

Media/Research Updates:

"Days of Our Lives" and Autism Speaks Team Up for Autism Storyline Award-winning daytime drama "Days of Our Lives" is launching a new storyline focusing on how the whole family is affected when a child is diagnosed with autism. The story will be based on the experiences of the series' head writer, Dena Higley, who has raised a child with autism. In the story, Dr. Lexie Carver (Renee Jones) and Commissioner Abe Carver (James Reynolds) are told their 3-year-old son, Theo, has autism. In developing the story, "Days of our Lives" has joined with Autism Speaks to help convey a message of hope and impart accurate and useful information.

Louisiana Legislature Passes Autism Insurance Bill In a key victory for children with autism, on June 11, the Louisiana Senate unanimously passed a measure that would require insurance companies to cover evidence-based, medically necessary autism therapies. House Bill 958, the autism insurance reform bill, would cover Applied Behavior Analysis and other treatment costs of up to \$36,000 per year with a lifetime cap of \$144,000 for children under 17 with autism. The bill now goes to Governor Bobby Jindal for his signature.

NASCAR "Best Buy 400 benefiting Student Clubs for Autism Speaks" Raises Funds and Awareness The "Best Buy 400 benefiting Student Clubs for Autism Speaks" NASCAR race, which was won by Kyle Busch on June 1, 2008 at Dover International Speedway, raised \$76,000. The race not only raised funds from ticket sales and fan donations, but it also generated tremendous awareness for autism and the new Student Clubs for Autism Speaks program.

Jenny McCarthy and Jim Carrey Lead "Green Our Vaccines Rally" The Green Our Vaccines Rally, intended to promote safer vaccines, was lead by celebrities Jenny McCarthy and Jim Carrey and sponsored by Talk About Curing Autism (TACA), Generation Rescue, HEAL Foundation and Moms Against Mercury. The event, which took place June 4 in Washington, D.C, began with a march through the streets of the nation's capitol and concluded at a rally site in front of the Capitol Building.

Autism Insurance Bill is Moving Forward in New Jersey New Jersey has become the latest state to address

autism insurance reform legislation in its statehouse. Assembly Bill 2238 and Senate Bill 1651 will include coverage for therapies such as physical therapy, speech therapy, occupational therapy, and evidence-based behavioral interventions, including applied behavioral analysis and other evidence-based, medically-necessary treatments. Autism Speaks and New Jersey COSAC are working together to move these bills forward. To receive updates on the New Jersey legislation, read the bills and find out what you can do to help pass A2238 and S1651, visit www.autismvotes.org/newjersey.

Over 1500 Newly Diagnosed Families Have Received the 100 Day Kit

In late February, Autism Speaks launched its 100 Day Kit, a personalized resource to assist families in getting through the critical time following an autism diagnosis. During the first 100 days following the kit's release, the family services team spoke with, and personalized kits for over 1500 families who had recently received a diagnosis of autism. In addition, thousands of visitors to autismspeaks.org viewed the online version of the kit.

Follow Your Feelings

By Kathryn Wylie

Our beautiful daughter, Bree, was diagnosed with autism and ADHD at age two. As a former school psychologist, I knew Bree (our third child) was different from birth, but I couldn't bring myself to admit that something serious might be wrong. Bree acted like a deaf child most of the time, not even seeming to know her own name. She did not talk, or make baby noises at all -- only screams to reveal her wants or needs. Finally, Bree's grandmother remarked during a visit, "We've noticed that Bree never looks at us when we talk to her." Gram was right, and I couldn't ignore it any longer; I knew from experience that Bree likely had autism.

Having your child officially diagnosed with autism is devastating on one hand, and a relief on the other. The child you thought you had "dies" and the one you really have becomes a reality. After the grief comes an intense desire to find answers. Children with autism do not fit into one mold. Some advice we researched or received seemed right for Bree; other recommendations did not. We followed our feelings.

We look back now as Bree soon turns sixteen, and feel grateful for the way our whole family has learned and

grown together. Perhaps the differences in how we approached our situation will encourage other parents of children with autism to follow their feelings when national or local trends in treating autism don't seem right for them.

Bree is the third of five children, the only one with autism. We were homeschoolers for many years, and also had our family attending private and public schools. Bree attended special needs classes for three years. She tested as very bright, or high-functioning, and learned to read easily. Her ADHD, coupled with autism, continued to challenge teachers and family. Bree could never be left alone. She was highly coordinated and could fearlessly climb anywhere or open anything. We were on "lockdown" at home with keys for every room she wouldn't be safe in (which was almost every room). We tried various medications and natural supplements. Some were helpful, many were not.

Our "therapy" for Bree was lots of family time. Her two older siblings pulled her along, modeling appropriate social and emotional behavior. Her two younger siblings pushed Bree, helping her learn to talk and slowly mature. Bree's younger sister followed her everywhere, thwarting Bree's attempts to isolate herself. Leaving Bree in her younger years for any length of time was highly stressful (for her and the sitter), so we spent many more hours doing things as a family than might be typical. The "togetherness" of our family was not always easy, but we can say now that it was worth it.

Today Bree is an amazing teenager. She still has autism and ADHD. But she is also smart, happy, well-adjusted, and mature in many ways. Bree has strong emotional bonds with all her siblings (although she can embarrass them at times!). She is very verbal and has an excellent memory. Her musical talent is obvious; we found she has perfect pitch. Bree will sing anywhere, anytime, and usually louder than anyone else (she delights others at church as they hear her echoing from the bathroom -- the place with the best acoustics!).

Bree plays ice hockey with our local special needs team. Many volunteers and sponsors make this possible. Ice hockey has been a perfect sport for her, as it requires interaction and cooperation, but doesn't threaten personal space. Bree sang the national anthem at our opening game last year.

Home school has been wonderful for Bree as a teenager. She has many social opportunities with her activities, church groups, and siblings. Her occupational skills (learned at home) include doing her own laundry, fixing her own meals, basic sewing skills, making phone calls,

using the internet (supervised), and shopping with mom or dad. Bree helps with the care of pets, doing the dirty work her siblings don't prefer (with no whining!). We are now raising baby bantam chicks together as a home school project.

We still cannot leave Bree anywhere completely alone, but "lockdown" hasn't been necessary for years. She will never have a driver's license or get married. She will always be with us. The joy and laughter she brings to those around her cannot be measured. She loves routine and keeps me going when health issues are discouraging. I can truly say Bree is a delight and I am grateful to be her mother.

Each unique child has so much to give. Finding the things that are right for Bree will continue to be our focus. We recommend following your feelings, with patience, and enjoying the journey.

If you have a story you wish to share about your personal experience with autism, please send it to editors@autismspeaks.org. Autism Speaks reserves the right to edit contributions for space, style and content. Because of the volume of submissions, not all can be published on the site.

Company Updates: (WI families)

- ✚ Keep hours consistent; only cancel if your child is sick!!!! All hours need to be made up if the therapist cancels!
- ✚ Line evals are due this month and raises go into effect on the July 25th.
- ✚ Remember, all therapists sign a confidentiality agreement and under no circumstances are clients discussed outside of the clients home.
- ✚ All therapists should wear clothes that cover the 3 b's. That is breasts, butt and belly. Remember that you are a professional and need to dress like one.
- ✚ There will be a new gas incentive coming soon! Ideas are welcome!

Joke of the month:

If money doesn't grow on trees then why do banks have branches?

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