

# THE 4TH ANNUAL **LONG ISLAND AUTISM CONFERENCE**

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*For Immediate Release*

Friday, August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2007, 9:00am EST  
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## **The Long Island Autism Conference Announces Next Event**

STONY BROOK, NY - NAA Long Island (NAALI) has just announced the date for the 4th Annual Long Island Autism Conference (LIAC). The LIAC is a two-day conference that gives parents and professionals hope for treating individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) and will be one of the largest comprehensive autism conferences in the northeast. It will take place on Saturday and Sunday, October 20th and 21st, at the Hyatt Regency Long Island in Hauppauge, New York.

This annual event is designed for health professionals, educators and families. Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a bio-neurological disorder that can severely affect communication and social skills in 1 out of 150 children today.

Over thirty-four local and nationally renowned speakers will join seventy-five exhibitors in bringing information and hope to hundreds of parents. "Having a child or children with autism can be extremely stressful. Parents need to know that they are not alone and there is help", said Christine Heeren, conference director and mother to an eight-year-old son with autism. Heeren continues, "This conference is a one-stop shop for all things autism. But, most of all, we want people to walk away with hope for their loved ones".

Stan Kurtz will deliver the keynote address on Sunday. Mr. Kurtz will provide a moving, multimedia presentation documenting his son Ethan's recovery from autism, as well as his own recovery from IBS and ADHD. Kurtz is also the owner and executive director of the Children's Corner School in California.

"People are often surprised to hear that neurological issues like autism often have biological causes and treatments. Children, like my son Ethan, can recover and I look forward to telling his story", said Stan Kurtz.

Some of the thirty-four presenters include: verbal behavior specialist Dr. Vince Carbone, Dr. Bryan Jepson and Dr. Arthur Krigsman from Thoughtful House for Children in Texas, Washington D.C. reporter Dan Olmstead, Raun Kaufman from the Son Rise Program, author Barbara Fischkin, senior autism clinician and co-founder of *Defeat Autism Now* (DAN!) Dr. Sidney Baker, certified RDI consultants June Hamilton and Donna Morrison, occupational therapist Jeanne Ganz and special education lawyer Edward J. Nitkewicz.

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Highlights of the event include the annual LIAC awards presentations. This year's recipients are:

***John Karl "Heart of Gold" Memorial Scholarship Award:*** Andrew Barsky and Tara Grieco.

This scholarship award was created to honor John Karl, a local swim instructor from Hauppauge, NY. Mr. Karl had a great impact in the life of many children, specifically Jackson Iallonardi, a 3-year-old boy with autism. When Karl passed away unexpectedly at the age of 18, Jackson's parents created this scholarship to encourage other young people to work with children with ASD. Barsky and Grieco will both receive \$1500 to be used towards continuing their education and their work with special needs children.

Barsky is sixteen years old and has devoted much of his time to working as a peer model for children with autism. In addition, he continues to do research on video modeling and has presented his findings at recent NYSABA conventions. He is also a speaker at this year's LIAC.

Grieco is seventeen years old, volunteers her time with teenagers on the spectrum and along with a friend, created *Sports, Friends, and Fun for ALL* (SFFA). Through this club, Grieco has formed genuine friendships with teens who have ASD, and she has created an environment for them to socialize with their typical peers.

***Truth in Media Award:*** Don and Deirdre Imus for their work educating the country about autism and environmental toxins.

***Parents of the Year Award:*** Katie Wright and Andreas Hildebrand, whose son Christian started a movement of autism awareness and because of their courage to speak about their experiences as parents.

***Elizabeth Birt "Never Give Up" Memorial Award:*** Evelyn Ain: mother, advocate and publisher for her unwavering crusade to improve the lives of all members of the autism community.

***Exceptional Sibling Award:*** TBA on August 15th, 2007.

***Grandparents of the Year Award:*** TBA at conference.

The LIAC will be held from 8am to 7 pm at the Hyatt Regency Long Island located at 1717 Motor Parkway, Hauppauge, NY. A full conference agenda may be viewed at [www.autismfair.com](http://www.autismfair.com). Exhibitor spaces, sponsorships and registration can be purchased through the website. There is a discount for non-professionals who register before October 1st, 2007. Sponsors include: Kidz Therapy Services, The HOPE Walk, Autism United and Spectrum Publications. Over 750 participants will be in attendance over the two-day weekend event.

NAA Long Island (NAALI) is a group of parents and professionals dedicated to raising awareness about autism in the Tri State area (NY, NJ, CT). NAALI is the local chapter of the National Autism Association (a 501c3 organization).