

NEWSLETTER

Featuring Jeffrey Cohen

Training Series Guest Speaker on Sept. 24, 2010



By Jeffrey Cohen

There are success stories. It's hard sometimes to remember when you're trying for the umpteenth time to convince a child with an autism spectrum disorder to behave at least a *little* like the rest of the class. When a child's arms are flapping at his sides. When she refuses to leave the classroom to go to the gym for phys ed. When he lies down on the rug and curls up into the fetal position, mumbling the theme from *Spongebob Squarepants*. But there are

success stories, more than you might imagine.

I know. My son, who has Asperger's Syndrome (until a new name is officially designated for the disorder), is one of them.

Working his way from what was then called "Handicapped Pre-K" through the public school system, Josh had his share of difficulties. Loud noises were always a problem. Subjects that didn't fit into his list of special interests were ignored. Self-stimming motions were common. Recess and lunchtime were nightmares.

But because our school system was determined to get him through inclusively, but with supports like a 1:1 aide, social skills instruction and occupational therapy, Josh thrived in school. His grades

Calendar

Sept. 14-15, 2010

Autism Interdisciplinary Team Training (AIT) - Russell, KS

Sept. 24, 2010

Training Series - Presenter: Jeffrey Cohen - "How Schools & Parents of Children with ASDs Can Work Together" - ITV, across Kansas

Sept. 28, 2010

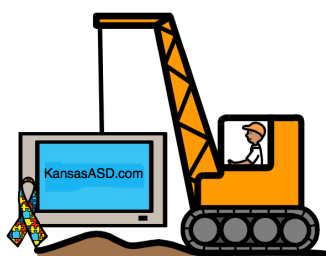
Webinar Series - Presenter - Katie Thomas - "An Introduction to Boardmaker (An Overview)" - Online, across Kansas

For more information and registration information on Trainings, please visit:

www.KansasASD.com

& check out the Training Calendar

KISN - SPECIALIZING IN TERTIARY SUPPORTS AND PROFESSIONAL TRAINING



Our website has a new look! Services Map makes it easy to locate your county and browse resources. The Training Calendar makes it easy to locate trainings in Kansas. Check out what resources are available from the Library. If you know of any trainings or resources not listed, please email ktthomas3@kumc.edu.



JEFF COHEN CONTINUED:
 were always at the upper end, when other children in his position have struggled to average a “C.” In math and English, he excelled. Part of that is Josh’s natural intelligence, but much of it is the help he got when he needed it.

Children with AS or any autism-spectrum disorder aren’t *trying* to drive their teachers and school administrators crazy. Not most of the time, anyway. They do the things they do because that’s the way their brains are wired. We were told too many times in the early years, that our children were “discipline problems,” intimating that we as parents were somehow failing the school system. Some of us, given that kind of feedback, decided the schools were in fact adversaries of ours, that they didn’t want our children.

We felt like we had to fight for our kids, and we were right. But others among us believed that fighting *against* the school was counterproductive, and would only result in less help for our children and a less happy ending to the story.

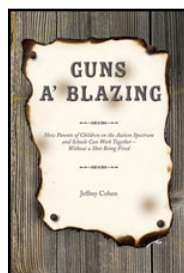
So we found areas of common ground, and we turned more than a few cheeks. We sought out teachers and specialists who “got” our children, and we often discovered team members who wanted to help. We devised new therapies for each child, because

autism is never just one thing for everyone born with it.

And sometimes, we prevailed, the schools and the parents together. “Prevailing” is a student who graduates with a sense of purpose, a sense of pride, and a sense of responsibility to pass on what’s been learned.

Like Josh. Now a junior at Drexel University in Philadelphia, he is currently working in his chosen field—film editing—as part of a co-op plan between his college and a New York City post-production company. That didn’t seem possible when he was complaining about bullies, singing to himself in class and reporting that all his teachers “hated him.” It didn’t seem possible when doctors told us his problem was being “eccentric,” and that we’d have to work harder as parents. It didn’t seem possible when his kindergarten teacher, two weeks into the term, informed us that he wasn’t “ready for school,” and that we should take him home for a year. (We didn’t, and the teacher adjusted beautifully.)

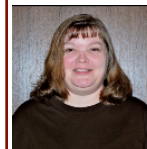
It didn’t seem possible. But it was.



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