

# **EVENT FLOW AND TALKING POINTS**

## **STAR GARDEN PARTY**

**Sunday, June 4, 2006**

**6:00 p.m.**

**515 Altagate Road**

**Staff Contact: Karen Sexton Stevenson,**

**Cell 262-8410**

## **WELCOME – SANDY METTS SNOWDEN**

Good evening! It is such a pleasure to welcome all of you to the second annual STAR Shining

the Light on Autism Garden Party. I am Sandy Metts Snowden, Chair of the STAR Advisory Board and it is truly an honor for Dave and me to welcome you and all of our special guests to our home this evening. It is such a pleasure to welcome all of you to the second annual STAR “Shining the Light on Autism” Garden Party. STAR stands for the Systematic Treatment of Autism and Related Disorders and is a program of the U of L Weisskopf Child Evaluation Center.

This event is designed to raise support and awareness of autism and the STAR program at the University of Louisville.

Many of you know that I am passionate about the field of autism research and treatment. About five years ago my grandson was diagnosed with autism. I remember our feelings at the time, when we learned that there are not many resources in Kentucky for children with autism and related disorders.

If you don't already know a family affected by autism, chances are that you will. Statistics show that approximately 1 in 166 children are diagnosed with autism or a related disorder.

We know, because of the work done by people like STAR's Director, Dr. Lisa Ruble and her team, that early intervention is vital for later success. Without early intervention,

children may not develop the social and communication skills that they need to reach their full potential for success.

We also know that, without opportunities for learning these skills, we may not even KNOW the potential of each individual child. People with autism don't conform to stereotypes.

Autism is a spectrum disorder, and there is a wide range of talents and abilities that people with autism display. There are gifted artists, scientists, technical professionals and consultants with autism. It is so important that every child be given the tools to develop his or her special talents to the highest level possible.

Early intervention also decreases the lifetime cost for meeting the needs for an individual with autism, which may be as high as \$4 million over a lifetime.

Now, I'm pleased to introduce Dr. Jim Ramsey, President of the University of Louisville.

## REMARKS – PRESIDENT RAMSEY

Thank you, Sandy. And thanks to all of you for coming out tonight to support the STAR program, which provides much-needed services, education and outreach to autistic children, their families and professionals who work with them.

I also want to take a minute to thank Sandy and Dave for opening their lovely home for the second year in a row.

I also want to recognize our other hosts – in addition to myself and Mrs. Ramsey, Drs. Larry and Christine Cook, and Sandy and Dave – this lovely evening is hosted by Representative Scott and Donna Brinkman, Rabbi Gaylia R. Rooks, & Rabbi Joe Rapport. Please join me in a round of applause *[pause for applause]*.

At the University of Louisville, we measure success in terms of our ability to create programs, like STAR, that advance knowledge and provide resources – in this case services – to our community. When we build outstanding

programs, we then transfer the knowledge we are gaining by training professionals who will be the future of this field – creating a ‘virtuous circle’ of success in the state and region. One of the things that I am most proud of at U of L is that we aren’t focused on research for the sake of research. In the end, we measure success in our ability to make a difference in people’s lives.

In just a few minutes, I am going to ask Dr. Larry Cook to tell you about the outstanding progress that the STAR program has made in the last year.

Before I do, I want to express my gratitude to a number of people who are supporting the

university's efforts in autism research and treatment and particularly those behind STAR.

The STAR advisory board is a powerhouse. This group of volunteers is dedicated to creating opportunities for children with autism and their families and has provided expertise, advice, support, introductions to new partners and a tremendous amount of their time and effort to making the dreams we have for STAR a reality. *(Ask advisory board members and honorary board members to stand or raise their hands.)*

I also wanted to mention that Lee Greenwood was our guest for Derby and he taped a Public Service Announcement for



*STAR. (If Darrell Griffiths is there, also thank him for agreeing to make a PSA.)*

It is always gratifying when members of our community step up and support U of L's programs and this year, thanks to the Woman's Club of Louisville, 16 children with autism will attend "Camp SS Star" over the next two weeks. This is an intensive summer social skills camp with a very high staff-to-camper ratio. Thanks to our new partnership with the Woman's Club, scholarships were provided to 8 students in addition to the trained staff, materials and special experiences designed to build skills for kids aged 9-14. Would members of the

Woman's Club please raise your hand to be recognized. *[Pause for applause.]*

I also want to recognize Mr. Larry Townsend who has been a true friend of the STAR program. Larry established the Townsend Scholarship Program to help families that do not have the means to pay for the therapy and other clinical services that are recommended for their autistic children.

At this time, let me introduce Dr. Larry Cook, Executive Vice President of Health Affairs to tell you about the progress that has been made over the past year.

**Dr. Larry Cook:**

As a pediatrician who has worked with children and families over the course of my career, tonight's cause is close to my heart.

*[Personal remarks about involvement in STAR program as Chair of Pediatrics in collaboration with Dr. Joseph Hersh and recruitment of Dr. Lisa Ruble to direct the STAR program. Point out Dr. Hersh and Dr. Ruble.]*

STAR started seeing patients in 2003 – this is the only individualized intervention program in the state and region, and we have something to be proud of here. Dr. Gerard Rabalais *[Point out Dr. Rabalais]*, who is currently chair of the department of Pediatrics, has been extremely supportive of the efforts to expand the STAR

program to serve the great need that exists for special intervention programs for autism spectrum disorders.

I am also proud to be associated with such passionate, dedicated community partners and want to personally thank all of our volunteers and my fellow hosts this evening.

This has been a great year for STAR in initiating programs that are really going to make a difference for kids.

Dr. Lisa Ruble won a competitive grant from the National Institutes of Health to investigate how training teachers and service providers in the public schools affects outcomes for children with autism.

Families of children with autism can tell you that the change in routines over the summer can be upsetting and difficult. Camp SS Star is taking this transition time and making it a fun opportunity to practice skills needed for success including peer interaction. I want to acknowledge the role of the Jefferson County Public Schools in partnering with STAR and the Woman's Club in making this camp a reality.

This spring, STAR held its first regional conferences on Evidence-Based Practices in Autism. These conferences, with participants from across the state, provide a framework for developing a research-supported, holistic program with specific goals for each child. The

feedback on these conferences from professionals and parents has been outstanding.

STAR is also working with partners at JCPS and seeking other partners to start a model pre-school program. What Sandy said about early intervention is really important, and this program develops the teacher training and infrastructure for a research-supported model preschool experience for children ages 3-5 with a diagnosis of autism. This program will be a key part of our outreach.

STAR has also partnered with a number of agencies to expand clinical services in the state. In collaboration with regional mental health facilities and educational authorities, these

centers will bring the STAR model to five centers across the state and region, with Henderson/Owensboro and Evansville the first targeted communities.

Finally, the fact remains that access to services is limited due to insurance reimbursement policies and lack of insurance. Through the efforts of the U of L Development Office and the STAR advisory board, a few clinical services scholarships that will be awarded to eligible families by a committee of parents and professionals.

If I were to go into all of the details of STAR's outreach this year, we'd be here until well after dark, but I want to conclude by

recognizing key partners at U of L who, in addition to STAR, are helping us put together the pieces of the autism puzzle.

Dr. Allan Josephson, director of the Bingham Child Guidance Center, has been a tremendous clinical partner for STAR, and Dr. Allan Tasman, chair of the Department of Psychiatry, has been very supportive.

Dr. Manual Casanova continues his efforts on the basic research side. Due to Dr. Casanova's international reputation in the field of neuroscience, the Department of Psychiatry is sponsoring lectures from some of the nation's top experts in the field of autism as part of their Grand Rounds scheduled this fall.



In February, Dr. Casanova published an important research paper in the journal “Cerebral Cortex” demonstrating that tiny strands of connected brain tissue called cell minicolumns operate differently in the brains of autistic people and normal people and look different in terms of size, spacing and density. He created a model for predicting the growth rate of the minicolumns before and after birth, a tool that could be used to pinpoint the origins and timing of brain abnormalities as they develop.

We are very proud of the tremendous expertise that we have accumulated in faculty and staff who have a passion – discovering the

causes of and new treatments for autism and bringing them to those affected by this disorder.

As Dr. Ramsey noted, community support for efforts of this magnitude is important – we can't do it without you. That is why I want to thank you again for being here tonight – your commitment is the catalyst for work that truly makes a difference. I'm going to place you back in Sandy's capable hands.

## **REMARKS—SANDY**

Thank you, Dr. Cook. I want to recognize you and President Ramsey for your commitment to help children with autism and applaud all of those involved at U of L for their progress over the past year.

Community support is so important and our next guest speaker is helping raise awareness of autism in the community and state. Miss Louisville Metro Ashley Pritchett is the daughter of Bruce and Jacquelyn Pritchett of Henderson, KY. Ashley is currently a senior at Murray State University, majoring in Special Education. Ashley's cause is autism awareness – please join me in welcoming her.

## **ASHLEY PRITCHETT SPEAKS:**

2-3 minutes

## **SANDY METTS:**

Thank you, Ashley. We'll be cheering you on as you compete for Miss Kentucky next month.

Tonight we're enjoying wonderful food and we're going to have some fun with our live auction. But that doesn't mean that this is the only way to raise funds for STAR. I'm going to ask Dr. John Buchino to give us an overview of the Corn Hole Cup we are having this fall – and for those of you who are Corn Hole novices – he'll explain the game and give you a preview of some auction items.

**DR. BUCHINO SPEAKS:**

## **SANDY METTS:**

As we have noted, autism affects the whole family in ways that are hard to imagine if you haven't experienced having a loved one with this disorder. It is my pleasure to introduce STAR Board Member Diane Stuckert, who will read an essay that her granddaughter wrote about having a sibling with autism.

## **DIANE STUCKERT:**

Reads essay

## **SANDY METTS:**

Thank you, Diane. And thanks to your granddaughter for allowing you to share the essay with us.

Treating autism is expensive, requiring one-on-one counseling and therapy. As Dr. Cook noted, there is a critical need to expand STAR services to address treatment issues not only in Jefferson County, but also in southern Indiana and throughout Kentucky.

We have to be aggressive to achieve this level of outreach, and our fund-raising plan calls for \$5 million. These funds will expand the STAR program and build the financial base needed for sustained operations. It will also

create an endowment to support research initiatives.

One of the more fun ways to raise philanthropic support is by collecting donations for a live auction, and we have some great things here tonight. I am going to turn the podium over to Jim Stuckert, who will tell you all about it.

**JIM STUCKERT:**

**RUN SILENT AUCTION**

**CLOSING: SANDY METTS**

Private philanthropic gifts will allow us to step beyond where we are today and continue to

grow in national, state and local prominence—  
providing more children with these life-  
enhancing services.

In order to bring a new standard of care to children with autism and their families, we need your ongoing commitment and sustaining support. Please consider making a leadership gift to the STAR program. We would also like to suggest that if you know of a corporation, foundation or an individual that may be interested in supporting STAR, please give me a call. When asked, please be a “star” and help us build the programs that make it possible for children with autism to reach their full potential. We have placed pledge cards on the table. You



can write down their pledge and give it to me or Dr Ramsey or Dr Cook, or if you could help us call on someone that they think would help us, write that down also.

I would like to draw your attention to the postcards at each place. These postcards are replicas of art painted by Trent Altman, who is autistic. Also, there is a star under one seat at each table. The person with the STAR gets to take home the table centerpiece.