is being hosted by the Mount Wolseley Hotel, Spa & Country Club in Tullow, Co. Carlow.

The Event will take place on Wednesday October 1st. The Golf will kick off with 2 shotgun starts, one at 9am and the other at 2pm.

That evening, there will be a black tie champagne reception with gala dinner and evening's entertainment will be provided.

A four ball for this event will cost €1,000, which includes the black tie gala reception with table for 8.

Tables of 8, without the golf, will cost €800.

Proceeds from this event will be shared between IAA and the Saplings School in Carlow.

For further information or to enter a team, contact Colette at the national office on 044 9342576.





Partnership - What we're doing together

O2 Ireland originally chose Irish Autism Action as its Charity of Choice in 2006 for three years. We are delighted to announce that this partnership will continue for one more year, until 2009. During this time, O2 will donate skills, people and money in a bid to make a difference to the lives of children with autism.

O2 Ireland is headquartered in Dublin and has offices in Limerick, Cork and Galway as well as 60 stores nationwide. O2 employs 1,700 people and has 1.6 million customers in Ireland.

Here's what O2 people have been doing for IAA lately!

The Realities of Autism

A huge thanks to Peter McKenna, O2 Business Information Manager and Keith Duffy, Patron of Irish Autism Action, who shared their personal experiences of having a child with autism to a full house in O2.

The session, organised by O2 as part of April's Autism Awareness Month, outlined why O2 chose to work with IAA and the accomplishments to date.

Attendees then heard the moving accounts from Peter and Keith who outlined the struggles they, their partners and children Chris and Mia faced trying to get a diagnosis - but they also praised the hard work and support provided by IAA and the successes possible with early intervention and access to Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) schooling

'It really opened my eyes to the difficulties parents have in trying to fight for the future of their children,' commented Sara Philpott from O2 after hearing the stories.

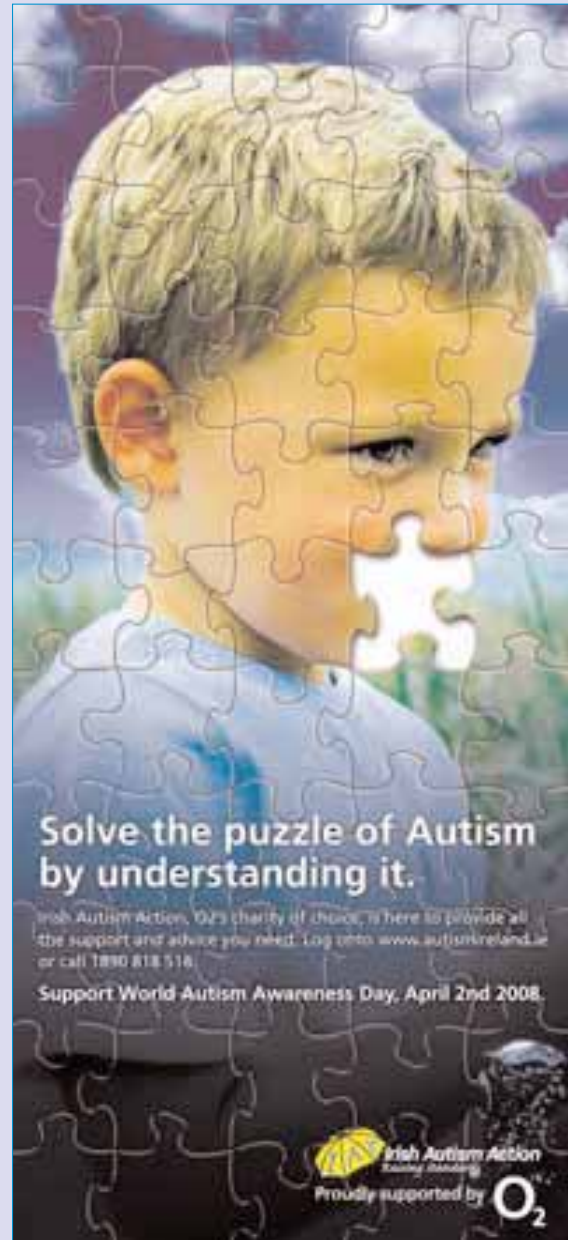


Log on!

April 2 saw the launch of the new Irish Autism Action website (www.autismireland.ie). O2 worked with IAA to develop the site which now includes a discussion forum, an option to donate online and a county by county breakdown of services. Log on, take a look and spread the word!

Help is just a phone call away

On Wednesday 2nd April, O2, in partnership with IAA celebrated the first World Autism Awareness Day!



This poster was displayed in the 60 O2 retail stores nationwide on World Autism Awareness Day.

Irish Autism Action launched a new helpline for parents of children with autism, with the support of O2. The Helpline number is 1890 818 518 and is in operation from 7pm to 10pm, Monday to Friday.

With the rate of autism estimated to have grown in Ireland from 1 in 10,000 in 1988 to 1 in 166 in 2008, this helpline will enable more parents and families to share experiences and advice about autism.



Partnership - What we're doing together

Fundraising

I'VE GOT A GOLDEN TICKET!



Remember the Willy Wonka chocolate bars that contained the golden ticket? To mark Autism Awareness Month in April, O2 staff in the Dublin and Limerick offices were given the chance to win a European Break worth €1,000 by buying Golden Ticket chocolate bars. Each bar cost €2 and a lucky few contained Golden Tickets which enabled the holders to enter into the draw for the European Break. Just over €2,000 was raised for IAA as a result!

Volunteering

PAINTING PARTIES!

A big thank you and well done to all the O2 employees who volunteered to paint the Saplings School for children with autism in Mullingar at the end of March.

Twelve O2 staff took their annual volunteering day to paint classrooms and play areas in the Saplings School. They succeeded in getting the whole school painted in one day. This was a great achievement for all concerned, though there were some sore arms the next day! Everyone at the school was thrilled with the result.

Nicola Hardy from the Saplings School, Mullingar said 'the guys did a fantastic job! We are all on cloud nine with how great the place looks!!

Here is what some of the volunteers said about their experience:

'I had a great time apart from the sore back. It felt good to do something for the school and those who use it considering the daily struggles they have with securing funding from the government. It's great that O2 allow people to participate in such initiatives'.



'We had a great day. I truly enjoyed the break from the office and a chance to help out'.

If your group could benefit from the help of O2 volunteers, simply contact Niamh.Griffin@o2.com. We have lots of people all over the country who would love the opportunity to make a difference to you!



Happy Birthday to Solas!

In addition, the Solas Centre, Ireland's first national diagnostic and assessment centre for children and families with autism was one year old in April. The Solas Centre was opened as a result of funding from O2. So far, in excess of 200 children have been diagnosed. The 1st Birthday Party in Solas was attended by Danuta Gray, CEO, O2 Ireland.



Farewell Sinead!

Sinead Smith, Corporate Responsibility Executive for O2, has moved onto pastures new! Sinead was the person who managed the IAA/O2 relationship for the last 3 years.

Sinead is now on secondment for 6 months to Kanchi, formerly known as The Aisling Foundation. Sinead will be working as Project Manager with them.

We want to thank Sinead for all of her help and expertise over the last 3 years and wish her the very best of luck in her new role.

Additional Information

A for Autism

AN EXTRACT FROM HAMMIESBLOG

Opinions based on personal bias and experience, from the wonderful world of Autism

I am not a psychologist or behavioural specialist or a Psychiatrist. So, I am not going to talk about the triad of impairments or assessment scales etc, etc.

What I can tell you is that Autism is a sensory disability in which everything your child sees, hears, feels, tastes and smells is distorted. They may see every strand of hair on your head individually with more detail than a Dandruff commercial, hence the need to push your hair off your face.

They may taste food in individual components that make the slightest change to the recipe seem like an entirely different food. Touch can be too light to feel or too intense to bear, or both! Sound can be very distorted, either because they hear everything and cannot tune in to what's important, ie. your voice, or because they only hear the higher sounds or the lower sounds that are in their environment.

There are a myriad of variations on these "Unders and Overs" and no two children are alike. (Believe me I have a sample of two!) So, imagine that having autism is a bit like being in a very busy foreign city where you don't speak the language and everyone is too busy to give you directions.

You can't read the street signs and you cannot understand what people are saying to you, or even pick up on any kind of pattern in the words they are using, as everyone talks too fast. The traffic is loud, it is really hot and you want a drink; but you don't know how to ask for it and nobody can understand you. Eventually you are going to recognise which shops are likely to have drinks for sale, but you will probably feel more comfortable going into a place where you can get it yourself.

That is how your child feels.

That is why they do not learn to imitate speech and ask for things, but instead lead you to what they want or build complex towers of chairs and climb up to get the things they need, rather than just ask for them.

That is why they often learn to read and count and do puzzles - because those things have a recognisable and consistent order. When I travel I quickly learn to read the word for supermarket (Alimentari, Supermarche, Supermercado) and Toilet (Servisos) but it takes me a long time to pick up on what people are SAYING as they speak so fast, often with an accent or variable dialect. Compare that to when your child with autism looks at you out of the crib, they are being bombarded by such a range of sights, sounds and sensations that they are not going to pick up on your words to begin with, or your reactions to them. They may chance upon saying the odd word, but will not notice how happy this makes you and know to do it again. A typically developing child will realise that you react and praise the first time they chance on that sound and do it again. The child with autism

will be distracted by the fantastic prism the light is making through the window, or pins and needles sensation they get every time you touch them or any one of a number of sensory over and under loads. So they have a lot of distraction when it comes to imitation and learning. And thats where the structured breakdown of the skills they need comes in.

For more, visit <http://hammie-hammiesays.blogspot.com>

IAA Identity Card

Just a little note to let parents know the value of the I.A.A. identity card. Recently I travelled to the U.K. and I had been told that the card was useful in Legoland. You don't have to queue, they let you go up the exit of each ride so there is no anxiety for our children who live with autism.

I thought when we went to London I would just ask if there was a special deal for special needs. As a carer I got on the London Eye for free and at the London Aquarium, I only had to pay for my boys.

Maybe via the forum on the website families could list where they have had a good experience so other families may try to have as good an experience!

(Article by Pamela Barrett, Co. Kerry)

To receive your ID card, please send the following information to the IAA national office:

1. Full name of child
2. Full postal address
3. Child's date of birth
4. Names of parents
5. Recent photograph of your child



Research in Sibling Support

Family life for a sibling of a child with ASD is far from average; the relationship between a child with ASD and their siblings can play a crucial role in the balance and harmony of family life. In the current research it is my aim to look at two vital components of a positive relationship between a child with ASD and their siblings, coping strategies and understanding of ASD.

It is aimed at siblings of children with ASD aged between 6-12 years old and will involve them and a parent completing a questionnaire (approx 30 mins in total)

All of the data will be gathered and analysed and feedback will be given on individual basis. This research is being completed as part of a MSc Applied Psychology in Trinity College Dublin by an ABA tutor under the supervision of Dr Kevin Tierney. If you would like to participate or know more information, please do not hesitate in contacting me Emma Daly at 087-9005520 or ecdaly@tcd.ie

Additional Information

Advocacy - Thank you

I had been in touch with you a few times about my son Jamie. My name is Mia Smith. At the time I was going through an awful lot, with things like transport and having no accommodation which I was fighting for and eventually got, which ironically was in the last term of the primary! How convenient! He is in secondary now in St Josephs in Fairview. He's doing quite well. I just wanted to say we got a house and we're going in to our third year. I just wanted to thank you for your support and correspondence which contributed to us getting the house. I'd just like to say thanks again and keep up the good work as your organisation is a great support to many and anything I can do to help, I would be more than happy to oblige. (Taken from email to Kevin Whelan CEO)

Advocacy project with Sligo IT

Irish Autism Action, as Ireland's National autism-specific disability organisation, operates at a National Level and this project aims to contribute at a local level to the development of improved services through a collaborative approach and innovative linkage to Sligo regional IT and with allied partners, to undertake a pilot that will have the capacity to be mainstreamed in the future. The partners in this programme are the Institute of Technology Sligo, Citizens Information Board (formerly known as Comhairle) the Equality Authority, Disability organisations, information providers and a student participating in the course.

There are a number of key benefits that this project offers:

- ▲ Capability to influence best practice among all organisations under the aegis of IAA and across autism specific service delivery.
- ▲ Addresses a fresh way to support people with disabilities
- ▲ Transferability as model for other organisations, once pilot is complete
- ▲ Developing a service that leads to empowerment and independence for people with disabilities through parent advocacy
- ▲ Focuses on eliminating barriers to children and adults with autism, including access to information and social activities.

Part time Nanny required

Autism related experience required

Two children ages 7 & 10.

7 year old girl has mild/moderate autism.

Hours: Afternoons daily

Location: Carrickmines, Dublin 18

Start: May 2008

Car owner essential

Non-smoker

Attractive terms

Contact: Deirdre 086 2438118

Befriending



Hi everyone. Kevin Whelan has asked me to talk to you about befriending. My name is Gabriel Hickey and I am 14 years old. I was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome, ADHD and dyspraxia when I was eight. I am in third year and about to do my Junior Cert.

My befriender Johnny is really great and has experience with teenagers with AS. He also likes the same sort of music as me which is a plus! The first time I met him it was a bit awkward but Mum explained to me the sort of things he could help me with and what we could do together. The next time I met him it was a bit easier because it was just me and him so I could talk to him about stuff easier. These are some of the things we've done over the past four months -

- ▲ Visited my friends in Dublin and re-established contact with them
- ▲ Made a film for a youth film festival
- ▲ Go to drums and guitar lessons every week (best bit!)
- ▲ Had an adventure at Loughcrew Cairns
- ▲ Been to a gig in Cavan three times, featuring original singer-songwriters

Johnny also helps me with practical stuff that's hard to do with the dyspraxia, like climbing and balance.

Before, I used to spend a lot of time in my room playing games, but now I go out a lot more and know a lot more things and people that are a lot better than games. I feel a bit more confident when meeting new people now that I've developed conversation skills. Most of my friendships have improved as well, and I am looking forward to my 15th birthday this summer when a bunch of friends (the ones from Dublin included) are coming over.

Having Asperger's has made a lot of things difficult for me, especially socially, but now that I have a befriender, things are looking a lot better for me. It's great that I have a befriender, but not everyone does.

As the last word, trust me, befriending works!

(Written by Gabriel Hickey)

Supervisor Required

Supervisor required for home tuition programme for ASD child in North Mayo area. Please contact 087 7766401.

Additional Information

The Red Door's 3rd Annual Autism Conference

Get into Craft-ED!

Monday/Tuesday 8th & 9th December 2008
"Evidence-based Interventions for individuals with autism across the lifespan"



The Red Door is hosting their third annual conference, bringing together some of the best-known experts in the field of autism and the science of Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA).

"We are delighted that so many of our colleagues have accepted our invitation to come to Dublin in December to take part in our third annual autism conference" said Martina Boylan, Director of Education at The Red Door. "There is so much interest in evidence-based interventions, and we hope to include as many workshop presentations", she added.

This year, the conference will consist of a number of key-note presentations from leading educators and ABA Professionals from Ireland, Britain and America. This will be backed up by a variety of specific workshops hosted by professionals including many of Ireland's ABA schools. Specific case studies of particular subject matter will be presented, offering professionals and parents a "hands-on" illustration of dealing with particular problems.

Over 300 people have attended each of the previous year's conferences, and the organisers were delighted with the positive response from everyone who attended the various presentations.

All the conference details will be available on www.thereddoorautismconference.com shortly. In the meantime you can contact the organisers by email at info@thereddoorschool.com or by phone on (01) 2943943 or by post at: Learning Centre for Autistic Children, The Red Door, 28 Corrig Road, Sandyford Industrial Estate, Dublin 18.



Already a hit in the UK and South Africa, scrapbooking is an excellent way to motivate and involve children with Autism. Brendan McEvoy explains how Craft-ED could help support Autistic needs in Ireland.



"The Craft-ED schools programme offers children the chance to engage with the National Curriculum in a way that offers fun through learning, recording of responses at a truly personalised level, and engages learners through creative, hands on and tactile approaches. Craft-ED provides schools teacher and parents with the tools, materials and teaching know how to embed this type of learning throughout schools and their wider communities through creative portfolios, manipulative learning aids, posters, display, enterprise, extended schooling and study support activities.

Offering this to all children regardless of ability, encouraging self esteem, motivation, pride, collaborative working and most importantly fun in the classroom and at home is Craft-ED's mission.

The effectiveness of the Craft-ED Live & Learn Schools Programme in an SEN setting is partly aided by the simple and effective cutting tools the programme uses, called a die cutting machine, which instantly and safely produces professional, crisp and inspiring cut out shapes at the push of a handle. These dies come in a range of curriculum linked or display designed shapes, including alphabet and numbers, and can cut materials from paper through to balsa wood, fabric through to vinyl. The embellishments made using die cutting, are both motivational in appearance, open for all to use regardless of ability and offer real tactile kinaesthetic learning aids to bolster the lesson or activity being taught.

Autistic children and their families have repeatedly benefited from using our programme, through taking ownership and generation of their own tactile PECS (Picture exchange communication) resources, to demonstrating and communicating feelings through creative expression.

I invite you all to find out more about Craft-ED and Live & Learn by contacting me, on Brendan.mcevoy@craft-ed.com or calling me on 086 6096600 or visit our web site www.craft-ed.com to find out more."



Additional Information

Ireland's first harmonized European Protocol for Autism Prevalence (EPAP) study.

This study will be recorded in a common format across the EU and will provide the strongest, most robust evidence available to determine the prevalence of ASD in the EU.

Information from the study will impact upon capacity building for anticipating the burden that families and society should consider adopting for the necessary decisions for improving the social and communicative capacities of these children and teenagers.

Increasing prevalence as a reality may suggest that there is a need to improve research for environmental causes to be incorporated into autism research policy decisions.

Prevalence is also an important estimate for burden of diseases analysis (Sanchez-Valle E et al, 2007) and for policy-making decisions.

It is obvious that where so many countries are involved, many difficulties will have to be overcome. However, this type of large cooperation across Europe will provide added value both in getting to know the ASD reality in Europe as well as capacity building in many countries. Harmonisation of methods, information on study costs, burden of disease estimate and also opening a door to setting up European standardized ASD surveillance and costs programmes are some of the added value included in this project.

Autism Speaks

Kevin Whelan our CEO, attended a meeting of this group in London. Autism Speaks is the world's leading charity dedicated to funding and accelerating biomedical research to unlock the mysteries of autism. The founder chair of autism speaks in the UK is Dame Stephanie Shirley.



At present autism research in the UK receives only 0.5% of government medical research funding significantly less than other more rare childhood conditions. Autism costs £28 billion a year in the UK but less than 0.02% if this expenditure is on research.

Three significant outcomes have accrued from Kevin's attendance;

- ▲ A member of Autism Speaks will present at our AGM (date to be confirmed)
- ▲ Martin Knapp, who has undertaken many research projects on the cost of autism, will also present at our AGM
- ▲ Irish Autism Action have been invited to meet Autism Speaks in America in October 2008 to explore what they can do to help fund research in an Irish context.

Grants Received



Irish Autism Action has been most fortunate in securing two grants to help with our work. Community Affairs grant funding to assist in supporting the work of our national office has been secured until 31st December 2010. As stated earlier in this issue, Pobal have grant aided Irish Autism Action as lead agency to develop an all-Ireland one-stop information website for autism. This represents a great opportunity for a group of autism agencies to collaborate on a project. The title of the project is Autism Partners in Information. This project will be grant aided for 2 years.

Google



In February this year, Google Ireland approached Irish Autism Action, asking the IAA, if they would like to get involved in Project Spectrum. Spectrum was an initiative that started with Google in the US, whereby Google staff provided support to children on the autistic spectrum, to use "Google Sketch Up". Sketch Up is a program developed by Google, and is a very user friendly three dimensional design programme. The programme is sold to architects, and soon after it went on the market, Google started to receive calls from some architects -saying that their children with autism, seemed to have a flair for using the programme to draw and create designs. With the support provided by Google staff, the initiative became a success story, and many young people with autism discovered an outlet for their creativity.

On April 2, a group of children from the Setanta School in Stillorgan Co Dublin, came to the Google European Headquarters in Dublin, to receive some training on Sketch Up. It was a pleasant surprise to see that almost immediately, the kids were able to produce some terrific drawings. Even if you are not creative, Sketch up is fun - and it's provided free by Google. Just Google "Google Sketch Up", and follow the instructions to download the software on your computer. You don't need to have formal training to use it - just follow the online tutorial which will get you started. Hopefully, we'll find the next Bill Gates here in Ireland!

IAA would like to thank Penny, Rob, Darren and Dee at Google, for giving the kids this wonderful opportunity.

Additional Information

Wexford People of the Year Award Winners Honoured in Gala Ceremony



Monday, 10th March 2008: The presentation ceremony for the 9th annual Wexford County Council/Rehab Wexford People of the Year Awards, in association with the Wexford People, took place on Friday evening in the Riverside Park Hotel and Leisure Club in Enniscorthy. The 300 guests at the black-tie event were treated to a gala dinner before compère for the evening, RTÉ newsreader Eileen Dunne, introduced each of the nine winners.

First established in 2000, the Rehab Wexford People of the Year Awards recognise the positive contribution made by individuals and groups to life in the county. Among the guests in attendance at the event were Eddie Breen, County Manager, Dennis Kennedy, Chairman of Wexford County Council, Sean Connick TD, Michael D'Arcy Jnr TD, Brendan Howlin TD, Paul Kehoe TD, Senator Jim Walsh and Shona Boyne, Director of Human Resources, Rehab Group.

Speaking prior to the Awards, Shona Boyne said, "This is a great event recognising the fantastic work of many people in Wexford and the outstanding contributions they have made to Wexford life. I would like to thank everyone involved in supporting the work of Rehab in Wexford, particularly our funders, the sponsors of this event and our volunteers. With



your help, Rehab is able to make a real difference to the lives of hundreds of people in Wexford every year."

Frederike Frederiks and Servaas Dodebier's inspirational work for children with autism was recognised with the Health and Welfare Award. The Castlebridge-based couple founded both the Cottage School for children with autism and the Cottage Autism Network for parents, and campaigned for the establishment of the specific autism unit at Scoil Mhuire, Coolcotts, Wexford. The award was sponsored by HNS Development Ltd and presented by Marie O'Connor.

The Wexford Person of the Year Award was presented jointly to Frederike Frederiks and Servaas Dodebier. The award was presented by Chairman of Wexford County Council, Dennis Kennedy.



Artramon Farm, Wexford

Congratulations

Irish Autism Action would like to congratulate Frederike Frederiks and Servaas Dodebier on their 25th Wedding Anniversary which they celebrated on the 16th August 2008.



Additional Information

AIB Better Ireland Programme



The AIB Better Ireland Programme gave ?1.85 million to deserving children's projects all over Ireland. Local communities had the final say in choosing the 185 most deserving children's projects to receive funding. By voting, each community chose which group in their area received €10,000 from their local AIB branch.

AIB's Better Ireland Programme received nearly 1,300 applications for funding nationwide. These applications were then short-listed to 547 children's projects. Applications ranged from a wide variety of groups including homework clubs, teen clubs, autistic services, community crèches, schools and colleges as well as drug and alcohol services for youth.

Voting took place from 6th May to 6th June and AIB had an overwhelming response with 308,011 votes received.

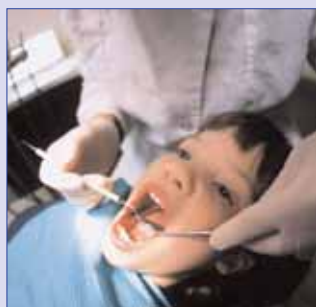
The following are the list of IAA member groups that received €10,000 from the local AIB branches. Congratulations to all involved:

- ▲ Cork CABAS Parents Association
- ▲ Abalta Special School, Galway
- ▲ Saplings School for Autism, Mullingar
- ▲ Saplings School, Kill, Co. Kildare
- ▲ Saplings School, Rathfarnham
- ▲ The Jonah Project, Waterford
- ▲ Cottage Autism Network, Wexford

Taking your child to the dentist?

The Social Learning And Resource Network are gathering information on experiences and worries with taking your autistic child to the dentist with a view to producing a set of stories to help children to cope better with visiting a dental surgery. We are hoping that as many parents as possible will participate in this project, as the more viewpoints we have, the better the results will be! No personal information will be required and all information will be treated confidentially. The stories resulting from this project will subsequently be freely available through Irish Autism Action to all members. We are also hoping to get enough feedback from parents to produce a set of guidelines for dentists on dealing with autistic children as an understanding of their needs can only make this an easier and happier experience all round.

For further information please email Nadaline Webster at grallowwood@yahoo.ie or text your name and number to 086 0650790



Fáilte Towers



A very big thank you to everyone who travelled to Bellingham Castle Hotel in County Louth to support Michelle Heaton during her appearance on RTE's Fáilte Towers recently. Michelle picked Irish Autism Action as her charity as she is a good friend of Keith Duffy's and was familiar with our work.

Unfortunately Michelle didn't win but IAA will receive the funds raised from the text votes that she received. Thanks also to Jacinta Walsh for co-ordinating the groups to attend and sorting out the banners.



Dollymount Ladies Golf Society

A very big thank you to Dollymount Ladies Golf Society for all they did in raising funds for Irish Autism Action. The society raised a very impressive €9,000. Their support is very much appreciated.



Additional Information

New Support Group Meetings at Solas Centre

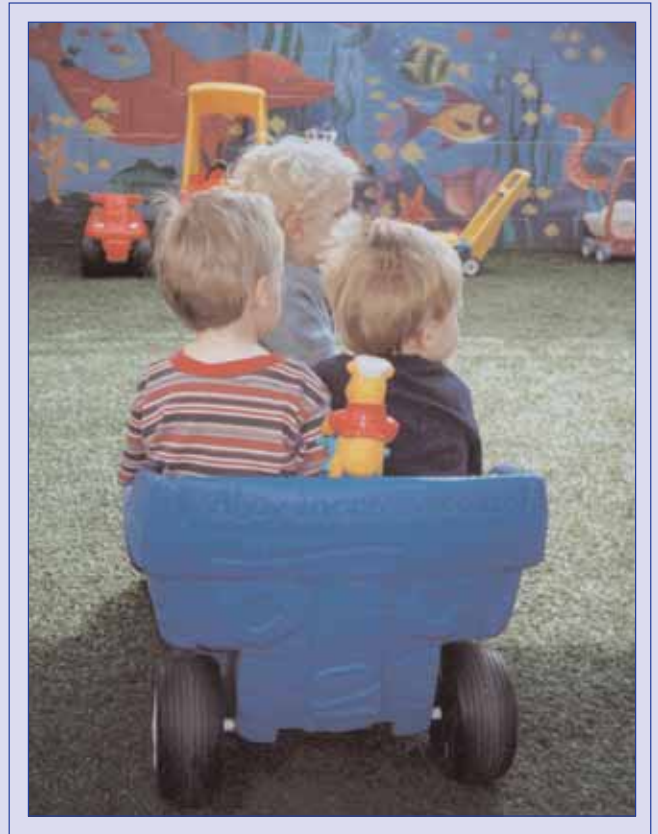
From September, the Solas Centre will be the venue for 2 support group meetings a month. One monthly group will be geared towards the parents and families of children and adults who are newly diagnosed with ASD and the second monthly group will be for parents and families of those who have had a diagnosis for some time. Both group meetings will be held on a Friday morning between 10am and 12 noon and will be hosted by the Information Officer, Sarah Rennick. Parents and family members who are interested are invited to drop in between these times to meet up with other parents and for information and advice.

For further details please email sren@autismireland.ie or contact the Solas Centre on 01 853 1572.

Solas Centre Pilot Counselling Service

We're all aware of the need for emotional support and the difficulties in accessing counselling services. We're delighted to announce that we'll be piloting a Counselling Service in the Solas Centre from September 2008. Yvonne Lucas will be joining the Solas Centre team to provide the service, which will initially be available at the centre on Fridays.

For more information, please contact Sarah Rennick at the Solas Centre on 01 853 1572.



bicycle design 087 2491111

BECOME A FRIEND OF SOLAS

- Sponsor a full assessment for €1500
- Sponsor an individual therapy assessment for €500
- Make a donation of €



Instruction to your Bank or Building Society to pay Direct Debit

Please fill in the whole form and sent it to: Irish Autism Action, 41 Newlands, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath.

1. Name and full postal address of your Bank or Building Society

TO: THE MANAGER _____
 _____ Bank or Building Society
 Address _____

4. Bank or Building Society Account Number

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2. Name(s) of Account Holder(s)

3. Branch Sort Code

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5. Instruction to your Bank or Building Society
Please pay Irish Autism Action Direct Debits from the account details on this instruction subject to

Signature(s) _____

 Date _____

Banks and Building Societies may not accept Direct Debit instructions from some types of account