

# *Under the Umbrella*

## *eNews*

March 2003

### **Highlights**

- **Fundraising News**
- **Open Meeting Tuesday, 11 March: Parents views on education issues and autism**
- **AGM: 5 April with Tandy Harrison on their experience of the Options programme at home and at Son Rise in the USA**
- **Report on the Supported Accommodation Meeting**
- **Help wanted**
- **Future dates for your diary**
- **Talk on autism 10 March 5pm**
- **Other events:**
  - **Open Meetings**
  - **Picnic plans**
  - **Parent support group**
- **Cinema event**
- **Newly diagnosed child aged ....?**
- **NAS events**

### **Fantastic Fundraising News!**

The Annual Charity Dinner organised by the St John's College School PTA has raised over £7,000 for Umbrella Autism! Umbrella Chair, Robin Wallach, attended the event and spoke briefly before the auction. It was astonishing the number of people who came up and said that autism was a particular personal cause, either because their own family or a friends family or contacts at work were affected. Many thanks to everyone involved in the event for their warmth and generosity.

### **Reminder: Open Meeting on Tuesday 11 March 2003**

The next Open Meeting is on Tuesday 11 March at 7.30 pm. The meeting will be at the Hilltop Carer's Centre, Primrose Street (off Victoria Road), Cambridge. This is a chance for members to exchange views on whether schools/the LEA and parents have the same aspirations for their children's education. This is a sensitive topic, but an important one, and it's important for parents to voice their views. The outcome of the meeting could be a letter to the LEA and future opportunities to explore the issues with key people in the LEA.

### **The Umbrella AGM: 5 April 2003**

The topic will be about the Options Programme and how it's principles could be adapted by any family. The Harrison family have recently been to the Son Rise programme in the USA and are using Options at home. Tandy Harrison will share, using video footage, their experience of the programme and how the ideas can be adapted by any family.

## Report on Supported Accommodation Meeting

The January meeting of the support meeting for parents of older teens and adult was open to all and had a visit by Richard Holland (from the Adult Learning Disability Service based in Cambridge). The meeting was aimed at finding out how we can influence the provision of specialised supported accommodation in the community for adults with high functioning autism and Asperger Syndrome. No such accommodation exists at present and the need is urgent and, with increasing diagnoses, growing.

- We discovered that allocation of funding for supported housing is influenced by key services.
- We discovered that key definitions of disability are ambiguous as to entitlement of people with Asperger Syndrome and High Functioning Autism to services.
- We learned that we can and should have a voice in local services. We agreed to contact the key Partnerships and request a clear account of the scope of their service and how we could have a voice.
- Local Mental Health and Learning Disability Partnerships are supposed to have plans to provide for the local needs. It was agreed that we would contact specific key service providers to ask them how they were going to meet the accommodation needs of adults with Asperger Syndrome and High Functioning Autism.
- A further meeting will be called to look at the responses and plan further action. If you were not involved in the meeting but would like to be kept up to date on this, please email [rww20@cam.ac.uk](mailto:rww20@cam.ac.uk).

## Help Wanted

- **Publicity co-ordinator for Umbrella Autism.** You don't have to be able to design or produce publicity, just co-ordinate the members of the Umbrella Committee with their different publicity jobs. Good at helping others to plan time table, an excellent sense of humour, sensitivity and the ability to enthuse others --- these are the required skills. Time? This is a volunteer role, requiring an hour or so per month, spread out over the month. Mainly phone calls, but could involve some collecting and delivery of publicity if the volunteer was able to do this. Interested? email [rww20@cam.ac.uk](mailto:rww20@cam.ac.uk)
- **After school companion** for 12 year old with autism who attends a local special school. Could be part of a small team. This is a waged job. Email your contact details to [rww20@cam.ac.uk](mailto:rww20@cam.ac.uk) and the family will get back to you.

## Future dates for your diary

**Umbrella Open Meetings** (members and non-members welcome) at Hilltop Carers Centre, Primrose Street (Off Victoria Road) in Cambridge. Parking at the end of Green Street or nearby streets. 7.30-9pm with networking from 9-9.30.

Tuesday Mar 11<sup>th</sup> -AGM

Thursday May 15<sup>th</sup>

Tuesday July 1st                      Thurs October 2nd  
November (To Be Arranged )  
Weds Dec 3rd

**Umbrella Family Picnics** will be in July and in September: dates to be announced

**Meetings for parents of older teens and adults** (venue and times same as Open Meetings) are Tuesdays, generally the last Tuesday of the month. For details ring Phyl Lewery (01223-709827).

25 Mar	25 Mar	29 Apr	27 May
(no July and August meetings)			
28 September	October	25 Nov	16 December

## Stop Press: Talk by Simon Baron-Cohen 10 March at 5pm

Leading researcher on autism, Professor Simon Baron-Cohen will be summarizing the central idea in his new book, "The Essential Difference: Men, women, and the extreme male brain" due to be published on may 1st by Penguin. The talk will ask "Is autism an extreme of the male brain?" He will suggest that - on average - women have a stronger drive to empathize, and men have a stronger drive to systemize. In people with autism, one sees the male profile to a much greater degree. The talk attempts to understand and characterize the spectrum by exploring this pattern. The talk will be at 5pm on 10 March at the Institute of Education, Shaftesbury Road (off Brooklands Avenue ---note: temporarily one way only from Trumpington Road to Hills Road).

## Autism-friendly Family Cinema events

Just after New Year's we had the use of the Arts Picture House one morning for our own autism-friendly showing of Lilo and Stitch. It was a relaxing cinema experience for everyone who came. The Committee are considering arranging another of these events. Email .....if you'd be interested in coming to another similar event or suggestions for suitable films.

## HELP! For the newly diagnosed

Do you have a newly diagnosed (in the past year or so) child with an autistic spectrum disorder? If so, you could attend a pilot course put on in Cambridge soon by the National Autistic Society. The course involves a mixture of day and evening meetings, so partners could take turns attending sessions. Times and dates should be known by the time you receive this, so ring or email if you want more details.

### NAS Events

- The National Autistic Society is holding a Regional Branch Congress in Peterborough Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March from 10.30-2.30. Some members of the Committee, including the Treasurer, will be attending.
- An NAS 2 hour seminar on Independent Living (examples of good practice from the NAS and personal experience of Thomas Madar, an adult with autism) will take place in several venues (Stoke, Lincoln, Shrewsbury and Kettering) in March. Free for people on the spectrum, £5 for parents, professionals £25. The Kettering event is Friday 28 March 7-9pm. Interested? Contact [rw20@cam.ac.uk](mailto:rw20@cam.ac.uk) or more details