



## From the director's desk



### The giving goes on and on...

Our Summer Learning Lab for 2011 is now history. Our 5th learning lab once again had so many miracles! They started there, but the impact will continue far into the future. From the little red-headed girl who recognized our "angel" ([http://www.weartv.com/newsroom/features/angels/videos/vid\\_212.shtml](http://www.weartv.com/newsroom/features/angels/videos/vid_212.shtml)) at the post office and thanked her to the teachers who will lead "model" classrooms this fall, your support of Kids for Camp will continue to bear fruit. So many teachers spoke emotionally at our final staff meeting about the changes they had witnessed not only in the children, but in each other. Parents once again told stories of kids excited to get up and come to camp every day and of the new skills they were learning. "I like camp" was a common phrase with many reporting it was the "best summer ever"! No matter what type of support you gave - money, time, or talent - you made a difference, and over 70 families and 50 educators are very grateful!



Just before we began camp this summer, two brave, dedicated gentlemen spent seven days exploring the "wilds" of the beautiful Suwannee River. Board member Joe Webb and his friend Conner Taylor have raised over \$25,000 for autism education efforts in our area. The model classrooms planned for Escambia County this fall are the first step in our efforts to create a year-round program that meets the educational needs of those with autism in a highly effective way. We are so excited to continue to build this partnership with the schools in our area.

As we turn our thoughts toward the fall (and hope for cooler days!),

we are so excited to be planning our inaugural "Steps for Autism" walk for autism awareness. This family-friendly event is a great way for everyone in this wonderful community to come out and celebrate those who live with autism and those who serve them. The funds raised by this event will be used to support improving the safety of those living with autism and related disabilities. Some of our children wander and don't understand danger. Others have behaviors that can so easily be misunderstood in public, often resulting in tragic situations with first responders who are not aware of autism. We have a long history of working with Pensacola Police Department's officer Jimmy Donohoe who created the "Take Me Home" program. We want to find ways to expand the reach of his nationally acclaimed program right here in our area. With your continued support, we can do it together!

Wishing you a beautiful end of summer,

*Susan Byram*

## Early Childhood continued from page 1

The activities varied from water play outside to an inside bouncy house (my personal favorite) to field trips to Bayview Park and Cordova Mall. The class provided a wonderful opportunity for children to get a glimpse of what school will be like in a warm, friendly environment. I really appreciate the kindness, forethought, preparation, and overall ability of the teacher to engage the children and provide resources for the individual parents, because as we all know, each child is different and therefore has different needs. Thanks so much Autism Pensacola for this wonderful opportunity for my child and myself!

### API Council

Susan Byram, Executive Director  
 Jessica Lapen, Council Chairperson  
 Amy Lorton, Recording Secretary  
 Tammy Mendiola, Newsletter Editor  
 Jenny Doyle, Dinner Committee  
 Jacqui O'Connell, Webmaster  
 Rebecca Sterzing, Programs  
 Luci Faucher, Chats  
 Shawnon Babb, Support  
 Sharon Fink, Support

Everyone is welcome to attend council meetings and find their own place to serve. We have a variety of committees where you can make a difference.

Email [info@autismpensacola.org](mailto:info@autismpensacola.org) for information on council needs.

### 2011 API Board of Directors

Dr. Leasha Barry	Jim Shirley
Judy Burns	Rebecca Sterzing
Shirley Cronley	Sue Straughn
Gerald Hoewing	Dr. Dave Suhrbier
Cate Merrill	Bentina Terry
Cecilia Nanni	Joe Webb
Mark Proctor	Dr. Kevin Welch
Debbie Ritchie	

Susan Byram - Executive Director

### 2011 API Executive Committee

Ted Kirhharr, President	Logan Fink
Kevin Doyle, Vice President	Fred Donovan
Sandra Cesaretti Ray, Secretary	Peg Nickelsen
Mort O'Sullivan, Treasurer	Bonnie Sferes
Quint Studer, Past President	

# Meet Our Board of Directors

As we complete our series of articles on our current Board of Directors, we would like to introduce our Class of 2013. Members of this class will continue to serve on our board until the October 2013 election.

If you are a member of API, you will receive election ballots this fall to elect our Class of 2014. We will introduce you to any newly elected board members in our next newsletter.



**Judy Burns**

**Judy Burns** is the Executive Director of Ronald McDonald House Charities of Northwest Florida. She and her husband, Richard, have two teenage sons, Richard and Stewart. Their younger son, Stewart, has autism. They have lived in the Pensacola area for ten years. Mrs. Burns has served on our Board of Directors for 5 years. She says that she accepted the invitation to serve because

she wanted to help with our mission, serving children autism and their families. One of her many contributions to our community is the creation of Kids for Camp.

**Shirley Cronley** is a Community Activist, formerly the Executive Director of the Pensacola Sports Association. She and her husband of 23 years, Jim, have a son, Ed, daughter-in-law, Andrea, and a precious granddaughter, Jordan. Ms. Cronley is a Pensacola native. She has served on our Board of Directors for 2 years. She chose to serve because she feels this is a great organization, serving the needs of the community and making a difference in so many lives. While she has no personal connection to someone with autism, she is appreciative and aware that so many in our community are affected and realizes the positive changes API can make in their lives.



**Shirley Cronley**

**Fred Donovan** is the President of Baskerville-Donovan, Inc. He and his wife, Susie, have nine beautiful grandchildren that they enjoy spending time with. He and his family have lived in Pensacola for 55 years. Mr. Donovan has served on our Board of Directors for 5 years. He chose to serve because he wanted to make a positive and measureable difference in our overall program. He has no personal connection to autism, except with the families he has met through API. Mr. Donovan believes that API is an awesome program, and he feels a tremendous sense of satisfaction that is renewed as each year passes.



**Fred Donovan**

**Logan Fink** is an Associate Professor at Pensacola State College, primarily teaching Biology. He and his wife, Sharon, recently celebrated their 40th anniversary and have lived in this area for 27 years. They have two sons and two grandsons, both of whom have autism. When their first born grandson was diagnosed with autism and they experienced the pain and



**Logan Fink**

shock of receiving such word, they dedicated themselves to helping families living with autism. They became associated with API in 2002 and have done a great deal to raise autism awareness and raise money, especially for Kids for Camp. Mr. Fink has proudly served on



**VADM (Ret.) Hoewing**

API's Executive Committee for 5 years.

**VADM (Ret.) Gerald Hoewing** is the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Naval Aviation Museum Foundation. He and his wife of 33 years, Charlie, have two children, Sean and Sara, and four grandchildren. They have lived in Pensacola for 5 years. Vice Admiral Hoewing has served on our Board of Directors for 3 years. He does not have a personal connection to autism, although at one

time they thought one of his grandsons might be on the spectrum. He enjoys being a part of our team and believes we are making a difference in our community.

**Ted Kirchharr** is the Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of Landrum Professional Employer Services and Landrum Consulting. Mr. Kirchharr has 3 daughters; Colleen, a nurse at Sacred Heart Hospital; Emily, a senior at FSU; and Claire, a senior at Pensacola High School. He has lived in Pensacola for over 50 years. Mr. Kirchharr has served on our Board of Directors for 3 ½ years; he currently serves as our Board President. His desire to serve on our board grew from personally observing the struggles families living with autism face. He has a personal connection to autism through a very dear friend whose daughter is on the spectrum.



**Ted Kirchharr**

**Cate Merrill** is an ASHA certified speech/language pathologist. She and her husband, Collier, have three children. They are Pensacola natives – born and raised. Ms. Merrill has served on our Board of Directors for 2 years. She chose to serve because she feels that her experience with the school system allows her to see both sides of working with the schools to provide appropriate services for children on the spectrum. She understands the difficulties that both parties face and sees an opportunity for our organization to support both the families and the schools in their efforts.

**Dr. David Suhrbier** is a partner of the Child Neurology Center, a private medical practice serving children with diseases of the nervous system, including autism. He and his wife, Jan, have two children, Shaina and Benjamin. They have lived in the Pensacola area for seven years. Dr. Suhrbier has served on our Board of Directors for 2 years. He chose to serve because he wanted to be involved in helping the autism community beyond his role as a medical doctor. He has a personal connection to autism through his son, who exhibits signs and symptoms of high functioning autism. He feels that families with children on the spectrum face an ongoing series of challenges, and API looks to find ways to provide help and support.



**Dr. David Suhrbier**

# Why do Students with Autism Have Such a Difficult Time with Transitions?

By Mary Lynch Barbera, BCBA

Imagine you are at the beach on a beautiful sunny day having a cold drink and reading a great book. On a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being the most reinforcing activity, you would rate being at the beach on this day to be a 10. Without warning, I abruptly come up to you and say, "all done beach, time to load heavy boxes in a truck." You would most likely not like this at all and might start displaying problem behaviors in the form of arguing, stomping your feet, and slamming your chair onto the sand. You might even refuse to leave your preferred activity and literally dig your heels into the sand. What I want to illustrate is that we all have problems with transitioning from high preferred to low preferred activities. The key is to ease transitions by not asking a child to transition from a 10 (a highly preferred activity) to a 2 (work) constantly throughout their day. I will briefly describe five techniques to ease transitions.

## 1) Dangle the carrot (the reinforcement) before problem behavior occurs.

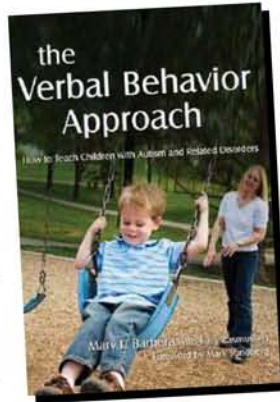
In the beach example above, if I would have come up to you and offered you \$50 to help me load 5 heavy boxes in the truck, that would have been fine, but waiting to offer cash until you start stomping your feet and refusing to move is a very bad idea. Remember any behavior that is reinforced will maintain or go up. Propose the reinforcement while you place the demand to transition not after problem behavior occurs.

## 2) Don't physically move a student from one location to another (even if they are small enough to carry or move).

I wouldn't even think about physically dragging you off the beach to help me load heavy boxes as this could lead to me getting arrested for assault. It amazes me that some people try to physically move students with autism from one activity to the next. If you try to prompt the child to move and he or she resists with equal but opposite pressure, this is considered a physical restraint. If you are currently using too much physical guidance for transitions, you need to stop and implement some other appropriate interventions.

## 3) Whenever possible, give choices.

If I would have come up and stated that I needed help with some heavy boxes and asked you when would be a good time for you to transition, you would probably have been a lot more cooperative. You may have suggested that we load the boxes when you finished your drink or after you read to the end of the chapter in the great book you



were reading. We make a lot of choices throughout the day, especially when we are faced with difficult or unpleasant tasks. We need to give our students with autism as many choices as possible to ease transitions.

## 4) Sandwich harder activities between two preferred activities and consider using schedules and timers.

Some students benefit from visual schedules and the use of timers to indicate that one activity is over and a new one is beginning. The use of a "promise" reinforcer is also successful for many students. A promise reinforcer is used when it is time to transition to a less preferred area. The child is approached with a favorite toy or a small edible reinforcer and this is used as the "carrot" and a visual reminder that reinforcement is available for a smooth transition. Some students need several small edible reinforcers on the way to a less preferred area. It is also important that all the hard activities are spread out throughout the day and placed in between reinforcing activities. In the beach example, if you knew that you would be at the beach from 1 to 4 pm then you would spend 10 minutes helping to load boxes in a truck followed by going home for pizza, the task of loading boxes would not have been such a big deal.

## 5) Make sure all "work" stations are paired with reinforcement and avoid the word work whenever you can.

Some of the best classrooms and home programs I have seen have strong reinforcers at every "work" area. Each area has some electronic device (a computer, DVD player, or music box) as well as a separate box of toys and items kept on top of a rolling cart that can go with the student and his instructional materials to each area. I often tell professionals and parents to avoid the word "work" for students who have difficulty with transitions and to spend a few minutes at the beginning of each session pairing yourself and the materials with reinforcement. If students are not running towards the next activity or at least moving there without problem behavior, your demands are too high and/or your reinforcement is too low.

*The preceding article was originally written as a blog entry on Mary Lynch Barbera's blog "The Verbal Behavior Approach" which can be found at <http://verbalbehaviorapproach.blogspot.com>. Her book, also titled "The Verbal Behavior Approach", is available on Amazon.com, and provides readers with useful information for developing language skills in children with autism written in an easy-to-understand format.*

## Kids for Camp Gives Back continued from page 1

Eight of our campers, along with eight peer buddies, volunteered at Manna Food Pantry this summer. They performed tasks both in the garden and in the warehouse. 300 man hours were donated to Manna Food Pantry as our teens and their peer buddies performed a wide variety of tasks that included filling 120 USDA food bags, harvesting 156 lbs. of food, and bagging 300 lbs. of coffee. These campers learned a wide variety of skills while volunteering, and

while the heat was daunting this summer, they went to work and returned with smiles on their faces, knowing that they had done a good job each time.

We are very proud of our Job Transition Program campers and all that they accomplished this summer! They all made great progress on their road to independence and made a difference in our community at the same time!

## Reader's Corner

### “Look Me in the Eye” and “Be Different”

Written by John Elder Robison

Reviewed by Regina Harris

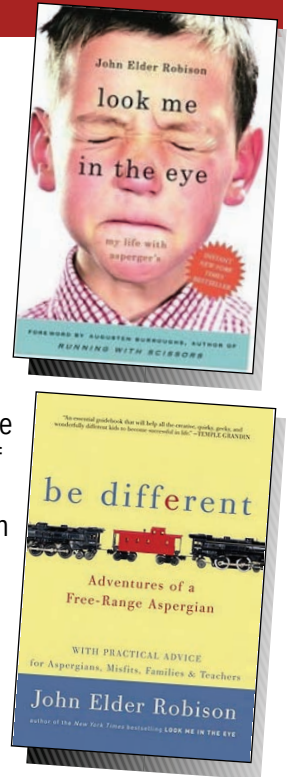
I enjoyed reading both *Look Me in the Eye* and *Be Different*, by John Elder Robison. I started with *Look Me in the Eye*, which was published first. It is mostly an autobiography, with side comments pertaining to Asperger's. Robison writes very well, and the book kept me interested. As the mother of a teenaged Aspie, I found it fascinating to look inside the mind of a successful "Aspergian" (Robison's preferred term) adult. Some reviewers have mentioned that the story seems disjointed...to me, the writing style itself provides insights into the Asperger brain. One minor warning if you're planning to read it: Robison does use some colorful language, including the "F" word.

After finishing *Look Me in the Eye*, I was eager to move on to *Be Different*. There are some additional autobiographical stories here, but the book is arranged more by certain topics. For example, Robison describes sensory issues with his clothes, and how he has

"trained himself" to work around them. I found that fascinating, and I appreciate his perspective that differences do not need to be liabilities. This book is appropriate for teens as well as adults.

If there's an Aspie in your life, or you are an Aspergian, I would recommend both of these books. It was refreshing for me to read a first person accounting infused with humor and real life experiences - a nice break from the more clinical and "how to" books.

If you would like to submit a book review for Reader's Corner, please email Tammy Mendiola at [tmendi@live.com](mailto:tmendi@live.com).



## “Steps for Autism” continued from page 1

are often attracted to water sources such as pools, ponds, or lakes, resulting in drowning as a leading cause of death for this population. In addition, adults with autism who wander are often misunderstood by those who come in contact with them, resulting in unfortunate and preventable situations.



Zack Schraer hard at work at Manna Food Pantry Garden.

Autism Pensacola has been working with officials from Escambia and Santa Rosa counties to implement safety programs such as Take Me Home and Project Lifesaver throughout our two-county area. We would also like to provide training for first responders in our area – training in recognizing autism when they see it and knowing how to interact with individuals with autism when necessary. All of this will make our community a safer place for our loved ones on the spectrum, but funding is needed to make it a reality.

We are excited to be holding our inaugural “Steps for Autism” awareness walk on October 1, 2011 from 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. at the Pensacola State College track. This family-friendly event will include fun activities for children of all ages, entertainment, and of course, a ceremonial walk around the track. All funds raised by this event will be used to implement important safety programs in our two counties. We need you! Registration for “Steps for Autism” is quick and easy! Simply visit [www.autismpensacola.org](http://www.autismpensacola.org) and click on the “Steps for Autism” logo on the home page – then click “join now” on the FirstGiving page and complete your registration. You can register multiple participants in one easy process, and you can create your own unique online fundraising page that tells the story of why this event is important to you. Online fundraising pages are a great way to fundraise and are easily shared with all of your contacts via email and social networks like Facebook.

Your support is needed to make our community a safer place for individuals living with autism! Join us! As an individual, as part of a team, or by making a donation – you can make a difference!

For more information about “Steps for Autism” please contact Tammy Mendiola or Susan Byram at (850) 434-7171 or email [walk@autismpensacola.org](mailto:walk@autismpensacola.org).

# Support Steps for Autism!

Several of our Steps for Autism teams have arranged mini-fundraisers to help raise money to donate to our cause. Show your support for safety programs in our area by supporting one or more of these events!

Scentsy Consultant Becky Barquet is holding a Scentsy fundraiser from now until October 1 to benefit Steps for Autism. To make your Scentsy purchase, please visit <https://beckybarquet.scentsy.us/Home> and click on the Steps for Autism walk party. 20% of ALL purchases made through this "party" will be donated to Steps for Autism!

\* \* \* \* \*

Club Pet TLC is proud to be a Bronze Stepper for the Steps for Autism awareness walk! To further support Steps for Autism, Club Pet TLC has commissioned friend and jewelry designer Meghan Hufty of Madderon Lane to design a custom charm necklace to commemorate this event. The necklace charm has two sides, is covered in glass, and comes in an organza jewelry pouch. The cost for each necklace is \$30. Club Pet TLC will donate \$10 from each necklace purchased to Steps for Autism! To place your order, please visit [www.ClubPetTLC.com](http://www.ClubPetTLC.com) and visit the online boutique. For more information, contact Terrie L. Campfield-Grammer at (850) 393-8255.

\* \* \* \* \*

Steps for Autism team "Michael's Minions" will be holding a hamburger and hot dog sale on Saturday, September 10 beginning at 11:00 a.m. at the Elks Lodge, 661 Pensacola Beach Blvd., Pensacola Beach. They will be selling lunches that include your choice of a hamburger or a hot dog, a bag of chips, and a soda for \$5.00. ALL proceeds will be donated to Steps for Autism! Come out and enjoy a day at the beach with your family and support Steps for Autism at the same time!

\* \* \* \* \*



Piecebypiece Creationz will donate 50% of the purchase price for every lanyard and coin purse they sell between now and October 1 to Steps for Autism team Isaiah's Angels! You can visit their Facebook page to see photos of these items. For more information or to make a purchase, please email [piecebypiececreationz@yahoo.com](mailto:piecebypiececreationz@yahoo.com).

\* \* \* \* \*

Do your baseboards need cleaning, and you just never have time to get to it? Or do you just dislike this particular household chore? Well you're in luck! Steps for Autism team "Chasing Away" will take care of them for you! Contact team captain Jaime Daniel at [2010jndaniel6@gmail.com](mailto:2010jndaniel6@gmail.com) for more information and to schedule your baseboard cleaning day!

\* \* \* \* \*

Official "Steps for Autism" event t-shirts are available for purchase now on our website! Simply go to [www.autismpensacola.org](http://www.autismpensacola.org) and click on the "special events" tab at the top. Scroll down and place your order – payment is accepted through paypal. To guarantee size, orders must be placed by September 1st!

## Get Connected! Check out API on Facebook!

API is into social networking!

Find our Fan Page at

<https://www.facebook.com/#!/AutismPensacola>

You can also search for Autism Pensacola, Inc. under 'Groups' and ask to join us!

We have several other groups including the following:

- API Parents of Young Adults on the Spectrum
- South Santa Rosa Autism Moms
- North Santa Rosa County Autism Moms
- Grandparents of Autism Pensacola

(We are looking for moderators for Escambia County mom groups!)



And check out our friends at Emerald Coast Autism Society! These are great ways to connect and share info any time you are on your computer. See you in CyberSpace!

## Membership Updates

- |                            |                         |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Darry & Kim Adkison        | Verna Herdman           |
| Leasha Barry               | Kerry & Dory Hornsby    |
| Amy Bodkin                 | Elizabeth Iddings       |
| John Brandt                | Amanda Jensen           |
| Richard & Jessica Browning | Rae Jean Kerr           |
| Julie Cartwright           | Josephine Licudine      |
| Daniel & Cheryl Cavanaugh  | Larry Loria             |
| Charmaine Davis            | Nicole Nolan            |
| Abraham Derreza            | Melondy Neal            |
| Pamela Dias                | Kathryn Sample          |
| Erick & Kim Dillard        | Kevin & Dianna Sorensen |
| Lea Drain                  | Tracy Wilson            |
| Frank & Joan Fitzsimmons   |                         |



## API Contact Information

To donate, pay dues, obtain membership forms or for other correspondence  
**mail to address below or visit [www.autismpensacola.org](http://www.autismpensacola.org)**

Email: [info@autismpensacola.org](mailto:info@autismpensacola.org)

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*Connecting the Pieces*  
**Autism Pensacola**

serving families along the gulf coast

P. O. Box 30213

Pensacola, Florida 32503-1213

## “Using Technology to Support Those Living with Autism”

presented by  
Center for Independent Living

**Tues., Sept. 20  
6:00 - 7:30 p.m.**

ARC Gateway  
Corner of 10th Ave. and Fairfield Dr.  
Pensacola

Social activities for kids of all ages available  
with reservations!  
[reservations@autismpensacola.org](mailto:reservations@autismpensacola.org)

The Center for Independent Living has many  
technology items available to loan so families  
can “try before they buy.”

Come out and see what they have to offer!  
Don't miss this great chance for the kids  
to have fun while parents learn!



**Saturday, October 1, 2011  
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**

**Pensacola State College Track  
1000 College Blvd., Pensacola**

**Register today!**

**It's free and easy!**

**Go to [www.autismpensacola.org](http://www.autismpensacola.org)  
and click on the “Steps for Autism” logo.**

**For more information contact Tammy Mendiola  
or Susan Byram at 434-7171  
or email [walk@autismpensacola.org](mailto:walk@autismpensacola.org)**