

ISAND

INTEGRATED SERVICES FOR AUTISM AND NEURODEVELOPMENTAL DISORDERS



ISAND supports Anthony as he transitions to adulthood

Tina, Anthony and Claudio Capobianco

Like many parents of young adults with autism, Tina and Claudio Capobianco worry about what will happen next year when their son Anthony turns 21. That's the age he must leave the public education system and the many school-based supports he receives.

"For several years we've been concerned that Anthony will have nowhere to go and nothing interesting and meaningful to do when he ages out of high school," says Claudio. "It's been our biggest fear."

These concerns are well founded, as research shows that more than 80 per cent of adults with autism are unemployed. There is a shortage of

support available to help young adults explore interests and acquire vocational skills as they prepare for the next stage of their lives.

Though Anthony has received support from ISAND since he was 17, the Capobianco family's journey with autism started when he was just three years old.

"I had my suspicions that something was wrong," Tina recalls. "When he started preschool I asked Anthony's teacher what she thought and she suggested we have him assessed. It took a one-hour appointment with a developmental specialist to confirm that Anthony had autism."

At first the diagnosis devastated Anthony's parents.

"My first reaction was, 'What did I do wrong?'" says Tina. "I wondered if I had done something during my pregnancy to harm him. However, we realized that it could have been worse. So, we buckled down to get Anthony as much treatment as possible."

Through Anthony's preschool, elementary and high school years, Tina and Claudio were able to ensure that he received excellent support, both in school and through private service providers. Anthony has had outstanding teachers and educational assistants. His school experiences have

Story continues on page 2

been positive and transitions between each school stage have gone smoothly. However, Anthony's impending transition out of high school looms large for his parents.

Three years ago, in response to Tina and Claudio's concerns about Anthony's future, his developmental pediatrician referred them to ISAND. It was an opportunity to explore possibilities for Anthony as well as to help him gain skills to support greater independence.

"In our first meeting with Anthony's Behaviour Consultant at ISAND we talked about our goals," says Tina. "They included learning how to navigate and behave on public transit, go shopping, and use money in a variety of settings."



ISAND Behaviour Consultant Kelsey Ferguson and Anthony Capobianco.

Since then, Anthony has met with his Behaviour Consultant each week to steadily work toward these goals. A favourite part of his routine now involves taking the Toronto subway from ISAND to a station three stops away to purchase a snack or other item from a nearby store. In addition to using public transit, Anthony has learned how to use cash, a debit card, complete a shopping transaction, and interact and engage with the people he encounters.



"ISAND is helping me to do things," says Anthony. "I really like it and I feel happy."

Recently, the family participated in a McMaster University study led by Dr. Briano De Rezze, a member of ISAND's Scientific Advisory Board. The study looked at the challenges that young people with autism have in finding and maintaining a job. Tina and Claudio were required to dig deeply to figure out Anthony's potential vocational strengths and interests.

"As we see Anthony grow and flourish, we realize there are now possibilities for him after high school," says Tina. "ISAND has given us hope and direction for the future."

Tina and Claudio recognize that not every family living with autism has the resources they need to access autism services and programs. This fact, coupled with their own good fortune, has inspired them to get involved and fundraise for ISAND.

"We think about families that cannot afford services and programs to support their children," says Claudio. "We want to help."

Anthony and his family became the inspiration for the Give-a-Latte fundraising campaign launched in 2014 by iCapital, a company co-founded by Tina's sister Diane and her business partner Domenic Sgambelluri. ISAND was selected as the campaign beneficiary in 2015. Thanks to generous \$10,000 matching grants from iCapital, the 2015 and 2016 Give-a-Latte campaigns raised more than \$43,000 to support ISAND services and programs. This year, iCapital grew their fundraising efforts even further through Cook-off for Autism, a new and innovative event created for iCapital by Hop Skip Marketing. The Cook-off was a huge success, raising more than \$24,000 and bringing iCapital's cumulative support for ISAND to more than \$70,000.



"ISAND's growing focus on supporting young people as they transition from high school is so important and needed," says Tina. "Our family is doing everything we can to support ISAND, allowing them to enable young people with autism to reach the greatest potential possible."



ASK THE PROFESSIONAL

Members of our clinical team answer questions from parents.



Kelsey Ferguson



Danielle Ostfield



Candace Yanchyshyn

“How can I help my child transition successfully back to school?”

Response provided by Behaviour Consultant Kelsey Ferguson, Clinical Psychologist Danielle Ostfield, PhD, and Education Consultant Candace Yanchyshyn.

Back to school season is right around the corner. While it can be an exciting time, it can also be stressful. Whether your child is going to school for the first time, starting a new grade, or transitioning to a different school, here are some tips for easing the challenges of this change.

Visit the school ahead of time.

- Arrange a visit before school starts to allow your child to become familiar with the school surroundings.
- If possible, take photos during your visit. Include photos of your child's teacher and classroom as well as important people and places outside the classroom. These could include the hallway, line-up location, educational assistant, additional school staff, playground and any other rooms that will be used throughout the school week.
- Some parents arrange to meet with the Principal and new teacher(s) during the last week of summer vacation to review the transition support plan (if required), timetables and/or schedules, share their child's strengths, needs, and calming strategies, as well as any new

information that might not have been available in June. Be proactive in discussing what has worked well in the past and any concerns you may have.

Adjust schedules and routines.

- Use a calendar to count the number of days until school begins.
- A few weeks before school starts, have your child go to bed and wake up at the time he/she will need to once school starts.
- A few weeks before school starts, begin eating snacks and meals at the same time as the school schedule.

Practice and prepare.

- During the summer, encourage your child to engage in activities that help with concentration, attention and focus. These could include board games, puzzles, card games and building activities such as Lego.
- For younger students, encourage simple reading and writing activities such as creating shopping lists, reading together, visiting story time at local libraries, or enjoying craft activities at a local community centre.
- For older students, try to gradually decrease daily screen time and promote activities that encourage and enhance social interaction skills with peers and adults.
- Consider introducing your child to some curriculum-related topics being covered this academic year. The goal is to help build your child's confidence, not have your child master the educational content.
- Have your child practice packing their lunch and backpack. If your child did not participate in back to school

shopping, show them the materials they will be using at school.

- Choose a first day of school outfit.
- If your child will have a locker, have them practice opening and closing the lock.

Prepare a social story and visual aids.

- Students may want to create a personal portfolio to share with their new teacher(s). Topics could include background information, communication strategies, sensory considerations, things they can do independently and things they need help doing, and what motivates them.
- Use the photos taken during your visit to the school to create an album that you can review with your child throughout the summer. As you look at it together, talk about returning to school and/or what happens during a typical school day.

Stay calm and positive!

- If your child is feeling anxious about starting school, empathize with them by acknowledging their feelings and letting them know that you are there to support them. Help your child find something that they can look forward to and become excited about in September.
- Above all, try to be positive and calm with your child about starting school, even if you as a parent feel extremely anxious. Try to make the lead up to school fun and stress free.



Family ties inspire iCapital's generous support

Left to Right: Claudio Capobianco, Tina Capobianco, David Gray, ISAND Executive Director, Anthony Capobianco, Diane Capobianco, iCapital Principal and Domenic Sgambelluri, iCapital Principal.

Since learning of ISAND in 2015, Diane Capobianco and Domenic Sgambelluri have come to feel like part of the ISAND family. Small business lender iCapital first connected with ISAND when Diane's nephew Anthony began receiving services at age 17.

"The autism cause is near and dear to our hearts," says Diane. "Anthony inspires the entire iCapital team to do everything we can to help families access the services they need."

Even before learning about ISAND, Domenic and Diane were raising funds to support autism services. In 2014 iCapital launched its online Give-a-Latte campaign. With Anthony as the inspiration and motivation, the campaign encouraged people to skip their morning coffee and instead donate the \$5 they would have spent. Thanks to a \$10,000 matching grant from iCapital, the campaign raised \$20,000 in its first year.

"After Anthony started at ISAND we decided to learn more about the organization," says Domenic. They had the opportunity to meet dedicated

team members and hear about ISAND's work with families living with autism.

Diane and Domenic were impressed by what they learned, especially ISAND's continuum of care integrated approach. Children, youth, and young adults — along with their families — can benefit from ISAND's services and programs.

"Because of Anthony, who is now 20 years old, I was particularly interested in how ISAND supports teenagers as they transition to adulthood," says Diane.

Diane and Domenic also recognized that, as a non-profit organization, ISAND needs contributions from generous donors to continue providing its services. They realized that support from iCapital could make a significant difference.

In 2015 iCapital chose ISAND as the beneficiary of its Give-a-Latte campaign and renewed its commitment to an annual \$10,000 pledge. The 2015 campaign raised

more than \$22,000 and the 2016 campaign grew to more than \$23,000.

"What has been so satisfying for us to see is the impact that iCapital's support has made," says Domenic. "We now feel like part of the family as we have been part of ISAND's growth. The organization is well respected and has gained an outstanding reputation. It's been wonderful to see."

This year instead of the Give-a-Latte campaign, iCapital launched a new fundraising initiative. Their "Cook-off for Autism" event this spring met with an enthusiastic response, selling out and raising close to \$25,000 for ISAND. This brings iCapital's cumulative fundraising efforts for ISAND to more than \$70,000.

"We are deeply grateful for the support of Diane, Domenic and the entire iCapital team," says David Gray, ISAND Executive Director. "Their ongoing partnership and commitment to helping families living with autism has enabled us to continue to provide vital services."



An RDSP can provide future financial security

By Shane Nixon

Do you know about the Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP)? Introduced by the federal government in 2008, the RDSP is a tax deferred savings program that helps parents and families save and provide financial security for their loved ones with disabilities. There are many benefits to the RDSP program, including generous matching through the Canada Disability Savings Grant and Canada Disability Savings Bonds.

Who is eligible for an RDSP?

Individuals can benefit from an RDSP if they are eligible for the Disability Tax Credit (DTC), have a valid social insurance number, are a Canadian resident and are under age 60.

How does it work?

An RDSP can be opened at major financial institutions in Canada. Contributions to the plan can be made until the end of the year in which the beneficiary turns 59. Contributions are not tax deductible. However, contributions are not included as income when they are withdrawn. RDSPs do not impact other social assistance benefits such as Old Age Security, the Canada Pension Plan, or provincial benefits.

Is there a limit to contributions?

While there is no annual limit to RDSP contributions, there is a maximum lifetime contribution limit of \$200,000. Transfers from RRSPs or RRFs to RDSPs are allowed.

Is there financial help available?

There are two government programs available to provide financial help. The Canada Disability Savings Grant is an amount paid into an RDSP. The government matches contributions made to an RDSP to a maximum of \$70,000 lifetime per beneficiary. Unused grants can be carried forward for 10 years. Canada Disability Savings Bonds provide additional help for lower income families. The government will contribute \$1,000 per year to a plan until the year the beneficiary turns 49, even if no contributions have been made by the holder of the plan. There is a \$20,000 lifetime bond limit.

How can I learn more about the RDSP?

There are many rules and regulations for RDSPs. Seek the advice of a professional for this key component of your family financial plan. Information is also available at www.canada.ca.



iCapital event serves up fun and inspiration

In April a sold-out crowd gathered at Cirillo's Culinary Academy in Toronto for the first annual iCapital Cook-off for Autism. The event raised more than \$24,000 to support ISAND services and programs. Teams battled it out in the kitchen preparing a selection of delicious dishes for judging and tasting. The winner? The many families served by ISAND!

"We were thrilled by the enthusiasm of the participants as they tackled a variety of dishes," says Diane Capobianco of iCapital, a small business lender and ISAND supporter. "It was a fun and inspiring evening and we're thankful for everyone who helped make it such a success."

Many thanks to iCapital, the volunteer chefs, and all the participants for their hunger to make a difference!

Canada Disability Savings Grant (CDSG)		
Family net income *	CDSG matching rates	Maximum annual CDSG
Up to or equal to \$91,831	300% on first \$500 200% on next \$1,000	\$3,500
Over \$91,831	100% on first \$1,000	\$1,000

Canada Disability Savings Bonds (CDSBs)	
Family net income *	Maximum annual CDSB
Up to or equal to \$30,000	\$1,000
Between \$30,000 and \$45,916	\$1,000 is reduced on a prorated basis (based on the formula in the Canada Disability Savings Act)
Over \$45,916	No bond is paid

Charts adapted from *Registered Disability Savings Plans – Your guide to saving for a secure future*. Mackenzie Financial, 2017.

*2017 rates. For a minor beneficiary, the family net income is that of his or her parents. Where the beneficiary is over the age of majority, the family net income is that of the beneficiary and his or her spouse, if applicable. The income threshold is indexed to inflation.

Shane Nixon has been in the investment and financial services industry for 20 years and is currently the director of a private client group at HollisWealth. He holds designations as a Chartered Investment Manager, Certified Financial Planner, and Chartered Life Underwriter. Shane is also the parent of a child who receives ISAND services.

Cynergy Mechanical

Charity Gala

IN SUPPORT OF **ISAND**

More than 250 guests enjoyed an evening of fine dining, dancing, entertainment and inspiration at the Cynergy Mechanical Charity Gala on June 15. The Gala raised more than \$50,000 to support ISAND services and programs.

"We are inspired by the work that ISAND does every day," says Gerald McCann, President of Cynergy Mechanical. "Through its professional, integrated and multidisciplinary care, ISAND makes a real difference for families living with autism."

This is the second year that Cynergy Mechanical has hosted a fundraising gala in support of ISAND. Plans are already underway for the next Charity Gala, taking place in April 2019.

"We are deeply grateful to Gerald and his team for their vision, passion and commitment to our work," says David Gray, ISAND Executive Director. "We also thank TD Securities, HPG and Q Residential, for their sponsorship of the Gala."





Judy Knight



June Weekes

Meet our Clinical Front Desk Team!

Have you met our clinical front desk team members Judy Knight and June Weekes?

Judy joined the ISAND team in late 2017 after more than 15 years of providing administrative support to leaders and team members across a variety of sectors, including healthcare and medicine. Judy's skills, along with her personal experience of supporting and advocating for family members dealing with health-related issues, has instilled a passion for professional integrated care and helping others.

"Working at ISAND gives me a unique opportunity to collaborate with a wonderful integrated team of professionals," says Judy. "ISAND's administrative team works closely with the medical and clinical team to create and implement a plan for each family to achieve the best possible outcomes."

June came to ISAND this spring after 10 years at the Geneva Centre for Autism providing administrative support in the Centre's Clinical Behaviour Services program. She combines her knowledge of the autism sector with broad experience in working with and supporting families, clinicians, and senior leaders.

"Having worked in the autism field for several years I was familiar with many of ISAND's expert clinicians and am excited to be working with them," says June. "Seeing firsthand the difference our services make in the lives of families is the favourite part of my work!"

June and Judy's skills and experience, together with their warm and friendly demeanour, help ensure high quality and well-coordinated care for our clients. Be sure to say hello when you next visit the Centre!



Ali Schwabe

Welcome back Ali Schwabe, SLP!

ISAND is thrilled to welcome back speech-language pathologist Ali Schwabe following two years in Boston. ISAND families may remember Ali, who was an ISAND volunteer clinician, speech-language mentee and provided speech-language pathology services before moving to Boston with her husband as he completed his graduate studies.

"I am looking forward to rejoining the fantastic team at ISAND and the opportunity to collaborate with other disciplines," says Ali. "Plus, I love that ISAND is a non-profit organization!"

While in Boston Ali gained additional experience in speech-language pathology while working at the Bierman ABA Center and Milestones High School and Transitions Program. As well, she had the opportunity to complete training and certification in Social Thinking®. This is a flexible systems-based methodology created to help individuals with social-emotional learning challenges to improve their social capabilities.

In her role at ISAND, Ali will continue to pursue her passion for providing speech-language services to teenagers and young adults. She will also lead the development and implementation of a new social thinking program at ISAND in collaboration with Clinical Services Manager Ali Dussault and senior speech-language pathologist Carolyn Spavor.

Ali holds a Masters of Health Science degree in Speech-Language Pathology from the University of Toronto and has achieved Level 1 PROMPT certification. In 2009 she was named a Loran Scholar in recognition of her academic achievement, character, service and leadership.

ISAND to introduce *Getting Social* program



This fall ISAND will launch a new program to support teens in developing social skills. The *Getting Social* program is based on the Social Thinking® methodology, a research-based approach that helps people with social-emotional learning challenges better connect with others.

Social thinking is defined as the process people use to interpret another person's thoughts, beliefs, intentions, emotions, knowledge, and actions in the context of their particular situation to understand that person's experience.

"Social skills such as interacting with others, making friends, and

understanding other points of view may come naturally to many people," explains ISAND speech-language pathologist Ali Schwabe, who will lead the development and implementation of the program. "However, some of our clients may have difficulty understanding these concepts. *Getting Social* is designed to turn these concepts into concrete ideas."

Rather than an initial focus on changing an individual's behaviour in social settings, ISAND's *Getting Social* program begins with helping participants understand the *thinking* processes that underlie their own social behaviour as well as that of others.

With this understanding, participants can then learn about behaviour changes needed to foster social connections.

Participants in the *Getting Social* program will meet weekly for one hour in groups of between two and five teens. Learning is based on individual needs and carried out through a variety of activities and projects.

If you know of someone who may be interested in joining the *Getting Social* program, or to learn more, please contact Ali Schwabe at ali.schwabe@isand.ca or at 416-224-5959.



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

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