

ISAND

INTEGRATED SERVICES FOR AUTISM AND NEURODEVELOPMENTAL DISORDERS



ISAND teamwork supports greater independence for Aliza

Erle Karp, Aliza and Miriam Bernstein

For Aliza Bernstein, 18, steps to greater independence took a great stride forward when she met a team of ISAND clinicians who had a vision for her future.

Aliza was diagnosed with moderate to severe autism at age 3, while her mother Miriam was expecting her third child. Aliza soon began receiving Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) therapy.

“Aliza worked very hard in those early years and her behaviour was often challenging,” says Miriam. “At the beginning she had no language and couldn’t communicate her needs and wants to us.”

Aliza was later referred to the Autism Services program at Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital. It was here the family met Dr. Wendy Roberts, ISAND’s clinical director.

“Wendy was extremely helpful, especially on the medical side,” says Miriam. “When Aliza was struggling with anxiety, obsessive-compulsive tendencies and behaviour issues, Wendy was able to find the right combination of medication to help her. It was life changing.”

Shortly before Aliza turned 14, the family followed Wendy to ISAND, which had launched the previous year. Wendy was keen to have Aliza work

Story continues on page 2



World Autism Awareness Day
APRIL 2, 2018

We embrace the uniqueness of everyone living with autism. Today and every day.

Marking World Autism Awareness Day

Every year on April 2 we mark World Autism Awareness Day. This annual awareness day was established 11 years ago by the United Nations General Assembly to highlight the need to improve the quality of life of those with autism so they can live full and meaningful lives as an integral part of society.

Every day at ISAND we celebrate the uniqueness of every child, youth and young adult that we serve, together with their families. We recognize that each one has gifts, abilities and strengths that contribute to the vibrancy and diversity of our communities.

In addition to celebration, World Autism Awareness Day shines a spotlight on the hurdles that families living with autism face each day. Every year the ISAND team assists hundreds of individuals and families in many different ways, continually striving to find the most effective ways to support them.

We are grateful for this privilege and are honoured by the trust that families place in us.

On behalf of the ISAND team, we wish you a warm and colourful Spring.



Dr. Wendy Roberts
Clinical Director

David Gray
Executive Director

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

with an integrated team of ISAND therapists. She also wanted to ensure that the entire family — sisters Evie and Reena, and Miriam's husband Erle Karp —received the support they needed.

The ISAND team was soon convinced that with the right support Aliza could achieve greater independence. It was something her mother had not thought possible.

"I was told that Aliza could probably do more things on her own," says Miriam. "I was extremely hesitant, as I had not been away from her for even a single day. But we were willing to see what was possible."

Aliza's clinical team at ISAND worked together to develop plans and strategies for her Behaviour Therapist to introduce in their sessions together. Aliza made steady progress in learning how to do some independent tasks.

Then the Behaviour Therapist suggested what seemed like a jump off the deep end — a five-week overnight

summer camp program for Aliza. After a deep breath, Aliza and her family agreed to move forward with the idea. It took weeks for the ISAND team to prepare Aliza and her family for the experience.



Aliza and her sisters Evie (middle) and Reena.

"First, the therapist came to the house to work with Aliza on developing some independent living skills," says Miriam. "This included things like personal hygiene, making her bed, and caring for her clothes."

The clinical team also prepared a binder that outlined all the things the camp staff needed to know about Aliza, including strategies for helping her be successful. As an extra step,

Aliza's Behaviour Therapist went with her for the first two days of camp to help with the transition. The diligent preparation and integrated planning by the ISAND team instilled confidence in Miriam and provided a much-needed respite for the entire family.

The experience was an overwhelming success, giving Aliza's family a glimpse of what the future could hold for her.

Aliza continues to work with the ISAND team. A Behaviour Analyst is helping Aliza explore activities and build job-related skills she may be able to use in the future. Last year Aliza volunteered at Sobeys and she currently assists at the family's synagogue doing activities she loves, such as filing and labelling.

"While I know that Aliza will always need help with working, the ISAND team has helped me see that Aliza can maximize her strengths and contribute to society, despite her limitations," says Miriam. "My goal is that Aliza would have the best quality of life possible."

Learn more about ISAND!

ISAND is a registered non-profit organization that serves children, youth and young adults living with autism and other neurodevelopmental disorders. ISAND's clinical team of professionals includes developmental pediatricians, psychologists, clinicians and therapists from a variety of disciplines. They work together as one team to provide a comprehensive range of services to ensure that families receive fully coordinated, integrated and continuous care.

Do you know a child or young person who may benefit from ISAND services and programs? To arrange a consultation please contact us at 416-224-5959 or info@isand.ca.

Areas of Expertise

- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Complex Developmental Disorders

Our Professional Services

- Augmentative and Alternative Communication (consultation, assessment and support)
- Behaviour (consultation, assessment and therapy)
- Counselling (individual and family)
- Developmental Medical Care
- Early Intervention (ESDM, NDBI)
- Education (school consultation and tutoring)
- Occupational Therapy (consultation, assessment and intervention)
- Parent Education / Coaching
- Psychology (consultation, diagnostic and psychoeducational assessment and cognitive behavioural therapy – CBT)
- Social Peer Groups
- Speech-Language Therapy (consultation, assessment and intervention)
- Therapeutic Yoga and Rhythmic Movement Training

Cynergy Mechanical

Charity Gala

IN SUPPORT OF

ISAND

Please join us.

Friday, June 15, 2018

6:30 p.m.

Riviera Events & Convention Centre
2800 Highway 7, Concord ON, L4K 1W8

\$150 per person / \$1500 per table of 10

To purchase tickets please visit

www.CynergyMechanicalCharityGala.ca

“We’ve got to help them!”



CYNERGY Mechanical Ltd.

When Gerald McCann founded Cynergy Mechanical in 1994 he had no idea the impact his future generosity would have on families living with autism.

When the successful HVAC/R and plumbing services company reached its 20th anniversary, Gerald and his colleagues decided it was time to consider how they could give back.

“We had made various small donations to charities over the years, but wanted to make a sizeable gift to an organization where it would make a real difference and align with Cynergy’s vision and goals,” says Gerald.

Gerald and his leadership team researched a variety of non-profits and narrowed their choice to three options. Fortunately, ISAND was one of them.

“It was important to us that our donation make a significant impact,” says Gerald. “When ISAND staff came to meet with us they explained how our gift would help fill service gaps for children who were being missed. We were struck by their sincerity and passion.”

The Cynergy team was also impressed by ISAND’s integrated model of care, the availability of services under one roof, and the organization’s ability to serve people from newborn to age 24.

In 2016 Cynergy made a \$10,000 donation to ISAND which was used to help support services and programs. Shortly afterwards Gerald, Controller Ann Culbertson, and Office Manager Nancy Antonacci dropped in to visit. What they encountered stirred them to further action.

“On our visit we met some wonderful parents, children and dedicated clinicians and began to understand a small bit about what families go through,” says Ann.

“The experience helped us realize how much we take for granted,” adds Nancy. All were deeply touched by what they saw at ISAND.

“Back at the office we just looked at each other and said, ‘We’ve got to help them!’” recalls Gerald.

Out of that conviction came the idea for an annual Cynergy Mechanical

Charity Gala to benefit ISAND. The first fundraising gala evening took place in April 2017 and raised more than \$70,000 to support essential services and programs for families living with autism and other neurodevelopmental disorders.

Plans are now underway for the second annual charity gala, taking place this year on Friday, June 15. Gerald’s goal is to raise \$100,000 for ISAND during this inspiring and very special evening.

When asked what he would say to other businesses considering a charitable donation, Gerald responds, “ISAND is an organization that needs and is worthy of your support. They make a difference every day. No matter the size of your business, you can still do something!”

“We are deeply grateful for Cynergy Mechanical’s support and the strong partnership we have developed over the past two years,” says ISAND Executive Director David Gray. “We are looking forward to many more years of working together to support families living with autism.”

To learn more about the charity gala visit www.CynergyMechanicalCharityGala.ca



ASK THE PROFESSIONAL

Members of our clinical team answer questions from parents.



“My child’s therapist has suggested we seek support from a social worker. How can a social worker help our family?”

Response provided by Barbara Muskat, PhD, RSW. Barbara is a founding member of ISAND, an ISAND social worker and member of the Leadership Team, and Director of Social Work at SickKids Hospital.

Social workers have much to offer to families of children and youth with autism! When parents first learn that their child is developing in a different way from other children, they may feel overwhelmed. Sometimes they do not know where to start, what to do, or how to decide the best path for their child.

As trained mental health professionals, social workers help the entire family cope with the various emotions and dilemmas that may emerge when a child is diagnosed with a

neurodevelopmental difference such as autism. This includes helping families process the diagnosis and understand its impact. Social workers can vary their work depending on the needs of the family; they can support one parent, two parents or the entire family.

Once children begin therapies, social workers can assist parents in working collaboratively with members of their child’s treatment team. This will help parents support their child at home as they work toward their therapy goals. Social workers can also help families who are experiencing conflict with each other, communication problems, or impending changes. Social workers support families and help ensure that parents look after themselves while also looking after their child.

As children with autism go through stressful times such as school transitions, entry to puberty or other life changes, social workers are there to

help. Children and youth with autism may face greater challenges than those experienced by other children. They can be at increased risk for bullying or feelings of decreased self-esteem or sadness.

Social workers can help children, youth and young adults with autism discuss their worries and concerns. They can help them develop ways to address concerns about friendship and relationships, moods and anxieties. Social workers can also talk to children and youth with autism about issues that arise at school, including school experiences or getting along with peers.

Finally, social workers can help families see past difficulties and challenges so they can appreciate and embrace the family’s unique strengths and abilities!

Welcoming our newest team member

This spring ISAND welcomes Senior Speech-Language Pathologist Carolyn Spavor to the clinical team.

Carolyn comes to us with more than 14 years of experience as a Speech-Language Pathologist in a variety of settings, where she provided family-centered consultation, evaluation, assessments, intervention and counselling.

For the past several years Carolyn has focused her practice primarily on supporting children with autism who

also have motor speech disorders. Most recently Carolyn worked at the Speech & Stuttering Institute as a Speech-Language Pathologist, where she designed and implemented a motor speech therapy service for children with autism.

Carolyn holds a Master of Health Sciences in Speech-Language Pathology from the University of Toronto and a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from the University of Alberta. She is also an adjunct lecturer in the Department of Speech-Language



Pathology at the University of Toronto’s Faculty of Medicine, where she both lectures on occasion and supervises students in clinical learning opportunities.

“I am excited to be joining the ISAND team and providing speech and language services to the wonderful families here,” says Carolyn. “I have followed ISAND’s work for several years and am looking forward to making a difference as the organization continues to grow.”



OMERS Foundation supports Social Peers Program

Earlier this year the OMERS Foundation presented ISAND with \$20,000 to support ISAND's Social Peers Program. The Foundation, fully employee led and funded, is rooted in the sense of purpose and generosity of its members. The grant is directed to the program through ISAND's Helping Hands Fund, which reduces financial barriers for families by covering all or part of the costs associated with needed therapy.

The Social Peers Program provides coaching and support to help children build and maintain social relationships at home, at school and in the community.

Photo: Representatives of the OMERS Foundation visited ISAND to present a \$20,000 cheque to support the Social Peers Program. From left: David Gray, ISAND Executive Director; Andrew Prodanyk, Director, Legal, OMERS Private Equity; Shilpa Tiwari, Vice President, Corporate Social Responsibility, OMERS Private Equity; Jennifer Koffman, ISAND Board Member; and Teresa Lee, Director, OMERS Private Equity.

"I am incredibly grateful to have found the ISAND team," said Teresa Lee, OMERS staff member and ISAND champion. "The integrated team has been involved in my son's life for four years now and continues to help him progress in amazing ways. I cannot express how grateful our family is. I'm also very fortunate to work at OMERS, an organization of wonderful people who care about the communities we live in and support the missions of groups like ISAND."

Thank you Teresa, Shilpa, Andrew and the rest of the entire OMERS team!

Social Peers Program takes off

Since relaunching in January 2017, ISAND's Social Peers Program has taken off! This unique program targets communication and play skills to help improve children's social interaction skills with peers. During a 12-week care cycle, children, youth and young adults participating in the program receive coaching and support within a social setting.

The sixth care cycle is now underway and parents are enthusiastic about the results.

"My son had great difficulty in playing with other children or forming friendships," says Sandra, mother of 6-year-old Samuel. "After going through the Social Peers Program, Samuel has begun to develop the social skills he needs to successfully interact with others."

The success of the program lies in children being matched in twos or threes according to their age, strengths and areas of need. The goal is to find each child a match who will challenge them while also supporting their goals and enabling their strengths to shine through.

Participants are supported by an interdisciplinary clinical team that may include a speech-language pathologist, occupational therapist, behaviour analyst, early childhood educator or a communicative disorders assistant.

To learn more about the Social Peers Program please visit www.isand.ca or call 416-224-5959.

Meet ISAND's Clinical Advisory Board

We are pleased to introduce ISAND's Clinical Advisory Board, comprised of leading experts in the field of autism and other neurodevelopmental disorders. The Board provides advice, guidance and input as ISAND continues to strategically grow and expand its evidence-informed services and programs.



Briano Di Rezze, PhD

Briano is an occupational therapist, Assistant Professor in the School of Rehabilitation Science, and a CanChild Scientist at McMaster University. His current community-focused research is aimed at improving employment outcomes for youth with ASD and other neurodevelopmental disabilities. Briano's research examines the impact of rehabilitation interventions on everyday participation and functioning of children and youth with a neurodevelopmental disability. Briano's research program also engages families and other community stakeholders in community-based research approaches to address issues related to youth and young adults with neurodevelopmental disabilities transitioning into adulthood.



Jessica Brian, PhD, C.Psych

Jessica is a clinical investigator and psychologist who co-leads the Autism Research Centre at the Bloorview Research Institute. Jessica holds a PhD in psychology (clinical-developmental) from York University. She is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Paediatrics at the University of Toronto, and Adjunct Professor in the department of Applied Psychology and Human Development at OISE/University of Toronto. Jessica's research focuses on early identification and intervention in Autism Spectrum Disorder and related disorders. She is particularly committed to improving access to intervention for toddlers showing early signs of ASD.



Jonathan Weiss, PhD

Jonathan is an Associate Professor at York University in the Department of Psychology, and a clinical psychologist who works with children, adolescents, and adults with developmental disabilities. He held the CIHR Chair in Autism Spectrum Disorders Treatment and Care Research. His research focuses on preventing and treating mental health problems in people with autism or with intellectual disabilities across the lifespan. Jonathan conducts studies into how people with developmental disabilities access mental health care in Ontario, and is interested in their health service needs, their emergency service use, and their experiences of psychiatric crisis. He is passionate about knowledge mobilization and applied research that improves lives.

ISAND | INTEGRATED SERVICES FOR AUTISM AND NEURODEVELOPMENTAL DISORDERS

FAMILY LEARNING EVENT



The ABCs of Sexuality and ASD

Sunday May 6, 2018

Register today at: www.isand.ca/familylearning | Space is limited. Please register by Friday, April 20, 2018

ECHOage and ISAND - Partners for good

We all know it's better to *give* than to receive, but to be able to both give and receive? That's a win-win opportunity!

Thanks to ECHOage.com, parents and children have a unique way to celebrate a special occasion—such as a birthday—while raising funds for a charity that improves the lives of children. By throwing an ECHOage party, contributions from invited guests are split between a donation to the chosen charity and a contribution toward the purchase of a gift desired by the party honoree.

ISAND is proud to be an ECHOage charitable partner. Since June 2016, more than \$2,000 has been raised for ISAND through ECHOage birthday parties! **We gratefully acknowledge Marcus, Simon and Philip, Yianni, Marin, Julia, Lior, Sam, and Isabella for generously choosing to have ECHOage birthday parties for ISAND.**

The process for setting up an ECHOage party is simple. Parents register their child's birthday party online, select "ISAND" as their preferred charity, create an email invitation using one of the hundreds of ECHOage party templates, and send their invitations. Guests can then make an online donation when they RSVP. The money raised is shared between ISAND and the birthday child, with a minimum of 50 per cent donated to ISAND and the remainder given to the child. Tax receipts are issued for the charitable portion of the contribution.

ECHOage is not just for birthday parties! Party organizers can use ECHOage for bridal and baby showers, holiday parties, baptism and communion celebrations, Bar and Bat Mitzvahs, milestone celebrations and more. **To learn more, please visit www.echoage.com.**



Your support makes a difference.

Donations from generous supporters enable ISAND to provide professional care to even more families living with autism. Please consider making a gift today! **www.isand.ca/donate**. To explore giving opportunities tailored to your unique philanthropy goals, please contact David Gray, Executive Director, at 416-224-5959 or david.gray@isand.ca

ISAND

INTEGRATED SERVICES FOR AUTISM AND
NEURODEVELOPMENTAL DISORDERS

T 416-224-5959
E info@isand.ca
www.isand.ca

5734 Yonge Street, Suite 500
Toronto ON M2M 4E7

Charitable Registration Number 84141 7538 RR0001

