



All Special Kids

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# All Special Kids

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

ISSUE NO. 7 September/October 2007

## Dear Friends,

We at ASK wish to welcome you to the 2007-2008 school year; and we extend a heartfelt welcome to our ASK/Bern-Chapter members lead by Mary Kay Zumbach.

In this issue, we will focus on ASK.

Since its inception, our goal is to offer support services and provide educational programs to parents, as well as tools and techniques to become more confident and effective in our parenting skills of our special needs children.

This year, we are shifting our resources and energies toward creating children's programs. Our first event was 3 weeks of summer camp in July and August 2007. We plan to continue vacation camps during the school breaks in October 2007, February and March 2008.

This September, we will introduce a monthly Kid's Social Program. The objective is to allow for our kids to meet and socialize in a supervised setting with volunteer parents and older students.

Starting January, a program we will name C.A.R.E. (Community Assistance Resource Enrichment) will begin. It is created and will be facilitated by two children therapists. C.A.R.E. will offer three concurrent discussion



groups; one for parents, one for siblings and supervised fun activities for the special needs child. Baby sitting is offered to very young children upon request.

Personally speaking, I feel that each day has presented different challenges, and conquering the daily ups and downs would have been almost impossible, without the support of my husband and friends here in Geneva.

We hope that you will join us for our monthly coffee mornings, which offer moral support to many parents who might be struggling alone with frustration of dealing with their special needs children. Even after 4 years of running the support group, I am still amazed of the number of parents who have said, "I wish I had heard of ASK earlier. I have felt so alone all these years."

Yes, we are here and our motto is always: **ASK - we are here to help.**

Happy reading!

Joy and the newsletter team

*"Hope is the companion of power and the mother of success. For who hopes strongly has within him the gift of miracles." quote supplied by Mary Kay*

## Memories from ASK's SUMMER CAMPS

### Reflections from the Camps



*"I realized we had formed a cohesive group with each person an integral member, each contributing and each taking something out of it."*



The first annual ASK Summer Camp is officially over and I have had time to reflect upon it. There are many things that could be said about the camp but the one that stands out the most for me, above all, is that a lot of fun was had by all.

Going through the pictures, and videos, often filmed by the children themselves, I recalled the smiling faces, laughter and fits of giggles, especially whenever water was involved. Of course, there were moments with arguments, but the children were mostly able to resolve them by themselves and once resolved, were able to play happily together again.

I watched from a distance and saw children truly interacting with one another, which in itself thrilled me as many of these children had been described to me as having difficulties making or keeping friends.

When I got a little closer I heard snippets of conversations involving make believe play, riding horses to the supermarket and building tree houses complete with elevators. When I got even closer, I heard comments such as "we're so lucky to be riding the bus" or complete silence as the children watched two ferrets wrestling one another for fun.

I watched as the older children learnt to play gently and appropriately with

the younger ones and as the more able children hung back to wait for or to help those less able.

I watched as the children accepted that everyone is different; I answered innocent questions about difference and I saw them internalize this information. When I stepped back once again, I realized we had formed a cohesive group with each person an integral member, each contributing and each taking something out of it. Finally, I smiled as I saw how far each child had come in such a short period of time!

Each child developed in some way, not only because of the experienced and enthusiastic staff and volunteers but also because each child also positively contributed to the group dynamic. It is because of all these reasons and many more that I consider the first annual ASK summer camp to be a great success and I look forward to the ASK October camp (and many more camps to come).

Petal Jaffrey (ASK Camp Coordinator)  
[petal.jaffrey@allspecialkids.org](mailto:petal.jaffrey@allspecialkids.org)



## Memories from ASK's SUMMER CAMPS

### ASK Summer Camp Work Experience

Working at the ASK Summer Camp for children with special needs was an experience more valuable and enlightening than I had ever imagined when signing up for it. With one on one contact with the children most of the time you really developed a friendly relationship with the children that builds their confidence in you and your love and respect towards them.

Having worked with the children for a week you develop an enormous sense of admiration for them as you begin to see their progress and development in just one week. Initially a child would be shy and would have to be encouraged to play and talk with the other children but by the end of the week they are the ones inviting others to play games with them. Working at the camp is not only a very rewarding experience as you feel a sense of achievement and well being in helping someone else to develop in their lives; but at the same time it is very insightful and mind-opening in itself as you begin to appreciate all that you have much more fully and to a greater extent. All those things you take for granted suddenly seem a lot more valuable in your life to the point that it seems working at the Camp helped you as a person just as much as it helped the children.

The volunteer work at the ASK summer camp truly was a wonderful and unforgettable experience that benefited and helped me just as much as did the children.

Arjuna S. (Volunteer CAS Student)



### My Personal Experience

This summer, I volunteered at the ASK summer camp for my CAS program at school. I think the camp was really well organized to receive children with social problems. I think it was a good idea to include kids in a friendly environment so they can be easily integrate into a society that is "tougher" for them to enter. This experience hasn't only brought me CAS hours; it has also given me good contact with other kids.

I really hope that I and my colleagues have given them hope to enjoy life and confidence to believe they can achieve anything they wish to do in life and not be blinded by their difficulties.

Thomas P. (Volunteer CAS Student)





*“Build on the atmosphere of friendship and co-operation fostered there by introducing a Social Program for all our children to enjoy”*



## ASK Geneva Monthly Kid's Social Program

A new venture to foster friendship and social skills between children

With the success of the ASK Summer Camps still fresh in our minds, we want to build on the atmosphere of friendship and co-operation fostered there by introducing a Social Program for all our children to enjoy.

The children will meet each month from September to June for an outing: going to the Movies or the Circus, bowling, making pizzas, having a party...the list is endless!

The ratio will be 3 adults/students to 8 children so places will be limited to the number of adult/students volunteers available and will be allocated on a first come first served basis to subscribers.

There will be an open meeting on Thursday 20th September at 19:00 hr for parents who would like to receive more information, help chaperone the children or subscribe their children to the program.

The first outing will be 10 pin bowling either on Friday 29th September or Saturday 30th September (venue, date and time to be confirmed at the open meeting).

Kid's Social Program Coordinator  
Karen Wilkins  
[karen.wilkins@allspecialkids.org](mailto:karen.wilkins@allspecialkids.org)

## "Monthly Kid's Social"

A new venture to foster friendship and social skills between children

Frequency: Monthly from September to June

Proposed activities:

**Movies, Bowling, Pizza Parties, Circus, the list is endless...**

We would like to invite all interested parents to join us at the open meeting at Webster University, to discuss the formation of ASK sponsored monthly kid's social activities program to receive more information, volunteer to chaperone the children and/or subscribe to the program.

Where: Webster University, Bellevue, Jura Bldg. Rm # 21

When: Thursday 20th September. Time: 19:00 to 21:00hr

First outing will be 10 pin bowling either on Friday 28th September or Saturday 29th September (Venue, date and time to be confirmed at the open meeting)

Please contact Karen Wilkins: Tel: 022.755.0032 or

E-mail: [karen.wilkins@allspecialkids.org](mailto:karen.wilkins@allspecialkids.org)

## ASK's October Activity Camp

Skills Building Through Constructive Play and Activities

All Children Welcome - Special Needs and No Special Needs

ASK's October Camp focuses on fun in a safe and supportive environment during the school break, whereby children can develop new skills through constructive play and activities, make friends and be themselves. Children will benefit from low child to adult ratio in a program created and run by two therapists, Petal Jaffrey, MA, who is the coordinator of ASK's Camps and Nadia Fakhouri, MA.

Activities include art, drama, team games, exploration of different materials, creative expression, scientific experiments, photography and relaxation and outings. All activities have been chosen to promote, social skills, positive self-esteem, self discovery and awareness, cooperation, problem-solving and acceptance of differences in self and others.

When: October 22-26th, 2007, 9am to 4 pm

Where: Webster University, Commons Room

Cost: 875 CHF

If needed, One to One assistance is provided for an extra fee of 200 CHF unless the assistant is provided by parent

Contact [petal.Jaffrey@allspecialkids.org](mailto:petal.Jaffrey@allspecialkids.org) for more information and registration

**\*\*Special Limited-Time offer: 100Chf discounts for ASK members, participants of ASK's Summer Camp and enrollment received before 6th October 2007.\*\***



*“All activities have been chosen to promote, social skills, positive self-esteem, self discovery and awareness, cooperation, problem-solving and acceptance of differences in self and others”*



## Geneva Viewpoint



*"I'd reached a really low point in my life. It seemed like I'd explored every possible avenue and I was fast losing hope. I felt so isolated and desperate for answers "*

My son recently attended a Social Skills Summer Camp run by ASK.

Let me start by explaining how I came to know about this very special camp and why I thought my son would benefit from attending something like this.

You see my son has been diagnosed with dyspraxia, amongst other things. He attends a local French speaking school, where the focus is on the children's difficulties rather than on their strengths and the teachers refuse to accept any suggestions towards adapting their teaching methods. They prefer to use punishment to make the children do as they're told instead of positive encouragement, to motivate them.

We have spent the past year going from one specialist to another. Each time a different diagnosis has been offered and on top of this we've had to endure the condescending, inflexible attitudes of our son's teachers.

Just before I went on holiday, I'd reached a really low point in my life. It seemed like I'd explored every possible avenue and I was fast losing hope. I felt so isolated and desperate for answers.

Then, I decided to contact ASK. I'd heard about them through friends and even saw it advertised in a book. So I sent an email to ASK, pouring out my heart and explaining my frustrations.

Then Joy Tong answered my email and offered to help straight away. She immediately gave me practical, as well as, emotional support.

Meeting Joy was like, when you are about to trip and someone catches your fall.

She managed to restore my faith and suggested the Social Skills Summer Camp for my son.

In the beginning, I had certain reservations about the degree of special needs the other children had and whether this would have a negative impact on our son.

Well I couldn't have been more wrong. The team were absolutely fantastic with the children and created a safe, positive and totally secure environment. My son came away saying that he wished he could go to that school all the time and he wanted "Masa", who was his form tutor during the week, to be his teacher always because he never got angry with him like his current teacher did.

My son really enjoyed going to this camp and being surrounded by people who made him feel positive about himself, allowed him to really open up.

One of the biggest difficulties he found was approaching other children in the playground and initiating play. The ASK team worked on this with him and by the end of the week, he was able to go up to other children and confidently ask them to play with him.

For us this Summer Camp has been a very positive and enriching experience. We have made some wonderful friends and the future looks brighter.

**DQ 11.8.07**



## Bern Viewpoint

It is with great pleasure to be writing on behalf of the ASK/Bern-Chapter. As the first ASK chapter outside of Geneva, we are honored to have this opportunity to participate in this unique and much appreciated self-help group.

As many of you have experienced, parenting special needs children often brings us into contact with amazing people of a broad spectrum of talents. The common threads of patience, love and understanding run through all of these people. Sometimes we meet extraordinary ones who have extra doses of enthusiasm, encouragement, perception and initiative as well. I had the pleasure of meeting two such women on June 16 of this year, namely Joy and Elaine.

From our first telephone conversation the sparks were flying and ideas for starting a Bern chapter began to form. After our lunch meeting in June it was obvious that Joy and Elaine had a plan and I quickly became part of it!

The birth of our daughter Elena 12 years ago started us on a path of experiencing the world differently, practically from day one. The joy of having our first child was so overwhelming and the slow understanding that she was "different" presented our first real life challenges as a family. Together with Elena, our 9 year old son Luka, my husband Rainer and I continue to be hopeful and grateful for all that we have been given. We realize that the support of others is essential to finding family harmony, health and in helping Elena to ease toward achieving her own self potential.

We have met neurologists, cardiologists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, homeopathic doctors, kinesiologists, naturapaths, low vision trainers, Physycomotorics, tutors, nurses, special ed teachers, pediatricians, ear doctors, eye doctors, Auditory Integration Training (AIT) specialists, educational psychologists, eurhythmy therapists, music therapists, nutritionist, and least but not last (and never enough of), other PARENTS of special needs kids!

Self help organizations provide us with a base support and information to help carry us forward in those moments when we just feel stuck and frustration sets in. Also it can give us the opportunity to share in the little joys of accomplishment that others cannot imagine to be momentous, but we all understand. We can never give up hope for our children, our families or ourselves.

ASK is a wonderful resource for all of us parents. It has definitely been a missing resource in the Bern area and has already been received with open arms and hearts by the international community here. Many Swiss nationals, be parents, doctors or therapists, have also voiced their support and interest in our group. We look so forward to welcoming and meeting many new members very soon at one of our monthly get-togethers starting in September or at our ASK/Bern-Chapter kick off on November 27.

Thank you to Joy and Elaine for your guidance, wisdom and support!

Mary Kay Zumbach  
ASK/Bern-chapter Regional Director  
[marykayZ@allspecialkids.org](mailto:marykayZ@allspecialkids.org)



*“Self help organizations provide us with a base support and information to help carry us forward in those moments when we just feel stuck and frustration sets in”*





*“Children will be encouraged to discuss thoughts and concerns that may be troubling them in an accepting and supportive environment”*



## C.A.R.E. a family approach

### Community Assistance Resource Enrichment

What is the CARE program?

CARE is a program offering a family approach, whereby the whole family is being supported; parents, the child with special needs and his or her siblings .

CARE offered three different concurrent monthly programs and one weekly support program for teenage siblings to meet the needs of the whole family.

**1. Support and discussion group for parents of children with special needs** (Couples encouraged) facilitated by Nadia Fakhouri, MA

In the parents' group, the parents are encouraged to express their needs and their areas of concern. The facilitator will serve as a mediator, providing extra information when requested but will otherwise be there to stimulate discussion when necessary and to ensure that everyone's needs are met. The goal of the group is for the parents to find support in one another and the facilitator's role will be to provide an emotionally safe environment which fosters open communication and a sense of cohesiveness.

**2. Support and discussion through games and activities for siblings of children with special needs** (ages 7-12) led by Petal Jaffrey, MA

In the siblings' group the facilitator will provide a structured environment and will introduce games and activities that will stimulate the children to express emotions at their own pace.

Children will be encouraged to discuss thoughts and concerns that may be troubling them in an accepting and supportive environment. Children will gain peer support and a sense of affirmation that others are experiencing similar feelings.

**3. Fun activities for children with special needs** (age 5-12), while parents and siblings attend the discussion groups - run by participants of the Webster Counseling Program under the supervision of Nadia Fakhouri and Petal Jaffrey

In this group for children with special needs, we will be organizing fun entertaining activities in a welcoming, interactive environment. We aim to provide them with the opportunity to meet and play with one another.

Note: Babysitting service offered for ages 3 to 6 upon request

**4. Weekly support and discussion group for teenage siblings** (aged 13-19) run by Nadia Fakhouri and Petal Jaffrey

Considering the unique challenges of being a teenager as well as a sibling of a child with special needs, we are providing a separate weekly group to provide them with an opportunity to fully express their possibly conflicting emotions in a neutral and safe environment.

For more information please contact:

**CARE Program Coordinator**

**Nadia Fakhouri**

[Nadia.care@allspecialkids.org](mailto:Nadia.care@allspecialkids.org)

[Petal.jaffrey@allspecialkids.org](mailto:Petal.jaffrey@allspecialkids.org)



## DYSCACULIA: The Trouble with Maths

Presented by Steve Chinn and Fil Came

Two leading experts and renowned educational trainers from U.K

Date: Saturday 1st and Sunday 2nd December 2007, Time: 9:00-16.00hr

Place: Webster University - Commons Room, Route de Collex 15, CH-1293 Bellevue, Switzerland

Online registration form: [http://www.allspecialkids.org/Dyscalculia\\_Registration\\_Form.htm](http://www.allspecialkids.org/Dyscalculia_Registration_Form.htm)

### The Trouble with Maths

Many children are troubled by Maths and there are many factors to consider when a pupil is not succeeding in learning mathematics, e.g. a weak memory, poor organisation, a mis-match between teaching and learning styles or a curriculum that leaves the pupil behind! But how can we identify and what intervention to use?

This *two-day course* offers a unique opportunity to work with two leading experts and renowned educational trainers from England, Steve Chinn and Fil Came. Based on the latest research, the course aims to provide a foundation of understanding and a practical framework of strategies for overcoming barriers and difficulties to learning Mathematics.

The Trouble with Maths course is thus directed at:

- Teachers from local mainstream primary and secondary schools and kindergartens
- Teachers working with children with special needs
- Teaching Assistants who are interested to develop their teaching skills for a career change
- Private Tutors Parents interested in developing their own practical knowledge

FEES: Members—CHF300,  
School staff—CHF300,  
Non-members—CHF400

CHF50 discount for early registration with payment received before 1st October  
Discount offered to group of 10 or more. Last registration date 15th November 2007

Please contact [info@allspecialkids.org](mailto:info@allspecialkids.org)

## ASK-Geneva Upcoming Events

### SEPTEMBER 2007

COFFEE MORNING- Informal get together every first Thursday of the month\*  
13th September - 10:00 - 12:00hr  
R.S.V.P: [gehlC@allspecialkids.org](mailto:gehlC@allspecialkids.org)

ASSESSMENT WITH DR. GAVIN REID\*  
17th to 20th September 2007  
By appointment only. [info@allspecialkids.org](mailto:info@allspecialkids.org)

### OCTOBER 2007

COFFEE MORNING- Informal get together  
4th October - 10:00 - 12:00hr  
R.S.V.P: [gehlC@allspecialkids.org](mailto:gehlC@allspecialkids.org)

ASK Activity Camp for kids aged 5-13  
22nd—26th October 2007—9 to 16:00 hr  
Webster University Commons Room  
Registration: [petal.jaffrey@allspecialkids.org](mailto:petal.jaffrey@allspecialkids.org)

### NOVEMBER 2007

COFFEE MORNING- Informal get together  
1st November - 10:00 - 12:00hr  
R.S.V.P: [gehlC@allspecialkids.org](mailto:gehlC@allspecialkids.org)

### DECEMBER 2007

DYSCACULIA: The Trouble with Maths\*  
Presented by Steve Chinn and Fil Came  
Two leading experts and renowned educational trainers from U.K  
Date: Sat 1st and Sun 2nd December 2007,  
Time: 9:00-16.00hr  
Place: Webster University - Commons Room

COFFEE MORNING- Informal get together  
6TH December - 10:00 - 12:00hr  
R.S.V.P: [gehlC@allspecialkids.org](mailto:gehlC@allspecialkids.org)

## ASK/Bern-Chapter Upcoming Events

### SEPTEMBER 2007

First Monthly Parents Get Together  
18th September - 10 to 12 noon  
Längenlooweg 16 3322 Urtenen-Schönbühl  
RSVP: [info.be@allspecialkids.org](mailto:info.be@allspecialkids.org)

### OCTOBER 2007

Monthly Parents Get Together  
23rd October - 19:00 to 21:00 hr  
St. Ursula's Church Hall, Jubiläumsplatz 2, 3000  
RSVP: [info.be@allspecialkids.org](mailto:info.be@allspecialkids.org)

### NOVEMBER 2007

Monthly Parents Get Together  
6th November - 10 to 12 noon  
Längenlooweg 16 3322 Urtenen-Schönbühl  
RSVP: [info.be@allspecialkids.org](mailto:info.be@allspecialkids.org)

ASK/Bern-Chapter KICK OFF  
27th November - 19:00 - 21:30 hr  
St. Ursula's Church Hall, Jubiläumsplatz 2, 3000  
RSVP: [info.be@allspecialkids.org](mailto:info.be@allspecialkids.org)

DECEMBER 2007  
No scheduled event.

## Monthly Kid's Social Program Calendar

September 20th: Open meeting (see page 5)  
September\*: Fri 28 and/or Sat 29—**10 Pin Bowling**  
October: No scheduled event. ASK Activity Camp  
November\*: Friday 9th or Saturday 10th:  
December\*: Friday 7th or Saturday 8th: Winter Party  
(\* Date/time/venue to be confirmed)  
Contact: [Karen.wilkins@allspecialkids.org](mailto:Karen.wilkins@allspecialkids.org)