Greetings from Dr. Laura Klinger, Director of TEACCH

Greetings,

In my new role as Director of TEACCH, I’ve been asked the same question repeatedly – “Where is TEACCH heading in the future?” Indeed, the entire TEACCH team has been asking the same question. We came together in December from across the state to participate in a two day retreat to plan our future. We titled the retreat “Moving Forward While Keeping Who We Are.” There is no doubt that TEACCH is committed to continuing to provide high quality clinical services, train the next generation of autism professionals, and conduct research that increases our understanding of autism and leads to the development of new intervention and diagnostic approaches. However, we all agreed that some changes in our mission were needed. When TEACCH began in 1972, its mission was to coordinate research, training, and clinical services for ALL individuals with autism and their families for the entire state of North Carolina. At that time, the rate of autism was approximately 1 in 2000 individuals. In 2012, the rate of autism is 1 in 110. The reality is that TEACCH cannot provide clinical services to ALL of the more than 87,000 people with autism in the state of North Carolina. However, we can continue to develop model programs that can be implemented by our partners across the state. We worked hard to craft a new mission statement that highlighted the things we felt that TEACCH can do better than anyone else in the world. Our new mission statement is: “The University of North Carolina TEACCH Autism Program creates and cultivates the development of exemplary community-based services, training programs, and research to enhance the quality of life of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder and their families.” This emphasizes our leadership role in program development and training so that we can help the state of North Carolina continue to support the growing numbers of individuals with autism and their families.

At our retreat, we identified several priority goals for TEACCH. I want to highlight two of our priority goals. First, we are committed to addressing the growing need for clinicians and intervention programs that serve adults with ASD. The growing number of adults with ASD has been described as an impending “tsunami” that will overwhelm our current service delivery systems. As a first step toward meeting these needs, we have received funding from the Foundation of Hope for Research and Treatment of Mental Illness to identify the needs of adults with autism in North Carolina. Our first TEACCH clients are now in their 40’s and we are hoping to locate them and find out about their outcomes and current needs. We are also working to develop model programs to support employment in adults with ASD. I’m particularly excited about a high school transition program being developed by our Supported Employment team. This program teaches pivotal employment skills to students with ASD in high school.

Another priority area is the expansion of our professional training programs. We are currently training professionals in
North Carolina, across the country, and (continued from page 1) across the world. As part of our new partnership with AHEC, we are expanding the scope of our training programs in North Carolina. Our upcoming TEACCH Conference (May 31st – June 1st) is a great example of this partnership. In keeping with this year’s theme of Autism Spectrum Disorder Across the Lifespan, we will have keynote speakers covering topics ranging from early diagnosis to adulthood. Through AHEC, we are offering continuing education credit at this year’s conference so that psychologists, speech language pathologists, physical therapists, educators, and other professionals can come together to hear about the latest developments in diagnosing and treating autism. I look forward to seeing you there!

As you can see, the past few months have been a whirlwind of activity for TEACCH. It is an honor to be asked to follow in the footsteps of Eric Schopler and Gary Mesibov. I hope that our forward momentum will meet the current needs of individuals with autism and their families while maintaining the vision of our past leaders.

**TEACCH Welcomes New Research Staff**

Katie Tompkins graduated Summa Cum Laude from Meredith College in 2010 with a double major in Psychology and Dance Education. She also received a K-12 License in Dance and studied abroad at the University of Oxford in the UK. In 2011, she completed a Graduate Certificate in Counselor Education at North Carolina State University. She is currently a full time graduate student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and is pursuing a Master of Science in Rehabilitation Counseling and Psychology with an emphasis on Developmental Disabilities. Katie was selected to receive the Masters Merit Assistantship for her entering class, giving her the opportunity to assist with research at TEACCH. Katie is the founder and director of Miracles in Motion, a program based out of Dance Dynamics, Inc. in Wake Forest that offers free dance classes for individuals ages 3-19 with disabilities. She is also on staff at Dance Dynamics, Inc. as a dance instructor.

Allison Meyer is a first year child clinical psychology graduate student and is very excited to be a part of the new TEACCH Research Lab. Her interest in autism started as an undergraduate at the University of Rochester where she worked on projects related to play behavior and social interactions in young children with ASD. After graduating, Allison worked at Boston University on research projects that examined language comprehension in children with ASD. She is currently interested in the learning styles of children with autism and intellectual disability.

Patrick Powell recently transferred from the University of Alabama to join the research team at TEACCH, and he is very excited to be a part of this team! He earned his MS in cognitive psychology from the University of Alabama where he explored classical conditioning in persons with Autism Spectrum Disorders. He has had several years of experience working with individuals with ASD, and most recently worked in a college transition program for college students with ASD. Patrick’s main research interests are in the cognitive abilities of individuals with ASD, specifically examining these cognitive abilities using neuro-imaging and psychophysiological methodology.
Mind the Gap: How TEACCH Services Meet the Needs of our Community in a Changing Economy

By Carolyn Ogburn, Therapist, Asheville TEACCH Center

“So, what exactly do you do?” At the Asheville TEACCH Center, this is a question that many of us have struggled with over the years. It’s a common question, and yet one that remains remarkably difficult to answer. The truth is that, like the characteristics of autism, what we do depends on the person. What we do can often be summed up most succinctly as: we do what other agencies aren’t doing.

As a state agency whose mandate is nothing less than to serve people with autism of all ages and their families, we’ve gone through many incarnations since our 1972 beginnings. The characteristics of ASD have changed; the number of individuals and families we work with has grown. The number of services and support options available to these same people has also grown, although not always in equal measure. At the Asheville TEACCH Center, as with TEACCH Centers throughout the state, we’ve developed extensive collaborative relationships with other people and organizations in our region. These relationships have many beneficial impacts, including a greater appreciation for multiple disciplines and alternative treatment models.

TEACCH has provided training and consultation for many years, working closely with professionals and paraprofessionals in medical, educational, residential, vocational and recreational settings, to raise awareness of the particular social, communication, sensory and cognitive characteristics that comprise ASD. Coupled with this advocacy work, we’ve learned that by teaching families and individuals with ASD to understand their own particular characteristics, their own range of strengths and challenges, they can learn to advocate for themselves while we cheer them on from behind the scenes.

The work we do the best remains the most obscure, and the least well-defined. A client describes our job this way: to think about autism. And, as usual, he’s right. What we do best is the work that comes in the middle of a session intended to work towards a completely different goal, the sudden epiphany when a parent experiences a burst of confidence in understanding the purpose behind a child’s behavior, or a college student realizes that it’s okay to ask for help. It’s working as a liaison between a case manager and his recently diagnosed client, or helping a family through the extensive waiting period until their teenage son can be placed in a structured residential setting. Usually, it’s the work that can’t be charged to a statement that we’ve learned to do the best. The reason for this is simple: if the work is able to be charged, an agency would exist to provide the service. Because TEACCH has not had to charge for services, we’ve been free to develop programs based on the needs of the clients. When an agency, or a school system, exists to provide the service, we provide consultation.

It’s this “outside the box” work that we do on a daily basis that has taught us almost everything we know about autism, no matter how many books we’ve read or lectures we’ve absorbed. Implementing effective structured teaching strategies has always meant individualizing these strategies for the families and interventions for whom they’re intended: implementation and individualization are one and the same. The answer to the question, “What do you do?” will hopefully – never be an easy one to answer.
Tasks Galore Donates iPads to TEACCH

By Kathy Hearsey

Tasks Galore Publishing, Inc. generously donated $3,000.00 to TEACCH for the purchase of iPads to be used at the various centers. As technology continues to be integrated into our daily lives, many individuals with autism spectrum disorder are showing a strong interest in the iPad and other tablet computers. With the easy touch-and-swipe screens and specially designed-applications, these computers are helping individuals with autism develop skills in the areas of social communication, leisure, organization and academics. A list of Apps titled A Spectrum of Apps for Students on the Autism Spectrum was created by Heather Bridgman and Nick Weiland from OCALI, Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence (November, 2011.) www.ocali.org/up_archive_doc/Spectrum_Apps_ASD.pdf. TEACCH is very thankful for this donation and the on-going support of Tasks Galore. Tasks Galore Publishing, Inc. provides parents and professionals with practical tools that will aid their children and students to become more independent in school and society. Visit Tasks Galore's website at www.tasksgalore.com

33rd Annual TEACCH Conference
Autism Spectrum Disorder Across the Lifespan

May 31st and June 1st, 2012
Sheraton Chapel Hill Hotel – One Europa Drive – Chapel Hill, NC 27517

The 33rd Annual TEACCH Conference is specifically designed to educate professionals about the latest research-based tools for diagnosis and treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorder from infancy to adulthood. This conference will be beneficial to both professionals engaged in direct service provision and professionals engaged in research with individuals diagnosed with Autism spectrum disorder.

Conference Featured Speakers:

- **Jed Baker, Ph.D.** is the director of the Social Skills Training Project and an award winning author of five books, including *Social Skills Training for Children and Adolescents with Aspergers Syndrome*.
- **Richard Grinker, Ph.D.** Professor of Anthropology, International Affairs, and Human Sciences, George Washington University, author of *Unstrange Minds*.
- **Laura Klinger, Ph.D.** Director, University of North Carolina - TEACCH and Associate Professor in the Department of Psychiatry in the School of Medicine, University of North Carolina.
- **Sally Ozonoff, Ph.D.** Professor-in-Residence, Vice Chair for Research, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, University of California Davis M.I.N.D. Institute.
- **Judy Reaven, Ph.D.** Assistant Professor of Psychiatry and Pediatrics at the University of Colorado School of Medicine in Denver, Colorado. Director of the Autism and Developmental Disabilities Clinic of JFK Partners, a University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities.

**2012 Eric Schopler Lifetime Achievement Award:**
At the Conference **Dr. Gary Mesibov**, former Director of TEACCH, will be given the 2012 Eric Schopler Lifetime Achievement Award, “In Recognition of Exemplary Leadership and Enduring Contributions to the Understanding and Treatment of Autism.”
From Spain to the States: An Intern’s Experience at TEACCH - Autism and Traveling

By Cristina García López, TEACCH Intern at the Charlotte Center

Learning about autism is like traveling. When one visits a new country, one has to adjust to its rules and understand the culture of the place according to a certain frame of reference. Like traveling, learning about autism may involve the unknown and require a change in one’s mindset in order to better understand how the world works for individuals with this disability. As TEACCH puts it, autism is a culture and, as such, it has its own social, communication and behavioral rules.

Similar to other cultures, autism is not always obvious to new travelers or visitors. Sometimes we are not aware of other countries apart from the one we live in; sometimes we are not conscious about how life can be so different for people who live in our own community. No one chooses the place he is born in, and in the same way, individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) do not choose the culture through which they interpret life. We can close our eyes to these differences, but it will never make them disappear. While each person can make a difference on the individual level, it requires an entire community to work together in order to make an impact on society as a whole. One evident goal is to start with increasing awareness and proactive behavior at the individual level. It would have been easier to stay within my comfort zone, return home this summer and resume work at my local summer job. It would have been even easier to take a break from work and spend the summer in Spain with old friends and family, relaxing on the beach every afternoon. Instead, I chose to obtain an internship abroad. I chose to broaden my perspective and insight into two different cultures, America and autism.

Before the internship
I received my degree in Psychology at the University of Barcelona, pursued research activities related to specific language impairments and worked as a psychologist in a private clinic serving children with learning disabilities. My interest in ASD arose during my master’s degree program when I chose to study the Broader Autism Phenotype (BAP). One of the conclusions I drew from my research was that the personality profile of the parents was a key point in the process of parental adaptation, that is, after having learned that their child has the diagnosis of ASD. Parents who expressed more traits of the BAP on its social domain were more prone to report less levels of stress in their parental role. This might be due to their reported social differences which may result in less contact and fewer interchanges with their child, which in turn leads to less stress. Another conclusion of the study was that parents who experienced high levels of stress reported less feelings of parental sense of competence. Considering that parents play a key role in their child’s development, I believe that paying attention to parental styles of thinking and behaving is worth further study. Promoting parents’ welfare not only is important in order to improve their process of adaptation to the diagnosis of ASD, but will have an impact on the way parents interact and support their child, influencing overall development.

TEACCH considers parents as a key element in the intervention process. This high regard and respect for parents as cotherapists as well as its philosophy and reputation heavily contributed to my decision for choosing TEACCH as the best place to complete an internship. Carmen Gándara, a former Charlotte TEACCH Intern, and the staff at the University of Navarra in Spain helped me make this life-changing experience possible.

The internship experience
I spent more than 500 hours at the Charlotte TEACCH Center learning lessons that I had never read in books, lessons that will have an impact on me for the rest of my life. Interning at TEACCH not only has taught me about the issues surrounding ASD, but also about myself, about the different cultures, and about the importance of teaching other people in the community about ASD. The staff with which I had the pleasure to work made me feel like one more member of their team from day one, encouraging me to participate in their discussions and taking the time to share their expertise and knowledge with me. I took an active role in several of the services offered by the Charlotte TEACCH Center including evaluations, individual sessions, and trainings. I was able to work directly with several individuals with ASD but particularly enjoyed designing and implementing an intervention program to improve communication skills for one student as well as structuring educational materials for the hands-on training. I have also had the opportunity of networking with professionals from all over the world during my internship. The main lesson I learned is that no matter what culture we come from (Spanish, American, Japanese, Autism Spectrum Disorder...) we have many more things in common than different.

After the internship
Beyond all this invaluable knowledge and experience, there are three particular things about TEACCH that I will take with me everywhere I go: the importance of team work, the philosophy of emphasizing individualization of services, and the compassion for individuals with ASD and their culture. After this unforgettable experience at TEACCH, I will join the Clínica Universitaria de Pamplona in Spain and work as a neuropsychologist evaluating children and adolescents with a broad range of neurodevelopmental disorders. I strongly believe that my experience at TEACCH will have a positive impact on this next adventure not only from a professional standpoint but also from a personal one.

Belcan Engineering Group Donates to TEACCH

By Dr. Mary Van Bourgondien

As part of Belcan Engineering Group Inc.’s “Giving back to our Community” initiative, Alan Young, the manager of North Carolina Operations, presented the Chapel Hill TEACCH Center with a donation to support the Chapel Hill TEACCH financial assistance program. Belcan Engineering is a global provider of engineering services specializing in design engineering, engineering analysis, computer modeling and advanced manufacturing techniques. Ralph G. Anderson the founder of Belcan started a tradition of giving to others, which his family has continued through their 60 offices and locations around the world. The donation will help TEACCH continue to serve the many children and adults with autism and their families through our parent teaching sessions.
TEACCH Plays an Important Role in My Life
By Darien Brooks, His Personal Account

My name is Darien Brooks. I became involved with TEACCH after I was diagnosed with high-functioning autism by the Developmental Evaluation Center in 1970. It was originally suggested that I be institutionalized but my parents would not hear of it. My father learned of a program being established at UNC-Chapel Hill called the Child Research Project. I became one of the first five children enrolled in TEACCH.

TEACCH taught my parents that just because I have a developmental disability, that they should not feel sorry for me. They should expect me to behave when absolutely possible. I used to bob my head in church. My mother recognized I was getting tired during the sermon and instructed me on how to stay awake. I also used to approach people at random, yet I was taught to greet appropriately. I recall meeting the mayor of Wilmington at a recent disability office opening. I recognized him among other people and walked up to him to shake his hand. TEACCH taught my family how to integrate me into a family unit for me to take part in family activities and not be left behind while they went out to do different activities. The programs were written specifically for my needs and changed according to what worked and what didn’t work, that wasn’t a one-program-fits-all. For example, going out to eat was hard because I had a meltdown if told to sit and eat my food properly. My parents instructed me in how to sit still and straight, and eat with my mouth closed.

Dr. Schopler, Ms. Lansing and Ms. Bashford taught my parents how to use different ideas to integrate me into a regular school environment during my evaluation sessions in Chapel Hill beginning in July 1971. These ideas helped my teachers understand my strengths and weaknesses. I was also enrolled in a special LD class to help me with subjects I had difficulty in. They worked with the teachers in helping me integrate into the classroom as well as extracurricular activities such as playing in a school orchestra. I later played with the Wilmington Symphony for seventeen years. As another example, at a teacher conference, I said “I would like to talk like other kids.” The TEACCH therapists suggested to my teacher that she listen to the appropriate slang other kids used. The therapist then wrote a program with suggestions on how to use those words in an appropriate manner.

TEACCH taught my parents that just because I have a developmental disability, that they should not feel sorry for me. They should expect me to behave when absolutely possible. I used to bob my head in church. My mother recognized I was getting tired during the sermon and instructed me on how to stay awake. I also used to approach people at random, yet I was taught to greet appropriately. I recall meeting the mayor of Wilmington at a recent disability office opening. I recognized him among other people and walked up to him to shake his hand. TEACCH taught my family how to integrate me into a family unit for me to take part in family activities and not be left behind while they went out to do different activities. The programs were written specifically for my needs and changed according to what worked and what didn’t work, that wasn’t a one-program-fits-all. For example, going out to eat was hard because I had a meltdown if told to sit and eat my food properly. My parents instructed me in how to sit still and straight, and eat with my mouth closed.

TEACCH taught my parents that just because I have a developmental disability, that they should not feel sorry for me. They should expect me to behave when absolutely possible. I used to bob my head in church. My mother recognized I was getting tired during the sermon and instructed me on how to stay awake. I also used to approach people at random, yet I was taught to greet appropriately. I recall meeting the mayor of Wilmington at a recent disability office opening. I recognized him among other people and walked up to him to shake his hand. TEACCH taught my family how to integrate me into a family unit for me to take part in family activities and not be left behind while they went out to do different activities. The programs were written specifically for my needs and changed according to what worked and what didn’t work, that wasn’t a one-program-fits-all. For example, going out to eat was hard because I had a meltdown if told to sit and eat my food properly. My parents instructed me in how to sit still and straight, and eat with my mouth closed.

Dr. Schopler, Ms. Lansing and Ms. Bashford taught my parents how to use different ideas to integrate me into a regular school environment during my evaluation sessions in Chapel Hill beginning in July 1971. These ideas helped my teachers understand my strengths and weaknesses. I was also enrolled in a special LD class to help me with subjects I had difficulty in. They worked with the teachers in helping me integrate into the classroom as well as extracurricular activities such as playing in a school orchestra. I later played with the Wilmington Symphony for seventeen years. As another example, at a teacher conference, I said “I would like to talk like other kids.” The TEACCH therapists suggested to my teacher that she listen to the appropriate slang other kids used. The therapist then wrote a program with suggestions on how to use those words in an appropriate manner.

TEACCH taught my parents that just because I have a developmental disability, that they should not feel sorry for me. They should expect me to behave when absolutely possible. I used to bob my head in church. My mother recognized I was getting tired during the sermon and instructed me on how to stay awake. I also used to approach people at random, yet I was taught to greet appropriately. I recall meeting the mayor of Wilmington at a recent disability office opening. I recognized him among other people and walked up to him to shake his hand. TEACCH taught my family how to integrate me into a family unit for me to take part in family activities and not be left behind while they went out to do different activities. The programs were written specifically for my needs and changed according to what worked and what didn’t work, that wasn’t a one-program-fits-all. For example, going out to eat was hard because I had a meltdown if told to sit and eat my food properly. My parents instructed me in how to sit still and straight, and eat with my mouth closed.

Dr. Schopler, Ms. Lansing and Ms. Bashford taught my parents how to use different ideas to integrate me into a regular school environment during my evaluation sessions in Chapel Hill beginning in July 1971. These ideas helped my teachers understand my strengths and weaknesses. I was also enrolled in a special LD class to help me with subjects I had difficulty in. They worked with the teachers in helping me integrate into the classroom as well as extracurricular activities such as playing in a school orchestra. I later played with the Wilmington Symphony for seventeen years. As another example, at a teacher conference, I said “I would like to talk like other kids.” The TEACCH therapists suggested to my teacher that she listen to the appropriate slang other kids used. The therapist then wrote a program with suggestions on how to use those words in an appropriate manner.

TEACCH taught my parents that just because I have a developmental disability, that they should not feel sorry for me. They should expect me to behave when absolutely possible. I used to bob my head in church. My mother recognized I was getting tired during the sermon and instructed me on how to stay awake. I also used to approach people at random, yet I was taught to greet appropriately. I recall meeting the mayor of Wilmington at a recent disability office opening. I recognized him among other people and walked up to him to shake his hand. TEACCH taught my family how to integrate me into a family unit for me to take part in family activities and not be left behind while they went out to do different activities. The programs were written specifically for my needs and changed according to what worked and what didn’t work, that wasn’t a one-program-fits-all. For example, going out to eat was hard because I had a meltdown if told to sit and eat my food properly. My parents instructed me in how to sit still and straight, and eat with my mouth closed.

Dr. Schopler, Ms. Lansing and Ms. Bashford taught my parents how to use different ideas to integrate me into a regular school environment during my evaluation sessions in Chapel Hill beginning in July 1971. These ideas helped my teachers understand my strengths and weaknesses. I was also enrolled in a special LD class to help me with subjects I had difficulty in. They worked with the teachers in helping me integrate into the classroom as well as extracurricular activities such as playing in a school orchestra. I later played with the Wilmington Symphony for seventeen years. As another example, at a teacher conference, I said “I would like to talk like other kids.” The TEACCH therapists suggested to my teacher that she listen to the appropriate slang other kids used. The therapist then wrote a program with suggestions on how to use those words in an appropriate manner.

TEACCH taught my parents that just because I have a developmental disability, that they should not feel sorry for me. They should expect me to behave when absolutely possible. I used to bob my head in church. My mother recognized I was getting tired during the sermon and instructed me on how to stay awake. I also used to approach people at random, yet I was taught to greet appropriately. I recall meeting the mayor of Wilmington at a recent disability office opening. I recognized him among other people and walked up to him to shake his hand. TEACCH taught my family how to integrate me into a family unit for me to take part in family activities and not be left behind while they went out to do different activities. The programs were written specifically for my needs and changed according to what worked and what didn’t work, that wasn’t a one-program-fits-all. For example, going out to eat was hard because I had a meltdown if told to sit and eat my food properly. My parents instructed me in how to sit still and straight, and eat with my mouth closed.

Dr. Schopler, Ms. Lansing and Ms. Bashford taught my parents how to use different ideas to integrate me into a regular school environment during my evaluation sessions in Chapel Hill beginning in July 1971. These ideas helped my teachers understand my strengths and weaknesses. I was also enrolled in a special LD class to help me with subjects I had difficulty in. They worked with the teachers in helping me integrate into the classroom as well as extracurricular activities such as playing in a school orchestra. I later played with the Wilmington Symphony for seventeen years. As another example, at a teacher conference, I said “I would like to talk like other kids.” The TEACCH therapists suggested to my teacher that she listen to the appropriate slang other kids used. The therapist then wrote a program with suggestions on how to use those words in an appropriate manner.

TEACCH taught my parents that just because I have a developmental disability, that they should not feel sorry for me. They should expect me to behave when absolutely possible. I used to bob my head in church. My mother recognized I was getting tired during the sermon and instructed me on how to stay awake. I also used to approach people at random, yet I was taught to greet appropriately. I recall meeting the mayor of Wilmington at a recent disability office opening. I recognized him among other people and walked up to him to shake his hand. TEACCH taught my family how to integrate me into a family unit for me to take part in family activities and not be left behind while they went out to do different activities. The programs were written specifically for my needs and changed according to what worked and what didn’t work, that wasn’t a one-program-fits-all. For example, going out to eat was hard because I had a meltdown if told to sit and eat my food properly. My parents instructed me in how to sit still and straight, and eat with my mouth closed.

Dr. Schopler, Ms. Lansing and Ms. Bashford taught my parents how to use different ideas to integrate me into a regular school environment during my evaluation sessions in Chapel Hill beginning in July 1971. These ideas helped my teachers understand my strengths and weaknesses. I was also enrolled in a special LD class to help me with subjects I had difficulty in. They worked with the teachers in helping me integrate into the classroom as well as extracurricular activities such as playing in a school orchestra. I later played with the Wilmington Symphony for seventeen years. As another example, at a teacher conference, I said “I would like to talk like other kids.” The TEACCH therapists suggested to my teacher that she listen to the appropriate slang other kids used. The therapist then wrote a program with suggestions on how to use those words in an appropriate manner.
Supported Employment Around the Globe

By S. Michael Chapman, Director of Supported Employment

Through our travels spreading the message of Division TEACCH, our staff have the opportunity to see many autism programs. Some programs are in their infancy and some are very well established, but all of them have one thing in common; they want to help the people with Autism Spectrum Disorders realize a better and brighter future. For the last 7 years, I have had the opportunity to work with the Autism Resource Center, a very unique organization in Singapore that has made significant changes to the lives of individuals with autism in that country. As one of its first projects, the Autism Resource Center founded the Pathlight School for individuals with ASD who were not able to succeed in the standard classroom setting.

The Pathlight School was designed to help those individuals with autism that are able to obtain a typical education with modifications made for their unique learning styles. Since then, it has grown to over 600 students with ASD, and will be expanding to a second school soon. Due to its success, the Autism Resource Center has started working with a second school for individuals with autism who will not be able to access the standard curriculum, The Eden School. These two schools have begun to develop and consult to day activity centers for people with ASD who are no longer in the school system.

Part of my original consultation with the Pathlight School in 2004 was to help them develop a vocational track for those students who needed additional vocational training before they left the Pathlight School. The school partnered with various community businesses and created vocational opportunities within the school by replicating the businesses within the school. The students in these programs learn the certification requirements needed to work in a particular field before they leave the Pathlight School. They have developed or begun to develop programs in Food and Beverage, Hospitality, Cleaning, Horticulture, Computer Design and Printing.

Over the years, I have learned to work within the Singapore culture, and to understand the incredible challenges they face in making change happen within their country. They have worked closely with their Ministry of Education and various other government and community organizations to secure the change they need. Yet despite these incredible changes in the last few years, they have come to realize that the country was not changing as fast as their graduates needed it to with regard to employment. Therefore, they contacted me for support in prototyping and developing their Supported Employment Program for adults with ASD in Singapore, the first of its kind in Singapore. I was asked to spend several weeks to train a group of their staff to be the first job coaches dedicated to helping individuals with autism obtain employment in Singapore.

I worked with 14 different professionals in the two schools to teach them about our own Supported Employment Program at TEACCH, how they could adapt its practices and philosophy, and modify it to meet the needs of individuals with autism in Singapore. They learned about our assessment tool, the TTAP, and how to support individuals with obtaining and maintaining employment. The culture in Singapore is incredibly structured, and they took to the training and learned in a very short time what many take years to learn. Though they learned a lot, they pushed me to think about our own program in the USA and how we could improve upon what we are doing as well. Looking at your own program from another person’s perspective is the best way to see what you do and how you could do it better or differently. They led me to realize that much of the information our program has, is held within the heads of the people in our program. More needs to be put down on paper and visualized for those who follow us, so that they can carry on our mission and passion for seeing people with autism gainfully employed.

The Autism Program in Singapore is scheduled to officially start services in January of 2012. They are going to be working closely with the TEACCH Program to continue to develop their employees and program to meet the core values of TEACCH and to provide exemplary services to individuals with autism. They have a long way to go and there is still a lot to learn, for both them and for us at TEACCH, but the team they have put together has the heart and the determination to make the dream of employment a reality for individuals with autism in Singapore.
Norman’s Journey...Salvation TEACCH

By Betty Camp

If you were born in North Carolina and were a preschooler in the mid sixties, displaying some form of psychotic behavior, and with luck, chosen to be one of the children in Dr. Eric Schopler’s and Dr. Robert Reichler’s Child Research Project, consider yourself fortunate and blessed. Norman was about eight years old and almost missed this life saving opportunity because it was first thought he may be too old to be considered a preschooler. Dr. Schopler, however, told us to bring him to Chapel Hill for a diagnostic interview. Thus, began the journey to salvation.

We had been trying to get help for Norman since 1963, at which time, he had attended the Child Guidance Clinic in Winston-Salem, NC for one day a week until 1965. In the late summer of 1965, we moved to Raleigh where he was seen by the Wake County Health Center. He was seen there for about two months and later released. We were told to try and get him in the Child Psychiatric Center at Butner, NC, which we subsequently did. He was kept there for evaluations and observation for one week. When he was released, the director told us to take Norman home and try to make him happy, as they could not do anything for his problem. After this unfortunate experience, we were lucky to get him into a private nursery school where he seemed happy with a very caring and compassionate director and teaching staff. Although this was a very good environment for him, I realized he still needed professional help.

Based on the experiences I have described at the beginning of this article, one would conclude that Norman’s life had been full of changes and lots of moving and this would be true! Let me explain how this all transpired! Norman’s journey started in Leesburg, Virginia where he was born in September, 1960. His father, Norman Camp III and I had accepted teaching positions there right out of college in 1956 and Norman was born four years later. His father was awarded a National Science Foundation grant to study for a year at Arizona State University in Tempe, Arizona. We moved in August 1961 to the Southwest where his father completed his Master of Natural Science degree.

I thought Norman was developing normally while we lived in Arizona. He walked by the time he was 12 months old, he could feed himself with some help and between the ages of 12 – 20 months, he began to say words such as mama, da-da, car, ball, hi, bye-bye, etc. Norman exhibited some peculiar behaviors that appeared to be cute but not abnormal. He was almost two years old when we moved back to North Carolina. We spent a few weeks with relatives and moved to Winston-Salem, NC to take teaching positions. We could not afford an apartment and had to room for about six months. This rooming situation was rather stressful and Norman appeared to stop saying anything. We could not get his attention and the hyperactivity was increasing. By the spring of that year, we had an apartment and I was able to train Norman to use the “potty.” By the fall, he was three and there was no change in his talking or saying words. We were fortunate, however, to get him in a nursery school where he was loved by the teachers and children. It was during this time that he was also accepted in the Child Guidance Clinic in Winston-Salem and he was diagnosed as autistic by a psychologist from Wake Forest University. I joined a mother’s group whose children were in a weekly therapeutic group which became a settling situation for the entire family.

As I indicated, when we moved to Raleigh (which was home), we got help from the Wake County Mental Health Center. The Psychiatric Social Worker informed us that the Division of Child Psychiatry had expanded their treatment facilities for autistic children and we needed to contact Dr. Eric Schopler, Director of the Child Research Project at UNC Chapel Hill. Early in September 1968 we were told to bring Norman in for a diagnostic interview and by September 18, Norman was admitted to the Child Research Project. We felt a tremendous burden had been lifted from our shoulders, but it was just the beginning of Norman’s journey to a life where he could grow up in a world that would eventually understand him, although he may not understand the world around him.

Dr. Schopler’s research model addressed the disability of autism without blaming the parents (as early research believed) and used the parents as co-therapists to treat this condition. This collaborative effort between parents and professionals – the respect they had for parents’ input was the key to the success of this project. Norman was in the project for two years. Toward the end of the NIH grant the parents were so pleased that they did not want to see the project end. Thus, the parents, families and friends petitioned the NC General Assembly for funding to continue their work and set up classes for these children. The result was the passage of the Senate Bill 383, a landmark legislation creating the TEACCH Autism Program.

Norman is now 51 years old. He still lives at home and works each day. When I think of what TEACCH meant to my life and our family, I know we would not be in this place without having had this service. Our next big job is preparing a place for Norman as we get older. In light of the past two years of uncertainty and change at Division TEACCH, I shudder when I realize the possibility of what could have happened to all the autistic people in the state of North Carolina. Those of us who are founders were compelled to rise to the occasion and become active in helping parents who depend on this service have some assurance that TEACCH would be there. I particularly feel that being involved in the process during this interim period certainly helped me to accept the change with an open mind and confidence that everyone can move forward.
Head’s Up! Therapeutic Horseback Riding at the Carolina Living and Learning Center  By Erin Bevier

The residents of the Carolina Living and Learning Center (CLLC) have been enjoying a new weekly recreational activity this year: riding horses at Head’s Up! Therapeutic Riding Center. Head’s Up! is a PATH Intl. (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International) premier accredited center. Originally founded in 1991, the program provides equestrian activities for people with special needs with a goal to improve physical and mental abilities as well as improving social and daily living skills. Heads Up! is currently housed in a permanent facility just 5 miles south of Pittsboro, where several CLLC residents participate in lessons designed with their specific needs and goals in mind.

For each lesson, a lead instructor, as well as several volunteer side-walkers work with riders to ensure safety by teaching the importance of wearing a helmet, proper mounting, and stretching exercises. Lessons are individualized and include basic horse riding skills instruction while also incorporating life skills training. For example, riders from the CLLC who are working towards improving money skills are sometimes given a picture of a specific amount of money; then they ride through an obstacle course and match the picture of money to the written amount on a mounted board. Riders learning about nutrition feed the horses, then learn about healthy versus unhealthy food choices for horses as well as people. Riders also learn appropriate social skills by practicing appropriate responses to questions and being prompted to remember to say “please” and “thank you,” to the volunteers, instructor, and even the horses.

Laura Dyer, a Therapeutic Riding Instructor at Head’s Up!, says that she sees improvements in riders of all skill levels. “Physically, many riders gain strength in their trunk muscles, and some even walk better over time. You can see their hand-eye coordination improve, as well as their ability to follow instructions. It’s also great to see riders remember their last lesson and be able to repeat what they’ve learned.” CLLC staff member Jailee Hollars says that she enjoys watching how much more extroverted residents become while riding. “The best part of watching the lessons is that the clients seem so focused and follow directions so well while on the horse. They seem more social and interact really well with the instructors and volunteers, some of whom they’ve never met before, as well as the horses.” Laura and Jailee also enjoy watching the relationships that develop between rider and horse. Therapeutic horseback riding lessons are open to riders of a variety of ages, functioning levels, and disabilities. A physician’s form must be completed and may help determine whether or not riding is appropriate for a person with a specific disability. According to Laura Dyer, “While you may also want to consider whether the person you’d like to participate is afraid of heights, scared of large animals, or have other considerations, we would encourage you to come and meet our horses first. You never know if they might become interested.”

For more information about the Head’s Up! Therapeutic Riding Program, please visit their website at headsuptrp.org or call their main office at 919-542-6207.
University of North Carolina
TEACCH Autism Program

5-DAY CLASSROOM TRAINING FOR TEACHERS & PROFESSIONALS

TEACCH is offering a five-day, hands-on classroom training in several locations in North Carolina this summer for teachers, psychologists, physicians, speech and language therapists, as well as researchers, clinicians, and others interested in educating children and adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorders ranging from preschool age through high school. This program is a 5-day, direct, supervised hands-on experience in a demonstration classroom setting. If you are interested in learning more about this training or other trainings offered throughout North Carolina, please visit our website www.teacch.com/trainings

Other TEACCH Trainings Coming Up Soon:
- Transition to Middle School - Workshop for Parents & Caregivers
- Structured Teaching and Behavior Management
- Structured Teaching in Vocational & Residential Setting
- Preparing for Kindergarten - Workshop for Parents & Caregivers
- Effective Strategies for Professionals Working with Young Children with ASD

Thank you to all of the TEACCH Centers and Programs for contributing articles to this newsletter.

Please let us know...

Interested in subscribing to our e-newsletter, email hearsey@email.unc.edu and enter “SUSCRIBE” in the subject heading.

TEACCH Newsletter
Editor - Kathy Hearsey    Design and Layout - Michelle Jordy
Special Thanks to Mary Lou (Bobo) Warren and Betty Camp for their time, support and superlative editing efforts.