

AUTISM SPECTRUM NEWS DESK

Putnam ARC Launches Region's Largest Comprehensive Autism Library Collection

Staff Writer
Autism Spectrum News

With a legacy of 55 years providing exceptional services and extensive programs which offer new and exciting initiatives to participants and family members, Putnam ARC (PARC) is pleased to announce the creation of the region's largest, comprehensive library collection dedicated to Autism.

With over 200 books, dvds, magazines, and periodicals, the Autism Resource Center Library opened officially to the public on Friday, January 9, 2009 at Mahopac Public Library, located at 668 Route 6, Mahopac, NY. PARC leaders, local and state politicians, and honored guests were all a part of a ribbon cutting and grand opening celebration on January 9, 2009.

"Resources like this are critical for the growing number of families who find themselves surrounded by hurdles just to provide the bare and basic necessities for their children," said NYS Assemblyman Greg Ball, who attended the ribbon cutting. "I applaud the efforts of PARC and the whole team to once again go the extra mile for those families who are in special need for an advocate, a voice and a network of support."

The library collection marks the successful completion of phase two of the Regional Autism Resource Center. Phase one, launched to the public in March



2008, was the center's website, www.AutismResourceCenter.info. The website is a one-stop clearinghouse of information related to Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs), including autism, pervasive developmental disabilities (PDD), and Asperger's Syndrome.

Autism spectrum disorders are developmental disabilities that cause significant impairments in social interaction and communication. The ability of individuals with ASDs to think and learn ranges from gifted to severely challenged. And rates for those affected by autism are changing rapidly. Autism now affects 1 in 150 children, and 1 in 100 male children.

Recognized as a 501 c (3) in 1954, PARC provides programming and advocacy for over 650 children and adults with developmental disabilities within Putnam County and in southern Dutchess and northern Westchester counties. PARC's extensive autism services include an autism-focused preschool in Mahopac, teenage educational services and support, workplace training and employment services, vocational training, and supported apartments and community residences.

The library collection and the website are just the first two components of the PARC-sponsored Regional Autism Re-

source Center. In the coming months, center staff will work to create support groups for parents and caregivers, and an annual, regional conference related to Autism care, advancements, research, information, and more.

The center received start-up funding from Provident Bank, The Thomas & Agnes Carvel Foundation, Senator Vincent Leibel/NYS Senate, and the Gannett Foundation.

The library collection is available by borrowing at the Mahopac Public Library or by using inter-library loan from any library in the Mid-Hudson Library System. For library hours or to search for autism-related books and publications, log on to www.mahopaclibrary.org.

"This partnership gave Mahopac Public Library the ability to build a current, quality collection on this very important topic and to make it accessible to the widest audience possible," said Library Director Patricia Kaufman.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), autism, which is classified as a developmental disability, is growing at a startling rate of 10-17% a year, with the prevalence level potentially reaching four million Americans in the next decade.

For more information about the Autism Resource Center and the center's website, www.AutismResourceCenter.info, please call 845-278-PARC or log onto our website, www.PutnamARC.org.

Autism Speaks Seeks Applications for New Round of Family Services Community Grants

Staff Writer
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Grants Will Fund Education Programs, Community Activities, Supportive Technology and Services for Teens and Adults

Autism Speaks, the nation's largest autism advocacy organization, announced that it is seeking applications for its fourth round of Family Services Community Grants to promote services that enrich the lives of individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). Grant proposals are being solicited that address one of the following areas of need: Education, Recreation/Community Activities, Equipment/Supportive Technology and Young Adult and Adult Services.

Successful applicants will apply

grant funding to support new programs or the expansion of existing projects. All applications must be submitted online at: <http://grants.autismspeaks.org/research/login.asp>. The due date for applications is June 25, 2009.

To date, Autism Speaks has approved more than \$1,400,000 in funding for seventy-one Family Services Community Grants to help community organizations across the country expand existing programs and create new ones that demonstrate true innovation.

"The goal of our Family Services Community Grant program is to facilitate the expansion of services for individuals with autism and work collectively to more effectively serve this growing community," said Peter Bell, Autism Speaks Executive Vice President for Programs and Services. "There are many great organizations doing remarkable work and improving the qual-

ity of life for our children. We want to bring attention and resources to these programs so the autism community can benefit from more and better services."

A two-tier review process will once again be used to assess each grant application. In the first tier, each proposal will be reviewed by both the parent of a child with autism who has experience in the area of need and an autism professional with expertise in that same area. To help ensure objectivity, proposals will be assigned to reviewers located in a different geographic location from the applicant. Proposals that earn an established minimum score will be reviewed by members of the Autism Speaks Family Services Committee (FSC).

The FSC members will consider the following criteria for each program:

- Field building – increasing services

(new opportunities) and the capacity of service providers;

- Number of individuals served; including the ability to serve individuals who had not previously been served by the organization.
- Innovation and creativity;
- Geography;
- Ability to address the needs of the underserved;
- Replicability;
- Services provided for individuals across the spectrum.

For more information about the Family Services Community Grants, visit www.autismspeaks.org.