

Upcoming Conferences:

"Fostering Peer Play and Friendships in Children on the Autism Spectrum"

Victoria: November 30 & December 1, 2007

Hosted by the Queen Alexandra Centre for Children's Health

Queen Alexandra Centre, Auditorium
2400 Arbutus Road, Victoria, BC
V8N 1V7

Registration information contact:

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Calgary: October 17 & 18th, 2008

Hosted by Autism Calgary Association & Friend 2 Friend Social Learning Society

Executive Royal Inn Hotel & Conference Centre
2828 – 23rd Street NE, Calgary, Alberta T2E 8T4

Registration accepted by phone, fax, mail or e-mail.

Autism Calgary Association
174, 3359 – 27th Street NE
Calgary, Alberta T1Y 5E4
Phone: 403-250-5033
Fax: 403-250-2625

Welcome Friends
to **Friend 2 Friend Social Learning Society's** bi-annual newsletter "Here's What's Different About Us".

Our electronic newsletter is designed to keep you updated on Friend 2 Friend's programs, upcoming events, conferences and new publications. Be sure to look for interesting columns on Play & Socialization, Positive Behaviour Support and Communication.

Friend 2 Friend celebrated Autism Awareness Month by hosting our first conference "**Fostering Peer Play and Friendships in Children on the Autism: Blending the Integrated Play Groups and Friend 2 Friend Models**" on October 19th & 20th presented by Pamela Wolfberg Ph, D and Heather McCracken. All proceeds from this seminar were donated to Friend 2 Friend Social Learning Society to support the delivery of the F2F and IPG Programs. Friend 2 Friend would like to thank all who participated in the conference for their support and Dr. Pamela Wolfberg who donated her time to support the society.

We will continue to deliver our simple but profound message "**we are all different in our own way, being a good friend means accepting differences.**"

KEN'S Everyone Needs Friends!

Korner: Colby is in grade 5. It is recess time. While everyone else is outside playing, Colby is sitting in the office for the third time this week. It is only Wednesday. Colby knows what will happen next: his principal will talk at him. She will say that Colby is scaring the grade ones and that he has to stop chasing them. She will say that if he does not stop, he will not be allowed to play on the playground during recess and lunch for the rest of the week. Colby will say that everyone was just having fun, and his principal will end up getting frustrated. This pattern seems to be set, and it does not seem to be working for anyone.

Hannah is in grade 2. It is lunchtime. As she often does, Hannah is sitting by herself at the edge of the field watching the other children play. Hannah has heard adults say that she "likes being alone" and that she "needs quiet-time to be able to cope in class". Hannah gets angry when she hears these things, but right now she is feeling sad and alone. Some girls from her class are watching her nervously and keeping their distance. They were told by their teacher that they should play with Hannah and they have tried without much success. A few minutes ago Hannah picked up dog-poo with a stick and began waving it at the girls. Everyone ran away. It took them a long time to get away from Hannah. Hannah eventually left to sit at the edge of the field. She did this after seeing a monitor walk towards her. Now, Hannah is just waiting for the lunch bell to ring so she can go inside. Hannah needs help. However, every time that she says she does not have anyone to play with, the monitors simply point out children for Hannah to try to play with. This does not help.

Both Colby and Hannah have autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Like most children their age, Colby and Hannah wanted to have friends, but they were increasingly having trouble connecting with their peers. To Colby and

Ken's Korner continued from front...

Hannah, the games that their classmates were playing were confusing and seemed to change all the time.

Colby's solution was to start games of "chase" with the younger children. Colby had fun with them, but he also had a hard time reading their emotions. He did not see when their excitement at being chased occasionally turned to fear – Colby was having fun, and he just assumed the younger children were having fun too. Colby knew that he might get in trouble for playing chase; however, without anything else to do, he kept playing the only way he knew how. Hannah's story was the same: she did not know how to connect with her peers, so she tried different things to get their attention. Unfortunately, Colby and Hannah's stories are ones that are all too often echoed throughout neighbourhoods, playgrounds, and schools for children on the autism spectrum.

Colby and Hannah's behaviours were deemed "problems" at their schools. As is often the case, the behaviour plans developed for both children was to remove them from the playground when problems arose. However, this plan did not work for either Colby or Hannah because they were only being taught what **not** to do. The adults in Colby and Hannah's world seemed to assume that all children know how to play, and that Hannah and Colby were "choosing" to behave inappropriately on the playground. No time was spent teaching Colby, Hannah, and their peers how to play with each other.

Regardless of disability, if a child has not yet learned how to interact and play with their peers, the child will use less appropriate ways to meet their social needs. Often, as was the case with Colby and Hannah, these less appropriate ways of connecting with their peers get them in trouble. For both Colby and Hannah, their behaviours decreased when we began teaching them and their peers how to play together. Once they had learned the necessary social and play skills, neither Colby nor Hannah needed their unusual behaviours any longer – they learned better ways to meet their social needs.

Without intervention, children with ASD often fail to master the communication, social and play skills required on the playground. Children with ASD and their peers often need extra support to learn to connect and play with each other.

Everyone needs friends!

Ken Brown is a behavioural consultant who has worked with children on the autism spectrum in inclusive school and community settings for 15 years. Ken is a published author in the areas of autism, communication, and behaviour supports. kennethbrown@telus.net



Publications

"That's What's Different About Me"

Helping Children Understand Autism Spectrum Disorder

Written by: Heather McCracken

Illustrated by: Kathryn Robbins

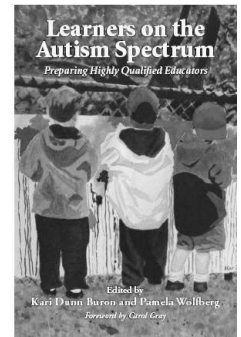
Friend 2 Friend's packaged program of our puppet presentation for children aged 3-10. This package contains an interactive DVD of the puppet presentation, implementation manual and 5 children's colouring books. This package is designed for self-use by teachers and parents and available from AAPC.

"Learners on the Autism Spectrum: Preparing Highly Qualified Educators"

Edited by Kari Dunn Buron and Pamela Wolfberg, Foreword by Carol Gray

This text responds to the escalating need to prepare highly qualified educators with essential knowledge and practical skills to support diverse learners on the autism spectrum. Covering a range of critical topics and themes, this edited volume brings together leading experts representing diverse disciplines and perspectives (i.e., researchers, therapists, educators, parents and adults on the autism spectrum).

Available January 2008 by AAPC.



Friend 2 Friend
Social Learning
Society

Our Mission:

To foster mutual friendships between children on the autism spectrum (ASD) and their peers by providing programs and services that promote understanding, acceptance, and empathy of ASD, and to support all children to develop to the best of their abilities through the play and socialization that friendships offer.

Our Vision:

To provide sustainable community programs and services that foster an understanding of the many challenges experienced by individuals with ASD, and to support our community to embrace all persons with ASD as valuable, contributing members.

Our Values:

All children want friends. We strive to create and deliver universally accessible programs and services that embrace diversity and equality using an inclusive, sensitive, age-appropriate, fun and educational approach.

For more information on the Friend 2 Friend Programs and Services contact: **Friend 2 Friend Social Learning Society**
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Website: www.friend2friendsociety.org
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