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Cure Autism Now Launches 2006 Science Program

22 Pilot Project and Young Investigator Grants Awarded

By Liz Bell

CURE AUTISM NOW IS PROUD TO announce the kick off of the 2006 science program with 22 Pilot Project and Young Investigator grants totaling \$2.4 million. These grants offer an opportunity for experienced researchers to collect preliminary data, test hypotheses and explore novel topics, and to entice new talent to join the field.

These grant-funding mechanisms are two of several components of the overall research effort of the foundation. Building on the previous findings of grants such as these, Cure Autism Now has formed targeted initiatives that explore brain

development, the environment, genetics, neural retraining and innovative technology for autism. We have also created programs to support treatment and intervention strategies, and build resources for the research community. Several new awards through these initiatives are announced in this issue, and additional initiative projects will be announced in the coming months.

Cure Autism Now envisions four interactive research objectives that together will lead us to the cure we seek. The 2006 Pilot Project and Young Investigator awards primarily address two prongs of this scientific framework: *find the children*

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Combating Autism Act Must Pass This Year

CURE AUTISM NOW IS TAKING A LEADERSHIP role in a national effort to secure passage of the Combating Autism Act. Having played a similar role in the passage of the Children's Health Act of 2000, Cure Autism Now is actively working with other organizations to create a consensus version of the bill and present a unified message to Congress. It is critical that the entire autism community support the bill, federal legislation that will ensure the government recognizes and responds to the autism epidemic.

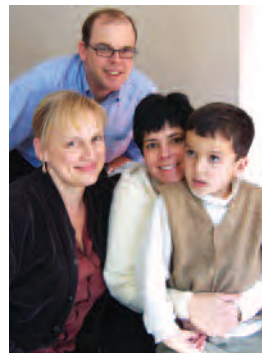
Cure Autism Now board members Elizabeth Emken and Craig Snyder were recently joined by representatives from Autism Speaks including founders Bob

and Suzanne Wright and Deidre Imus for a productive day of lobbying on Capitol Hill. The autism advocates enlisted the support of the Senate for the legislation. Sen. Michael B. Enzi committed to taking action on the reauthorization of the autism provisions of the Children's Health Act. The Senate HELP Committee is treating the consensus version of the bill as the working draft and it is currently under review and consideration. Sens. Rick Santorum, Christopher Dodd and Bill Frist all reiterated their support. To learn more about this legislation and how you can make your voice heard, please visit www.combatautism.org and read the story on page 24.



CAN Neuroimaging Summit Focuses on Collaboration

IN JANUARY, 25 RESEARCHERS FROM around the world came together in Los Angeles for the Cure Autism Now Neuroimaging Summit Meeting. The science summit meeting was convened as a forum to brainstorm about how imaging technology can be used to uncover the underlying biology of



Portia Iversen, Christopher, Jill and Jonathan Escher.

autism – in a manner as directed, timely and cost-efficient as possible. The summit, held at the University of California, Los Angeles, was a result of a generous donation from Christopher and Jill Escher.

The explosion of digital imaging technologies has made characterization of brain structure a hot topic in autism research, and holds promise as a way of revealing subtypes (called *endophenotypes*) to classify patients. For example, recent structural imaging data have told us that the brains

“The intention of all of our summit meetings is to create a venue for the top scientific minds to spend 48 hours focused solely on problem-solving for or in autism.”

–CAN Science Director Sophia Colamarino, Ph.D.

of some autistic toddlers tend to be larger than those of typically developing controls. Functional imaging studies have also shown that brain regions of individuals with autism are not always activating in the same sequence and pattern as control individuals.

This information is helpful in

uncovering the biological problems that are at the root of autistic behavior. However, obtaining statistically significant imaging data that can reveal these often subtle variations requires large numbers of patients and images. Imaging studies are extremely expensive, making collection of large numbers of subjects a costly and time-consuming proposition. Increasing the sample size can be achieved by sharing and combining data, but researchers use a variety of machines and differing protocols for data collection, making data sharing even that much more difficult. With this in mind, the goals of the summit meeting were to provoke discussion about how the power of imaging can be used to achieve a better understanding of the affected biological systems in autism, and how the field can work collaboratively to make this happen as fast as possible.

In the world of science, collaborating and sharing data is not the norm. Ideas and findings are guarded in order to protect a researcher’s work until after

publication – the yardstick by which a researcher’s success is measured. Sharon Begley from the *Wall Street Journal* reported in January that scientists are now realizing the need to better share their data. She wrote that when scientists don’t keep discoveries under wraps until publication, they can build on each

other’s work sooner. Cure Autism Now is intent on facilitating and accelerating this process.

“The intention of all of our summit meetings is to create a venue for the top scientific minds to spend 48 hours focused solely on problem-solving for or in autism,” said CAN Science Director Sophia Colamarino, Ph.D. “We need more collective brainstorming and free-exchange of ideas.”

The summit meeting was chaired by John Mazziotta, M.D., Ph.D., member of CAN’s Scientific Advisory Board, chairman of neurology and director of the Brain Mapping Center at UCLA. Dr. Mazziotta, a renowned imager recently featured in a Time magazine story about building an atlas of brain structure, led the meeting participants in two days of discussions that centered on the best ways to minimize the technical, sociological and political impediments to data sharing in autism imaging research.

“We’re learning a lot about the sociology of collaboration,” Joe Piven, M.D., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, said. “Bringing together autism imaging researchers in this summit is really a way to begin the process of a much larger collaboration.”

During the event, researchers were assigned to participate in breakout sessions to brainstorm about a particular neuroimaging topic. One group was assigned the topic of “alternatives to sharing.” However, that group reported back that they didn’t like their assignment, because they all felt it necessary to come up with a way to share their data – so they worked off that premise instead.



Researchers discuss data collaboration and sharing at the neuroimaging summit.

“When we all relax around the idea of collaboration and sharing, the highest quality work can be done so much more quickly and efficiently,” said summit participant Eric Courchesne, Ph.D., University of California, San Diego.

Other topics covered in the meeting included designing research questions, phenotyping and subject variability, technical imaging and databasing. A report of the meeting proceedings will be prepared and distributed to all parties with an interest in neuroimaging in autism, including the National Institutes of Health.



Researchers participated in breakout sessions to brainstorm about various neuroimaging topics.

“I feel that the meeting may be a turning point in our commitment to collaboration,” said Elizabeth Aylward, Ph.D., University of Washington. “Hopefully, this will allow us to make some real sense of the neuroimaging data we have so far and to guide our future work to a more productive end.”

Cure Autism Now would like to thank all participants for their hard work, Dr. Mazziotta for his experience and guidance, and the Escher family, who attended the summit, for their generous support. **A**

Study Confirms Parents’ Claims: Birthday Home Videos Prove Existence of Autistic Regression

By Geraldine Dawson, Ph.D., University of Washington and Cure Autism Now Scientific Advisory Board



RESEARCHERS STUDYING home videotapes of children’s first and second birthday parties have confirmed what a number of parents have been claiming for years – that some youngsters

who are seemingly normal at age 1 regress and exhibit the characteristic behaviors of autism by the end of their second year.

In a study we published in the *Archives of General Psychiatry*, research done in my lab at the University of Washington’s Autism Center provides the first objective evidence for autistic regression. This form of autism is estimated to account for about 25 percent of all autism cases in the United States. The study did not address the cause of autistic regression or the possible role that childhood vaccines might play in children developing autism.

The findings corroborate parent reports that some children with autism use words spontaneously and meaningfully, use gestures and participate in social games early on and then lose these skills.

My collaborator on the study, Emily Werner, and I believe that this study provides an important lesson that parents are good reporters on what is happening with their children. It underscores the importance of professionals listening to parents. And it certainly suggests that, in early screening for autism, we need to screen at 18, 24 and 36 months to find children who develop normally at first, but then experience a regression.

We examined the birthday videos of 56 children – 15 who were later diagnosed with autism and whose parents reported

that their children experienced regression in their first three years of life; 21 whose parents reported that their child had symptoms early in life and had no regression; and 20 typically developing youngsters. The children’s behavior was coded by trained observers who were not aware of which children had been diagnosed with autism or had reported regression. Parents also filled out a detailed questionnaire about their child’s development during the first two years of life.

The findings corroborate parent reports that some children with autism use words spontaneously and meaningfully, use gestures and participate in social games early on and then lose these skills.

Perhaps the study’s most striking finding involved verbal communication. The three groups differed significantly in their use of complex babbling and use of words at 12 months of age. Children

later diagnosed with regressive autism used complex babbling and words much more frequently than those diagnosed with early onset autism. Typically developing youngsters fell between the groups of children with autism. However, a year later, typically developing infants showed a dramatic increase in the use of words and complex babbling while the two groups of toddlers with autism either had lost their language or failed to make meaningful gains.

Children with regressive autism at age

Continued on page 11



Presenter Patricia Heaton and host Annette Bening arrive at the Regent Beverly Wilshire.



L.A. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa presents the CAN:DO Awareness Award posthumously to former *Los Angeles Times* Editor Frank del Olmo.



Magdalena Beltran-del Olmo watches proudly as son Frankie remembers his father, Frank del Olmo.



Frankie del Olmo (right) tells actor Dustin Hoffman (left) how much he enjoyed his work in the animated film *Racing Stripes*.



Dr. Ricki Robinson accepts the CAN:DO Achievement Award.



Event co-chairs Gretchen A. Willison (left) and Nanci B. Fredkin (right) talk with actress Debra Messing (center).

Cure Autism Now Celebrates 10 Years at CAN:DO Gala

ON NOV. 6, CURE AUTISM NOW celebrated its 10th anniversary with CAN:DO, a star-studded gala presented by Cadillac. Supporters including Annette Bening, Dustin Hoffman, Debra Messing, Anthony Edwards, Patricia Heaton, Jane Kaczmarek and Bradley Whitford came together to share in the once-in-a-lifetime event at the Regent Beverly Wilshire in Beverly Hills, Calif. The event raised \$1.3 million for Cure Autism Now's science programs.

Award-winning actress Annette Bening hosted the elegant evening and helped Cure Autism Now review the highlights of the past decade. Cure Autism Now CEO Peter Bell gave an emotional welcome and proclaimed that with the accelerated pace of scientific research and everyone's help, the next decade will be the "decade of a cure." Mark LaNeve, General Motors Vice President of Vehicle Sales, Service and Marketing, made the trip from Detroit to express GM's commitment to autism research through Cadillac's support of the gala and Chevrolet's support of the WALK NOW program. He also spoke about his shared experience as the parent of a child with autism.

Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa presented the CAN:DO Awareness Award to Magdalena Beltran-del Olmo in honor of her late husband Frank del Olmo, former editor and columnist for *The Los Angeles Times* and the first journalist to write about the autism epidemic for a national audience. Son Frankie proudly addressed the audience of more than 700 and thanked Cure Autism Now for honoring his father, who still inspires him to grow up to be a "good man." Accomplished actors Michael Chiklis, Dana Delany and Treat Williams



Cure Autism Now co-founders Portia Iversen and Jon Shestack with children Miriam, Gabriel and Dov.

read excerpts from Frank's columns, honoring his legacy.

Patricia Heaton took the stage next to present the CAN:DO Advocacy Award to husband and wife Bradley Whitford and Jane Kaczmarek. Long-time friends of CAN co-founders Jonathan Shestack and Portia Iversen, Brad joked about Jon waiting for him to become famous enough to help the foundation and Jane described why Portia remains one of her heroes. Brad and Jane were honored for their efforts to raise awareness of autism while raising funds for Cure Autism Now through their own foundation, Clothes Off Our Back.

Award-winning actor Dustin Hoffman presented the CAN:DO Achievement Award to Dr. Ricki Robinson and spoke about preparation for his role in the 1988 film *Rain Man*, in which he portrayed a man with autism. Film segments showed a few of Dr. Ricki's kids expressing their admiration through assistive technology devices.

Special guests Debra Messing, Steven Weber, Catherine O'Hara and Ed Asner read selections from Shestack's traditional



Legendary musicians Jackson Browne and Stephen Stills bring the house down.

year-end letters that talk about his son, Dov, whose diagnosis at age 2 prompted Jon and Portia to found Cure Autism Now.

The final award of the evening, Cure Autism Now Friend of the Decade, was presented to Anthony Edwards in honor of his tireless work on behalf of families affected by autism. In keeping with his humble spirit, Tony immediately turned the spotlight on CAN cofounders Jon Shestack and Portia Iversen and presented them with a special gift, a sculpture by Tola Inbar, on behalf of CAN's chapter members, scientists, board members and supporters from all over the country.

Jon and Portia closed the awards program with speeches that reminded everyone how this organization has come so far, so fast, and why we won't stop until we find a cure. Legendary musicians Stephen Stills and Jackson Browne, with guests Fred Martin and the Levite Camp Gospel Choir, ended the evening with a special performance dedicated to all children who

struggle with autism, and to all of the parents, clinicians and researchers who continue to work on their behalf.

Brad Whitford's *West Wing* castmates John Spencer, Mary McCormack, NiCole Robinson and Kristin Chenoweth were in attendance. *Good Morning America* reporter Monica Moore, *Trading Spaces* interior designer Vern Yip, and writer-director David O. Russell were all on hand to show their support.

Notably, many of the evening's special guests didn't grace the red carpet. A huge thank you to all of the chapter leaders, long-time volunteers, corporate supporters and contributors who enabled Cure Autism Now to raise \$1.3 million for autism research while enjoying an unforgettable event.

The gala weekend also included a golf outing at some of Los Angeles' premier courses and an invitation-only Saturday night cocktail party at the home of Patricia Heaton and David Hunt. Sunday morning, Cure Autism Now hosted a Grandparents Brunch, featuring talks with a few of the leading scientists and physicians working in autism today, including Dr. Martha Herbert, Dr. Dan Geshwind and Dr. Anshu Batra.

Plans are underway for a 2007 gala. Tune in to future *Advances* for details. **A**

Cure Autism Now gratefully acknowledges:

Event co-chairs: Janet Grillo, Gretchen A. Willison and Nanci B. Fredkin.

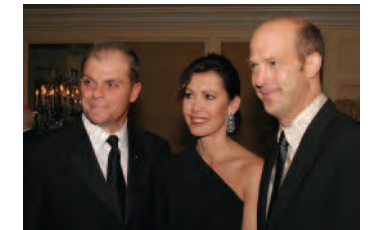
Event committee: Lorraine Alexander, Cindy Asner, Liz Bell, Colleen Camp, Linda Davis, Alan Elliot, Shari Goldberg, Michelle Greenberg, Merritt Johnson, John MacDonald, Jocelyn Moorhouse, Chuck Safiler, Sharon Shelton, Jonathan Shestack, Darren Star, Kristen Stills, Carol Tedman, Jason Weinberg and Kimberly Wolf.

Event supporters: General Motors and Cadillac, First American Title Insurance Company, Sallie and Tom Bernard, Charlene and Rudy Borneo, Federated Department Stores, Michael and Bonita Romans, Ricki and Joel Robinson, Gretchen and Bruce Willison, Swatch and countless others.

Event production team: New Philanthropy Group, R.H. Egan Productions, Creative Intelligence, bluPrint Public Relations, The Regent Beverly Wilshire Hotel, Avant Garde Productions and InSync Media.



Actors Bradley Whitford and Jane Kaczmarek receive the CAN:DO Advocacy Award.



GM's Mark LaNeve, Paula LaNeve and CAN:DO Friend of the Decade, actor Anthony Edwards.



Actors Steven Weber, Catherine O'Hara, Debra Messing and Ed Asner read highlights from Jon Shestack's traditional year-end letters.



CAN CEO Peter Bell, Liz Bell, CAN Board Chair Sallie Bernard and Tom Bernard.



Event co-chairs Janet Grillo and Gretchen A. Willison enjoy the festivities.



Actors Michael Chiklis, Dana Delany and Treat Williams read excerpts from Frank del Olmo's annual *L.A. Times* columns.

All Photos © Lee Salem

It's Time to Let Washington Hear Our Voices: Help Us Pass the Combating Autism Act

CURE AUTISM NOW CONTINUES ITS efforts in support of the Combating Autism Act – and we need your help. The bill reauthorizes and builds on the provisions of the Children's Health Act of 2000 and would authorize more than \$1 billion in federal funds over five years to combat autism through research, screening, intervention and education. It also reauthorizes the National Institutes of Health Centers of Excellence for Autism program originally created in 2000, doubling the number of authorized centers.

A majority of the Congressmen in both the Senate and the House are needed as cosponsors of the Combating Autism Act. We need Cure Autism Now supporters to call, e-mail and fax their senators and representatives to secure their co-sponsorship of Senate bill S.843 and House bill HR.2421. Go to www.combatautism.org for complete instructions on how to contact your representatives and for up-to-date information on the Combating Autism Act. We need to continue this effort as we work to accomplish the steps that will help this bill become a law.

S.843 was introduced by Sens. Rick Santorum and Christopher Dodd and was referred to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and



Pensions. As of this printing, we have 27 co-sponsors in the Senate, showing their support for this bill. H.R. 2421 was introduced by Reps. Mary Bono and Diana DeGette and was referred to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce. Following this first action, it was referred to the Subcommittee on Health. As of this printing, we have 98 co-sponsors in the House.

We can make this bill a law – but we need your help. In order to encourage the committees to review our bill, we need additional co-sponsors. Make your voice heard by visiting www.combatautism.org and phone, fax or e-mail your legislators today. There will also be petitions directed to your representatives for signing at the WALK NOW events. (See page 28 to find out when WALK NOW will be coming to a city near you.)

Together, we'll pass the Combating Autism Act! **A**

What Can You Do to Help? Go to www.combatautism.org today!

- 1. Call Your Representative** – Calling your elected officials is the most effective way to get them to co-sponsor this act.
- 2. Stay Informed and Connected** – Sign up at www.combatautism.org to receive updates from Combat Autism.
- 3. Tell Your Friends and Family** – Spread the word about the Combating Autism Act and promote advocacy efforts!
- 4. Become a Campaign Captain** – Represent your district on Capitol Hill. We're looking for leaders who can join us in meeting with legislators on pre-arranged lobby days.

Cure Autism Now and General Motors Extend National Partnership Through 2006

CURE AUTISM NOW AND General Motors Corporation (GM) are extending a national partnership that began with the WALK NOW and 10th Anniversary Gala events last year. In 2006, GM will again feature its Chevrolet brand as the National Automotive Sponsor of all WALK NOW events, Cadillac as the Presenting Sponsor of the Athletes Against Autism Golf Tournament this summer and will partner with CAN on the star-studded *Acts of Love* theatrical event in the fall. Cure Autism Now is pleased to extend its most significant corporate relationship while highlighting GM's commitment to the autism community.



“General Motors was a tremendous partner for Cure Autism Now last year, significantly impacting our ability to fund research and develop more effective treatments for autism,” says Peter Bell, CEO of Cure Autism Now. “We are excited to be extending and expanding our partnership this year with one of the world's largest corporations. This partnership exemplifies GM's commitment to community and will help us raise awareness nationwide while getting us closer to our goal – a cure for autism.”

Mark LaNeve, GM North America vice president of Vehicle Sales, Service and Marketing, says, “Our partnership with Cure Autism Now is one of the programs I'm most proud of. Like GM, Cure Autism Now is passionate about innovation and together we are accelerating scientific research.



We are dedicated to improving the quality of life for all individuals affected by autism.”

GM will showcase new E85-compatible Chevrolet products at Cure Autism Now events throughout the year. The partnership includes activities at 17 regional WALK

NOW events April through November, the Athletes Against Autism Golf Tournament in Santa Barbara this June, the *Acts of Love* theatrical event in Los Angeles this October, as well as other sports and entertainment events where GM will promote their affiliation with Cure Autism Now.

The General Motors family of brands includes Chevrolet, Buick, Pontiac, GMC, Saturn, HUMMER, Saab and Cadillac. We encourage you to visit your local dealership and join us in acknowledging GM's tremendous commitment to the autism community. For more information, visit

www.GM.com. **A**

Ted Abel Joins Cure Autism Now Board



CURE AUTISM NOW welcomes Ted Abel, Ph.D., to its board of directors. Dr. Abel has served as a member of Cure Autism Now's

Scientific Review Council since 2004 and was appointed to the board in December of last year. As an associate professor in the Department of Biology at the University of Pennsylvania and the parent of a child with autism, Dr. Abel brings extensive knowledge and genuine passion to his new role with the foundation.

“I became involved with Cure Autism Now because my son, Seamus, has autism,” says Dr. Abel. “I wanted to use my expertise in neuroscience to help CAN work towards understanding and treating autism – for Seamus and all children affected by the disorder.”

In addition to his position as associate professor, Dr. Abel is the director of the Biological Basis of Behavior Program at the University of Pennsylvania. He began his career as a scientist at Swarthmore College, where he earned a bachelor's degree in chemistry. He then attended the University of Cambridge as a Marshall Scholar, receiving a Master of Philosophy in Biochemistry. Dr. Abel went on to Harvard University to work in the lab of Dr. Tom Maniatis as a National Science Foundation graduate fellow, and completed his Ph.D. in biochemistry and molecular biology.

Dr. Abel's training continued at the College of Physicians and Surgeons at Columbia University where he did his postdoctoral work, focusing on genetic approaches to study the role of protein kinase A in neural function, in the lab of Dr. Eric Kandel. He continues that work in his lab at Penn, studying the role of the protein kinase A signaling pathway and transcriptional regulation in memory storage, sleep/wake regulation and mouse models of psychiatric disease.

Dr. Abel was recognized for his accomplishments in undergraduate teaching, research and advising when he was named Biological Basis of Behavior (BBB) Society Professor of the Year by the undergraduate BBB majors at Penn twice, in 2001 and 2005. He was elected to membership in the American College of Neuropsychopharmacology in 2005. Dr. Abel is also a member of the editorial boards of the journals *Hippocampus* and *Behavioral Neuroscience*.

Dr. Abel resides in Media, Penn., with his wife Noreen O'Connor-Abel and their 6-year-old son Seamus. His experience as a scientist and parent make him uniquely qualified to understand and promote Cure Autism Now's mission.

“We are privileged to work with a man of Ted's expertise and vision, and look forward to his contribution to the foundation's efforts to understand and develop biomedical treatments for autism,” says Peter Bell, CAN CEO. **A**

Donate Your Vehicle

Donate that old vehicle you've been trying to get rid of through Donate for Charity. Avoid the expense, hassle and anxiety of selling your used vehicle, qualify for a significant tax deduction and make a great contribution to our cause. Call (866) 392-4483 or visit www.donateforcharity.com for more information.



Cure Autism Now
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Register NOW www.WALKNOW.org

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Logos: Chevrolet, EventMover, Spectrum, VIACOM

Ready...Set...WALK NOW!



WALK NOW is rolling into seven cities this spring and nine in the fall, expecting crowds to exceed 40,000 nationally and raise \$6.5 million. With an estimated new case of autism diagnosed every 21 minutes, a cure must be found – NOW. The money raised at WALK NOW supports Cure Autism Now's mission to find the causes, effective treatments and a cure for autism through funding essential biomedical research.

Los Angeles	April 22	Rose Bowl
Atlanta	May 6	Turner Field
Las Vegas	May 13	Star Nursery Field at Sam Boyd Stadium
Chicago	May 21	Soldier Field
Dallas/Fort Worth	June 3	Amerquest Field in Arlington
San Francisco	June 10	Bay Meadows Race Track
New England	June 17	Gillette Stadium

In September, WALK NOW will come to Philadelphia, Seattle and New York. In October we'll visit Houston, Orange County, Calif., and Washington, D.C. We finish out the year by visiting Phoenix, Orlando and San Diego in November. Visit www.WALKNOW.org for the latest WALK NOW news and information.



How Much Money CAN You Raise? Think BIG!

- **Start today** – set your personal fundraising goal and see how easy it is to exceed. Your enthusiasm and commitment to finding a cure for autism is infectious; so remember...if you don't ask, they won't donate! Use the simple online template at www.WALKNOW.org to design a personal Web page in minutes, then upload your address book and send e-mails to potential donors.

Did You Know?

- In 2005 the average dollar amount raised per walker was \$229 with many walkers raising \$500, \$1,000, \$5,000 – even \$10,000 and more! Double the

money you raise by asking your employer about matching gifts. Remember to ask all your donors about their company's matching gift program, too.

Building a Team

- Forming a team is easy. Build your own Web page using our simple online system at www.WALKNOW.org and invite everyone you know to join you at WALK NOW. By joining you in your fight against autism, your team will raise additional funds and add to the spirit of WALK NOW.
- Corporate teams are large and powerful fundraisers, encouraging employees to collaborate, donate and attend

WALK NOW. Do you work for a corporation that wants to form a corporate team? Do your friends or spouse work for a corporation that could form a corporate team? Call or e-mail us at walknow@cureautismnow.org and we'll get you started.

Is your fundraising method unique? Are you quickly reaching your fundraising goal? We want to hear about it. Send us an e-mail at walknow@cureautismnow.org and you could be featured in an upcoming WALK NOW publication.

Visit WALKNOW.org and register NOW!

Athletes Against Autism: Coming to an Arena Near You

By Sam Levitt

ATHLETES AGAINST AUTISM IS an organization of professional athletes and sports personalities committed to raising awareness about autism and funding



for research, treatment and family support programs. Olaf Kolzig, Byron DaFoe and Scott Mellanby – National Hockey League players and fathers of children with autism – founded Athletes Against Autism to make a positive impact for families affected by autism. Athletes Against Autism is an initiative of Cure Autism Now.

More than 14,000 were on hand for Athletes Against Autism's inaugural Autism Awareness Night with the

Washington Capitals on Dec. 27. Through proceeds from a portion of ticket sales, a silent auction and merchandise sold during the game and a special meet

and greet with Caps goaltender Kolzig, more than \$26,000 was raised for Cure Autism Now's research programs.

Autism Awareness Night with the Anaheim Mighty Ducks was held March 12 with the Ducks facing off against the Phoenix Coyotes at the Arrowhead Pond in Anaheim. The evening was presented by Athletes Against Autism and Cure Autism Now, in partnership with TACA and the American Special Hockey Association. Athletes Against Autism held a successful and action-packed Autism Awareness Night with the Nashville Predators on April 1 as the Predators took on the St. Louis Blues at the Gaylord Entertainment Center.

On April 15, Atlanta Thrashers captain and Triple A co-founder Scott Mellanby will be on hand for Autism Awareness Day with the Atlanta



Capitals goaltender Olaf Kolzig and friends at Autism Awareness Night with the Washington Capitals.

Continued on page 31

Chicago Auto Show's First Look for Charity Raises \$150,000 for Cure Autism Now

ON FEB. 9, NEARLY 600 CURE AUTISM Now supporters joined co-chairs Kim Wolf and Barry Craven along with the Chicago chapter at the 2006 Chicago Auto Show's First Look for Charity preview gala. The gala raised nearly \$150,000 for Cure Autism Now.

Chicago chapter member and Teamsters Local 731 President Terry Hancock was presented with the CAN Event of the Year Award for his annual Golf Outing which raises more than \$200,000 annually.

Hancock and his "right hand person" Roberta Lester graciously accepted the award in honor of Terry's son, Bryan. Sharon Rosenbloom, author of *Souls, Beneath and Beyond Autism*, provided touching and inspirational closing remarks.

First Look for Charity is the single largest one evening fundraiser in the Chicagoland area, raising more than \$2.6 million for its 18 participating charities. In its five years participating in this event, CAN has raised more than \$750,000 for autism research.

Fore! Hit the Links with Athletes Against Autism

Athletes Against Autism will host the inaugural celebrity golf tournament and dinner at Sandpiper Golf Club and Bacara Resort and Spa in Santa Barbara, Calif., June 25-26. This event will bring together professional athletes and avid golfers from around the country to raise awareness and significant funds for autism research. Featuring Cadillac as a presenting sponsor, the event will include a dinner reception and silent auction, with the golf tournament the following day. Make your reservation now. For information on participation and sponsorship opportunities, contact Special Events Manager Sam Levitt at SLevitt@cureautismnow.org or (323) 549-0500, ext. 747.

Doug Fischer and Maureen Reilly

By Lara Warren

WHEREVER DOUG FISCHER GOES, HE seems to drum up support for Cure Autism Now. Whether it is convincing his health club to sponsor WALK NOW Philadelphia or Miss Keystone Rachael Brooks (a preliminary to the Miss Pennsylvania pageant) to change her platform to autism awareness, he is always on duty as president of the Philadelphia chapter of Cure Autism Now.

“Doug is always making connections,” his wife, Maureen Reilly, says. “Every opportunity he has, he talks about CAN.” Sometimes it leads to a new sponsor. It virtually always leads to one more family who better understands autism and the importance of CAN.

“Every family with autism needs to first come to a Walk - you need the community. Get information at the Resource Fair and know that you are not alone. Then, later, get involved with a CAN chapter. Come to a chapter meeting and find out what we’re about.”

- Maureen Reilly

For example, two years ago Doug read in the newspaper that Miss New Jersey had selected autism awareness as her platform, and better yet, she was going to be in a local Fourth of July parade. So Doug loaded up his family, went to the parade and waited for the opportunity to see Miss New Jersey 2004, Erica Scanlon. He introduced himself and his son, talked to her about CAN, and invited her to the Philadelphia Walk. It worked – two years in a row Erica Scanlon has served

as an honorary chair of WALK NOW Philadelphia. And Doug’s health club, the Crozer-Keystone Healthplex Sports Club, has designated CAN as the charity beneficiary of an indoor triathlon scheduled for April 22.

Doug and his wife Mo live in Wallingford, Pa., with their two children, Ben, 6 ½, and Maddie, 4 ½. Doug is president of the Philadelphia chapter and co-chair of the 2005-06 Walk sponsorship committee.

“We have a particularly motivated chapter,” Doug says. “We’ve spent a lot of time perfecting our Walk, and after three years, it is running very smoothly. Now we can focus on other big fundraising events such as the

Healthplex Triathlon, a children’s concert series at the World Café, and a motorcycle ride to the shore.”

While the chapter’s goals are driven by the national agenda, Doug says that the Philly chapter has a “grassroots approach,” employing a number of smaller, community-minded events every year as well.

Doug may be chapter president, but he is very quick to point out that it is a chapter effort. “It is so nice to work with a chapter with such a motivated



Maddie, Mo, Doug and Ben

Photo by Maa Tolstorff

leadership committee,” Doug says. “We work well together as a team – and I’m so very proud to be a member of that team. None of this could be accomplished without all of them.”

Doug and Mo first got involved with Cure Autism Now a few days after their son Ben was diagnosed with autism at 22 months. Local CAN members helped them find services in their area. When the Fischer family first became involved with Cure Autism Now in 2002, the Philadelphia chapter was in its early stages. They attended Cure Autism Now’s first Leadership Conference in Philadelphia, and it was there that they met chapter members Peter and Liz Bell. Through that connection they became involved with the planning of the first WALK NOW Philadelphia.

Doug realized that an untapped resource for the Walks was corporate participation, and worked to nurture corporate team building.

“We felt that corporate team building would be an important way to support the Walk,” he says. “I formed a team from my company, Boeing Philadelphia, which raised more than \$3,500 for the first Walk and has been participating ever since. For the 2005 Walk, 40 participants signed up for the Boeing team and our fundraising efforts soared to new levels.”

“Doug was instrumental in recruiting his employer Boeing to get behind Walk Now Philadelphia,” says Jeremy Sidell, Cure Autism Now special events

director. “They had a great turnout at the event bringing together Boeing employees, family and friends to support Cure Autism Now and Walk Now Philadelphia. Doug’s leadership efforts served as a guideline for creating corporate teams nationwide and it’s a program we will continue to expand and aid in funding additional research while giving major corporations a turnkey opportunity to give back to their community.”

Despite all the hard work that was obviously taking place, the volunteer committee was still not sure what to expect before the first WALK NOW



Doug, Mo, Ben and Maddie with their Walk team, Ben’s Buddies, at WALK NOW Philadelphia 2005

Philadelphia in 2003. “We had no idea if we’d be the only people at the Walk or not,” Mo laughs. “But then we got there and there was this sea of people, all sharing your same experience. It was really breathtaking. That’s when you realize that the Walk is not just about raising the money. It’s such an important thing to do for the community and for yourself as a parent.”

Doug agrees. “I look at photos of the first Walk, and it’s very gratifying to know that the community is so involved and how much the Walk has grown over the years,” he says, “But it’s also very bittersweet to realize why there are so many more people there. The number of people participating is growing, but in part that’s because more of them are touched by autism.”

In 2004 Doug assumed the role of sponsorship co-chair. In 2005, he

proudly accepted the role of chapter president and thought that it would be best for him to focus his energy on reaching out to the community and to chapter members.

Doug and Mo whole-heartedly suggest that anyone who has an affected child should get involved in their local CAN chapter.

“Get involved for your child and for your grandchild,” Mo adds. “Every family with autism needs to first come to a Walk – you need the community. Get information at the Resource Fair and know that you are not alone.

Then, later, get involved with a CAN chapter. Come to a chapter meeting and find out what we’re about.”

The couple says that one of the primary reasons they are involved with CAN is the access they get to cutting-edge scientific knowledge.

“The greatest opportunity for me is having the opportunity to hear about the CAN science program

Mo says. “We get to see where the science is going, and find out what is going to change the world for my kids and someday their children. It is about knowing that by helping CAN, we are helping to change the future.”

“That is where our hope is,” Mo says. “CAN’s commitment to engaging the best and the brightest scientists to tackle autism, and to hasten the pace of their work – is so inspiring. It gives us hope. We’re deeply committed to raising funds for now and the future...that’s why we’re doing this.”

Join Doug, Mo and the Philadelphia chapter at WALK NOW Philadelphia Sept. 30 at Citizens Bank Park. Visit www.WALKNOW.org for details. ■

In 2004 Doug assumed the role of sponsorship co-chair. In 2005, he



www.canridenow.org



Rev Your Engines for RIDE NOW

RIDE NOW is a rally, ride and shindig benefiting Cure Autism Now. It’s a celebration of motorcycles, chrome, and music so great it can’t be contained in just one city. This year, RIDE NOW will be cruising through four cities, raising much-needed funding for biomedical research in autism:

Philadelphia	Fall
Chicago	Sept. 17
Los Angeles	Sept. 17
San Francisco	Sept 17

For more information about RIDE NOW or to join a planning committee, e-mail ridenow@cureautismnow.org or call (888) 8-AUTISM. To register, visit www.CANRIDENOW.org. ■



Volunteer Fundraising Activities

Many individuals host their own events or participate in community events to raise autism awareness and money for research on behalf of Cure Autism Now. Events include runs, bike rides, golf tournaments, casino nights, shopping activities and more. We applaud the initiative and creativity of these individuals and their generous efforts. If you're interested in organizing a local fundraising event, contact Sam Levitt at SLevitt@cureautismnow.org for event guidelines.

The Upland Country Day School Alumni Association hosted the First Upland Alumni Association 5K Run/Walk and Kiddie Run on Sept. 10 in Kennett Square, Pa. The event welcomed more than 200 participants and raised more than \$20,000 for Cure Autism Now ... **Karen DeMeola** traveled halfway across the country to race in the Chicago Marathon on Oct. 9 and solicited donations in support of her participation. Pushing through the pain that comes with traveling 26.2 miles by foot, Karen raised more than \$2,300 in support of Cure Autism Now ... **Marcia Broker** hosted a Halloween party in support of Cure Autism Now in Thousand Oaks, Calif. Friends and family came together to celebrate Halloween and raised more than \$2,600 for autism research ... **Metal Jam 2005** honored Cure Autism Now as one of the beneficiaries of their annual Los Angeles event in October. Local metal musicians came together and raised more than \$750 in support of Cure Autism Now ... **Jill and Jeff Plato** hosted the 6th Annual CAN Scotch Doubles Bowling Tournament in February in Godfrey, Ill., raising more than \$9,000 for Cure Autism Now. ■

Autism Awareness Month

Each year, April is the designated month to promote autism awareness. This provides an opportunity to engage the larger community and educate the general public about autism. Here's a look at what Cure Autism Now chapters and volunteers are doing to promote awareness in their communities during Autism Awareness Month.

On April 22, the fourth annual **WALK NOW Los Angeles** will be held at the Rose Bowl. Attendance is expected to reach 10,000 and it may just be the first \$1 million Walk. For event details, visit www.WALKNOW.org. ... The **Atlanta Thrashers** host an **Autism Awareness Day** on April 15. Find out more at www.athletesagainstaautism.org. ... The **Washington D.C.** chapter is organizing a dine out event the week of April 24, with D.C.-area eateries donating 10-20% of proceeds from meals purchased on designated days to CAN. For information about the D.C. chapter, go to www.cureautismnow.org/chapters. ... Cure Autism Now's **Philadelphia** chapter has planned a series of events and activities during the month of April. Chapter members are setting up displays, speaking to community groups and continuing sales of the **Blue Band of Hope**. For more about the Philly chapter, go to www.cureautismnow.org/chapters. ... The **Autism Puzzle Foundation** is producing a dinner and raffle on April 28 at Barre, Vt., that will benefit Cure Autism Now. ... With the first-annual **WALK NOW Las Vegas** scheduled for May 13, participants will be holding events during the month of April. For details, visit www.WALKNOW.org. ... The **Chicago** chapter is revving up for its fourth annual **RIDE NOW** scheduled for Sept. 17. Register at www.canridenow.org. **From Hawaii to New England** families and friends of children with autism will be holding bowling tournaments, speaking to parent groups, registering for Cure Autism Now events and more.

At Cure Autism Now, every month is Autism Awareness Month. To find out about events in your area, visit www.cureautismnow.org/calendar. For information on how you can promote awareness and raise funds for autism research, visit www.cureautismnow.org.

Upcoming Volunteer Fundraising Events

April 22 – **5K Run for Autism**, organized by the St. Marlo Country Club Social Committee (Duluth, Ga.) ... April 22 – **Southern Illinois Walk-A-Thon**, organized by the Harrisburg Autism Support Group (Harrisburg, Ill.) ... April 23 – **2nd Annual Plattsburgh Autism Walk**, organized by Laura Carmichael & Associates (Dannemora, NY) ... May 11 – **Autism Benefit 2006**, organized by Cassie Witek and Associates (North Adams, Ma.) ... May 21 – **Speak for Silent Voices**, organized by Melissa Salter & Associates (Spring Grove, Pa.) ... June 24 – **George Noyes Memorial Golf Tournament** (South Lake Tahoe, Calif.) ... June 26 – **14th Annual Golf Tournament at Round Hill Country Club**, organized by Pete's Brass Rail and Car Wash (Alamo, Ca.) ... Sept. 9 – **Upland Country Day School Alumni Association Second Annual 5K Run/Walk** (Kennett Square, Pa.) ... Sept. 17 – **Ride for a Cure**, organized by the Marist College Equestrian Team (Hyde Park, N.Y.) ... Oct. 1 – **North Park 5 Mile Run/Walk for Autism**, organized by Sarah Lapinski and Associates (Pittsburgh, Pa.).

To find out about other events in your area, visit www.cureautismnow.org/calendars. For information on how you can get involved in these and other upcoming events, or to organize an event of your own, contact Sam Levitt at SLevitt@cureautismnow.org or (323) 549-0500, ext. 747.



James Denton and Carmen Electra at *Out at Short*

James Denton and Friends Knock It Out of the Park!

ON FEB. 18 IN LOS ANGELES, CURE Autism Now supporters from around the country were treated to an intimate reception and exclusive reading of the original screenplay *Out at Short* with James Denton, Carmen Electra and several other talented actors and CAN supporters. The event helped raise autism awareness, with coverage from ABC and Extra, and funding for Cure Autism Now's research and treatment programs.

Acts of Love Returns to the Stage

JOIN US THIS OCTOBER FOR THE FOURTH *Acts of Love* theatrical event in Los Angeles. Celebrities will be out supporting Cure Autism Now at this year's all-new show comprised of dreams read aloud by some of the nation's greatest actors. This one-night-only theatrical event raises much-needed funds for autism research while raising awareness in the entertainment community. Past events have featured one-acts with Annette Bening and Richard Schiff and love and hate letters read by the cast of *The West Wing*. Lily Tomlin has



Pamela Anderson at FOX's casino fundraiser

FOX Bets on Cure Autism Now at Fall Casino Party

FOX CELEBRATED FALL WITH A CELEBRITY casino fundraiser that benefited Cure Autism Now, Feed the Children, Habitat for Humanity and The Salvation Army.

FOX's prime-time talent stepped up to the "Luck of the Draw" table to turn over cards ranging in value and then select which charity would receive the donation. Peter Liguori, president of FOX Entertainment; Pamela Anderson (*Stacked*); Jane Kaczmarek (*Malcolm in the Middle*); Mila Kunis (*That '70s Show*); Eric Millegan (*Bones*) and others selected Cure Autism Now.



hosted two past *Acts of Love* events and Jane Kaczmarek, Bradley Whitford, Patricia Heaton, Rene Russo, Ben Stiller, Courteney Cox-Arquette, Mark Ruffalo, Eric Stoltz and Bill Pullman have all lent their talents to this unique event. For updates on this year's event, visit www.cureautismnow.org/actsoflove.

Oscar Event Benefits Cure Autism Now



THERE WAS ONLY one place in Chicago to be Oscar night for anyone with an autism connection. Chicago's Apollo Theater served as

host for an *Evening with the Stars* benefiting Cure Autism Now on March 5. Members of Cure Autism Now, Autism Society of Illinois, Unlocking Autism, The Illinois Autism/PDD Training and Technical Assistance Project, all gathered for this special event, which was hosted by the beautiful local NBC News/Telemundo news anchor Zoraida Sambolin.

The evening began with a champagne trolley ride to the famous Catch Thirty Five Restaurant, where guest were entertained by Two for the Blues band and enjoyed a gourmet buffet. As guests returned to the theater, the sights and sounds of Hollywood surrounded them in



the Windy City. The marquee was lit, the red carpet was out, and the Apollo was aglow. Giant spotlights shone into the night sky, piercing the falling snow.

For the hundreds of participants it was a wonderful sight, especially those personally touched by autism. Inside the stage, with three giant video screens suspended directly above the auction and raffle, was set with the true ambiance of the Academy Awards. Information on the event and photos are available online at www.eveningwiththestars.org.

Visit the Cure Autism Now Online Store

Every purchase benefits Cure Autism Now. Every product helps raise awareness.



\$20

CAN "Hands" Stamp

Each sheet of 20 stamps will help to fund autism research, and with every letter you mail you will help raise autism awareness.



\$8

Dual Message Twist Pen

This solid brass, twist action, ballpoint pen has two important messages: "Cure Autism Now" and "Help Us Find a Cure."



\$18

Charm Bracelet

Sleek but substantial, our charm bracelet features round links, a toggle closure and a square Cure Autism Now charm. In solid nickel, 7 1/2 inches long.



\$12.50

Baseball Cap

Soft, pre-washed navy blue twill with embroidered Cure Autism Now logo on the front and www.cureautismnow.org on the back. Adjustable.



\$10

Note Cards

These bright, cheerful note cards feature a collage of children's handprints. Blank inside, you can use the cards for a variety of occasions. Package of 10 with envelopes.



\$12

Adult T-Shirt

Simple, classic and comfortable. Our 100% cotton T-shirt prominently features our logo.



\$18.50

Picture Frame

Our 3 1/2 x 5 inch brushed aluminum photo frame, laser engraved with the Cure Autism Now logo, is a great way to display your favorite memories. Also makes a great gift.



\$8

Luggage Tag

Keep track of your luggage in a stylish way. Brushed silver finish with a black leather strap and information card with a plastic protective cover. Cure Autism Now logo laser engraved on the front.



\$5

Lapel Pin

Our lapel pin is a classic way to proudly show your support. Features our three color logo, and comes attached to an information card.



\$10.50

Business Card Holder

Simple in black but substantial, our business card holder expands to hold up to 40 business cards. Embossed with the Cure Autism Now logo.

Visit www.cureautismnow.org for more products and quick online ordering.



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