

**Spring
2014**

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**Comments?
Tips?
Suggestions?**

To send in comments, suggested topics for our next newsletter, or grandparent tips, please [email to us.](#)

Join Our Mailing List!

Welcome to Our New GAN Members!

*GAN members are a vital resource for autism
... and each other!*

The **G**randparent **A**utism **N**etwork is an all-volunteer, international nonprofit organization that supports grandparents of children with autism and their families. GAN's mission is to promote awareness and understanding of autism and to enhance the resources essential to community responsiveness.

The Board of Directors is pleased to extend membership to grandparents internationally. The rate of autism is rapidly increasing *everywhere* and we support grandparents who want to make life better for their families and increase autism resources in their communities..

GAN's current focus is on the development of lifetime supports for people with autism. Our eNewsletters and websites address issues that universally impact grandparents. ***All of GAN's programs and projects may be replicated, however, GAN's name and logo are trademarked and may not be used without permission.***

We know that the best recommendations come from our members and we welcome your feedback and suggestions about how we can increase support for you and your family.

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New Video: Your Grandchild Has Autism:

How Can You Help?

A GAN video for grandparents who have recently learned their grandchildren have autism, is now available to view online. It is sponsored by the *Dorene and Lee Butler Family Foundation* to help grandparents understand more about autism and to suggest how they can support their families, especially at that very stressful time.

The featured speaker, Dr. Erica Holding, Ph.D., BCBA-D, I.S.I.S., is the founder of [Avita Nova](#), which provides Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) services for children and adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDS). Dr. Holding has more than 20 years of experience in the assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of children, adolescents, and young adults with a variety of developmental disabilities and behavior disorders in school, home, community, and clinical settings. Our GAN members have also contributed information from their personal experience in this video.

You can use [this link](#) to access the five segments from our website.

Where to Find Summer Resources for Grandchildren

In addition to some good tips on our [site](#) for activities and things to do with grandchildren, there may be additional resources in your community during the summer months. Contact local community parks and recreation departments, YMCA's, and Boys and Girls Clubs for programs that serve kids with special needs. Local libraries, newspapers and autism service providers may have flyers and announcements for summer camps for special needs children.

Easter Seals, Special Olympics, United Cerebral Palsy and other non profit organizations may also provide appropriate summer activities for grandchildren. Inquire about swim, horseback riding, tennis, music, crafts and dance programs with instructors who are trained to work with children with autism. The Challenger sports teams are becoming more available and accommodate different age groups in baseball, soccer and swimming.

There are also special needs vacation opportunities available. Check online for companies like [Autism on the Seas](#) that have cruises that the whole family can enjoy.

Beware of "Cures" Grandparents are Vulnerable!

Grandparents want to ensure their grandchildren receive the best possible autism therapies. We are highly motivated to give our families as much emotional, physical and financial support as possible. Frequently we hear about "new autism therapies" or unpublished "research breakthroughs" from well meaning people. Some of us pay thousands of dollars for treatments that promise "recoveries" or "cures."

Grandparents have sacrificed their retirement savings just hoping to see some improvement in their grandchildren.

Many parents and grandparents have paid thousands of dollars for brain and other therapies they initially thought were beneficial. However, in many cases, they subsequently realize that it was "wishful thinking." Most new therapies have not been scientifically tested, medically approved or replicated in other population samples of children with autism. Even if one child appears to benefit from a treatment, it may not be effective for another, and recommending it can be emotionally and financially costly for other families.

Currently, Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) is the only therapy endorsed by the Surgeon General, national medical organizations and health care professionals, based upon 30 years of research. In many states, it is supported by insurance.

If you are contemplating sponsoring innovative therapies for your grandchild, please ask for advice from the child's pediatrician, neurologist and service providers. Search online to find the most recent reports from reputable resources. Patient testimonials for companies promising "cures" and "recoveries" should be not be considered reliable sources for new, unproven treatment protocols.

GAN's Recent Activity

Housing and Estate Planning

The programs and projects GAN develops in Orange County California can be replicated in communities world-wide. If you do not have a local grandparent support group, there are likely to be other philanthropic groups, churches or businesses you can approach to sponsor, partner or underwrite projects that will benefit your local autism community. (Check to see if Autism Speaks' has a local support group in your community or a chapter of Autism Speaks' U for students at your local college).

GAN is focused on the development of new lifetime resources for adults with autism in virtually every community. **Housing and planning for Special Needs Trusts** are both issues of concern for most families. In May, GAN hosted guest speakers, Mary Eble, MSW and Stephen Dale, Esq. to speak about Legacy Homes and the Golden State Pooled Trust.

Ms. Eble's agency, the [North Bay Housing Coalition](#), is a one-stop-shop to help families determine which housing options are best for their loved ones. It also facilitates the donation of homes from parents and grandparents to provide housing for their developmentally disabled family members.

Stephen Dale, Esq. specializes in disability law and his [website](#), provides free webinars and information about laws and regulations that pertain to Special Needs Trusts and other legal issues that impact our families. This website can be of great assistance to you prior to meeting with your own personal financial advisor or estate attorney.

For additional ideas for events and presentations, visit our [website](#), and review *past events*.

The board of directors of the **Grandparent Autism Network** and I welcome your suggestions and requests for newsletter topics. We invite you to share this newsletter with your family and friends.

Thank you for making GAN members
... a vital resource for autism ... and each other!

Warm regards,

Bonnie Gillman
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