

## Sonnenberg Consultants Newsletter February 2011



### Company News

-Stay connected to updates and reminders- Click the like button on the Sonnenberg Consultants official Facebook page!

-Hopefully the blizzards are over, but if the local school system shuts down due to weather then therapy is optional for the staff.

-Remember, if you are cancelling any shift you need to call the team and floaters to see if someone can cover, as well as the family, Senior, and the office.

### Looking for a good book?

Curl up with a blanket and some hot chocolate and take a step into a different perspective or gain some more knowledge on the subject of Autism. All of these books are available from Amazon.com.

*Nobody Nowhere*- Donna Williams

*Somebody Somewhere*- Donna Williams

In these 2 books, Williams paints a portrait of herself as she has grown up with Autism.

*There's a Boy in Here*- Judy and Sean Barron

Here, a mother and son are the co-voices as they take you through their experience of Sean growing up with Autism.

*The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*- Mark Haddon

This is a fictional story told through the eyes of a 15 year old Autistic boy.

### Robbie Maino Speaks... This Time the Virginia General Assembly Listens

February 2, 2011

<http://blog.autismspeaks.org/2011/02/02/gr-robbie-maino-speaks/>

*The past few days have been a whirlwind of action in the Virginia General Assembly on the autism insurance reform bills, [Senate Bill 1062](#) and [House Bill 2467](#). On Monday, the Senate Labor and Commerce Committee passed the bill. Robbie wrote a letter to all members of the Virginia House of Delegates. His mother, Marybeth, forwarded his letter to Autism Speaks and Robbie's words resonated in such a way with us that we are eager to share them with the entire community.*



### Here is Robbie's letter:

Dear Members of the Virginia House of Delegates, I want to extend my sincerest thanks for your support of the Autism Insurance Reform Bill. I am a 17 year old that has been living with autism my whole life and I know from personal experience that early intervention is one of the most vital steps in a child's life with autism. Because of my parents, I have been fortunate enough to receive such treatment from an early age and have gone through countless therapies and behavioral counselors to get to where I am today. Because my parents took the personal burden of having to give up so much of their livelihood to give me this blessing, I am now an independent advocate of autism awareness and I spend a good portion of my time volunteering and working to help assist children like myself. Without this intervention on my parent's part, I would most likely not be graduating high school. Instead, I will be graduating high school in June and have been accepted into the President's Leadership Program at Christopher Newport University. I sincerely believe that this bill, once put into action, will make a difference for all those children that don't have it as well off as I did, and make their lives and those that care for them much easier.

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Autism isn't an easy thing to deal with. Before I got to where I am today, I had enough close friends to count on one hand. The few that I had were forced to deal with my social awkwardness and my general obnoxious behavior. I made life for my parents interesting, but I have no doubt that life would have been very different for them if I was "normal." Worst of all, however, I didn't realize how much their love played a role in my life until high school, and I rarely gave them thanks until I was aware that they more than deserved it. This patience and kindness, repaid very often by bad behavior on my part, shows the stubborn confidence of my friends and family that I COULD get better. And I like to think they were right.

No amount of education could have prepared me for life, what I really needed was therapy, social skills training and medication. I am one of the incredibly lucky few who have been able to benefit from these therapies from an early age and I have been able to learn how to deal with my high functioning autism (called Asperger's). Now I can speak for and work with others who have it. With the passing of this bill, I look forward to seeing the amount of kids who can speak for themselves grow exponentially.

I recognize that the cost of this bill is notable, and many of you had hard decisions to make when voting. For those who voted no, I understand your viewpoint, and I have an incredible amount of respect for your sympathy for the financial impact and your careful consideration. I know that you weighed the choices and decided what you believed was right. Of course, I also need to thank, most of all, those of you who voted yes for this bill. You also weighed the choices, bearing in mind the burden of either choice. You listened to the advocates for each side, and you also decided on what you believe is right. Everyone has choices that face them, and not everyone will pick the same side. Differences are to be respected, not used to separate individuals. If anything, what I learned the most on my visit to the hearing and passing of this bill, is the power of listening to different viewpoints in an argument, because it makes it easier to understand the issue and respect all who are involved.

Thank you for continuing to work to pass this bill into law. I hope all of you realize the impact you are going to have on hundreds of children's lives all around Virginia. Children who have been already crossed out for a bright future, who live every day wishing to become something more than they currently are. Children whose parents can't afford to help them without help from insurance, and sometimes even, children whose parents have given up on them. Many of these children will receive treatment and, you have my word, will become something greater than anyone around them could possibly imagine. All these children will have a chance at living a meaningful and impactful life because of you. In 15 years when you see the headlines of a newspaper or a story on the news detailing a man with autism designing a computer system or finding a cure for a disease, give yourself a pat on the back. It's very likely they did so thanks to you.

Thank you for voting for the bill and thank you for building a brighter future for children with Autism. I am planning on trying to make it to the General Assembly this week to support the bill as it is presented by Delegate Greason when it goes to the floor.

Best Regards Always,  
Robert Maino

*Have a wonderful  
Valentine's Day!  
(Don't eat too many chocolates!)*



Happy Birthday!

*Lindsay Hofmann 2/8*

*Marie Johnson 2/8*

*Natasha Mullen 2/9*

*Megan Leicht*

*Angela Dizzone 2/27*

**And a Belated Birthday wish to...**

*Elizabeth Krifka 1/17*

*Dan Sosa 1/19*

*Amy Edling 1/25*

*Brynn Deboer 1/31*