

# ◆ Into the Light ◆

Volume 17 Issue 4 *Autism Society of America, Central Virginia Chapter* April 2009



## ASA-CV Mission & Philosophy

The mission of the Autism Society of America is to promote lifelong access and opportunities for persons within the autism spectrum and their families, to be fully included, participating members of their communities through advocacy, public awareness, education and research related to autism.

Recognizing and respecting the diverse range of opinions, needs and desires of this group, ASA embraces an overall philosophy which chooses to empower individuals with autism, their parents or caregivers, to make choices best suited to the needs of the person with autism. At the very core of the parent choice philosophy is the belief that no single program or treatment will benefit all individuals with autism. Furthermore, the recommendation of what is "best" or "most effective" for a person with autism should be determined by those people directly involved - the individual with autism, to the extent possible, and the parents or family members. Providing information and education to help in decision-making are more highly regarded at ASA than is advocating for one particular theory or philosophy.

## APRIL IS NATIONAL AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH

In cities, towns, and rural communities all over the United States, families impacted by Autism Spectrum Disorders will call attention to the rise in the incidence of autism and how it affects their lives during the month of April. The Central Virginia Chapter of the Autism Society of America will be doing our part to help raise awareness in the Central Virginia area. The chapter has the following activities planned for National Autism Awareness Month (NAAM):

- Billboards will once again be up across the Richmond metro area highlighting autism.
- The Chapter and a host of members will participate in the nationwide Bounce for Autism on April 2, World Autism Day.
- Board members will present information on autism to a local women's club meeting.
- The Chapter will have a booth distributing information on the Center for Disease Control's *Learn the Signs. Act Early* during Mom's Night Out at Babies R Us on April 14.
- The Chapter will sponsor an informational booth at Bon Secours Hospital during April.
- The Chapter will man a booth for the Connections Resource Fair at the Children's Museum on April 25.
- Members and their families will recognize NAAM with our annual picnic at the Roslyn Center on April 18th.

So how can you help raise autism awareness in your community? We offer the following suggestions:

- Donate a children's book about autism to your child's school or your community or church/temple library. (We will have a nice selection of children's books for purchase at the chapter picnic.)
- Write an article about NAAM or about how autism has impacted your life. Share your story with your PTA newsletter, your church newsletter, or your community newspaper.

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## 2008–2009 Officers and Board

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## May 8 Chapter Meeting SIBLING PANEL

Our May 8 chapter meeting will feature a panel discussion by teen and young adult siblings of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders. These young people will share their experiences, joys, and challenges of growing up with a sibling on the spectrum. Questions from the audience will be entertained at the end of the presentation.

ASACV meetings are held at River Road United Methodist Church, 8800 River Road, Richmond, 23229. Our meetings are free and open to the public. The library opens at 6:30 p.m.; meetings are from 7:00 to 9:00. Free childcare is available during the meeting; space is limited. A supervised teen group also meets during chapter meetings. Reservations for childcare and the teen group must be made by e-mailing the chapter at [asacv@aol.com](mailto:asacv@aol.com) or calling 257-0192 with the names and ages of each child no later than May 1.



## ASACV TEEN BOWLING PARTY

ASACV will sponsor a FREE bowling party for middle and high school students on April 17 from 6:00 to 8:00 pm . Deep Run High School Key Club members will be on hand to bowl with our kids. This event is open to chapter members only. Please RSVP at [www.asacv.org](http://www.asacv.org).

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(804) 257-0192

We accept for consideration any comments, personal vignettes, book reviews, information, announcements or advertisements for publication in our chapter newsletter. The deadline for submission for the May newsletter is April 15. You may send your contributions to the Chapter at the above address or email contributions to [SELKO1@aol.com](mailto:SELKO1@aol.com).

The Autism Society of America, Central Virginia Chapter does not endorse nor promote any program or service provider. The information contained in this newsletter is provided for informational purposes only. The Chapter is a volunteer organization providing information, support and encouragement to parents, family members and professionals in the Central VA area. This edition was edited by Elizabeth Selko and Bradford Hulcher.

## APRIL IS NATIONAL AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH

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- Send you school board member, delegate, and senator information about National Autism Awareness Month and how autism impacts your child and family. Include a picture of your child.
- Let friends, co-workers, family, and neighbors know how they can help create awareness by participating in the Memorial Day weekend 5 K Run/Walk for Autism. Encourage them to form a team and register online at [www.asacv5k.com](http://www.asacv5k.com) !!



### Annual Chapter Member Picnic

ASACV Chapter Members—Join us at the Roslyn Center for our 3rd Annual Picnic April 18th, 2009, 12:00—3:00 pm. The picnic is a relaxing time for chapter members and their families to enjoy entertainment for the kids and lunch. We will once again have inflatables and activities for the kids of various ages to enjoy with their parents or volunteer teens. We may have some exciting new things to see this year as well! We will also be raffling off door prizes—free registrations for this year's 5K on May 23.

This year we will provide subs from Jersey Mike's, hot dogs, and water and a variety of soft drinks. For those on special diets, please rsvp for "no lunch order" and bring your own picnic. We are asking this year that each family bring a bag of chips or snack or dessert to share—regular or Gluten free/Casein free. We should have plenty of choices for those that can only snack on GF/CF items.

Please RSVP at <http://asacv2009picnic.eventbrite.com/> by April 15th. This event is weather dependent so stay tuned to chapter voicemail and email notification for details about cancellation.

Again, this event is for members of ASACV and their families. Don't forget your picnic chairs and/or blanket.

## *Cooking to Heal: Nutrition and Cooking Class for Autism*

### A Book Review

This DVD/workbook combo by Julie Matthews was a tremendous help to me because it provided so much useful and practical, how-to information about cooking for those with autism-spectrum disorders (ASD) regardless of WHICH diet you're trying to follow. The different diets beneficial in ASDs are described first, followed by the relevant food substances involved (e.g. dairy). The DVD shows Julie Matthews in a kitchen making various recipes so you can see exactly what tools to use, and how to do it, and hear her very knowledgeable advice and numerous tips.

Special diets tend to intimidate me because some of the foods are unfamiliar. I don't know sometimes what they look like, where to buy them, or how to handle them. I procrastinate making these types of dishes because when I read about them in most books, I feel many of the important, practical details are left out. But I find this video & workbook quite empowering. My comfort level got a huge boost. The video & workbook are well matched and present wonderful strategies and recipes for getting the most important and most dense nutrition into our kids using recipes they'll actually eat!

The selection of food topics is exactly what I needed: stocks & broths - juicing - fermented foods for good probiotics - soaking nuts, beans & grains to make them more digestible and bio-available - etc. Each recipe is clearly labeled for which diets it is compliant. You don't have to worry about figuring out substitutions yourself. The recipe states any such info - such as, "for SCD, use honey instead of sugar." Julie Matthews really knows her stuff, and communicates it in a clear and friendly manner. This resource is a goldmine if you need practical info about cooking special diets for autism-spectrum disorders.

[This resource is available in the chapter library for checkout to ASACV members.]

Submitted by ASACV Member Sally Kirchhoff





## NEWS FROM THE LIBRARY

One of the benefits of Chapter membership is being able to check books out of the library. The library is accessible at each month's Chapter meeting and at Special Interest Group meetings throughout the month. If you have books on autism spectrum disorders, special education, disability issues, etc., please consider donating them to the Chapter's library so that other families and professionals may learn from them. If you have books you would like to donate, please contact the Chapter at 257-0192 or [asacv@aol.com](mailto:asacv@aol.com). The following materials are additions to the library:

**Developing Talents: Careers for Individuals with Asperger Syndrome and High-Functioning Autism** (2008) *updated and expanded edition - new chapter on entrepreneurship and ideas for how to benefit from Vocational Rehabilitation services*  
Temple Grandin and Kate Duffy

**Speech and Language and Communication: Meeting the Needs of Adults with ASD** (DVD, 2007)  
Joanne Gerenser, PhD, CCC-SLP

**The Primary Care Approach to Adults with Developmental Disabilities** (2007, DVD)  
James R. Powell Jr, MD

**Issues of Psychopharmacology and Adults with ASD** (2007, DVD)  
Eric London, MD

**Positive Behavior Support: What Really Counts in Life** (2007, DVD)  
Edward Carr, PhD

**Bringing the Birds and the Bees Down to Earth: Sexuality and Sexuality Education for Persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder** (2007, DVD)  
Lisa Mitchell, LCSW

**Evidence-Based Practice in the Promotion of Healthy Lifestyles for Adolescents and Adults with ASDs** (2007, DVD)  
Linda Meyer, EdD, MPA

**Residential Issues for Adolescents and Adults with Autism** (2007, DVD)  
Eileen Hopkins, PhD

**Successful Transition from an Individualized Education Plan to an Individualized Vocational Plan** (2007, DVD)

Nicole Weidenbaum, MS, Ed, SAS; Maria Garrett, MS, BCBA, and Jason Watson

**Evidence Based Practices for Promoting Daily Enjoyment Among Adults with Autism** (2007, DVD)  
Dennis Reid, PhD, BCBA

**Live. Work. Play.** (2007, DVD)  
Linda Walder Fiddle

**Floortime: Symbolic and Logical Thinking** (2005, book and DVD)  
Greenspan and Wieder

The following titles were donated by Carol Wagner:

**Asperger Syndrome in Adolescence: Living with the Ups, the Downs, and Things in Between** (2003)  
edited by Liane Willey

**School Success for Kids with Asperger's Syndrome** (2007)  
Silverman and Weinfeld

**Asperger Syndrome and Adolescence: Helping Preteens and Teens Get Ready for the Real World** (2004)  
Teresa Bolick, Ph.D.

## WORKSHOPS AND CONFERENCES

April 2 **Special Education and Your Child: IEP Meeting 101** Whether you are about to head into your first IEP Meeting or you are just looking for tips and advice, this is the presentation for you! This seminar takes a look at what goes into an IEP. We will also discuss scheduling and who should attend as well as brief summaries of Prior Written Notice and options for resolving disagreements. The presentation will last approximately an hour and a half to two hours and presenter(s) will be available for questions afterwards; FREE; 12:00 noon, Woolridge Road Church, Moseley; to register: [tammy@theridgeonline.cc](mailto:tammy@theridgeonline.cc) or phone 639-4777.

April 2 **Visual Strategies for Improving Communication** sponsored by the Powhatan County Parent Resource center; 6-8 p.m.; to rsvp, call: 598-3034

April 14 **Social Skills for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders**; presented by Maureen Conroy, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Special Education and Disability Policy, VCU; sponsored by the Faison School for Autism;

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## WORKSHOPS AND CONFERENCES

*(Continued from page 4)*

assessment and intervention strategies related to social skills for children with ASD; 8:30-10 a.m.; FREE; to register: 804-612-1947 or [kwright@thefaisonschool.org](mailto:kwright@thefaisonschool.org)

April 20-22 **Shaping the Future** an intensive three-day workshop designed to provide parents and professionals with training in the theory and application of ABA principles, specifically as they relate to children with autism. Topics covered include the principles of reinforcement, ABA-based teaching techniques, assessing the function of behavior, and data collection and analysis; includes lecture, hands-on activities, and student observation. A 20% discount in the workshop registration fee is offered to parents and home therapists; Charlottesville; for info: <http://www.viaschool.org/>

April 20-24 **Orton-Gillingham 30 Hour Comprehensive Training** comprehensive program enables the learner to have in-depth understanding of the expanded Orton-Gillingham methodology, assessment, higher level skills, and the tools to implement this program into an existing curriculum; \$975; Richmond; for information, visit: [orton-gillingham.com](http://orton-gillingham.com)

April 23 **Disability Trust Planning**; sponsored by Hanover County Parent Resource Center; Paula Peaden, Esq. will help you understand how to preserve resources for your child after you are no longer able to care for them; rsvp to 365-4596 or [hanoverprc@hcps.us](mailto:hanoverprc@hcps.us)

April 23 **Self-Determination from the Student's Perspective**; topics such as decision making, problem solving, goal setting, self awareness and self advocacy. Portfolios, "Life Plan" scrapbooks, IEP Power Point presentations and brochures to enhance self-determination will be featured. Student involvement in the IEP process will also be discussed; T/TAC Renee Bullano; Moody Middle School Library' 6:30-8 p.m.; sponsored by Henrico County Parent Resource Center; rsvp to: 804.343.6523 or [presource@henrico.k12.va.us](mailto:presource@henrico.k12.va.us)

April 27-28 **Virginia Guardianship, Elder Rights and Disability Services Conference** workshops on intellectual disabilities and mental health, coalition building, special needs trusts, planning for the needs of adult children with autism, supporting positive behaviors of care recipients and providers, understanding brain function and brain injuries; \$165; Richmond; [www.vgavirginia.org/conferences.asp](http://www.vgavirginia.org/conferences.asp)

May 7 - **Special Education and Your Child: Procedural Safeguards** Recommended for parents of all experience levels, this installment of VOPA's special education series digs into your rights and what to do when you and the school

can't come to an agreement. This presentation includes detailed overviews of Prior Written Notice, Procedural Safeguards, Mediation, Resolution Sessions, Due Process and State Complaints. The presentation will last approximately an hour and a half to two hours and presenter(s) will be available for questions afterwards; FREE; 12:00 noon, Woolridge Road Church, Moseley; to register: [tammy@theridgeonline.cc](mailto:tammy@theridgeonline.cc) or phone 639-4777.

May 12 **Overview of Verbal Behavior** Kathy Matthews, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, VCU, Director of Education, The Faison School for Autism; sponsored by the Faison School; Skinner's (1957) Verbal Behavior and its use to address the language needs of children with ASD; 8:30-10 a.m.; FREE; to register: 804-612-1947 or [kwright@thefaisonschool.org](mailto:kwright@thefaisonschool.org)

June 17 **52 Practical Strategies for Asperger's, Nonverbal Learning Disorder & High Functioning Autism** sponsored by Health Ed; speaker John Ortiz. PhD; Richmond; \$179; for info: 800-839-4584 or [www.health-ed.com](http://www.health-ed.com)

For additional information on autism conferences and workshops in VA, visit [www.autismtrainingva.org](http://www.autismtrainingva.org)



*When you share your child's successes, no matter how great or small, you offer hope to other families who face the challenges of autism!*

Our son John was still non-verbal at age 4, but he has eventually progressed to one word, then two, and now at age 7, saying some short sentences. He has been attending the children's music time at church every Wednesday night during the school year. This group is called the "Little Angels". It has been a challenge as well as a joy for him to participate with typical children because the noise level often hurts his ears and drives him out of the classroom for a sensory break. Still, he loves music so much that he can't stay away, and asks to come back into the classroom. The children are preparing for a little performance for the parents soon. We told the teacher that John didn't have to be in the performance, because he might have some unpredictable stimming. The teacher said she was OK with it if we were. Surprised, we said "OK". The kids each got a chance to sing at the piano solo-style with the teacher, to prepare for the event and show their progress. John went second, and we thought it was best to leave the room. We didn't have a chance. He sang the first song "Kum Ba Ya" to the teacher's accompaniment, with perfect pitch and rhythm. He is fitting into this classroom for the first time after two years of attending. What a blessing. We don't know how he'll do for the performance on the stage next week, but it doesn't matter. He showed us that he has learned how to sing, and he sang like a Little Angel.

*John and Linda Murray*

# CELEBRATIONS!

*(Continued from page 5)*

We celebrate the students of Mrs. Kusterer's fourth grade class at Cool Spring Elementary School in Hanover County. My son, Austin, is fortunate to be with kind, respectful, inclusive and intelligent children during his time in regular education. At the beginning of the school year, the class learned about autism through structured but fun workshops. They studied how Austin is both different and like them. Most importantly, they learned how they could be his friend and how to help him in appropriate circumstances. They have asked questions, but most of their actions are through simple innate kindness. Students were given a no pressure secret opportunity to volunteer to be his "buddy". It filled our hearts with joy to learn that every student placed his or her name in the volunteer box with no one knowing. The students engage Austin to play dodge ball and kick ball at recess. In fact, on one occasion, he was the first choice in "playground pick" for teams. If he becomes overwhelmed, a student will break away from the game to play catch with him on the side. Classmates invite him into conversations. One student noticed he broke one of his favorite fidget balls--her birthday gift to Austin was an exact duplicate. A boy addressed a note to him with "Awesome Austin". Most telling is a photo of his group on a class field trip. One student casually has her hand resting on his arm—it was obvious she was looking after him. My examples could fill this entire newsletter. I believe most parents with a child on the spectrum can appreciate the value of peer acceptance. We want to share that friendships with typical peers are attainable. These students are learning a great life lesson, but their gift to Austin and to our family is more than they will likely ever know. Nearly the entire class is proud to participate in ASA's Bounce for Autism. I believe autism awareness is a cause some will continue to pursue beyond their time with Austin. Credit should be given to those who have guided the fourth graders: Karen Kusterer, their classroom teacher; Tara Childs, a Hanover County Autism Spectrum Consultative Teacher; Cheree Schroeder, paraprofessional; Denise Carter, paraprofessional; school principal, Dr. Paula Brown; many other outstanding school staff members and the parents who have raised children capable and willing to embrace diversity. All of whom have made it truly a priority to see Austin succeed socially.

*Matt and Leigh Wear*

## Special Education Teacher Available

Qualified special education teacher available to work in home w/ child with special needs. Specialize in Autism; experience/training in TEACCH & ABA. Can work on behavioral skills, social skills, communication, community/life skills, schedules, & academics to fit your child's needs. Hours/rates flexible. Contact Kristin at (804)687-8767 or [kmeyer17@yahoo.com](mailto:kmeyer17@yahoo.com)

*Paid Advertisement*

## Community Events Meetings of Interest

April 5 **Eagle's Nest** A faith-based support group for parents of children with special needs; sponsored by Woolridge Road Church; 5 - 6:30 p.m. for info: [tammy@theridgeonline.cc](mailto:tammy@theridgeonline.cc) or 639-4777

April 9 **Powhatan County Special Education Advisory Committee**; 6-8 p.m. Powhatan High School; open to the public

April 9 **Richmond Asperger's Meetup** face-to-face meeting will be on the second Thursday of each month from 7-9pm at the River City Diner on Parham Rd (at Brook and I95); a place where older children (age 11-17) can meet other Aspergers Children and siblingsadults with Aspergers can meet together and/or share information with parents of kids with AS; to RSVP for the face-to-face meetings, sign up at <http://aspergers.meetup.com/397/> The Yahoogroup is at <http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/richmondaspergersgroup/>

April 14 **Living with Autism: A Parent Discussion Group** sponsored by the Hanover County Parent Resource Center for Hanover parents; meets second Tuesday of each month @6:30; for info: 365-4596

April 15 **Chesterfield County Special Education Advisory Committee** 4:30 - 6:30; Instruction Division Center, 600 Southlake Blvd.; open to the public

April 15 **Families of Children with Special Needs Support Group at Mount Vernon Baptist Church**; A support group for families who are caring for children with special needs. Informative and inspirational, offering educational, social, emotional and spiritual support; meets second Wed. of month (except this month); 6-7 p.m. Jennifer Bittner at 421-4989, [extraordinaryfamilies@gmail.com](mailto:extraordinaryfamilies@gmail.com)

April 18 **Buddy Break** a free respite care program for children with special needs ages 3-21 and their siblings ages 3-11; 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.; sponsored by Southside Church of The Nazarene; see website for additional information at [www.nathanielshope.org](http://www.nathanielshope.org); questions? contact Amy Morgan @ 804-778-7800 ext. 247 or [BuddyBreak@SouthsideChurchVA.org](mailto:BuddyBreak@SouthsideChurchVA.org); parents required to attend an hour orientation the first time they attend Buddy Break.

April 19 **Eagle's Nest** A faith-based support group for parents of children with special needs; sponsored by Woolridge

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## Competition for Young Artists with Disabilities

VSA Arts and Volkswagen are sponsoring a competition for artists ages 16 - 25 with disabilities who are living in the United States and who have a physical, cognitive, mental, or sensory disability. Submissions must be original work completed within the last three years and after the onset of disability. Eligible media include, but are not limited to, paintings and drawings (oil, watercolor, acrylic, pencil, or charcoal), fine art prints, photography, computer-generated prints, digital art, and time-based media (video, film). The work must have a visual component. Both representational and abstract work are welcomed. The deadline is June 19, 2009. For more information, visit:

<http://www.vsarts.org/PreBuilt/showcase/gallery/exhibits/vw/current/>

## ASACV APRIL CALENDAR

The Autism Society of America, Central VA Chapter will sponsor the following meetings in April. All meetings are free and open to the public unless otherwise noted. Meetings take place at River Road United Methodist Church, 8800 River Road unless otherwise noted. For information: 257-0192 or [asacv@aol.com](mailto:asacv@aol.com)

April 2	6:00 p.m.	<b>Bounce for Autism</b> (register @ <a href="http://www.bounceforautism.org">www.bounceforautism.org</a> )
April 3	9:30 a.m.	<b>Run Committee Meeting</b> (@ Baker's Crust)
April 13	7:00 p.m.	<b>Parents of Children Preschool/School Age w/ Asperger's/High Functioning Autism Interest Group</b>
April 14	7:00 p.m.	<b>Chapter Board Meeting</b>
April 16	10:00 a.m.	<b>Biomedical Interest Group</b>
April 17		<b>Teen Bowling Party</b>
April 18	Noon	<b>Chapter Members' Picnic</b> (register @ <a href="http://asacv2009picnic.eventbrite.com/">http://asacv2009picnic.eventbrite.com/</a> )
April 22	10:00 a.m.	<b>Parents of Children Preschool/School Age w/ Asperger's/High Functioning Autism Interest Group</b>
April 27	7:00 p.m.	<b>Adults w/ Asperger's/High Functioning Autism Interest Group</b> (open only to adults w/ AS/HFA)
April 27	7:00 p.m.	<b>Parents of Adults with ASDs Interest Group</b>

## Community Events Meetings of Interest

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Road Church; 5 - 6:30 p.m. for info:  
[tammy@theridgeonline.cc](mailto:tammy@theridgeonline.cc) or 639-4777

April 22 **Parent Networking Meeting** for parents of children with autism, Asperger's and related developmental disabilities. Contact Bertie Strickler at [rstrickler@sjvmail.net](mailto:rstrickler@sjvmail.net) for information.

April 24 **Autism Network Group** dinner at Boychik's Deli in Innsbrook for persons with disabilities and their families; 5-7 p.m. for info: Heather at [HKELIAS@AOL.com](mailto:HKELIAS@AOL.com) or 387-9425

April 28 **Henrico County Special Education Advisory Committee**; 6:30-8:30 p.m.; Brookland Middle School; open to the public

May 4 **Hanover County Special Education Advisory Committee**; 7 - 9 p.m.; meets at School Board Office, 200 Berkley St., Ashland; open to the public

## Thank you for the Following Donations

Carol & Don Wagner  
Thierry & Jennifer Matulessy  
Nancy Andelin

The Following Donation Was Made In Memory  
of Amy Helfer  
Kersey Creek Elementary School SCVA

The Following Donations were Made in Memory  
of Charles Spencer  
Mrs. James Price  
Shannon Venable



## 7th Annual Racing to Solve the Puzzle 5K Run/Walk May 23, 2009

Register TODAY for the ASACV 5 K Run/Walk for Autism! You can do it all at [www.asacv5k.com](http://www.asacv5k.com):

- register
- form a team
- fundraise for the chapter
- volunteer
- find sponsorship forms (we are still in need of sponsors! Ask your company or favorite business!)
- find directions to Innsbrook Pavilion
- FAQs

All proceeds go directly toward operating the chapter and funding programs to the membership and autism community; this is the chapter's single biggest fundraiser for the year! This a fantastic, feel good community event to raise awareness about autism and the needs of those impacted by autism.

## Welcome New and Returning Members

Nancy Andelin  
Tom & Jackie Whitmore  
Thierry & Jennifer matulessy  
Richmond House  
Michael & Samantha Buzzard  
Sherri & James Horn  
Dee Quilling  
Carol & Don Wagner  
Angela Green