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Your Health, Wealth, and Happiness explores concepts and ideas within or beyond the confines of the matters of health, wealth, and happiness. We have one goal; to bring you the information you need to live a healthy, wealthy, and happy life. With the power of technology, we are able to present and portray the community via social media, print media, and video media. The information covered will benefit you in various ways. These ways include simple tricks to improving your health, and long term goals to stay on top of your actions and missions. Keeping on top of information, especially that which concerns your well-being, is crucial to living the best life possible. Cheers to growing a more healthy, wealthy, and happy lifestyle.

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Your Health, Wealth, and Happiness

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What is Autism?

By Missy Taylor

Autism is a developmental disability that can cause significant social, communication and behavioral challenges in both boys and girls.

Ten and a half years ago I would never have thought I would be asking that question regarding my now 14-year-old daughter. I can still remember the extreme feeling of excitement and overjoyed rush of emotions when I first found out we were finally going to have our family after over a decade of trying. My husband Randy and I spoke of the many things we would do such as putting up a swing set, sandbox in the yard, a family trip to Disney, setting up an account to start saving for her future schooling etc. I had a normal pregnancy, our beautiful baby girl Melanie came along right on schedule with no issues or complications.

For the first year and a half Melanie was a very happy baby. She met her milestones and progressed as I had assumed was the norm. Shortly after Melanie turned 18 months I noticed some changes in her that seemed to be out of the ordinary. As a mother, you have “gut feelings” when things are just not right. I had expressed my concerns several times to our family doctor that she was no longer looking at us when we spoke to her, at 8 months she had a 50-word vocabulary and now all of a sudden was not speaking at all, she consistently had tantrums and there seemed to be no communication either way. At one point, we thought maybe she was deaf. The doctor continued to reassure me that everything was fine and to be patient. More out of the ordinary things were occurring as we approached the age of 3. I noticed Melanie had to have certain objects in a specific place at all times – if one of these objects was moved she would become very upset and insist on it being put back in that place. She began lining objects in rows, insisting on things being grouped by colors. The next thing I had noticed was her fascination with flashing lights and the constant flapping of her hands along with an upswing gesture with one hand when saying things.

Eventually, after consistently feeling uneasy we were referred to Buffalo Hearing and Speech for an evaluation. Within ten minutes, I had to swallow these words, “We strongly feel your child is Autistic and we will have to do more testing.” I remember just standing there completely numb, with a deer in the headlights look on my face. As I was driving home, I began to talk to myself, “How am I going to tell my husband our little girl has been preliminarily diagnosed with Autism?” “What is Autism, how can I explain something I know nothing about?” To be completely honest I went through a brief so

called mourning phase because everything we had planned for, hoped for, wanted to do was completely off the table. By now, Melanie was three and a half years old with a diagnosis of Autism in the works. We had already missed out on Early Childhood Intervention. My husband was having a difficult time grasping all of what was happening. Little did we know that this life long journey would be a difficult one with constant battles, challenges, ups and downs.

At the time, there was not much out there regarding Autism. Unlike someone who may be diagnosed with cancer, there was no brochure to read or special doctor to see. I felt like I was thrown to the wolves to fend for myself and figure this all out. We started our continuing diagnosis process through referrals from the Special Education Department of Clarence School District. After several tests, neurologists, endocrinologists and child psychologists Melanie had been diagnosed with severe Autism, Sensory Integration Disorder and ADHD. Quite honestly, I had so many feelings running through me; sadness, anger, lost, hyper, out of control, resentment, hate - I had to just let it out and then let go again to move on.

“
It's been a difficult
journey and we have
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in our face, but we will
never give up.
”

I began to research what I needed to do to help my daughter. Who knew there would be countless hours of phone calls, paperwork, red tape and jumping through hoops to get the necessary services, she needed along with the proper placement in a program? No two Autistic persons are the same so there is no typical handbook when it comes to Autism. Melanie started with speech and occupational therapy for developmentally delayed children in a preschool setting for kids with special needs. After two years on a waiting list Melanie was enrolled at The Summit Center in Getzville, NY. At first I second guessed my decision to send her to that school because of the structure and what appeared to be a rigid program. The fact is The Summit Center is the place for children with Autism and developmental disabilities. Thanks to this school Melanie, who was predominantly nonverbal can now communicate with some verbal as well as through her speech program on an iPad.

After all the constant battles and finding placement to get Melanie on the right path one may think all is finally set and good. Unfortunately, Autism does not just end there and live happily ever after. In the beginning, I raised the question, What is Autism? What I provided was the clinical definition. Autism for every person and parent can vary to several degrees. Many times, friends and family have heard me coin the phrase “predictably unpredictable” because that is basically how we as a family live our lives. Melanie is a beautiful blue-eyed young

Story Continues on Page 9

Battling the Stigma

By Carlton N. Brock III
GBUAHN Corporate Trainer

If you follow newly released movies, there is a good chance that you have seen the hype around the Lionsgate film, Power Rangers. Many fans were ecstatic to see Jason, Zack, Kimberly, Billy and Trini going up against the likes of Rita Repulsa in epic kaiju big battles. Beyond the action, there was another note the movie hit. Billy, played by R.J. Cuyler, the new Blue Ranger is on the Autism Spectrum.

While it is unclear exactly where on the spectrum he fell, it is something he makes other characters aware of. Rather than

being viewed as a liability or a lesser member of the team; Billy is portrayed as smart, powerful, and vital. Billy is not the only recent character in pop culture that displays the characteristics of being autistic. Drax the Destroyer, played by Dave Bautista, from Marvel's Guardians of the Galaxy franchise is unable to process sarcasm and speaks every line with literal meaning.

Having super heroes display these traits may seem like a minute detail, but they are doing more than fighting the villain. They are facing the stigma society often places on the people who deal with these issues every day. Beyond making people on spectrum feel important, it also normalizes the conditions for the rest of society. If people become used to seeing others that fall into specific groups cast in a positive way, they will be more likely to accept others and themselves. The US has seen this effect work with various other social and minority groups. Normalizing, could lead society away from being wary of Autism or any other condition and more towards acceptance and treatment by eliminating the social stigmas. Which ultimately benefits everyone connected. Heroes like Billy and Drax are the ones we deserve and need.

WNY Autism Events

Parent Group for Parents of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders: April 19th from 6:30pm to 8:00pm at the Empower Children's Academy in Lockport, NY. To register, please call 332-4170 or email info@parentnetworkwny.org.

Feeding Strategies for Picky Eaters with Shawn Manvell Workshop: April 22nd from 8:45am to 12:45pm at Classics V Banquet and Conference Center on Niagara Falls Boulevard in Amherst, NY. To register, please visit: <http://friendsofasi.org/autism-center-for-learning/>

Family Support Group for Parents of Children with Developmental Disabilities: April 24th from 5:30pm to 7:00pm at the Pioneer Student Union at Alfred State Wellsville Campus in Wellsville, NY. For more information, please call (585) 808-4379 or email ashleigh.cline@alleganyarc.org.

Sensory Storytime: April 27th from 6:30pm – 7:30pm at Kenmore Library. For more information, please call 873-2842 or contact Kenmore Library.

The Summit Center Autism Walk: April 29th from 10:00am to 2:00pm at The Summit Center in Getzville, NY. For more information or to register, please visit www.summitwalk.org.

Coming Soon:
The Autism Nature Trail at Letchwork State Park Predicted to open by the end of the park's 2018 season.

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Apps and Local Resources for ASD

By Victoria Robbins, Medical Assistant



People with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) have impairments in social interaction, communication as well as atypical behaviors that include restricted interests and repetitive behaviors. According to The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), one in 68 US children have autism. Because of the growing prevalence of autism spectrum disorders, it is not unusual that tech companies have developed hundreds of apps to suite the various needs required by those with ASDs.

Many people who have ASDs have trouble communicating and expressing themselves, especially those that are non-verbal. "Proloquo2Go," an app available on iPad, iPhone, and iPod Touch, is an argumentative and alternative communication app (ACA) that allows people to choose and tap symbolic images. The app then speaks whatever words go with the chosen image, ultimately forming a sentence. It can be used with people of all ages, and is available in English and Spanish for bilingual use. The price is pretty hefty (\$249.99), but is described as "highly customizable" by teachers that use it, and helps teach the basics of interaction for those that have trouble communicating or are non-verbal.

Another app, "My Video Schedule," is a useful tool to help offer predictability, consistency, and customization to those who struggle with structure, new situations, or schedules. Users are able to choose an image, and schedule the specific task into their schedule. The app also sends reminders to the users,

and best of all, one can customize the schedules with any images or videos that he or she pleases. It can be used on an iPad, iPhone, or iPod Touch, and is only \$4.99.

For those that live within the Western New York community, there are many local resources available. Women and Children's Hospital of Buffalo (WCHOB) has an Autism Spectrum Disorder Center offers a comprehensive developmental, psychological, and neurological evaluation and, if necessary, an ADOS (Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule) type interview. Following the visit, the team of professionals determines the diagnosis and/or need for any additional testing or services. This team-based approach found at WCHOB is the only place for a medically-based, multidisciplinary evaluation and diagnosis of children with ASDs in WNY. Additionally, the ASD Center hosts monthly support groups for parents of children with ASDs; locations are listed on the Kaleida Health website. They also have a community calendar on their website which includes events for those with ASDs.

Countless number of people are impacted by ASDs and the difficulties that come with the disorder. However, with the improvement in technology and the resources available, families are able to better navigate new challenges, and receive the support they need.

Early Intervention is Key for Kids with Autism

By Ellen Spangenthal
Director of Communications

Your two-year-old appears not to hear you when you call her name. Your toddler seems disinterested in toys, but is fascinated by electric fans. Your eight-year-old has great difficulty making and maintaining friends.

Could it be autism?

April is National Autism Awareness Month. Autism affects 1 in every 68 children. It is a lifelong neurological disorder that affects a person's communication, behavior, and social skills. Although the cause is unknown and there is no cure, intervening early can dramatically improve a child's outcome.

Autism is considered a "spectrum disorder" because it affects every individual differently and to varying degrees. The first signs of autism usually appear before age three and include:

- Delay or absence of spoken language
- Little or no eye contact; seeming unawareness of others
- Non-responsive to facial expressions/feelings of others
- Lack of pretend play and/or interest in playing with or near peers
- Repetitive movements (hand flapping, body rocking)
- Over or under-sensitivity to sounds, sights, tastes, touch and smells

"Often parents take a 'wait and see' approach, hoping that their child will outgrow some of these issues," said Stephen R. Anderson, Ph.D., BCBA-D, CEO of The Summit Center. "We encourage parents to take action and speak with their child's pediatrician if they notice any of the warning signs. Getting



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help early is critically important."

With 600 professional staff, and expertise in autism and social/emotional development, The Summit Center, located in Getzville, NY, offers more than 30 programs for children and adults in the areas of Early Intervention and Education, Behavioral Health, Community, and Adult services.

Summit's programs employ the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) – identified by hundreds of scientific studies as the most effective method to teach individuals with autism. "Using this approach, we'll develop a plan that addresses a child's specific areas of need, work with the child individually to make progress toward goals, regularly measure that progress, and make changes as needed to ensure success," Dr. Anderson said.

For more information, visit www.TheSummitCenter.org, or call 716-629-3400.



What is Autism? Story Continued From Page 3

lady with a heartwarming smile. She loves all types of music, can utilize a computer and can work a TV/VCR and DVD player like she invented the darn thing. She loves the outdoors, plays sports with other special needs kids and loves art. Melanie has an extreme difficult time with loud noises, crying children and large groups of people to name a few things. There are times when she becomes over stimulated and cannot sort things out which results in her having a tantrum commonly known as a meltdown. This is not something that is limited to just the home environment and has happened in public many times. One of the most difficult things for my husband and I, as parents of an Autistic child, is to be judged by others. There have been several times we would experience a meltdown in public, where others would be quick to judge. I cannot tell you how many times I have been accused of being a "bad mother." How can one mother be so cruel and quick to judge another mother? The stares and the whispers when she is flapping her hands because she is excited can be so hurtful. We are not bad parents and our child is not in need of severe discipline. Before you pass judgment maybe ask yourself if there is some way you could help in the moment. If not then do not comment on that which you do not know. Melanie does not sleep through the night often and there are many times that she will go around



the clock for two to three days straight. She needs constant supervision, has no sense of danger and a high tolerance for pain. She is very routine-oriented and sudden changes can put her in a tailspin. There are times when she can be aggressive and is very strong.

All of this can be very difficult on parents. It also means that it takes time away from one another, unintentionally. I am blessed to still have my family as one whole unit. Many know, as special as our children are it can be very difficult to cope with the tantrums, meltdowns, daily routines, structure, therapies etc. that comes along with having a child diagnosed with Autism. Randy and I are lucky to have each other and to be together as many marriages with Autistic children end in divorce. Randy loves Melanie so very much, he would give her the world and loves her to the moon and back. He has told me, "I am just a humble father trying, with expectations, but I cannot change this." I know it is heartbreaking for him and he tries so hard. They really are buddies and it's fun to watch the two of them challenging one another. One thing I can say positively is that, because of Autism, there is a greater sense of patience within our household. We have learned to accept that it is what it is and we cannot control it. What we thought was "normal" no longer is and sometimes we need to step out of our world and into hers.

In looking back from the beginning and her first being diagnosed till now, Melanie has made many great strides and shown much progress as well as episodes of regression. There is so much more we need to learn. It has been a difficult journey and we have had many doors slammed in our face but we will never give up. Not only does Melanie need to learn to adapt, understand and learn how to live in our world. We too must adapt, better understand and learn about her world.

Autism is not going away it is here right in our face and more and more children are diagnosed daily. Don't fight it, learn about it, and try to help others be aware. Regarding my daughter Melanie and her Autism diagnosis, it is what it is, she is who she is, accept her and learn more about it.

Autism Awareness Word Search

Now that you have discovered vital information about autism, it's time to put your knowledge to the test! Find the various terms in the word search below. Words will be forward, backward, and diagonal.

S	L	L	I	K	S	L	A	I	C	O	S	F	Z
C	F	A	S	R	O	I	V	A	H	E	B	U	J
Y	O	R	C	I	M	P	A	I	R	M	E	N	T
S	T	M	U	I	M	N	D	P	H	Y	K	C	N
L	N	I	M	S	G	A	R	M	G	O	V	T	O
L	E	E	L	U	T	O	U	I	B	W	R	I	I
I	M	C	T	I	N	R	L	T	F	Y	X	O	T
K	P	I	I	H	B	I	A	O	I	L	O	N	A
S	O	E	I	T	E	A	C	T	R	S	I	I	V
R	L	I	S	T	E	R	S	A	I	U	M	N	R
O	E	A	U	R	L	N	A	I	T	O	E	G	E
T	V	R	O	N	R	C	E	P	D	I	N	N	S
O	E	I	I	S	C	U	I	G	Y	T	O	F	B
M	D	R	E	P	E	T	I	T	I	V	E	N	O

Autism
Behaviors
Communication
Development
Disability

Frustration
Functioning
Genetic
Impairment
Motor Skills

Neurological
Observation
Repetitive
Social Skills
Therapy

Check your answers in next month's issue!

Monthly Recipe: Mashed Ginger Carrots

By Lauren Antkowiak



More often than not, children with autism are picky eaters. This has a lot to do with wanting to stick to a ridged routine of eating the same things every day and having preferences for certain colors, textures, and temperatures of food. It can be difficult for parents to make sure their child receives a balanced diet, but be patient. Every child is different, just as their type of autism is different from one person to the next. What works for one child may not work for others. However, here is one recipe that has been popular with autistic children and is worth a try!!

Mashed Ginger Carrots

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons Shedd's Spread Country Crock Spread
- 1/4 cup onion, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, chopped
- 1/4 teaspoon ground ginger spice
- 2 (14.5-ounce) cans sliced carrots, drained and warmed
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar, firmly packed
- 2 tablespoons fresh coriander, chopped

Directions

1. Melt the Shedd's Spread Country Crock Spread in two-quart saucepan over medium heat.
2. Cook onion, stirring occasionally, about three minutes or until crisp-tender.
3. Stir in chopped garlic and ginger and cook one minute, stirring frequently.
4. Add heated carrots and brown sugar.
5. Mash until heated through.
6. Garnish with chopped coriander and serve immediately.

Technological Tools for The Autistic

By Daniel Azzinaro

Information released from the Center of Disease Control (CDC) specify that 1 out of 68 children in the United States will be diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). As resources become rarer, instructors find it more and more difficult to meet the needs of individual students with the labor-intensive traditional methods that currently dominate teacher training programs. People with ASD have a need for, and a right to, the same range of communication options available to everyone else. Today, most people use multiple devices to address their communication needs. The impression that only a single communication device can meet all the requirements no longer makes sense.

There are two purposes for technology supports. First, for Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC), and second, as a motivating teaching tool or strategy for increased independence. For this second purpose, technology can serve as a support for academics and literacy, social skills, vocational training, for leisure time pursuits, and daily living. Some needs may be met by the mainstream device, while others may require accessories and techniques specifically designed for them. Multiple use technology extends past our current technology and at a significant lower cost.

Utilizing technology like tablets and other hand-held devices are useful tools because they are flexible and portable, unlike other steadfast devices that often can be heavy and cumbersome. A hand-held device is easily carried and can promote peer acceptance. The touch screen and layout are more accessible for individuals with coordination or learning difficulties—sliding and tapping are easier than typing. Technology can improve communication with others by the timely use of email or texting, which has a cost and time savings. Technology allows for adaptability and motivation.

Many people with ASD are visual thinkers. According to Temple Grandin, authors, speakers, and an individual with ASD, pictures are their first language, and words are their second language. As concrete, literal, visual thinkers, individuals with autism can process information better when they are looking at pictures or words to help them visualize information. Technology just makes visual images more accessible to the individual with ASD. Computer graphics capture and maintain their attention.



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