

NEWS & UPDATES FROM THE  
**Center for Autism  
& Related Disorders**  
AT KENNEDY KRIEGER INSTITUTE



Center for Autism and Related Disorders  
at Kennedy Krieger Institute  
December 2016 • VOL. 9, ISSUE 5

3901 Greenspring Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21211 • [CARD.KennedyKrieger.org](http://CARD.KennedyKrieger.org)

## A Word from Our Director

Dear Friends of CARD,

Seasons Greetings! At this time of year, the air is filled with anticipation. At the same time, we are all inclined to indulge ourselves in a little reflection over the last year. Reflection can bring us a sense of satisfaction, a sense of loss, or even a new realization. In any case, we all seek to experience peace, love, and meaningfulness. I wish all these things for you in the coming year and beyond.



Most people reading this newsletter know and love someone on the autism spectrum. That binds us together in a special way, no matter where we live, how old we are, or how we spend our days. I am grateful for all of you and am so very pleased to be in this community of individuals whose aim is to open doors to fulfillment for people with ASD.

I'd like to take this opportunity to give you a few highlights of what your autism center, the Kennedy Krieger Center for Autism and Related Disorders, has done this year.

**Service delivery:** Our team of clinicians, teachers, and administrative staff provided state-of-the-science care to over 3,300 different individuals with ASD and their families in 2016. Lots of tender loving care was delivered too. Numerous new staff were added to help us meet the needs of those seeking services at CARD Greenspring or Odenton campuses.

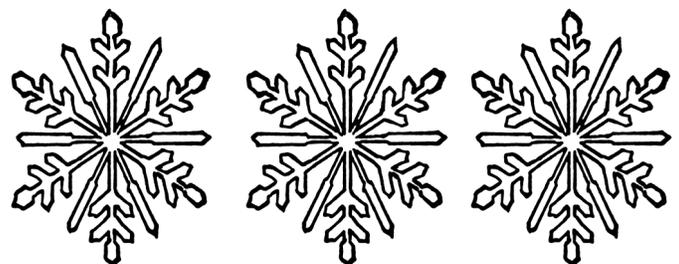
**Innovation:** At CARD, we are always asking ourselves, "How can we do more to help?" The unique blend of talent and experience in our staff, along with our close ties to scientists developing new technologies and methods around the world, enable us to

design new assessments, new intervention approaches, new training methods, and new research studies that will improve functioning and well-being in individuals with ASD and their families. Some of our innovations started in 2016 included:

- o Discovering a new way to measure visual motor integration in infants at risk for ASD.
- o Developing a new intervention for infants at risk for ASD and other communication disorders.
- o Developing a high-tech, fun video therapeutic game to improve social abilities in school-aged children with ASD.
- o Developing a new mindfulness-based intervention for anxiety in children and youth with ASD.
- o Developing a new way to train residents in Pediatrics how to identify ASD and make appropriate referrals.
- o Designing a new care coordination system for families having a daughter or son with ASD.

*Each of these innovations, along with others I did not list here, are being evaluated to understand their effectiveness. We seek support in the way of programmers, web developers, graphic designers, and other talent to help us bring these innovations to completion. Please contact us if you are interested in helping to accomplish something that will change lives!*

*(Continued on Page 2)*



### Inside this issue

A Holiday Treat	3
ASD in the Media	3
Accessibility at CARD	4

*(Continued from Page 1)*

**Research:** CARD is an international leader in cutting-edge autism and child development research. Our innovative scientific questions and research designs enabled us to secure research funding from the National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control, Institute of Educational Sciences, Simons Foundation, and more. This funding is positioning us to make high-impact discoveries in areas ranging from causes of autism to public school intervention methods that teachers learn to implement in their classrooms during group instruction. When findings emerge, we present them at international conferences, share them at think-tank meetings, and publish them in international peer-reviewed journals. This year we published findings about: how infants with autism learn, sensory-motor functioning in school-aged children with ASD, anxiety in individuals with ASD, prevalence of ASD, medical issues related to ASD, and much more.

*As we make these ground-breaking discoveries, we apply the new knowledge to the next stage in the discovery process – following these new leads to develop better diagnostic tools, treatments, parent training, and clinical care methods. To successfully compete for grants, we must have strong preliminary evidence that our new theories and hypotheses are accurate. To gather this preliminary evidence, we need, on average, \$100,000 to \$300,000 in donations per year for equipment, materials, and staffing. If you are able to help, please let us know or donate, specifying Center for Autism and Related Disorders. We welcome you to be a part of our team.*

**Teaching and Training:** Every year, hundreds of people learn about the latest breakthroughs in the care of individuals with ASD through our Annual Autism Conference in October, our Lunch and Learn series, and our training of clinical fellows in Speech-Language Pathology, Social Work, Occupational Therapy, Neuropsychology, Clinical Psychology, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and Pediatrics. This year, we also mentored six postdoctoral fellows from diverse fields, preparing them for clinical work and/or research in the field of autism. We trained many community professionals, including teachers in Maryland, Pennsylvania and Delaware in how to implement evidence-based instructional methods, how to teach children with autism who are deaf, and how to use augmentative and alternative communication systems in their classrooms to promote language and social abilities in students with ASD. We also trained child care providers to accelerate learning and engagement in children with ASD and other developmental delays. In addition, we trained undergraduate students from Johns Hopkins and Morgan State University through our research program. Our Morgan State University student presented findings from her CARD-REACH project at two important conferences: Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students and the Penn Honors Diversity Symposium. She is poised to take her next steps toward graduate school to obtain her PhD.

All of our efforts are aimed at helping individuals with ASD, their families, and the professionals who serve them. We see every day as a new opportunity to provide new insights, support new abilities, promote well-being, and to make new breakthroughs in the science of autism and care of individuals with ASD. Thank you for all that you do every day! Have a safe and peace-filled holiday, and I wish you a wonderful New Year.

*If you would like more information about any of CARD's initiatives, please contact me at [Sule@KennedyKrieger.org](mailto:Sule@KennedyKrieger.org).*

Warmly,

*If you have any questions about making donations or would like to make a donation, please contact our philanthropy officer, Leslie Marsiglia, Director of Individual Giving for Kennedy Krieger Institute, at 443.923.7326 or [Marsiglia@KennedyKrieger.org](mailto:Marsiglia@KennedyKrieger.org).*



Dr. Rebecca Landa, PhD, CCC-SLP

*If you would like to make your gift online, please visit [KennedyKrieger.org/CARD16](http://KennedyKrieger.org/CARD16).*

## Free Upcoming STAR Trainings

Taming Tantrums and Meltdowns: Techniques for Caregivers of Children with Autism —

Wednesday, Jan. 11, 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., presented by Kate McCalla, PhD

For more information or to register, visit

[KennedyKriegerCARD.eventbrite.com](http://KennedyKriegerCARD.eventbrite.com).

## A Holiday Treat

It's the most wonderful time of the year! The holidays are upon us, and that means it's time for holiday cookies.

Here's a quick and easy recipe for a tasty holiday treat. (And, it's gluten-free, too!)

### Gingerbread Cookies

1 teaspoon xanthan gum	½ teaspoon ground cinnamon	
¼ cup margarine	1 teaspoon salt	1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg
¼ cup dark molasses	1 tablespoon baking powder	½ cup water
1 cup light brown sugar	2 teaspoons ground ginger	Sweet rice flour for rolling
3 cups gluten-free flour mix	¼ teaspoon ground cloves	

Cream margarine and sugar. Beat in molasses. Sift dry ingredients into separate bowl. Stir into creamed mixture alternately with water. Once everything has been added, mix thoroughly. Dough should be soft and sticky. Refrigerate dough for at least one hour.

Using sweet rice flour, roll portions of dough on plastic wrap or parchment paper to about ¼ inch thick. Cut and decorate as desired. Bake in 350 F oven for 8-20 minutes depending on size.

Cookies are ready to take out of the oven when they're just starting to brown. Bake longer for crispier cookies. Cool slightly on sheet before removing to rack to cool completely. Store in airtight containers.



*Rebecca Landa, Melanie Pinkett-Davis, Jewell Thompson, and Joy Johnson spread holiday cheer at CARD*

## Career Corner

### Spotlight on Dr. Amy Keefer



A passion for clinical research drove Dr. Amy Keefer to get a PhD in clinical and health psychology from Drexel University in 2003. Today, that same passion informs her work as the supervising clinical psychologist at Kennedy Krieger Institute's CARD.

Dr. Keefer joined the CARD team in 2008, after working as a staff psychologist at a multi-disciplinary autism clinic in Pennsylvania. At CARD, Dr. Keefer has pursued her clinical interests and expanded her skills in the treatment of psychiatric disorders in youth with ASD. In 2014, she obtained board certification in cognitive and behavioral therapy.

She's also been actively involved in training new psychologists and has supervised the post-doctoral residency in child clinical psychology and neurodevelopmental disabilities housed jointly within CARD and Kennedy Krieger's Neuropsychology Department. As Kennedy Krieger's psychology staff has grown, Dr. Keefer's responsibilities have expanded to include administrative duties and program development. She enjoys supporting her colleagues and creating new initiatives to improve the quality of care provided to children with ASD.

Dr. Keefer has participated in many research projects across CARD. Currently, she's developing a research project focused on the phenomenology, assessment and treatment of psychiatric comorbidities in youth with ASD. She holds a faculty appointment at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine's Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences Department.

## ASD in the Media

### Review of 'Speechless'

*By Hillary Stalknecht, Research Assistant*

ABC's new sitcom "Speechless" hits home for many parents in the autism spectrum disorder community. It's the story of the day-to-day life of a family with three children, including JJ, a nonverbal teenager with a developmental delay. Viewers quickly learn that the family struggles to balance everyone's individual needs. Main character JJ, played by Micah Fowler, is portrayed with a mix of personality traits like any teenager: sarcastic, devious, optimistic and curious. He communicates mainly through his iPad with the help of his friends and family.

The pilot episode, which aired this past September, touches on the troubles families may face while finding appropriate school placement for a child with special needs. Viewers see JJ's mom as his No. 1 advocate. She is portrayed as tireless, fearless and loud as she helps JJ find his voice in his surrounding community and world.

"Speechless" illustrates a realistic example of an individual with special needs and how his family members negotiate both his and their needs. The series shows that while someone may be nonverbal, they still have a lot to communicate.

# Accessibility for Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing CARD Patients and Families

By Rachael Plotkin, PhD

Kennedy Krieger Institute's Center for Autism and Related Disorders (CARD) is making great strides in enhancing the accessibility of its services for deaf and hard-of-hearing patients and patient family members. As part of this initiative, several CARD staff members are learning American Sign Language to improve communication with deaf and hard-of-hearing patients and family members.

Environmental changes to CARD's Greenspring campus are also in the works, including new visual signage and consistent captioning for all media in the waiting area and playroom. In September, CARD staff members attended two lunch-and-learn presentations titled "Understanding Deaf Culture" and "Capturing the Complexity: The Assessment & Treatment of Children who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing with Autism Spectrum Disorder."

CARD now offers a range of comprehensive neuropsychological services to deaf and hard-of-hearing children and adolescents with known or suspected autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and their families. CARD, which is one of only a few programs of its kind in the country, provides language-accessible assessment services performed in a patient's preferred mode of communication, such as American Sign Language, spoken English or other languages or communication methods.

In collaboration with the Maryland State Department of Education, CARD is also working with the Maryland School for the Deaf to provide educators, staff members and school administrators with the tools they need to incorporate evidence-based instructional practices into their teaching. CARD hopes that, ultimately, this will help improve outcomes for deaf and hard-of-hearing students with ASD and multiple disabilities.

# Happy Holidays from all of us at CARD!

## Save the Dates!

March 20-22, 2017, Johns Hopkins and Kennedy Krieger present **The Spectrum of Developmental Disabilities XXXIX: Autism: Issues in Identification, Diagnosis, and Management**

April 22, 2017, Autism Society Baltimore-Chesapeake presents **Honestly Autism Day**

For more information, visit [BaltimoreAutismSociety.org](http://BaltimoreAutismSociety.org)

October 12-13, 2017, CARD presents **CARD's 17th Annual Autism Conference**

Stay tuned for updates on CARD's annual conference.



VISIT

<https://goo.gl/forms/EsqfLdd9N1WgiiZf1>

TO SUBMIT YOUR PROPOSAL!

For the latest HAD updates and information:

Join us at <https://www.facebook.com/HonestlyAutismDay/>

Follow us @HonestlyAutismD

Visit [www.BaltimoreAutismSociety.org](http://www.BaltimoreAutismSociety.org)

ATTENTION!  
Are you a parent, self advocate or professional who would like to present at Honestly Autism Day 2017?

The HAD committee is accepting proposals now for the breakout session presentations!

Deadline 1/13/17

