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By Kelly Jakymiw

bridges for autism FOUNDATION



Special News:

- The Bridges Grant Program has given away \$12,000!
- Our 2nd Annual Benefit Dinner was a memorable success.
- Visit us at: www.bridgesforautismfoundation.org

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Foundation Members

Marcia Biordi Brown, Founder & President

David R. Brown, Founder & Senior Vice President

Tiffany Cappel, Executive Vice President

Carrie Culos, M.Ed. Grant Writing

Kelly Jakymiw, Secretary

Mike Jakymiw, MBA Treasurer

Melissa Ramlow, Marketing

Syed S. Rizvi, Web Site Design & Administrator

Christine Roberts, Fundraising

Melissa Tolman, MS CCC-SLP
Director of Educational Programs

Mission Statement

Bridges for Autism Foundation is committed to providing educational and financial resources to families with children on the autism spectrum. We award financial grants to individual families so that children with autism spectrum disorders can receive the necessary treatment and support to reach their greatest potential.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES-

Bridges for Autism Foundation will award grants semi-annually (January and June) to those individual families whose completed application has been approved by the Foundation. Grants may pay for therapeutic services such as speech and language services, assistive technology, behavior consulting, ABA, RDI, verbal behavior, occupational therapy and therapeutic intensives.

EDUCATION –

Raising consciousness means educating professional such as medical personnel, educators, and providers, as well as parents and the general public. Bridges for Autism Foundation collaborates with special education districts in our community creating unique and specialized programs.

AWARENESS –

Our goal is to end apathy and raise consciousness about autism spectrum disorders throughout our community with current literature, conferences, fundraisers and up-to-date information via our website.

What is Autism?

The staggering statistic of 1 in 166 children born today in the US diagnosed with autism and its associated behaviors has just increased to 1 in 150. Very scary. Autism is a complex developmental disability that typically appears during the first three years of life. It is a neurological disorder that affects the functioning of the brain.

Autism is four times more prevalent in boys than in girls, and knows no racial, ethnic, or social boundaries. Family income, lifestyle and education levels do not affect the chance of autism's occurrence, though there is

some evidence that the incidence of autism increases with increased ages of parents at the time of child birth.

Autism impacts the normal development of the brain in the areas of social interaction and communication skills. Children and adults with autism typically have difficulties in verbal and non-verbal communication, social interactions, and leisure or play activities. The disorder makes it hard for them to sensitivities in the five senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste.

Over one million people in the USA today have autism or some form of pervasive developmental disorder. Its prevalence rate makes autism one of the most common developmental disabilities. Yet most of the public, including many professionals in the medical, educational and vocation fields, are still unaware of how autism affects people and how they can effectively work with individuals with autism.

Bridges for Autism Foundation 2nd Annual Fall Benefit



The 2nd annual fall benefit was a true success thanks to the generosity of our tremendous benefit committee and guests. We had a fabulous evening at Stoney River Restaurant on November 11, 2007. The restaurant was filled with 200 people who enjoyed the

outstanding music by Jeff and Barb Trudell. Everyone enjoyed the ample amounts of delicious food. We were so grateful for the exquisite service we received by Luigi Millacardi, General Manager and his flawless servers and staff. Through donations, our raffle,

silent and live auction, we raised over \$30,000. The proceeds of the benefit will go toward the Bridges Grant Program, which awards grants to individual families with children on the autism spectrum.

Thanks to the generosity and support of our guests we raised over \$30,000!

“As we concluded our wonderful evening of good fun, great food, good wine, good surprises, and most importantly, good friends, we wanted to express our most sincere gratitude for your support. We will never be able to thank you all enough for your generosity, your help and your willingness to make a difference in so many children’s lives. The money raised will be used to ensure that more children will get the proper therapy that is necessary to help these kids be their own personal best. While there is no cure for autism, we firmly believe that our children need us to never give up on reaching them.”

*You have helped to change those statistics by opening your hearts to these children! Together, we **will** make a difference! Thank you from the bottom of our hearts!”*

Jennifer McKinney, Bridges Benefit Committee

Madelyn Gilbert Award



Children helping children overwhelmed our hearts this year. Madelyn Gilbert raised \$5000 selling jewelry at the Highland Park Art Fair and has raised a total of \$8000 making jewelry so that she could find a way for her cousin Adam Heichman to speak.

Adam has a diagnosis of autism and is non-verbal. Madelyn merged her name with Adam’s to create her jewelry line: mAdam Creations. Adam Heichman and Nicky Brown presented an award to eight year-old Madelyn Gilbert naming her Volunteer

of the Year. Madelyn said, “You are never too young to help another child...” Each year, Bridges for Autism Foundation will present the Madeline Gilbert Award to an outstanding volunteer.

Bridges Grant Program

Our Foundation is committed to providing educational and financial resources to families with children on the autism spectrum. Bridges for Autism Foundation awards grants to individual families so that children with autism spectrum disorders receive the necessary treatment and support to reach their greatest potential. Through awareness, education, and treatment, our goal is to end apathy and raise consciousness about autism.

The necessary services for children on the spectrum can often cost an average of \$160 per hour that most insurance companies do not cover. Children with autism require approximately eight to ten hours a week of therapy in addition to the school setting. We know that there are a large percentage of families in our community that are not receiving the resources, support, and treatment they need due to financial restraints. We developed the **Bridges**

Grant Program in order to bridge the gap between the treatment parents' desire for their children and the ability to pay for those specific services. Any family with a child on the autism spectrum is eligible to submit an application to the **Bridges Grant Program** to receive a financial award given to the child's therapeutic provider.



January 2008 Grants!

The **Bridges Grant Program** received over 40 grant applications from families all over northern Illinois during our January 2008 grant cycle!

Our dedicated and diverse grant evaluation committee carefully looked over all the submitted grants. After thoughtful deliberation, the committee chose ten families to give \$12,000 in financial grants! It was an exciting process for us and we look forward to

supporting these deserving families and children!

"I am writing to give you all my thanks and gratitude and heartfelt appreciation for awarding the \$1000 grant for my son Alex! Words cannot begin to express the gratitude I feel towards Bridges for Autism Foundation. As a single parent of a severely autistic child it is very frustrating to know that my child

needs more than I alone can provide; therefore, it is SO comforting to know that there are organizations such as Bridges for Autism Foundation that are eager to help to ease this burden for parents like myself! Thanks a lot!

*With sincere gratitude,
Felicia Strugariu."*

The Bridges Grant Program has given away \$12,000 in grant money this cycle!



Thank You To Our Generous Sponsors

We are improving the quality of life for families, one child at a time...

mAdam Creations	\$8000
Burnham Foundation	\$5000
Josh Lukes	\$2000
Anonymous	\$1000
Carolyn & Gary Beller	\$ 500
Sage Products	\$ 500
Candace & Dennis Risen	\$ 500
Jim Klutznick	\$ 500
Joe Gutman	\$ 500



A Touching Testimonial...

"We just received notification that our daughter Tyler has been awarded a \$1,000 grant from the foundation. As parents of two little girls with autism, we are struggling to provide our daughters with the therapy they need to reach their maximum potential. Thanks to you, Tyler will be able to receive intensive speech therapy that will help her communicate her wants, needs thoughts and opinions. Thank you so much for helping our daughter find her voice!"

We are truly grateful,
Michelle N. McFarland-McDaniels

Generous Bar Mitzvah Project

A thirteen year old, Josh Lukes, did a Mitzvah project in preparation for his Bar Mitzvah. He is the nephew of Randi Heichman, and cousin to her son Adam who has autism. He raised more than \$2,000 for Bridges. The following is his letter:

"As you know, my Bar Mitzvah is approaching rapidly. For one of my many mitzvah projects, I

want to help Adam and raise money for Bridges for Autism.

On Thanksgiving morning, I organized a football game at a local park.

There was a turnout of about 80 people. I had two games set up. There was one game for kids and one game for the adults. There was a ton of drinks and we had a delicious breakfast for

everyone. I want you to know how much I love Adam and I hope by doing this, I will help him and others in need.

*Your cousin,
Josh Lukes"*

Thank you so much Josh!



Educational Committee

Bridges for Autism Foundation has partnered with Northern Suburban Special Education District's Autism Task Force to support educational outreach. Through the Educational Committee, we are working to develop workshops and events that will raise consciousness about autism and provide informative tools to parents and community members. Our first

workshop will be held on February, 19th 2008 at Early Childhood Center for Innovative Learning in Highland Park. There will two sessions, one at 10:00-11:30 and one at 6:00-7:30. The topic will be "*Behavior Through The Lens Of Autism*" presented by Dr. Kristin Swanson.

This interactive, discussion-oriented workshop will present

an alternative perspective regarding challenging behaviors. Following a short presentation, participants will work together to analyze challenging behaviors (suggestions taken from those attending), concluding with possible intervention strategies.

We look forward an informative and interactive workshop!



What is Assistive Technology?

Bridges for Autism Foundation donated \$1000 to Augmentative Communication Technology Supports (ACTS) to help families with financial challenges obtain devices that aid the facilitation of language and communication.

What is the solution for people who can't talk? ACTS provides information about other ways to communicate like pointing to pictures, using sign language, or computerized speech generating devices. This is called Augmentative and Alternative Communication. (AAC).

Who can benefit from AAC? Individuals with disorders resulting in severe communication impairments including cerebral palsy, autism, apraxia, Down Syndrome, ALS, traumatic brain injury, and stroke.

ACTS helps people in Illinois who cannot use their speech to communicate by providing them opportunities to practice and learn from others. Information is brought directly to their families so they can learn to better support their children and advocate for their unique communication needs.

"On behalf of Augmentative Communication Technology Supports, thank you so much for your generous donation of \$1000. Your donation will make a positive impact on the lives of many augmentative communication users and their families."

Jill Senner, PhD, CCC-SLP.



Bridges for Autism Foundation

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

**www.bridgesforautismfoundation
.org**

Attention Private Providers!

As we initiate our new Bridges Grant Program, in which families can apply on our website for financial support for therapy and other educational tools, we ask that you help us by "spreading the word" of this new program to those of your clients who might benefit from it.

By the same token, as we move forward with our award process, it is our vision to develop a

Northern Cook and Lake County directory of talented and respected therapists and the programs they offer. By doing so, we can further serve the families of children with ASD by providing information to all applicants as to the various providers and programs available to meet their expressed needs.

We would be very grateful if you would help

us out in this process.

Please visit our website and click on the "brochures/forms" link to find our Therapeutic Provider Form.

By filling out this form and returning it to us, you will be putting us one step closer to our goal of developing a private provider directory.

We truly appreciate the important services you provide to children. Thank you!

How You Can Help...

Bridges for Autism Foundation is a grass roots organization that is flourishing! We are actively seeking volunteers. We also graciously accept monetary donations. Please donate on our website at www.bridgesforautismfoundation.org or you may send a donation to :

Bridges for Autism
Foundation
P.O. Box 102
Deerfield, IL 60015

Upcoming Events

**3rd annual Charity Rummage
Sale Saturday May 17, 2008
9AM-5PM 936 Kenton Road,
Deerfield**

**Family Walk/Run
Date to be determined**

**Coasters for A Cause – Great
America – Coming in May!**

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FOUNDATION**

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