

Letter from the Executive Director

This project began with a “Wouldn’t it be wonderful if...” conversation with fellow-teacher and friend Amy Filson. As we are both long time educators, we often discuss the challenges of teaching. In no time, we had developed an “ideal” environment for teaching ASD students like my son, who have the ability to learn, but face boredom and learning disabilities within a standard classroom program. Amy began with the media center – that is the heart for her (she is just finishing her Masters in Library Sciences degree). “The library should be more like a children’s museum with a lot to experience and do,” she said. From that premise, we planned classrooms and programs that were about educating through doing and not through worksheets. We understand that we need to engage before we can educate, and that is the most challenging part about teaching those with Autism. Thus was born the business plan and the educational concept behind The Chase Academy.

We shared this idea with my sister, Eileen Taft, who immediately got on board. She uses her formidable background in marketing, training, computer software and accounting to fill the holes

as we go. She is no less than my right arm, my eyes and my ears. Her enthusiasm has been unwavering and she has sometimes had to drag us all with her, which she has done with a smile on her face.

Along the way, we met with volunteer Lili Withelder, who attended a business lunch where I pitched the concept of the Academy to a local city official. Lili’s cousin has Asperger’s Syndrome, and my vision made a believer out of Lili. She has volunteered her time to attend meetings, approach city officials, and advocate for our school almost to the detriment of her personal life! Putting it all aside, Lili is there for us to rely on, helping with fundraising and membership.

Our last two additions to our team were no less than vital as well. Jim King, Executive Director of The ARC of Volusia, I met at a Rotary Meeting and I was struck by his genuine desire to do nothing more (and nothing less) than help those with disabilities. He gave his full support and has been a genuine friend, confident and mentor to me and our team since he has joined us. Lastly, we recruited Lora Brewer from BFOCASD, a local



MIRIAM “MIMI” LUNDELL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

parent advocacy group. Her personal struggles far outweigh mine, but she has been so supportive since our meeting. She has gone out of her way to introduce our program to her parents and friends, and has not only said, “This is a long time coming,” but moreover, “What can I do to help?”

So, this is my team – we are joined by our common goal, and we are committed to the reality of this school. I would like to invite each of you to meet my team, ask us questions and see for yourself if you can share our vision, believe in our future and advocate for our children.

YOU are the missing component of my team – for only you can help me change the future of Autism in Volusia County and only you can make it

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Special points of interest:

- *Don’t gamble on your child’s education! Come “Cruz for Autism” with us in February, Autism Awareness Month.*
- *Make sure your child checks out our “Kids Korner!”*
- *Has your family joined The Chase Academy family? Chase the Dream with us by becoming a member!*
- *Would you like to make a contribution to The Chase Academy? Our “Wish List” will give you some ideas on how you can make the most impact.*

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Letter from the Executive Director

possible for every child who qualifies to attend our school. It will take time, hard work and probably more than one inconvenience, but at the end, we have built the dream and made not only today better, but tomorrow brighter for our students with ASD.

Won't you take one evening and join

The SCERTS® Model

I had the privilege over the summer of attending a workshop hosted by Volusia County schools which was in the process of creating a pilot program for SCERTS®. This new behavioral program is developed by a team of experts at FSU who have spent no less than 20 years studying autistic children. I was impressed by our presenter Dr. Amy Wetherby who is on the team that created this program, but also by her philosophy that each child should be in a maximum state of receptiveness to learn. If the child is not, it is the duty of the teacher to first get that child into that position, and then teach. Teaching to someone that is not in a maximum state of receptiveness is a waste of time. As I heard her give this statement, I knew I had found my behavioral program. It shares responsibility between the student and the teacher for behavioral outcomes, requiring more of the teacher than just responsiveness, and it requires constant monitoring, goal setting and adjustment throughout its program.

Cruz for Autism

In October, Eileen Taft, Director of Funding, met with Nancy Maddox, Volusia County Cultural & Heritage Activity Director to discuss some funding ideas. Well, Nancy gave Eileen a great idea for a fundraiser: a poker tournament!! The funny thing is, Nancy did not realize just what a great idea she had. Days later, the National Autism Association put out a press release announcing its first poker tournament in Atlantic City, NJ. What a coincidence!

Following the NAA's lead, The Chase Academy is very happy to announce it's *Cruz for Autism* fundraiser, planning for it to be an annual event, to be held

my team at the ARC facilities in Daytona Beach? We will meet Tuesday, December 5th from 6:00 pm -8:00 pm. ARC is located at 100 Jimmy Huger Circle, off of Jimmy Ann Drive, next to the Westside Elementary school, north of the Jimmy Ann/Mason Avenue intersection. You are welcome, and you are encouraged to invite anyone you be-

Sadly, SCERTS® is currently being implemented this year as only a pilot program, and even when fully implemented will only cover the first two levels of the SCERTS® model, as the third level deals with socialization and pragmatic issues - these are skills that lie outside the boundary of public education, and thus children like my son, who already have reached level III receive few real services under the public school's model of this program.

The Chase Academy intends to implement this program, fully train our staff and develop this model to its full integrity. We believe this model is the best way to implement a behavioral program, and we are providing you with an introductory look at its components so that you can judge for yourself.

The SCERTS® Model prioritizes Social Communication, Emotional Regulation and Transactional Support as the core challenges that must be addressed in any program for children and persons

lieve would be interested in attending our school or supporting our program. I ask for two hours of your time to make you a believer.

Remember, reality is only a dream in action!

Mimi



with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The SCERTS® Model is a comprehensive, educational approach and multidisciplinary framework that addresses the core challenges faced by children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and related disabilities. The model is derived from a theoretical as well as a research-based foundation on communication and social-emotional development in children with and without special needs. The SCERTS® Collaborators draw from over 100 years of collective experience with children with ASD and related difficulties, and have published more than 130 scholarly articles and chapters, as well as books and assessment instruments. The SCERTS® model was developed to address the critical need identified by professionals and parents for a comprehensive multidisciplinary team model for children with ASD that addresses educational priorities based on the most current research on ASD.

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Saturday, February 24, 2007 from 7:00 pm to midnight.

Tickets cost \$50

each and include gaming for the entire evening, drinks while gaming, live music, dancing, a dinner buffet, 2 drink vouchers and a \$5 cash start for your gambling pleasure. What a great way to "ante up" in support of a wonderful cause and have a fun evening! In addition to our ticket sales, SunCruz Casino is going the extra "nautical" by desig-



Ponce Inlet - SUN CRUZ III

nating one of their slot machines for The Chase Academy. All of the proceeds from this machine will be donated to the Academy. There will also be a slot machine tournament and a poker tournament. Poker tournament seats are limited and include a buy-in, which you can reserve that evening before stepping onto the boat. The evening will include hourly door prizes and tournament grand prizes. The Chase Academy will receive 80% of the ticket proceeds and 50% of the tournament fees.

We want you to "cruz" with us, so get your ticket today. We know they are going to go fast!

KIDS KORNER

Special Collections for Special People

I collect dolls. But not just any dolls, I collect American Girl dolls. They're for girls of all ages and you can buy clothes and accessories for them. I started collecting when I was four years old. Now I'm twelve, which means I've been collecting for eight years. I consider that a long time. I'm about to get the last doll for my collection and I'm excited that it's almost complete. My parents got a little irritated that they bought all those dolls for me and I never played with them when I was younger. But ever since they've found out I have Asperger's Syndrome, they know that collecting things but never playing with things or touching them is a big part of Autism.

Over the years, I have had various collections. When I was younger, I started with the dolls. Then when I got to about the age of eight or nine, I collected My Little Ponies. I never finished my collection, though. I still have all the ponies sitting in a crate in my room. Then when I was ten, I realized

that every time we went to the movies or a store that had sticker machines, I'd always want to get them. When I got a photo album for my birthday, I took the pages and pasted stickers all over them. Now my album has about six or seven pages in it full of stickers, and I have over two-hundred stickers. I never stopped collecting the dolls, though. Today, I have fourteen dolls, three pets that go along with them and who knows how many clothes and accessories! I have to get one more, and that completes the original collection. I would just have to get two more of the best friend dolls from that collection.

With every collection I have, my family always helps me. My mom has gotten me ten of my dolls, my dad got me one, and my grandma got me two. My mom also got me two of the animals and my aunt got me the last one. Just about every member of my family has bought me clothes and accessories for my dolls. When I was collecting My Little Ponies, my mom always bought me them on



Karen Lundell
7th Grade
Southwestern Middle
DeLand

special occasions and my grandma bought me a lot of them also.

My little brother Chase has only collected one thing though: cards. He collects any kind: baseball, foot-

ball, Yu-Gi-Oh!, Yu-Gi-Oh! GX, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. You name it, he collects it. He even has an album now with sleeves to hold all his cards. Last year my grandma bought him a box of the limited edition baseball cards.

So, to all you kids with Autism, if you collect something but never touch it or play with it, don't feel guilty. It's part of who you are and you are special in your own way.

Student of the Month

Jimmy Brewer

Our quiet household went from 0 children to 2 babies within a year. Jimmy was born in March of 2000 and quickly joined his brother in reaching all his baby milestones early. At his 18 month



Jimmy Brewer
1st Grade
Spruce Creek Elementary
Port Orange

check up, I asked the pediatrician why he seemed so quiet compared to AJ. I was told to wait until his 2 year check up to worry about it. Between the two check ups we relocated to Daytona

Parents: If you would like your child to be featured in Kids Korner, please send a photo and a brief bio to Eileen Taft, taft@bellsouth.net.

Beach. One week later, at the boys' pediatrician's visit both were diagnosed. AJ with PDD-NOS and Jimmy with Autism. Jimmy was immediately sent to Early Steps and began receiving therapies for the next 6 months. At 3, he entered the public school Pre-K Mild classroom and adjusted well. We added speech language, biomedical interventions and ABA therapy to Jimmy's class attendance and he began to make rapid progress. He is currently on the upswing again following a year of seizures that have taken most of his

speech away again. He is currently attending a mild ESE class at Spruce Creek Elementary for 1st grade. He enjoys the computer, videos, reading books, and his weekly gymnastics class. He is a fan of all the large theme parks, and just returned from an enthusiastic day at Universal Studio's Autism Awareness Day. He is looking forward to all the advancements that are coming in the field of autism research and education, and at the ripe old age of 6, his patience with us continues to amaze and inspire us every day.



The Chase Academy + ARC Volusia: A Winning Combination

Chartered on March 23, 1962, the ARC Volusia serves approximately 250 Volusia County adults with mental retardation every working day. Their DeLand and Daytona Beach training centers each serve about 100 individuals and feature Adult Day Training Level I, a self-help skill acquisition program for individuals with intense needs, Adult Day Training Level II, which includes work skill development and sheltered workshop programs, and Community Inclusion, a small group community participation program. Additionally, the Supported Employment and Supported Living programs emphasize integrating individuals into the community at competitive job sites, and in their own homes, serve a combined fifty participants.

Like most ARCs across America, the ARC Volusia was formed by local parents as a support and advocacy group. This was and still is accomplished by

being a member organization. Becoming a member of ARC Volusia also makes you a member of ARC Florida, their state chapter, and ARC US, their national chapter.

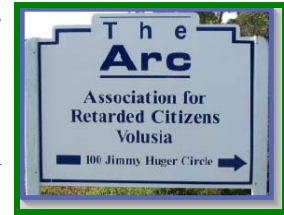
Partnering with ARC is step into the “big time” for The Chase Academy. Not only that, it just makes sense for two organizations that have such closely aligned missions to combine resource power. Both ARC and Chase are committed to serving our special needs citizens, particularly through education, in an effort to make them as self-sufficient as possible with the ultimate end to be fully included in society. These special people have a lot of talents and gifts to share with each of us, and they deserve equal opportunity to serve society in the best way they are able.

Our collaboration with ARC is one of those serendipitous events you occa-

sionally hear about. Mimi Lundell, Executive Director, was on an autism awareness campaign

this summer. She visited numerous Rotary Clubs in Volusia County to talk about autism and The Chase Academy. Fortunately for us, Jim King, member of the Daytona Beach Shores Rotary and Executive Director of ARC, was in the audience. He approached Mimi after her presentation, and said, “I can’t believe you’re talking about this! Autism has always been one of my pet projects. We need to work together!”

Jim King was able to see the vision, and we are delighted that he and ARC Volusia are excited to “Chase the Dream” with us!



The SCERTS® Model

The SCERTS® Model prioritizes goals and implements practices that focus on enhancing Social Communication, Emotional Regulation, and Transactional Supports for children with ASD and related social-communicative disabilities and their families. It is based on research and practice that indicates that educational programming should focus on 1) developing spontaneous, functional communication and secure, trusting relationships with children and adults (Social Communication), 2) enhancing the ability to maintain a well-regulated emotional state for learning and interacting (Emotional Regulation), and 3) supporting children, their families, and professionals to maximize positive social experiences across home, school and community settings (Transactional Support). The SCERTS® model focuses on functional skills in every day activities across settings, and is informed by research on the unique learning style of children with ASD. It is not an exclusive approach, in that it provides a framework in which practices from other approaches may be integrated. Assessment occurs through observation of children in different settings and differ-

“The SCERTS® model can be used with children who exhibit a wide range of ages and developmental abilities, including both preverbal and verbal children. It is also relevant for older school-age children and adults.”

ent partners using a detailed curriculum-based assessment and parent report. The SCERTS® model can be used with children who exhibit a wide range of ages and developmental abilities, including both preverbal and verbal children. It is also relevant for older school-age children and adults. Particular emphasis is given to parent-professional collaboration, and careful coordination across all settings and partners.

The SCERTS® model is:

- ◆ **Child-centered:**
Each child’s individual patterns of strength and needs guide program

planning, including selection of goals and strategies.

- ◆ **Family-centered:**
Family members are included as collaborators and partners in all efforts, and plans are developed to support families.
- ◆ **Developmentally grounded:**
The model and its curriculum is based on extensive research on the development of children with and without disabilities.
- ◆ **Activity-based:**
Everyday activities and routines are the primary contexts in which children learn, and in which progress is measured.
- ◆ **Relationship-based:**
The development of trusting and secure relationships with adult partners and other children provides the foundation for enhancing social communication and emotional regulation capacities.

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Please go to the SCERTS® website for more specific information about the model: http://www.scerts.com/frequently_asked_questions.htm.

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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

For One Year Membership

I wish to join The Chase Academy in the category of:

_____ **Student** **\$ 15.00**

Benefits: E- newsletter, priority notice for all Academy related functions and events, 10% discount on all Academy merchandise

_____ **Individual** **\$ 30.00**

Benefits: Same as Student plus - 2 presale discounted priced tickets for fundraisers or events

_____ **Family** **\$ 50.00**

Benefits: Same as Individual except for 4 presale discounted priced tickets for fundraisers or events

_____ **Non-Profit Organization** **\$100.00**

Benefits: Same as Family except for 12 presale discounted priced tickets for fundraisers or events plus - 4 complimentary tickets to any single event, 20% discount on all promotional advertising

_____ **Corporate** **\$300.00**

Benefits: Same as Non-Profit Organization

Enclosed is my check for \$ _____

Please make checks payable to: The Chase Academy, Inc.

Name(s) _____

(If family, supply names of both spouses)

College Name _____

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Join us today as we Chase the Dream!