

STAART Child and Family Project
Studies to Advance Autism Research and Treatment
Boston University School of Medicine
<http://www.bu.edu/autism>
Fall 2004



NAAR WALK

On Sunday, October 3, we participated in the greater Boston WALK F.A.R. for NAAR (National Alliance for Autism Research) walk. A total of 215 teams joined the walk with 102 new teams this year. Members of our lab, along with fellow researchers and staff from the Lab of Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience, walked 3.1 miles and collectively raised over **\$6,000!** We also presented information about our study to walk participants. The amount raised at the WALK by all teams was over **\$625,000!** This money will go toward programs in research on autism.

LEND A HAND!

We are **currently enrolling children with autism spectrum disorders, age 18-33 months, and their families.** To learn more about this research or to be considered for participation in the project please contact: **Gretchen Shuman, M.Ed., Family Coordinator,** at (617) 414-2358 or at gshuman@bu.edu.

PROJECT NEWS

The Child and Family Project has been up and running for 1 year! We have had a very exciting year getting our project off the ground. As many of you know, we are very interested in learning more about the development of young children with autism and how raising a child with autism is affecting families. We have enjoyed conducting child assessments in our newly-remodeled observation room. To date, we have had over **40 families** involved in the study!

Our project is one of four projects at the Boston University (BU) Studies to Advance Autism Research and Treatment (STAART) Center. The BU STAART Center is one of eight new autism research centers supported by the National Institute of Mental Health.

YEAR TWO OF OUR STUDY

Later this fall, we will begin contacting families enrolled in the project to schedule their second year visit! Please watch your mailbox for a postcard from project staff. We look forward to seeing you and learning how your children have grown and changed.

RECRUITMENT UPDATES

It has been wonderful to welcome so many families to our project. We have met families from across Massachusetts, from as close as Boston and as far as Western Massachusetts! Families have been referred to us from a range of sources, including early intervention providers and physicians. **Thanks to everyone who has helped to spread the word about our project!** (*cont. on reverse*)

(cont. from front)

Over the last few months, we have enjoyed getting to know directors and staff at many Massachusetts Specialty Service Providers. These include:

Building Blocks	Lipton Early
BEACON Services	Assistance Program
Children Making Strides	Horace Mann
Educational Consultants of New England	The May Institute
	New England Center for Children

In the last few months, we have also visited a number of local early intervention providers around the state. We appreciate the warm reception from these programs and look forward to working with them in our ongoing efforts to enroll families. These programs include:

Bay Cove EIP	Criterion Mattapan EIP
Boston EI for Children & Families	Dimock EIP
Brockton Early Childhood Intervention Program	Minute Man EI
Cambridge-Somerville EIP	South Bay EIP – Brockton Step 1 EI
	Thom Boston Metro EIP

We recently had the opportunity to attend a special evening program for parents, sponsored by **Children Making Strides**. It was great to meet more families who are committed to learning more about autism. We hope to attend more parent-focused activities in the future.

NEW GRANTS

We are pleased to announce that one of our project's co-investigators, Dr. Bob Joseph, was recently awarded a NAAR grant to conduct brain imaging studies with children with autism.

We are also excited to report that Kelli Dominick, an MD/PhD student in our lab, recently received an NIH grant to fund her remaining years in medical and graduate school. Kelli will be working primarily on the brain imaging project.

OTHER ONGOING STUDIES

We are still enrolling children ages 7-16 in the Language and Social Communication Program project. **Children with autism, children with language-based learning difficulties, and typically developing children** are invited to participate. Please call Kelley at (617) 414-1304 if you or someone who know is interested. This project investigates how children process language and social information that they read from other people's faces.

TIDBITS

- 18 children in our study have transitioned to preschool
- 33 children have at least one sibling. 2 children have gained new siblings this year.

We were sad to say goodbye this summer to **Tamar Remz**, our lab assistant, who left the project to begin her undergraduate studies at New York University. We will miss Tamar around the lab, but wish her luck in her new endeavors! When you visit our lab at BU, some of you may also meet University of Massachusetts Boston graduate students **Jennifer Kuhn** and **Karen Wachtel** as well as student volunteers from Boston University and University of Massachusetts Boston. We welcome all of these students, whose contributions will help make our project a success.

PROJECT STAFF

Alice Carter, Ph.D., Principal Investigator
Helen Tager-Flusberg, Ph.D., Director of STAART Center
Mary Beth Kadlec, Sc.D., OTR/L, Project Manager
Gretchen Shuman, M.Ed., Family Coordinator
Naomi Ornstein Davis, M.A., Assistant Family Coordinator
Anneliese Bass, B.A., Research Assistant
Amy Gower, B.A., Research Assistant