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### Manitoba Families for Effective Autism Treatment

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### Our Mission Statement:

*Our mission is to ensure Manitoba children with Autism Spectrum Disorder have access to Effective treatment.*

# MFEATnew

## St. Amant ABA Program Update

St. Amant has renamed the ABA Preschool Program: we are now the **ABA Program**, currently providing services in two areas: preschool and interim-funded school – age. Our preschool services provide ABA programming for up to 58 children across the province. Our administrative and clinical staff members have been busy with welcoming new children and families into the service, as well as in providing the continuation of services for existing preschool service clients.

(cont'd on page 4)



## MFEAT General Meeting

MFEAT's next General Meeting will be held at 10 am, **November 25th** in the West Dining room at St Amant Centre, 440 River Road, Winnipeg, MB. Look forward to seeing you there! Agenda for this meeting is on page two.

## President's Report

**MFEAT Annual General Meeting-** The Annual General meeting for the organization was held on June 20<sup>th</sup>. There was one new board member elected to take the place of an outgoing member. Guy Mercier has joined the board and filled the vacant position left by the departure of long time board member Scott Holod. I'd like to thank Scott for his contributions as a board member over the last several years. Scott was heavily involved with the organization acting as Vice President, Public Relations contact and MFEAT representative on several school age ABA committees during his term. The support we received from Scott and his wife Tracy over the past several years has been phenomenal and I'd like to thank them both for there hard work and dedication to our cause.

(continued on page 3)

### Calendar

- MFEAT General Meeting.....Nov 25, 2006**
- Biomedical Conference.....Jan 19, 2006**

# Manitoba Families for Effective Autism Treatment

## General Meeting Agenda Saturday, Nov 25<sup>th</sup>, 2006 - 10:00 a.m. St. Amant Centre

**Welcoming and Introductions** **5 mins**

- 1. Introductions ..... Eldon

**MFEAT Business** **90 mins**

- 2. Adoption of Agenda..... Eldon
- 3. Approval of Minutes of Annual General Meeting June 20, 2006 .....All
- 4. President's Report .....See Newsletter
- 5. Treasurer's Report.....Stephen
- 6. Business Arising from Old Minutes ..... Eldon
  - a) Annual Conference..... Eldon/Teresa
  - b) Pre-school Program Update..... Teresa/Kevin
  - c) Update on School Age Programming/Interim Funding..... Eldon
- 7. New Business
  - a) MFEAT Library..... Teresa
  - b) MFEAT Social Events..... Eldon
  - c) Other New Business Items.....All
  - d) Next Meeting Date- (Feb 07).....All

(President's Report – continued from page one.)

Following the annual meeting we had an additional member come forward with a request to join the executive board. Rhonda Cenerini has indicated an interest in becoming an MFEAT board member. As our bylaws state we can only elect new members at the annual meeting, Rhonda will join the board as a visiting member for the remainder of this term and then let her name stand for election next June. I think it is encouraging to see new families becoming involved at the board level, and we are looking forward to working with both Guy and Rhonda in the upcoming year. The slate for the upcoming year is as follows:

- Eldon Strachan – President*
- Kevin Augustine – Vice President*
- Lori Steele – Secretary*
- Stephen Sutherland – Treasurer*
- Leslie Bering – Director*
- Martine Bonneau Laczko – Director*
- Jeff Sigurdson – Director*
- Guy Mercier – Director*
- Teresa Grabowski – Director*
- Heather Milne – Director*
- Kent Somers – Director*
- Rhonda Cenerini – Member*

**Advocacy Update**

**School Age ABA Interim Funding:** While the interim funding for school age services continues to be accessed by some families, there has not been a lot of progress to report in regard to resolving some significant issues with funding resources and service delivery. We have not met with the government representatives for some time and we are awaiting feedback on information that was submitted to them for their review. While we are becoming concerned with the delay, we are hopeful that we will hear something at our next

meeting which is scheduled for November 10<sup>th</sup>. In the event that we do not hear positive news, families will need to be prepared to unite in order to take the advocacy to the next level. **The longevity and future of school age ABA may be at risk and MFEAT will need to have a strong voice in order to make school age programming succeed. This will only be achieved through the efforts of all MFEAT families. We need your support in the strongest possible manner.** Further information will be available at the next general meeting on November 25<sup>th</sup>.

**MFEAT Conference:** Once again the MFEAT Conference was a tremendous success. We had approx 350 people attend over the two days to hear three very dynamic speakers. On behalf of the board and organization I would like to extend a huge thank you to the conference committee for another job well done.

**MFEAT Website:** Once again Stephen Sutherland has resumed his duties as the webmaster for our site. He has completely redesigned and updated the site which looks fantastic. If you haven't already done so make sure you check out the new site at [www.mfeat.ca](http://www.mfeat.ca).

**MFEAT Library:** While we have purges some of the items from the library we still have some books and videos which can be accessed by MFEAT members. We plan on publishing an updated list of books and videos very soon

in our newsletter and on the website. In the mean time members can call Teresa Grabowski at 204-885-5867 if there is a particular book or video that you are looking for.

**Other Initiatives:** Other items which we are currently exploring include updating the MFEAT brochure, hosting social events, and partnering with other advocacy agencies to create an Autism Services Forum for exchange of information on autism services in our province. We are also watching the progress on Bill M-172 which is currently being debated in the house of commons. This bill calls for a national autism strategy for research and treatment funding across Canada. If you have not already done so, please consider signing the on line petition which can be found at

<http://canadaautism.com/>  
In closing I would once again like to remind all members that we are reaching a very critical time in the development of school age ABA services. **We do not currently have a school age program** and are facing some significant issues with the interim funding arrangements. We need you support now to collectively voice our concerns in order to rectify the situation and ensure that we can continue to develop school age ABA services in Manitoba.

**Next General Meeting:** Our next general meeting will be held on November 25 in the West Dining room at St Amant commencing at 10AM. I hope to see everyone there.

*MFEAT President – Eldon Strachan*



Joining the St. Amant team as Administrative Manager is **Deb Campbell**. In her role, Deb will focus strongly on preschool service clients and staff members but will add her experience and skills across both services as part of the management team.

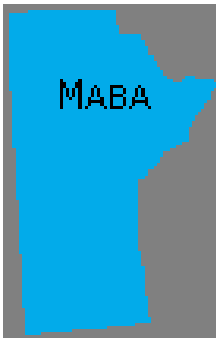
Interim-funded school-age services have grown tremendously, with 34 children being served across 16 school divisions and private schools. St. Amant is pleased to announce the appointment of **Kirsten Wirth** to the position of Coordinator of Treatment Programs, School-Age Services. Kirsten's role is to assist in clinical supervision of ABA Consultants providing services to families and school teams, as well as to assist in the conceptualization of services from a broader perspective. We are encouraged with the partnerships that are being forged with families and schools, and look forward to continued work with government representatives and MFEAT to address the needs of children in the elementary school setting.

**Daniela Fazio** continues to coordinate treatment programs for preschool children.

**Jill Franchuk** is now the Senior Administrative Coordinator for the Program, responsible for providing support and facilitating consistency from an administrative perspective for clients and staff members across both services.

The fall presents significant time for professional development opportunities for staff members, including the St. Amant and MFEAT conferences. The year's St. Amant Conference included an autism stream and many of the Program's staff members presented as part of the event.

St. Amant is also pleased to support the efforts of the **Manitoba Association for Applied Behaviour Analysis (MABA)**. This is a chapter of the



international Association for Applied Behaviour Analysis, and several of the Program's staff members have worked to establish the local group. The first annual conference was held in October, and was a great success. Information about MABA can be found at their website, [www.maba.ca](http://www.maba.ca)

## Documentary Film on Autism Stuns Internet Viewers - "Autism Every Day".



Produced for *Autism Speaks*, "Autism Every Day" is a new film produced by Lauren Thierry and Jim Watkins of October Group and Eric Solomon of Milestone Video. The film was screened at A New Decade for <http://tinyurl.com/j7qsm>, a fundraising event held May 9, 2006 in New York City, and subsequently broadcast by Don Imus on his show on MSNBC.

To view the film, visit: [http://www.autismspeaks.org/sponsorsoredevents/autism\\_every\\_day.php](http://www.autismspeaks.org/sponsorsoredevents/autism_every_day.php)

Just after the documentary, "Autism Every Day" aired on television on Wednesday, May 10, 2006. Following that, stunned and emotional reactions from media tracking autism parents began to appear on support discussion lists on the internet.

# Older Fathers More Likely to Have Autistic Children

*TUESDAY, Sept. 5 (HealthDay News) - The risk of developing autism is significantly higher among children born to men who are 40 and older than it is among children with fathers under 30, researchers report.*

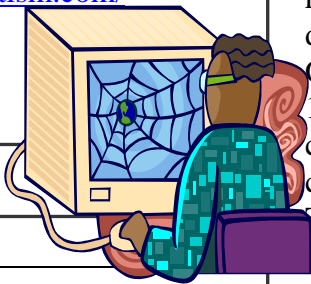
Autism is a growing problem, affecting 50 children in every 10,000, compared with just five in 10,000 only 20 years ago. This increase appears to be partially due to more awareness of the condition and changes in the definition of classic autism to include autism spectrum disorders. However, it could also be that there is an increase in the incidence of autism, experts say. The condition is marked by social and language problems and repetitive patterns of behavior. Autism spectrum disorder includes pervasive developmental disorder; Rett's syndrome, Asperger syndrome and childhood disintegrative disorder. The report appears in the Sept issue of the Archives of General Psychiatry. There may be several genetic reasons for this finding, said study author A. Reichenberg, from Mount Sinai School of Medicine, in New York City. One cause might be mutations in the sperm as men age, he said. "Those mutations might be accumulating with age and therefore transmitted from the father to the child," he said. "Another possibility is that mechanisms that the body has to protect itself from mutations are not working that well with age." It might also be that an improper or defective gene is being activated, Reichenberg noted.

These mechanisms operating alone or in concert may be the reason for the association of older parental age and autism, he said. In their study, Reichenberg's team collected data on the age of the fathers of 318,506 people born during the 1980s in Israel. The mother's age was known for 132,271 of these people as well. Among these individuals, all the men and three-fourths of the women were assessed by the draft board at age 17 for any psychiatric disorders. Among those whose father's age was the only one known, 208 children had a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder, as did 110 in the group where the age of both parents was known, the researchers found. When the researchers compared the parents' age when they had their child to the cases of autism among the children, they found 34 cases among 60,654 kids born to parents aged 15 to 29 years old, 62 cases among 67,211 kids born to parents aged 30 to 39 years old, 13 cases among 4,106 kids born to parents aged 40 to 49 years old, and one case among 190 kids born to parents older than 50. Reichenberg's group found the advancing age of fathers was associated with increased risk of autism. In fact, the odds of a child having autism spectrum disorder were nearly six times greater for children of men aged 40 and older, compared with men aged 29 years and younger. The older age of mothers was not associated with the risk for autism. "This phenomenon of older fathers having autistic kids should be explored further, because it might give us a clue about the genetic mechanism that contributes to the

development of autism," Reichenberg said. One expert thinks the finding might be explained by the fathers being mildly autistic, and therefore marrying and having children later. "The very real possibility that autistic traits in fathers led to older age of marriage and age at childbirth presents a real problem for interpretation of the results," said George M. Anderson, a research scientist at the Child Study Center and Laboratory Medicine at the Yale University School of Medicine. "This critical aspect is downplayed by the authors." "In the absence of good sociability/integration data in fathers of autistic children, I think one can say little about how much of the reported paternal age effect in autism is due to age-related genetic alterations," Anderson said. Another expert doesn't think the finding adds much to the understanding of autism. "Not an especially interesting finding," said Eric Courchesne, director of the Center for Autism Research at the San Diego Children's Hospital. It is unlikely this finding will have any significant impact on neuroscience research or on early identification or treatment of autism, Courchesne said. "The study says nothing about the brain bases and nothing specific about the genetics or possible environmental factors that may cause the condition," he said. In fact, he thinks the finding might be a statistical fluke. "Autism is a heterogeneous disorder, and when you get a huge enough sample, even small and possibly irrelevant statistical associations may be found," he said.

## Canada Autism.com

Canadaautism.com endorses the [Autism Spectrum Disorder \(ASD\)](#) Petition to Canadian Parliament (House of Commons). The website provides updates and information about the petition for people with ASD to be able to access health care. For more information, please visit <http://canadaautism.com/>



## What's Your Story?

Pamela Bryson-Weaver is putting together a collection of stories for a book tentatively called "The



Blessings of Autism". If you or anyone you know has a story about autism that is inspirational, heart

warming, funny, tender, or changed you in a positive way, please consider sharing. For more information, contact:  
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## Biomedical Conference



### *Biomedical Approaches to Autism Spectrum and Neurodevelopmental Disorders*

There will be a Biomedical Conference into Autism and related neurodevelopmental disorders taking place in Calgary on Friday, January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2007. The speaker credential list for this conference is outstanding.

The following speakers have been confirmed:

- Dr. Deborah Dewey, PhD University of Calgary
- Dr. Richard Deth, PhD Northeastern University
- Dr. Boyd Haley, PhD University of Kentucky
- Dr. Mady Hornig, MD Columbia University
- Dr. Bryan Jepson M.D. Thoughtful House Texas
- Dr. James Neubrandner MD, F.A.A.E.M., Private Autism Practice New Jersey
- Dr. Cindy Schneider.MD Centre for Autism Research and Education, Arizona

Leading experts will discuss current research directed towards explaining the increased prevalence of Autism and other childhood neurodevelopmental disorders as well as discussing new treatment modalities.

This will be an historic event as this is the first time a faculty of medicine has sponsored a biomedical conference into the caused and treatments of autism.

The organizers have controlled costs in an attempt to provide access to as many parents as possible. The cost will be \$40.00

The location is The Red and White Club at the NE end of MacMahon Stadium, 1833 Crowchild Trail NW, Calgary.

Registration for this conference is available by contacting:  
1-403-220-8632 or email [taylorc@ucalgary.ca](mailto:taylorc@ucalgary.ca) or <http://www.cellbiology.ucalgary.ca/Austism.html>

