



Connecting the Pieces



Serving Escambia and Santa Rosa Florida

Learning skills and having fun at annual Kids for Camp

Kids for Camp has completed another successful summer during which 67 campers had a lot of fun while learning important skills at the same time. This year camp for our younger children was held at Holm Elementary School, while our teens and kids college students attended Washington High School. The staff at each of these facilities were welcoming and accommodating, and we thank them for supporting our program.

This year Holm Elementary was a flurry of activity from arrival to departure each day.

At this campus our children were treated to art activities, music days, and physical education each week. In addition, they had special events like water days, a fun day at Triple Play, and a trip to the Funplex in Gulf Breeze.

Each of our campers had targeted skills to work on throughout their day, and whether they were in the classroom receiv-

ing one-to-one teaching or participating in a special event, they continued to receive instruction toward their goals.

At Washington High School, there was never a dull moment! Our teenagers worked on social skills, daily living skills, and physical fitness. Daily activities includ-



ed walking the track, cooking, aerobics, and dancing. Each class spent time on formal social skills instruction, role-playing activities with their "buddies" to learn how to interact and react in various social situations. Special events at Washington included trips to the mall to purchase lunch, swimming at Pensacola Junior College, trips to Sacred Heart Hospital, Pet Land, and Sam's Club to explore job opportunities, and a fun trip to Tiki Golf at the beach. Our teenagers were very busy throughout the summer while learning many important skills.

Throughout all of these fun activities, the techniques of applied behavior analysis were used by our staff to work on each camper's targeted skills. This was true demonstration of the fact that learning can be accomplished in any setting, and that children can have fun and learn at the same time.

David "King" Richard receives "Spirit of Life" award



David, Ann and King Richard with Lawrence Powell, Civitan Club President

David Kingston Richard, 18, recently won the coveted "Spirit of Life" Civitan Award. Better known as "King," this 18-year-old is one of our ASP "family," and we are very proud of him. Much has been written about King in past ASP newsletters for he is well known in his many accomplishments. King and his family epitomize the heart and soul of the ASP mission.

In an introduction given for him by Mrs. Cindy Barrington she gave a brief description of the "Spirit of Life" award as follows:

"We turn our attention now to a special Civitan Award called the 'Spirit of Life.' This award was the brainchild of a past Club President who believed mightily in the power of the spirit of life. He believed that such a spirit would carry a person far in life, and he was a shining example of just such spirit.

"He believed this spirit was in all of us and persons with disabilities were equally capable of possessing spirit of life, and

King Richard, continued on page 2

Breaking News! Save these dates!

Santa Rosa County Schools will sponsor two **FREE** workshops with nationally-known verbal behavior expert, Dr. Patrick McGreevy. Mark your calendar for Saturday, Sept. 26th and Saturday, Jan. 23. Watch our website for more details very soon!

From the director's desk

Another great year of "camp miracles"



Another great Kids for Camp is now history. Once again, amazing community-donors, parents, professionals - has worked together and done an amazing thing.

Together we provided 67 children

with autism 144 hours of summer leaning and fun! Additionally, there were all the 'camp miracles' – teens giving up their summer free time to be friends, parents making new friends as they worked together and teachers continuing their training when they could be taking a

break. Everyone who is a part of camp is touched by the miracles. If you were a part of this in anyway, thank you again, for making a difference. If you haven't seen camp in action, I hope you won't let another summer get by without seeing this magical event for yourself!

As Fall approaches, we enter the time of year when I find myself focusing on the "organization" of ASP. Our by-laws have been updated and those of you who are voting members will soon be asked to approve these minor changes. We also pause to thank this year's class of directors-Quint Studer, Kevin Doyle, Debbie Ritchie, Carol Carlan, Mort O'Sullivan, Mark Proctor, Eric Nickelsen, and Sandra Cesaretti-Ray. A special thank you to those who are taking a break from our board - Eric, Carol and Sally Spenser-who has moved out of our

area. We appreciate all you have done to make a difference for ASP! A huge thanks to all of these board members who have generously agreed to serve another term on our board! You are such a blessing! Our full slate of officers is being finalized at this printing and ballots will be mailed to voting members in late September.

Back to school is upon us and as you get into that routine, I hope you will try to find a place to be involved in our organization to make a difference for our community. Please call me if you are interested in volunteering in any way. There are many fun activities planned in the coming months. Hope to see you soon!

Susan Byram

King Richards receives award

Continued from page 1

often more capable. He created this award to honor the spirit of life. He was Jim O'Connor. Jim passed away five years ago. In 2005, the Pensacola Civitan Club renamed the award in his honor and is now the Jim O'Connor Spirit of Life Award.

"Today we present our 11th Spirit of Life Award. The purpose of the Spirit of Life Award is to honor an individual who has overcome his or her disability to become a productive citizen and to celebrate life. Today's winner exemplifies such spirit."

Lawrence Powell, President of the Civitan Club, continued: "This year's Spirit of Life winner is a native of Pensacola. He was born on October 4, 1990. At age 3, he was diagnosed with Autism - a lifelong brain disorder that affects a person's ability to communicate, understand language, and socially interact with others. There is no known single cause for autism. Autism is four times more common in boys than girls and affects 1.5 million in the United States. Autism is the third leading developmental disability. There is not a cure for autism."

His mother, Ann, is the author of "And When He Didn't Come Home," an inspirational story relating her family's struggle to come to terms with their son's autism. She and her husband, Dave, focus their attention on their child's strengths helping him

develop the assets which he already possesses so he can achieve his goals and realize his potential.

He is a member of Jehovah Lutheran Church where he sings in the youth choir. Recently he has sung the National Anthem at the Special Olympics Games, the Annual Autism Dinner, the annual Walk-4-Autism, Senior Honors Awards Night at his High School, UWF Disability Awareness Day, at a Pensacola Pelicans Ballgame - and now he has sung for Pensacola Civitans! He has helped to break down many barriers associated with his condition. You can see King's video of the "Star Spangled Banner" on You Tube and share with others:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BVUIZFGiL3E>

We live in a world which is not always kind to people with disabilities. His Mother wanted to protect him – protect him from

people who made fun of him, people who didn't understand his unpredictable behavior. She was reluctant to take him to church, and very reluctant to let him sing in the youth choir.

King's Dad knew their son needed encouragement and felt allowing him to sing with other children would be good for him. His parents were at odds with each other – Dad wanting their son to participate, and Mom wanting to protect. Dave forced Ann's hand – which ended up being the right thing to do. Obviously those early choir days have prepared him for the singing voice he has today!

King's life has impacted the lives of many and he has made a difference in our world. The autism community is very proud of him and his courage and tenacity inspire us all.



Kids for Camp would not be possible without superstar Volunteers like Tammy Mendiola and Jessica Lapen. Their generous spirit and tireless hard work helped produce "camp miracles" and "camp memories."

Making music and marching to their own beat



This summer at Holm Elementary School our campers had an opportunity to make their own music! Darren Johansen, a parent volunteer, along with band mates Joe Baker and William Meredith, volunteered their time each week to bring music to our young campers. As the father of a young child with autism, Darren had seen how his own son responded to his drumming and thought that maybe he could help kids with special needs through his music. He offered to share this wonderful oppor-

tunity with our campers this summer, and we took him up on it!

Each week our children got to sing and dance to the music, and they even got to try their hand at playing some of the instruments! This was a very popular and fun activity each week, which culminated with the grand finale of having an outdoor concert at water day on the final Wednesday of camp.

Thank you so much to Darren, Joe, and William for donating their time to share this unique experience!



Job training comes to camp

This year we were fortunate to have Tara Crawford, a Certified Employment Consultant, volunteer her time twice a week to work with our teenagers on job preparation skills. Tara helped our teens create their own person-centered plans, which they then presented to their peers at camp. Each person-centered plan was a PowerPoint presentation about the camper's interests, dreams, and plans for adulthood. Participating in this activity enabled our teens to realize that they can reach for the stars, and there are people out there who will help them reach their goals. As Tara puts it, "I want to plant the seed that they can aspire – not settle." A huge thank you goes out to Tara Crawford for bringing this much needed and helpful training to our teens this summer!

Overheard at Kids for Camp '09

"He slept great at night tired out from activities at camp. All the exercise, community outings and cooking were great!" -- Parent of SR Camper

"My child has begun to initiate conversation and ask relevant questions." -- Parent of Escambia teen

"Thank you for making this camp where my child had miraculous improvement." -- Parent of Escambia 3 year old

"Debbie's (Sacred Heart Autism Training Director) leadership has made such a positive impact! She has been a Godsend to our family. She gives teachers thoughtful suggestions as situations arise and shares ideas with families." -- Parent of 2 Escambia campers

I came to camp not know what to expect, but learned Kids with autism are alot like me. I just wanted to get my volunteer hours, but ended up making great friends" -- Teen Volunteer

Which came first?

Which came first, the chicken or the egg? Well, at Kids for Camp it was the egg! This summer one of our teachers, Keith Kinder, brought an incubator to camp, and we all shared in the experience of watching new baby chicks hatch and grow. Seven chicks were hatched during week three, and they stayed at camp for two weeks.



Mr. Keith's classroom became a very popular place for everyone to visit as we all wanted to check in and see how the new little ones were doing. Our campers had the opportunity to hold the baby chicks, if they desired, and some of our teens really enjoyed taking care of the new babies.

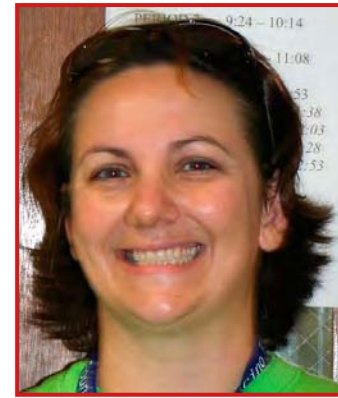
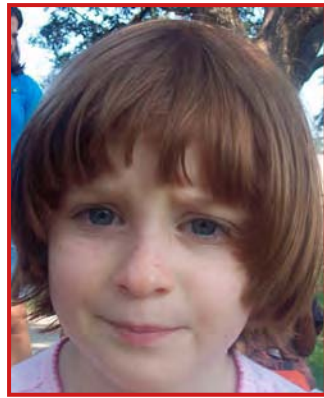
The chicks grew very rapidly! Before we knew it they were growing wing feathers and trying to fly! Thank you, Mr. Keith, for sharing this great experience with us!

ASP Family celebrates marriage



Tina Foley (Ivey) married Keith Ivey on June 20 in a beautiful church wedding. Tina, a member of GASP and of the ASP Council, has been an integral part of ASP for the past three years. In addition to GASP and Council, she has co-chaired the "Walk 4 Autism" event in Navarre. The reception was catered by GASP and Council member, Joan Harbuck, and Keith's mother, Barbara, also a member of GASP, did the decorating. ASP wishes them all the best. Pictured (right) is one of Tina's grandsons, Connor Sullivan, who attended Kids for Camp.





Just the Facts:

- 1** Sacred Heart Autism Center Training Director
- 67** Happy Camper
- 75** Teen Volunteers!
- 36** Dedicated Staff!
- 15** Typical friends!
- 16** Community Volunteers!
- 11** Parent Leadership Volunteers!



"I can't wait to get back to school and use what I have learned! This year is going to be different!"

Escambia ESE Teacher



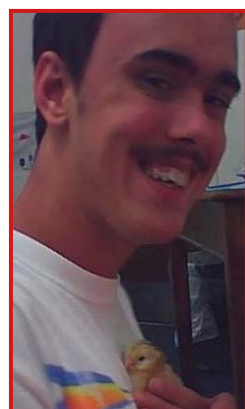
"I had a happy camper with things to do and a good learning experience, I also had some time to myself."

Parent of Homeschooled Camper



"Thank you for letting me be a friend"

8 year old Typical Peer Escambia Camper

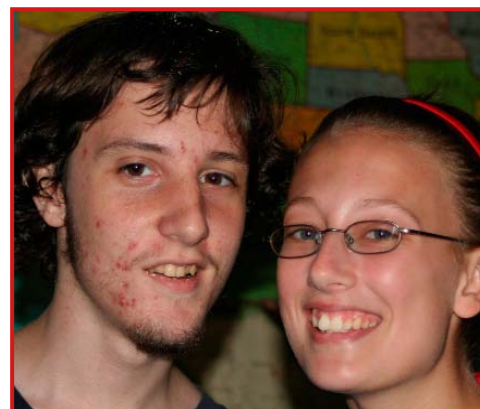


"I've decided to become a BCBA because of camp. That way I can continue to help kids with autism."

Psychology Student

"I was so delighted - my grandson was potty trained in two days. Can't tell you what this means."

Escambia Grandmother of 4 yr. old



Our teens are getting in shape



This year at Kids for Camp, our teenagers were challenged to walk a marathon as part of their camp experience.

Each morning, weather permitting, they walked the track at Washington High School, and they kept track of their distance with charts on the walls of their classrooms. As each camper reached the goal of 26 miles, they received a Pensacola

Marathon Challenge Certificate to mark their accomplishment. By the end of camp, we had 21 teens receive medals!

In addition to the marathon challenge, our teens also participated in aerobics workouts and dance lessons. These activities were led by Marietta McCaskill, a parent volunteer who also happens to be a PE teacher. At the end of camp, our teens performed their line dancing for their families at the end-of-camp celebration. This was a great opportunity for our teens to learn that fitness can be fun. A special thank you to Coach McCaskill for volunteering her time to add fitness to our camp this summer.



Camp can't happen without teens volunteering over 5000 hours

When talking about Kids for Camp, we often make the statement that "camp can't happen without volunteers". This is not only true of our adult volunteers, but our teen volunteers as well. This summer we had 75 teenagers volunteer over 5,000 hours of their time to work with our campers. These teens performed a variety of tasks from helping our campers practice their social skills to showing them some new dance steps. Their most important task, however, was to just be a friend to our campers.

These volunteers came from a variety of local schools and volunteer programs including the International Baccalaureate Program at Pensacola High School and Chain Reaction, and we are grateful for each and every one of them.

Having neuro-typical peers as social role models for our teenagers with autism is an important component of our camp program. Our teens, by definition, have delayed social and communication skills, and adults can only teach these skills to a point. Having the opportunity to interact with people their own age, in a setting where they are accepted and not judged by their peers, is priceless for our teens with autism. They have the chance to see how other teenagers behave when they are "hanging out" with their friends and just "being teens". No matter how hard we try, parents and teachers just cannot provide that kind of experience.

While we tend to focus on how much our teen volunteers help our campers over the summer, the volunteers learn some lessons as well. When asked what they have learned through volunteering at camp, these teens most often respond with

"patience". In addition, they often mention that they have learned that individuals with autism are just like everybody else, people with feelings who just want to be accepted. These are important lessons for all individuals to learn, and the fact that these teens have learned them at such an early age can only mean good things for them in the future.

Many thanks to all of our teen volunteers!



Pictured above, David Byram chums around with his favorite Pelicans after practice, while Kristian Kerr (bottom left) brushes up on his batting stance at camp this summer.

Pelicans visit Kids for Camp

During the first week of camp this summer, two players from the Pensacola Pelicans stopped by to visit with our teen campers. They all braved the heat to play a game of whiffle ball. All of our teens had a chance to bat and run the bases with their camp buddies. They also posed for pictures with the players and received Pelican autographs.

After the game our Kids College campers performed "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" for our visitors, which was a real treat. They practiced long and hard for their performance, and they did a wonderful job.



Upcoming events

ASP hosts several monthly meetings -- daytime chats, evening informational meetings and grandparents group. www.autismpensacola.org has all the details!

ASP September Meeting - Sacred Heart Autism Center
Training Director, Debra Keremes, BCBA

"Problem Behaviors"

September 15th 6:30pm

Arc Gateway, Pollak Training Center

Corner of 10th & Fairfield, Pensacola, FL

Sitters available with reservations 3 days prior to the event
by emailing autismpensacola@bellsouth.net

Mark your calendar for future evening meetings:

October 20 - Adults With Autism Speak/Annual Meeting

Nov 17 - TBA

January 19, 2010 - TBA

Check our website (www.autismpensacola.org) for the latest update on topics and any changes to time or locations.

Topics being arranged include social skills, organizing for special needs, future planning. If you have topics you'd like to hear about, please contact Rebecca Sterzing at sterzingd@aol.com

Use 'ASP meeting topics' as your subject line.

GASP - Grandparents of ASP meets Sept 18th, 11am,
Susan's office, 3916 N. 10th Ave.
Lunch out afterwards if interested.

Daytime Chats:

Pensacola Chat 4th Tuesday - 9:30 AM,
Village Inn 9th Ave. at Cordova Mall

Pace/Milton Chat 2nd Monday
at 9:30 AM Village Inn, Hwy 90 Pace

Navarre Chat Contact Myra Fowler
(myra@ecautismsociety.com)

if you are interested in organizing a chat in Navarre.

T.A.B. Treating Autism Biomedically Support Group
Next meeting, Sept. 14th, 2009

6:00 PM Triple Play, 3186 Gateway Lane, Cantonment
Childcare Provided, but please call to RSVP!

For questions or directions call Melanie at 516-8888 or Misty
at 479-4386.

Calling all Campers, Volunteers, Teachers and Friends!

Kids for Camp Reunion time!!

Saturday, Oct 3, 2009

Arc Gateway, Pollak Training Center, at 10th & Fairfield
Holm Campus Friends 10am-11:45

Washington Campus Friends 11:45-1:30

Pizza served from 11:15-12:15

Music, Memories and Fun!

Wear your camp tee shirt
and bring photos to share if you want!

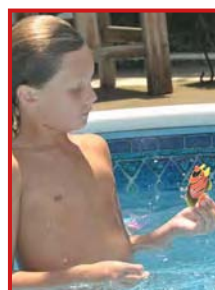
Campers enjoy pool time

What would summer camp be without swimming and water fun? Kids for Camp participants were able to enjoy ample fun in the sun thanks to ASP Board Vice President Kevin Doyle and GASP director and active volunteer Jenny Doyle.

Some campers learned new strokes, while others learned to enjoy swimming and kicking with the assistance of flotation devices and the help of many volunteers.

The success of Kids for Camp is made possible by many people who donated time, money, energy, and the use of a home swimming pool.

We thank the Doyle's for donating the use of their pool to enhance the campers' enjoyment.



GASP Picnic fun for all

Fun was had by everyone at the End-of-the-Year Picnic sponsored by GASP at Bayview Park in late May. Grandparents cooked hotdogs and burgers, while kids, teens, and adults enjoyed the outing.

The year-end picnic is an annual event for ASP families. Participants were encouraged to do some fishing. You should have seen the one that got away!

Join us next year!



Autism Society of Panhandle

ASP Council

ASP Council is our hard working group of volunteers who deal with the details of day-to-day operations of our organization. See our Calendar on page 7 for details.

Everyone is welcome and needed!! Together, we make a BIG difference in the lives of families living with Autism. Many committees (from supporting Susan to mentoring parents to helping with various groups to submitting a grant) exist where you may serve and help us continue our successful programs.

Susan Byram, ASP Executive Director

Jessica Lapen, Chairman of Council
Acting Recording Secretary

Sharon Fink, Corresponding Secretary,
Newsletter Editor

Council Members

- Nicole Brown, Chat Groups
- Jenny Doyle, GASP & Dinner
- Anita McGirt, Chats
- Tina Ivey, Support
- Joan Harbuck, GASP
- Marilyn Irby, Membership
- Tammy Mendiola, Camp & Newsletter
- Jacqui O'Connell, Webmaster
- Natasha Parvey, Programs
- Rebecca Sterzing, Camp
- Regina Williams, Support
- Bonnie Wooton, Newsletter/Print Design

Many serve on more than one committee, e-mail Susan Byram or Sharon Fink for contact information.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Quint Studer, President • Kevin Doyle, Vice President
Judy Burns, Secretary • Mort O'Sullivan, Treasurer

MEMBERS AT LARGE

Sandra Cesaretti-Ray Fred Donovan Logan Fink Eric Nickelsen

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jim Donatelli	Carol Carlan	Shirley Cronley
Gerald Hoewing	Ted Kirchharr	Dr. Dave Suhrbier
Mark Proctor	Debbie Ritchie	Jim Shirley
Sally Spencer	Rebecca Sterzing	Joe Story
Sue Straughn	Bentina Terry	Joe Webb
	Dr. Kevin Welch	

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Pam Ard	Jolene Fleming
Staci Berryman, BCBA	Gayle George
Stacie & Marcus Cross	Anita McGirt
Jaime Daniel	Deborah & Pat Potter
Charmaine Davis	Susan Shields
Meghan Erlacher	Kristin Spinella
James & Oriana Fahn	Christy Woolard

ASP CONTACT INFORMATION

Mail donations, dues, membership forms or other correspondence to:

The Autism Society of the Panhandle

PO Box 30213, Pensacola, FL 32503-1213

Phone 850-450-0656 • Email: info@autismpensacola.org

Check our updated website: www.autismpensacola.org

Send newsletter information to sharonjfink@cox.net

Newsletter designed and printed by



FormSystems inc.

WHAT YOUR BUSINESS NEEDS,
WHEN YOU NEED IT!

www.formsystems.net

850.479.0800

PRINTING • APPAREL

PROMOTIONAL ITEMS

DIRECT MAIL • MARKETING AIDS



Connecting the Pieces

Autism Society of the Panhandle

P. O. Box 30213

Pensacola, Florida 32503-1213

