

# KIDS CAN CHRONICLES

[www.kidswithautismcan.org](http://www.kidswithautismcan.org)

## What's up?

### Our trip to "The North Pole" on The Polar Express

We would like to thank the Grand Canyon Railway for providing tickets for The Polar Express. Eight families enjoyed a fabulous trip to the "North Pole". We shared cocoa, chocolate chip cookies, Christmas carols and a visit from Santa who brought a special gift of sleigh bells. We hope this is just the beginning of our opportunity to help kids on the spectrum join in special events where we can create a more appropriate sensory environment!



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### Walk Now for Autism Speaks

On October 31, 2010 team Kids with Autism Can joined in a 5K walk at Tempe Town Lake to earn money for autism research. We had a team of 12 and we raised over \$1000, thanks to Madalyn S. and our other team members for their amazing fundraising efforts. It was a morning filled with fun and inspiration!



# Nicholas



The last few newsletters we have shared stories of gifted young men on the spectrum. As we mark our first full year as an organization, we remember why this all started. We would remind you that at age 4, Nicholas spent his preschool days hiding in a play tent or outside sleeping under the play structure because the world was often too much to bear. This October, Nicholas was confirmed. In our church there is a two year preparation process filled with community service projects, social events, sermon reviews and other requirements. When we started this I thought “I have no idea how we are going to do all of this”. Well he did it, with the help and kindness of amazing people at our church and the ongoing support of his very caring father. The Sunday services were overseen by the young men and women being confirmed. Each person had to serve a role, Nicholas was required to attend three morning services: at the 10:30 service he walked up to the podium and read Psalms in front of hundreds of people and more amazing still was that he did it all in a starched white shirt, a tie, dress pants and dress shoes. So at the time of year when we reflect on where we’ve been and where we are now, we feel quite fortunate and we hope to inspire you to remember, Kids with Autism Can ...(we hope you’ll fill in the blank).

## What’s Next?

Kids with Autism Can would like to pass along the following information from Garret Westlake MEd, Director of Disability Resource Center, ASU Polytechnic Campus:

It is my pleasure to invite you to the First Annual Arizona State University (ASU) Community Conversation on Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) in Higher Education. Please join us Saturday, January 29, 2011, from 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., on ASU's Polytechnic campus. Participants will learn about innovative programs at the local and national level that offer increasing opportunities for individuals with ASD. Please RSVP for this event by calling the ASU Polytechnic Disability Resource Center at (480) 727-1039. This event will be held in the ASU Student Union Cooley Ballrooms on the Polytechnic campus.

First Annual ASU Community Conversation on ASD in Higher Education

8:00 – Refreshments/registration

8:30 – Welcome, Garret Westlake MEd

8:45 – Opening, ASU leadership

9:00 – Kids with Autism Can, Katie & Todd Murwin

9:30 – ASU Executive Director of High School Relations, Dr. Mark Duplissis

10:00 – break

10:15 – ASD in Higher Education, Garret Westlake MEd

11:30 – Bright Angel Software, Dr. Brenda McCaffrey and Anne Kirchgessner

12pm – Closing

12:15pm –Campus tours (optional)

# What We've Learned

As the year comes to an end we hope that this letter finds you well and enjoying moments of peace and joy and that 2011 will be a year of great hope. We want to share some of what we have learned over the last year as we have moved along in this venture.

- ❖ There are many people invested in your child's success that you aren't even aware of. We have met people creating school environments that might work for your child or work environments that will be prepared to hire young adults on the spectrum, as they come out of school.
- ❖ Small organizations as well as large exist to provide support and for you and your family. We hope you will find a cause and give generously of both with your time and money. Many of the people we have met create organizations because there is a need, they put their heart and soul as well as huge amount of their personal time into their groups and they have large amounts of people who take advantage of what they have to offer. Please give of yourself in return. I am not speaking of us but of groups who provide meetings and social groups and speakers for your benefit. Use what they offer but do your part to help our community maintain these programs.
- ❖ There are amazing opportunities for our children as they grow! People are becoming more informed and more understanding of this very challenging diagnosis. At a local community college there are currently 24 students on the spectrum enrolled at the school. Last year there were 12 students enrolled at the same school.
- ❖ One ASU campus has at least 8 young adults on the spectrum; they are provided the extra help that is required for their success.
- ❖ The best way to improve our kid's chances for success is through early intervention and community education! We are seeing more of this. Not only is it important to educate people but to change the perception of the diagnosis. It is not the end of the world. It's just a different world. These kids may have limited verbal skills and rock and shake their hands but some children, at the same time are brilliant, or have amazing memories or teach us that you can do 18 holes of mini golf in 10 minutes or show us what honesty really looks like. The spectrum is vast but each child can be their best and offers gifts to us if only we choose to see them.

We hope you will embrace the life you have been given!

## ~2011

We send out newsletters to provide information but we also want to share our plans for the future and we want you to know what we will be focusing on. If you believe in our passion we hope you will consider using your strengths and resources to support us. Kids with Autism Can will be working with ASU to serve the needs of young adults on the spectrum. This is an area where we will likely be using donations in the future. We are hoping to provide extra assistance to young adults in learning necessary life skills as a part of their education. We will also be applying for grants that will allow us to provide opportunities for families with children on the spectrum to attend social functions similar to "Polar Express". This year we hope to continue to create a supportive community of inspiration and information. Our best wishes for a wonderful new year.

# Baby It's Cold Outside

Are you feeling the chill? Are you looking for something to warm you up? Try some of this hot cocoa! It is a fun family project and everyone can join in.

## Instant Cocoa with Marshmallows:

8 ½ cups (25.6 oz package) non-fat dry milk  
1 ½ cups (6 oz jar) non-dairy coffee creamer  
3 cups (16 oz package) instant chocolate drink mix for milk

1 ½ cups confectioners' sugar

1 bag mini marshmallows

½ cup sweet ground chocolate (optional)

In a large bowl, combine all ingredients. Store in an airtight container.

Yield: 16 cups of mix

To make hot cocoa in a mug, combine ½ cup mix with 9 oz boiling water and stir. Top with whipped cream and a candy cane.



CAUTION: cocoa could be extremely **hot**, sip carefully ☺

Our children are watching us live and what we are shouts louder than anything we can say.

-Wilfred Peterson



## Willow House Fundraiser

Thanks to all of you who participated in the fundraiser with Willow House. We raised \$250 and earned free products that we will be able to use in next year's annual Kids with Autism Can auction. Thank you, Elayna for using your special talents to help us raise money. We hope others will follow in your footsteps and think outside the box to help us in our fundraising efforts.

Kids with Autism Can regularly updates their website. Please check back frequently for events and new information. Take time to dive into the stories and perhaps share some of yours.

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