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# Answers for Autism

Autism Advocates of Indiana.... Working for Indiana families touched by Autism

SPRING 2010

## Autism Advocates of Indiana

Working for Indiana families touched by Autism

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## April is Autism Awareness Month

April is a very special month....did you know...

**April 2nd is World Autism Awareness Day** - a result of a resolution passed unanimously by the United Nations General Assembly in 2008, making autism 1 of only 3 health issues to be recognized by the UN with its own "day." April 2 events will take place on multiple continents & in venues ranging from the floor of the New York Stock Exchange to the United Nations & the Worldwide Web.

**The U.S. recognizes April as a national autism awareness month**, a special opportunity for everyone to educate the public about Autism and issues within the autism community.

Autism affects 1% or 1 in every 110 children, including 1 in 70 boys. This represents a 57 percent increase from 2002 to 2006, and a 600 percent increase in just the past 20 years. Autism is more common than Down's syndrome, multiple sclerosis or cystic fibrosis. It affects the areas of cognition, social interaction, and communication skills. Each individual is uniquely affected.

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention have called autism a national public health crisis whose cause & cure remain unknown. By increasing autism awareness and educating the public, we can help those living with Autism learn how to adjust to the "neuro-typical" world we live in, enjoy happy, successful lives - and - will help early detection by parents, the general medical & educational communities as well.

You can help individuals affected by autism by supporting Autism Advocates of Indiana (AAI). AAI uses monies raised from the **Answers for Autism Walk** and other fundraising events to fund **grants submitted from all over the state of Indiana** for programs supporting individuals with autism and their families. Through the **Answers for Autism Grant Program**, AAI has helped to fund such programs as Project Lifesaver, which gives bracelets and transmitters to children who are flight risks, assisted in funding seminars, translating informational materials on autism into Spanish, as well as put current autism books in every library in the state of Indiana.

Additionally, a percentage of monies raised are given to national research projects. For a full listing of AAI's financial allocations, or to learn more, please visit [www.aaiwalk.org](http://www.aaiwalk.org). The 2010 **Answers for Autism Walk** is planned for September 18, at CoxHall Gardens in Carmel, Indiana.

In addition to the walk, this year Autism Advocates of Indiana is planning the **Answers for Autism Golf Outing** to be held on July 23 at Maple Creek Country Club, 10501 East 21<sup>st</sup> Street, Indianapolis, IN 46229. We hope you will join us!

Autism Advocates of Indiana would like to thank all of its supporters in the past 10 years and would like to ask you to tell your friends about our organization. By working together we can help the individuals with autism in Indiana lead better lives.

*Patty Reed*  
President  
Autism Advocates of Indiana

Are you a non-profit organization interested in applying for a grant?

Grant deadlines are March 15 and October 15  
Download a [grant application](#) from our website.

## Your Donations at Work... News from recipients of the Answers for Autism Grant program



Autism Advocates of Indiana appreciates all the donations received through its various fundraising events. We are proud of what we have been able to do with your donations and would like to share with you some examples of your donations at work for the Indiana autism community. In this section, we would like to bring attention to programs that have benefited from your donations to Autism Advocates of Indiana.

### Damar's Autism Family Training Series



For the past four years, Autism Advocates of Indiana (AAI) has given a grant to Damar in support of our Autism Family Training Series. The goal of this series is to provide family members, caregivers and teachers with empirically validated intervention strategies and techniques to assist them in working with children with autism. We hold monthly workshops on our campus that cover topics such as behavior modification, sensory needs, and individual education plans. Training videos which coincide with these topics are posted on the Damar Web site so that individuals who are unable to attend the trainings can still benefit from this information. Overall, more than 100 individuals have attended these training sessions.

Thanks to the grant from AAI, training sessions are offered at a very minimal cost to participants and include breakfast, lunch and childcare. We consistently receive positive feedback from parents and caregivers of children with autism who attend these sessions. They find the instructors to be knowledgeable and the information to be useful and applicable. In fact, one parent said, "I've learned more during this session about how to help my son than I've learned since he was diagnosed. I only wish I would've known about this sooner."

The sessions offer a comfortable environment where participants can share resources and learn from experienced Damar clinicians. Many attendees feel that the greatest benefit has been the opportunity to trade stories, ask questions and simply connect with others that have been impacted by autism. This has become a wonderful resource for our community and Damar is grateful to AAI for their partnership in this initiative.

The series includes seven monthly workshops and are held one Saturday each month from February 13 – August 14, 2010.

**Where:** Damar Services, Inc. at 6067 Decatur Blvd., Indianapolis, IN 46241

**Cost:** \$70 for the seven-session series or \$15 per session. Fee includes registration and meals for two (2) people.

To register by phone: Call Kristin Harmon at 317-856-5201 ext. 178.

To register by fax: Fax [registration form](#) and credit card information to:  
Damar Services, Inc.  
317-856-2333

ATTN: Autism Family Training Series

To register by mail: Mail [registration form](#) and your check, money order or credit card information to:

Damar Services, Inc.  
6067 Decatur Blvd.  
Indianapolis, IN 46241

# Technology News for Individuals with Autism and Their Families

## Tap to Talk for Nintendo DS submitted by Jennifer Akers

TapToTalk is software created for the Nintendo DS Lite, DSi or DSi XL, and is comparable to a handheld dynamic screen communication aid. The user simply taps the chosen picture on the DS



Lite's lower touch-screen to make it speak the word or sentence represented by the picture and appears on the upper screen. The DS Lite has 3" screens. You need to have fairly good fine motor skills to access the screen and also some of the DS control buttons to navigate. The cost for this software is \$99.95 for a home yearly subscription. There are different rates for home (1 child) Pro (2 or more children) and Agency (for 5 or more children). This could be off putting to people who like to buy a 'one off' product. However, there is a 30 day returns policy giving people the chance to try it out and see if it works for them.

The software comes with a large bank of pictures, and can be fully customized to contain the user's own pictures, photos and messages. If you want to use symbols, you need to either subscribe online to SymbolStix or import your PCS/Widgit symbols as jpegs. Sets of pictures, or 'albums' are customised on 'TapToTalk Designer' (accessed via the Internet), and then transferred to the DS via an SD card. You cannot program on the device itself for quickness, but can easily download the latest version if the DS gets lost or broken, whilst the DS itself is affordable to replace.

There are many advantages of this software: Tap To Talk is low cost, fully customizable and the fact that it works on the DS means that the user is likely to feel less self-conscious about using it as it has a 'cool' factor. The DS itself is fairly robust, suited to small hands, and has a decent battery life of 19 hours. It can also be used while charging. However, its volume is not loud enough for functional communication. The DS Lite requires external speakers such as 'DS Lite Grip Speakers' to make the voice output audible for everyday use. The sound quality when you record your own messages for the device is particularly poor. Also, the 'Tap to Talk Designer' software is not very intuitive for those used to conventional communication aids.

Tap To Talk can also be put on the DSi, which has a built-in camera, mic and five brightness settings. It is also slightly larger with 3.25" screens. The latest version - DSi XL - has 4.2" screens, and a larger 'pen sized' stylus. Both of these are marginally more expensive but promise 'enhanced sound.' To find out more visit the TapToTalk [website](#).

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## California School Uses the Wii as a Virtual PE Program

Matthew Huddleston winds up and throws a blistering fastball towards home plate. Justin Borquez takes a mighty swing but misses, and a big smile comes across his face. Not the normal reaction you would expect from a competitor involved in a baseball game. But the game



in question was not a real baseball game and Huddleston and Borquez are not athletes. The two are severely disabled students enrolled in the Kern County Superintendent of Schools' (KCSOS) special needs program at the Harry E. Blair Learning Center in Bakersfield, California. And they were taking part in a virtual baseball game, despite their physical handicaps, thanks to an innovative idea by teacher Taleiah Larkin.

Larkin has brought technology, hope, excitement and a new way of learning and exercising to students who have a difficult time doing through the "Project Virtual PE." The concept is providing about 45 students with severe disabilities in six classrooms at Blair the ability to participate in physical education activities.

"During a period of time this past summer it was too hot to take the children outside to play. I had a Wii of my own at home and thought 'I wonder if the technology might help our students get the needed exercise,'" Larkin said. "So, I brought it in and one of our former students, who is a special needs athlete, tried it out. She loved it, and I could see from her enthusiasm that Wii could have a valuable place in our classroom."

Now with the help of instructional aides and other teachers who help them use their arms and legs to play, the children are involved in fitness, dance, soccer, skiing, baseball, golf, tennis, boxing and more. Both student and teacher or aide hold the Wii remote control together and watch the activity unfold on a TV monitor. When it comes time to pitch, they pitch together. Same holds true for the hitting or whatever other game in which they might be involved.

Physically, the students can work on balance with the dance programs. As previously mentioned, the games require them to concentrate for extended periods of time, to recognize colors, shapes and numbers. Each time they pitch, bat, swing, roll, kick or punch, they are increasing much needed circulation in their limbs.

As with anything new that is producing results in the field of special needs, other teachers, other schools and districts have heard about Larkin's Wii sports center at Blair. She is getting requests for field trips and "game days" to see how it can work in other classrooms.

"What makes it work is that the whole staff at Blair has totally bought into this," Larkin said. "We are a team, and the smiles you see are not just those of the children. When a homerun is hit or strikeout thrown, there are two sets of smiles on display. One belongs to the student and the other to the teacher/aide playing partner."



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## IEP Checklist for iPhone / iTouch App Aims To Level Playing Field

By Shaun Heasley, (disabilityscoop.com February 12, 2010)

Forget the pen and paper at your next IEP meeting. A new iPhone app is designed to organize the process, providing legal tips and a place for notes all in the palm of your hand.



The app for iPhone or iPod Touch organizes the individualized education plan, or IEP, meeting into categories such as "current performance" and "annual goals." When a category is selected, there is a brief description of the legal requirements and an opportunity for the user to insert a goal or notes.

The free app, known as IEP Checklist, was developed by the Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center, a Virginia center that's part of a national network of special education parent information and training centers funded by the Department of Education. <http://www.taalliance.org/ptidirectory/pclist.asp>

"This application can empower families and equalize the relationship between families and professionals," said Paula Goldberg, executive director of the PACER Center, a Minnesota training center. "I can also visualize young people working on their own IEPs, being able to reference the federal regulations that say that their transition goals are supposed to be based on their strengths, needs, preferences and interests."

The IEP Checklist app can be downloaded at the iTunes store.

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*Disclaimer: Autism advocate of Indiana publishes information about issues and events that may be of interest to families raising children with autism. Autism Advocates of Indiana does not necessarily endorse all events, sponsoring organizations, individuals, products, or reports which appear in this newsletter. Families should research the information and decide if it is appropriate for their child.*

Would you like  
to promote  
your Autism  
Services?

Provide  
information to  
our [Autism  
Store](#) during  
our [Answers  
for Autism  
Walk](#)

## Mark Your Calendars.... Upcoming Events from Autism Advocates of Indiana

### Dine To Donate at Lone Star Steakhouse in Anderson, IN

Enjoy a night out with the family while supporting *Autism Advocates of Indiana* and its work for Indiana Families Touched by Autism.

**Thursday, April 22, 2010 5 –10 pm**

**Location: Lone Star Steak House**

**1721 East 60th Street Anderson, IN 46013**

Download a flyer from the AAI website ([www.aaiwalk.org](http://www.aaiwalk.org))

bring it with you to the restaurant and Lone Star will donate 10% of your check to Autism Advocates of Indiana.



### Roller Derby Night to Benefit Autism Advocates of Indiana

Come enjoy some hard-hitting roller derby action while helping out Autism Advocates of Indiana. Cheer on the Circle City Socialites, a local all-girl team, as they take on the Quad City Rollers of Moline, Illinois. The bout, Fishnets of Fury, will take place **Saturday, May 1 at the Forum at Fishers, 9022 E. 126th St., Fishers.**

Doors open at 5 p.m. and the action starts at 6 p.m. Tickets for the May 1 bout are \$10 in advance and \$12 at the door, with kids age 6 and under admitted free, and are on sale now through [www.brownpapertickets.com](http://www.brownpapertickets.com).

A portion of the evening's ticket proceeds will go to AAI to help fund the work it does on behalf of Indiana children with autism and their families.



### Answers for Autism Day with the Indianapolis Indians



Autism Advocates of Indiana and the Indianapolis Indians invite you to see:

**INDIANAPOLIS INDIANS VS. COLUMBUS CLIPPERS  
5:00 PM SUNDAY, JUNE 6, 2010**

*Come see some great baseball action and show your support for Indiana families touched by autism!*

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***For more information about any of these events please visit our website:***  
[www.aaiwalk.org](http://www.aaiwalk.org)

Interested in  
being a sponsor  
for our Golf  
Outing or  
Answers for  
Autism Walk?

Download a  
[sponsorship  
packet](#) from our  
website:  
[www.aaiwalk.org](http://www.aaiwalk.org)

## Tee up for autism at the Answers for Autism Golf Outing!

### Answers for Autism Golf Outing

Date: Friday, July 23, 2010

Registration: 10:00 am

Start : 12:00 pm

Location: Maple Creek Country Club  
10501 East 21st Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46229



Cost: \$75.00 per person or \$300 for four

This fundraising event will increase Autism Advocates of Indiana's ability to help Indiana families touched by autism. You can support this event by volunteering before and at the event, being a participant, having your family or company sponsor a hole or being a corporate sponsor through in-kind or monetary donations. On line registration and information will be available soon on our website at [www.aaiwalk.org](http://www.aaiwalk.org). To obtain more information contact [Donna Simerly](mailto:Donna Simerly) at [donna@aaiwalk.org](mailto:donna@aaiwalk.org) or 317-523-3796.

## Join us for the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Answers for Autism Walk!

It is our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and we need your help to make this walk the best yet! Join us on September 18<sup>th</sup> at Cox Hall Gardens in Carmel. Bring your family and friends to this family fun day. In addition to the 1 mile walk there will be music, sensory activities, a blow up slide, a rock climbing wall and a silent auction where both children and adults can bid on all kinds of items. There will be a quiet tent for those with sensitivity issues to noise but you might also bring headphones or ear plugs.



## 10th Annual Answers For Autism Walk

Saturday, September 18, 2010  
9 am-1pm  
CoxHall Gardens  
2000 West 116th Street  
Carmel, IN 46033

With your support, Autism Advocates of Indiana (AAI) has contributed over **\$300,000 in grants** to community organizations throughout the **state of Indiana** and over **\$200,000** to national **autism research**.

Create a team and come join us as we raise funds to support the Indiana Autism Community.

To register online or for more information about the walk, please visit our website:

[WWW.AAIWALK.ORG](http://WWW.AAIWALK.ORG)

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## Our Mission....



**AUTISM ADVOCATES  
OF  
INDIANA**  
[WWW.AAIWALK.ORG](http://WWW.AAIWALK.ORG)

*Our Mission is to increase and broaden public knowledge and awareness of the behaviors, social issues and emotional needs of individuals on the autism spectrum so that all individuals can participate in and contribute to our community without fear or bias or loss of individuality.*

*AAI accepts grant requests that are consistent with our mission. Grants will be considered in two categories: the Public Awareness Program, and the Individual and/or Family Support Program. The grant program would like to encourage new and innovative ideas to support our mission throughout the state of Indiana.*

*Working for Indiana families touched by Autism.*

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## AAI Board of Directors

<b>Executive Directors</b>	<b>Board Members</b>	
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