

November 2017

Panelists: "Prepare for Emergencies Now!"

On September 30th nearly 100 family members, self-advocates, first responders, service providers and others came together at the Martin Luther King Performing Arts Center in Charlottesville to network, learn, watch equipment demonstrations, and view onsite emergency vehicles and equipment. Our mission: to enhance awareness of public safety challenges that face individuals with disabilities. Mission accomplished!



The [Disabilities Public Safety Forum](#) was co-hosted by CRAAG and 7 other organizations: Virginia Institute of Autism (VIA), Blue Ridge Care Connection for Children (BRCCC), The Arc of the Piedmont, REACH Region-1, Region Ten Community Services Board, Charlottesville City Schools, and Commonwealth Autism.

Commonwealth Autism's Public Safety Trainer, Didi Zaryczny, presented "[Awareness Changes Things](#)" an overview of the issue. Bob Kreps, CRAAG Chairperson and parent of an adult daughter on the autism spectrum, moderated the event.

What we learned? **Prepare for emergencies now!**

The panel members:

- Roger Wood, a Greene County parent of a son on the autism spectrum
- Dr. Nancy Taylor, a Fairfax County parent of a son on the autism spectrum, member of regional council with the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Behavioral Services (DBHBS)
- James Vann, REACH Health Planning Region 1 Director
- Chief Andrew Baxter, Charlottesville Fire Department
- Chief Dan Eggleston, Albemarle County Fire Department
- Tom Joyce, Thomas Jefferson Emergency Medical Services Council, Executive Director
- Lt. Mike Gore, Charlottesville Police
- Vera Hailey, Magistrate, 25th Judicial District, Region 2
- Detective Mike Wells, Albemarle County Police, CIT

Roger Wood and **Dr. Nancy Taylor**, shared their stories of tense, although largely positive, interactions with numerous emergency first responders. Their fears? The first responders might make things worse. Their message: *When we call 911, our techniques for de-escalating aren't working. Now it's your turn. And, how you respond is critical, maybe even life and death critical.*

James Vann explained REACH's goal of minimizing law enforcement involvement in mental health emergencies by offering prevention services, intervention, mental health treatment services, and crisis stabilization. REACH is a state-funded ID/DD crisis service. *He encourages families to prepare for a crisis by connecting with REACH before one arises.* In emergencies, REACH mental health clinicians may be able to stabilize the individual in their own home without hospitalization or incarceration.

Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training of emergency personnel was the focus of two law enforcement panelists. **Lt. Mike Gore** (Charlottesville) and **Detective Mike Wells** (Albemarle) are both leaders in the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training. This 40-hour long training, used by 35 Police Departments and Sherriffs' Offices across Virginia and nationwide, is a successful model of improving police interaction with people experiencing acute episodes of mental illness. *The trained CIT officer is prepared to recognize and de-escalate crises, while bringing empathy and compassion to these difficult situations.* Albemarle County PD requires officers to be CIT-trained prior to any promotion within the department.

Captain Andrew Baxter (Charlottesville) and **Captain Dan Eggleston** (Albemarle) also advocated for CIT training for firefighters. They consider *firefighter education to be the starting point for a successful outcome in a crisis.* Baxter wears two hats – Fire Chief and parent of a young adult son on the autism spectrum.

Tom Joyce considers the 911 first-responder's most important job *to not make the crisis worse*. Parents/caregivers can help tremendously by identifying their family member to the local 911 call centers and fire/police. According to Joyce, if a first-responder is prepared with a *short bio of the person and some awareness of what might be achievable in a short time frame, they will be more likely to successfully de-escalate the crisis*.

Magistrate Vera Hailey prefers to meet individuals before there is a crisis. She asked families to be proactive and *prepare for a crisis by introducing the disabled individual to their local Magistrate*.

The panel discussion was followed by a very interesting Q and A session with the audience. Follow this [link](#) to review the valuable information shared by the panelists. Every family needs to understand this information and the resources available to them in a crisis.

Our community came together around this important topic. Many thanks to everyone who participated. Future public safety discussions may continue to deepen the discussion with first-responders and address new issues such as bullying and online safety for people with disabilities.

CRAAG Updates

CRAAGs HOLIDAY CHANGES - MARK YOUR CALENDARS: Due to the upcoming holidays, November's Lifespan meeting moves to the week *after* Thanksgiving, Wednesday, November 29th from 10 – Noon, at WorkSource Enterprises, 1311 Carlton Ave, Charlottesville. And, the December meeting is *cancelled*. Lifespan's focus and priorities include housing, qualified services, employment, transition, socialization, advocacy and awareness for individuals with ASD and other developmental disabilities. Please join us on January 24th for the first meeting of 2018. Lastly, the CRAAG newsletter is taking a holiday break. The January issue will be published at the beginning of 2018. To all our readers, have a safe and happy holiday season!



2016-2017 IMPACT REPORT: Autism Action Groups, like CRAAG, were initiated by **Commonwealth Autism (CA)**, and we've been under CA's umbrella since 2010. As the [Impact Report](#) shows, CA has had a great year serving autism families and professionals.

EARLY DIAGNOSIS OF AUTISM: Licensed Clinical Psychologist and director of Diagnostics and Research and the Transdisciplinary Diagnostic Clinic at **Commonwealth Autism**, Donald Oswald, PhD shares his thoughts in an interesting new post on early diagnosis, [Toddlers and the ADOS](#). ADOS stands for Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule - 2nd Edition, the most-recognized diagnostic tool for autism.

FACEBOOK: CRAAG needs your help to grow our Facebook page and get the word out about our cause. Please [like](#) CRAAG's Facebook page and share it with 2 other self-advocates, family caregivers, or autism professionals. Thank you!

Partner Updates

EVENTS FOR FAMILIES AND SIBLINGS: The **Virginia Institute of Autism (VIA)** announces two free events for children and parents/caregivers. On November 1st, attorney Neal Walters will hold a [workshop](#) on special needs trusts and guardianship. On November 29th, VIA is holding its annual free [cookie decorating & holiday crafts party](#) for siblings ages 5-14.

SENSORY-FRIENDLY THEATER EXPERIENCES FOR CHILDREN: The **Autism Theater Project (ATP)** announces its [fall season](#). ATP offers safe, judgement-free environments for audiences who would benefit from accessibility accommodations. They provide inclusive theater experiences for neurodiverse audience members and their families by partnering with theater organizations to create sensory-friendly productions. First up is *The Aristocats* at the Culbreth Theater on Friday November 10th in conjunction with the Virginia Film Festival, and then *A Christmas Story* at Four County Players in Barboursville on Saturday,

December 2nd. [Learn more.](#)

LIVE AND LEARN - INFORMATION AND RESOURCE FAIR: The **PREP/Parent Resource Center** announces a [free event](#) connecting families, schools, and communities on November 11th in Charlottesville. This fair will include presentations, a resource fair with exhibitors, door prizes, and refreshments.

MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID (MHFA) TRAINING: The **Region Ten CSB** is offering two final 2017 training sessions of [Mental Health First Aid](#) on November 10th (Youth) and December 8th (Adult). Mental Health First Aid helps individuals to support those experiencing mental health problems and aids in getting people professional help and support. It is an interactive 8-hour course that teaches a 5-step action plan to offer initial help to people with the signs and symptoms of a mental illness or in a crisis, and connect them with the appropriate professional, peer, social, or self-help care. See [brochure](#) or [website](#) for more information. A 2018 training alert will be available soon.

PLANNING FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH: Some of our readers may have attended the September 2017 *Embracing Transformation Symposium* organized by the **Region Ten CSB**. For those who couldn't attend the Symposium, and for others who want to hear it again, we have a [video link](#).

Autism Support Groups

CRAAG/BRCCC Special Needs Support Group: for parents and grandparents of children with special needs. This month's topic is the *School Year Check-In*.
Time: 2nd Friday of the month from 12:30 - 2:30 pm
Location: 500 Park Street, Charlottesville
More information: [Flyer](#)



VIA Autism Support Group: Parents/caregivers of a child or grandchild newly diagnosed with autism, join VIA's Hilary Nagel, MSW, LCSW for support and resource sharing.
Time: 1st Wednesday of the month from 9 -10:15 am
Location: C'Ville Coffee, 1301 Harris St. Charlottesville
More information: [Flyer](#)

Fun On The Spectrum: For parents and youths ages 18 to young adult
Time: 2nd Thursday of the month from 7:00 - 9:00 pm
Location: Maple Grove Christian Church Youth Center, Profitt Road, Charlottesville
More information: [Flyer](#)

Recreational Activities



ATA Martial Arts for Children with Autism
For children ages 3+
Time: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 3:30 - 4 pm
Location: 243 Zan Road, Charlottesville
[Flyer](#)



Autism Class at the Little Gym
For children ages 4 to 10
Time: Fridays, 5 - 5:45 pm
Location: Stonefield, 2075 Bond St., Suite 140, Charlottesville
[Flyer](#)

Therapeutic Recreation

Area 3



Special Olympics
Virginia

Special Olympics - Virginia

Provides year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities.

[Website](#)

Emergency Links*

CRAAG and BRCCC Resources

[CRAAG/BRCCC Resource Directory \(June 2017\)](#)

[BRCCC/CRAAG Safety Manual \(August 2017\)](#)

Emergency 911 Call Centers in CRAAG's Region

[Charlottesville/UVA/Albemarle - Emergency Communications Center](#)

[Fluvanna County Sheriff's Office](#)

[Greene County Sheriff's Office](#)

[Louisa County Sheriff's Office](#)

[Nelson County Sheriff's Office](#)

Project Lifesaver Programs in CRAAG's Region

[Albemarle County \(includes Charlottesville\)](#)

[Fluvanna County](#)

[Greene County](#)

[Louisa County](#)

Other Links

[Blue Ridge Poison Control](#)

800-222-1222

[Autism Speaks List of ASD Safety Products](#)

***Links change monthly**

CRAAG | Serving Charlottesville, Albemarle, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa, Nelson | [Email](#) | [Website](#)

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Connect - Engage - Learn - Change