



April is Autism Awareness Month

10 Things We Know About Autism That We Didn't Know a Year Ago

By Geraldine Dawson

Just two decades ago, autism was a mysterious and somewhat obscure disorder, commonly associated with the movie *Rain Man* and savantism. It affected an estimated 1 in 5,000 children.

How times have changed. Today, thanks to awareness and advocacy efforts, people now have a much better understanding of autism. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) now estimates that a staggering 1 in 88 children, including 1 in 54 boys, in the United States has been diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder. Another recent federal report presented data that autism prevalence among school-aged children, as reported by parents, is 1 in 50. An Autism Speaks-funded South Korean study, which used a more rigorous methodology, found a prevalence of 1 in 38 students.

With the increase in reported prevalence and overall awareness has come a significant expansion in the field of autism research. Piece by piece, we are starting to get a much better picture of what this disorder is and the extent of its complexity. We now know there is not one autism, but rather, a spectrum of disorders that have different causes and different manifestations. We know that both genetic and environmental factors are involved.

April is Autism Awareness Month, a good opportunity to reflect on the notable progress made by researchers, as well as the critical importance of building on this success and advancing the science much further.

Here are ten important things we've learned about ASD in the past 12 months that not only hold interest for researchers and clinicians, but also offer new insights and actionable information for parents:

1. High-quality early intervention for autism spectrum disorder (ASD) can do more than improve behaviors, it can improve brain function.
2. Being nonverbal at age 4 does NOT mean children with autism will never speak. Research shows that most will, in fact, learn to use words, and nearly half will learn to speak fluently.
3. Though autism tends to be lifelong, some children with ASD make so much progress that they no longer meet the diagnostic criteria for autism. High quality early-intervention may be key.
4. Many younger siblings of children with ASD have developmental delays and symptoms that fall short of an autism diagnosis, but still warrant early intervention.
5. Research confirms what parents have been saying about wandering and bolting by children with autism: It's common, it's scary, and it doesn't result from careless parenting.
6. Prenatal folic acid, taken in the weeks before and after a woman becomes pregnant, may reduce the risk of autism.
7. One of the best ways to promote social skills in grade-schoolers with autism is to teach their classmates how to befriend a person with developmental disabilities.
8. Researchers can detect pre-symptom markers of autism as early as 6 months -- a discovery that may lead to earlier intervention to improve outcomes.
9. The first medicines for treating autism's core symptoms are showing promise in early clinical trials.
10. Investors and product developers respond to a call to develop products and services to address the unmet needs of the autism community.



Please note that this year's the "A Night With the Stars" fundraiser event will held on September 20th . This is a change from 2013, when it was held in April. Get set for a great time in September!

Rider of the Quarter - Shae Johnson

When you meet Shae Johnson, you immediately notice her bubbly personality. She is a joyful 22-year-old young woman who has been riding with Mounted Eagles for over 12 years. Shae's excitement for her weekly riding lesson starts early in the week with her boots and hat laid out in wait for her trip to the barn each Thursday. Her riding partner is Ace. Shae has ridden other horses in the program but says Ace is definitely her favorite.

Riding with the Mounted Eagles program has built Shae's core strength. This helps to improve her low muscle tone due to Down's syndrome. Along with the physical improvements of better coordination and muscle strength, Shae also feels a strong bond with everyone associated with the program, especially Susie Bailiff. Shae's mom Becky says that Shae "gets a real sense of accomplishment and belonging from her riding lesson each week" and that "Shae is most proud of herself when she rides on her own without someone leading her." Learning how to post on Ace was something that Shae had to work very hard at. In the beginning, she did not like all that "up and down and around" but now has mastered posting and really likes it. Riding each week continues to build her confidence and when she completes her riding lesson, she tosses her riding helmet to her dad Lyle signaling that she has once again worked hard and accomplished much.

Shae is a resident of Brainerd, has one older sister, a job, and likes to dance and go bowling. In the summer, she loves to swim. But

truthfully, Shae loves everything! She is very easy to get along with and very happy just to be included in whatever is going on around her. Shae loves to go to plays and has plans to go the Chanhassen Dinner Theatre. She also loves movies and musicals. Her current favorites are *Frozen*, *National Velvet* and *Grease*. Shae is also known for being a good helper around the house and is very independent. She loves to spend time just hanging out with her wiener dog Annie. Like many of us, Shae is anxious for the snow to melt so she can put away her boots and wear her flip-flops!



If you get the opportunity to be around Shae, you will notice that she brings an easy going happiness to all around her. She finds goodness in everything and everyone. In fact, we could all learn from Shae and we should all strive to be more like her. Shae, we are grateful to have you in the Mounted Eagles family and we are very proud of your accomplishments.

Congratulations on being selected as the Rider of the Quarter.

Mounted Eagles is a 501(c) non-profit organization.

Our Mission Statement: Mounted Eagles enhances the lives of program participants, volunteers and the community by providing a safe and enjoyable environment where individuals with special needs benefit from therapeutic, developmental and educational equine-assisted activities.



From our Executive Director Lynn Fairbanks

Have heard about it? Have you seen it? Mounted Eagles has a new logo! This fresh new look was created over several months with the assistance of Linda Dahl, Dahl Graphics & Printing, and coordination by Lise Lunde and the Mounted Eagles Board. We have decals made with the new logo. These decals will be available at our Annual Meeting which will be held on April 14, 2014 at the Northwind Grill in Brainerd. Cost of the decal is only \$5. Put one on your car, your mailbox, your notebook, anywhere you want to let people know that you support Mounted Eagles! At our annual meeting, you will hear updates on the program and the plans for the coming year. All participants, family and caregivers are invited to be members of the Mounted Eagles Program. Everyone is welcome. Included in this newsletter you will find a list of our generous donors for 2013. Without these generous individuals, organizations and companies, Mounted Eagles would not be able to provide the services that we do. Please thank them when you see them or say thank you by doing business with them. We have many committed parents, volunteers and caregivers who make a difference every day for our program. We appreciate those efforts very much. In this newsletter, you will also find a calendar of events. We are always in need of additional help and new ideas. If you see something that interests you, please contact me for more information. We are looking forward to a fun and rewarding 2014!!



The 2014 Special Olympics show will be held on July 19. We are in the process of forming our SO equestrian team. Anyone interested should contact Lynn Fairbanks at info@mountedeagles.org. Participants must meet the criteria for Special Olympics which can be found at www.somn.org.



It's an annual summer tradition! The Nisswa Chamber of Commerce has again asked Mounted Eagles to be the official turtle wranglers for this great fundraising event. The Turtle races will be held every Wednesday beginning June 4 through August 20 in Nisswa.

2014 Calendar of Events

Apr 14	Annual Membership Meeting
Apr 17	Volunteer Training
June 4 - Aug 20	Turtle Races
July 19	Special Olympics
July 28	Pizza Ranch Tip Night Fundraiser
Aug 26	Volunteer Training
Sept 6	Walk N Roll
Sept 20	A Night With the Stars
Sept 27-28	Hoof'in IT
Oct 23	Volunteer Training

Watch www.mountedeagles.org for updated calendar.

New Riders

Randy B
Michael R
Amanda R

New Volunteers

Morgan D
Michael W

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Without You We Could Not "mount up as with wings like eagles."

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Any failure to list names of donors is unintentional and we offer our apologies for doing so. All support is greatly appreciated from those of you who share our passion for enhancing the lives of those individuals in our communities who face physical, mental, social and/or emotional challenges. May God Bless You All!

	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	
Happy Birthday	Lorraine B	Lise L	Amber H	Colleen G
	Makayla S	Cindy R	Danny M	Charles K
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	Kaleb G	Nicholas P	Jaden G	Connie M
	Lynn F	Sarah H	Jan M	Anja K
	Colleen L	Brad B	Christine S	
		Hank M		

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