

Joshua Center Newsletter

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www.joshuacenter.com 7611 State Line Road, Suite 142, KCMO 64114 816-763-7605

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Camps For Kids Campaign is almost over

This campaign is so important to the Joshua Center. We still need a **couple thousand** more to reach our goal. Any donation is greatly appreciated. You can make a donation directly at the Camps For Kids website www.campsforkids.org, the Joshua Center website http://www.joshuacenter.com/camp_for_kids.htm, send a check **made payable to Camps for Kids** with **Joshua Center** written in the memo area to Camps for Kids at 1080 Washington, Kansas City, MO 64105 or send to the Joshua Center and we will send it in.

Social Skills – New Classes and New Lessons

Watching the kids over the years make friends has been a real joy. It has been amazing to watch them play the games - sharing, taking turns and not “bumping words” while thoughtfully addressing specific social skill situations in the game cards. Classes continue to grow at the Joshua Center and Blue Springs. Classes at Timothy Church in Blue Springs started April 17th and we have room for a few more. You can register on our website www.joshuacenter.com. We need at least 4 students in each class to start. This is a great opportunity for the kids to make friends and learn appropriate social interactions in a safe environment. For the classes away from the Joshua Center we ask parents to either send a check or provide a credit card number for the Joshua Center staff to keep on file. The card will be processed the Monday following the class. We are developing new lessons so feel free to make suggestions by emailing Becky at becky@joshuacenter.com. We are here to meet the specific needs of the kids so we want to hear from you. For example, one parent contacted us to address table manners so we are designing a new game and lesson.

Helping Hands Therapeutic Riding Center

As part of a wider community of autism providers, Helping Hands Therapeutic Riding Center (HHTRC) now joins in collaboration with the Kansas University and the University of Central Missouri to further develop empirical research on interventions and treatment for autism. HHTRC’s focus, along with a full-time autism specialist, is to treat autism while providing a rewarding and positive venue for equestrian activities. We invite you to participate in a no-cost twelve week research study on the “Effects of Hippotherapy on Stereotypical Behaviors Identified in Autism Spectrum Disorders” with an award winning and research based curriculum developed by the *SpiritHorse Therapeutic Riding Center, Corinth, Texas*. We hope that you will join us and other community friends such as Autism Speaks and Autism Alliance to assist autism families in finding research based treatment options, while enjoying the benefits of therapeutic riding.

We are writing to ask your permission for your child to participate in this research project that will emphasize the development of the “Effects of Hippotherapy on Stereotypical Behaviors Identified in Autism Spectrum Disorders”. This project will be conducted at Helping Hands Therapeutic Riding Center, beginning in September 2010, over a 12-week time frame. We are interested in identifying and developing interventions with the use of equine-assisted healthcare, which has a different goal than that of recreational therapy. It includes, for example, 178 specific steps provided in a one-on-one setting for intervening with its 90 children who have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. HHTRC’s full-time autism specialist, along with our team of trained instructors, Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist, and trained volunteers, are

dedicated to advancing the field and treatment options for individuals diagnosed on the autism spectrum.

We receive referrals from Children's Mercy, pediatricians, neurologists, physical, occupational, behavioral and speech therapists, as well as the Missouri Department of Mental Health, educators, Early Childhood Intervention Administrators, and children's advocates groups. We also receive referrals from parents who have seen the benefits of our programs and are eager to share this resource with other parents.

Helping Hands Therapeutic Riding Center has been providing therapeutic interventions for children and adults for over 7 years. Therapeutic intervention methodologies administered include areas of socialization, theory of mind, attending skills, task sequencing, as well as sensory and vestibular integration. We teach many things taught in the school systems to typical kids. For example, we teach those diagnosed with autism how to focus and stay on a specific task through having the individual leading, grooming, and tacking the horse as part of the lesson. We have seen miraculous breakthroughs with our children when they start performing these tasks with greater accuracy, further developing the acquisition of independent skills.

The project in which your child has been invited to participate is expected to be an enjoyable experience and will require approximately one hour once a week for twelve weeks. There is no cost for this research study. To help you in this decision, a brief description of the project is provided. Children and families will meet with the researchers individually on two occasions, pre and post testing, to complete measurement assessments of targeted goals. During the research project, children and a family/caregiver representative will be asked to participate in general therapeutic riding and hippotherapy activities. At several times during the research project, we will cover communication, behavior and sensory inputs. Finally, equestrian skills will be monitored and progress reports provided at the end of the research study. Families participating in the study will receive shared outcomes.

All children's participation in this study is considered confidential and individual children's results will be kept confidential. However, information based on the results of the group of participants will be used to develop further research and for the benefit of empirically based interventions. Only children diagnosed on the autism spectrum, age 6 -18, who have parental permission, and who themselves agree to participate, will be involved in the study. Also, children or parents may withdraw their permission at any time during the study without penalty by indicating this decision to the researcher. There are inherent risks when working around large animals. All equines participating in this research project, as well as with any activities associated with HHTRC, have undergone extensive training and evaluations (as per NARHA accreditation policies and standards) for safety and soundness.

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Medical Committee at the HHTRC, and has the support of the HHTRC Autism Specialist. Should you have any concerns or comments or would like a participation form for this study, please contact Autism Specialist Maria Dietz at 816-697-5400 or mdietz@hhtrc.org.

We would appreciate if you would permit your child to participate in this project, as we believe it will contribute to furthering knowledge based on empirical research of Autism. Thank you in advance for your interest and support of this project.

Yours sincerely,

Maria Dietz
Autism Specialist
mdietz@hhtrc.org

Helping Hands Therapeutic Riding Center
31505 E Stringtown Road, Greenwood, MO 64034

Phone: (816)-697-5400 Fax: (816)-697-5408

Website: www.hhtrc.org

Help with Research

More and More Children are diagnosed with Autism each day!

We need your help.....

We need families to participate in our study- perhaps you know someone who has a child diagnosed with autism? Perhaps you are on a committee that might know of someone who is affected.....or perhaps YOU have a family member with autism.....

The Simons Simplex Collection is a bold new initiative to search for the causes of autism. Researchers at 12 sites in North America, including the Thompson Center in Columbia Missouri, will collect DNA samples from families with just one child affected by an autism spectrum disorder. This valuable data will be available to the best scientific minds in the world to search for clues that will lead to important breakthroughs.

A Complicated Challenge, A Focused Response

Earlier efforts studied multiplex families, (families with more than one child with autism). This study is different. It is focused on families with just one child with autism, (simplex families). ***This will provide insight into the most common and unexplained form of Autism!*** This comes at an exciting time in history, in which there have been breakthroughs in gene mapping, advancement of high-tech tools, and the latest brain research present a unique opportunity for progress!

Eligibility Requirements:

- You have only **one** child with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD), between the ages of 4 and 17 years.
- **If** you have additional child(ren) ages 4 years or older, they must be without ASD or significant developmental delays.
- **Both** biological parents are willing to participate for a blood sample and some paperwork.

Research Components: (all at no-cost to the family)

1. **Families will participate** in a variety of assessments: diagnostic, interviews, neuropsychological.
2. All family members will have a **blood test**, a source of DNA. (full confidentiality)
3. **Involves a single visit** in our center in Columbia Missouri!


If your family is interested in learning more about the Simons Simplex Collection contact:

Nicole Takahashi, Project Coordinator

Thompson Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders

300 Portland Street, Suite 110, Columbia, MO 65211

Phone: 573-884-1893 Email: takahashin@missouri.edu



**\$50 per Family
Member to
Participate!**

Service Dog Article

This is an interesting article about service dogs impacting children with autism.

<http://www.triplicate.com/20100317108480/News/Local-News/Tethered-to-a-friend>