Rethinking Autism

State Conference

April 15-18, 2015

Featuring:

Tracy Thresher & Larry Bissonnette

from ***Wretches & Jabberers***

Registration Packet

Hosted by:

Optimal Rhythms | ACCESS Academy



February, 2015

To Whom It May Concern,

In September 2014 we opened a therapeutic day school program, **ACCESS Academy** (Assuming Competence Can Ensure Student Success), to support the specialized needs of non-verbal students on the autism spectrum in our community. Our school has received a great deal of positive press and recognition in our short existence. Our CEO/Founder, Casey DePriest, MT-BC, has been providing clinical services since 1995, but her work recently led her and some of her colleagues to recognize the need to "Rethink" autism. Casey was recognized as a 2014 Courier & Press Health Care Hero and has been nominated for a Leadership Evansville award in 2015 for her innovative work in our community and her dedication to individuals and families affected by autism.

At **Optimal Rhythms / ACCESS Academy**, we work with nonverbal students on the autism spectrum, using a neurologic approach which addresses the movement differences and the brain-body disconnect associated with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), while always *presuming competence*. We also assist the youth in finding their voices and developing reliable communication through supportive communication and technology. Our program is evidence-based and quite ground-breaking, with only one other organization in the country (Arizona) on the front lines with us offering a similar approach and a therapeutic school program like our ACCESS Academy. Our hope is that you will review this information and consider joining us as we celebrate **Autism Awareness Month in April**.

Due to the rising prevalence of autism spectrum disorder in our community and across the world, there is a growing need for more education, clinical information and data about autism. The evidence about the neurologic differences in autism is increasing and this is bringing about differences in beliefs and is leading to new strategies for treatment. Our new approaches to autism treatment and autism education are making a significant difference in the lives of children, adults, and families in our community and across the region. We are excited to be hosting a number of exciting events in April, including a statewide autism conference featuring self-advocates, therapists, and autism experts who will be speaking to the need for us to begin **RETHINKINGAUTISM.** We are thrilled to announce that our events in April will feature the world-renown stars of the documentary, ***Wretches & Jabberers***! We hope you will join us and share this information to make these events available to professionals and families who can really benefit from attending the conference or one of the other offerings this same week.

The **2015 RETHINKING AUTISM Conference** will bring together hundreds of voices as a passionate statewide network to inspire hope and ignite change. Speakers, educators, students, paraprofessionals, therapists, psychologists, medical professionals, caregivers, parents, individuals on the spectrum, and many other interested persons will learn from Tracy Thresher and Larry Bissonnette, stars of ***Wretches & Jabberers*** fame; Marilyn Chadwick, Speech/Language Pathologist and Senior Consultant for the Institute for Communication and Inclusion at Syracuse University; Casey DePriest, Board-Certified Music Therapist and Certified Neurologic Music Therapist, owner of Integrative Music Therapy and CEO/Founder of Optimal Rhythms, Inc./ACCESS Academy; and John Smyth, 17 year old non-verbal self-advocate from *Saved by Typing* of Carmel, Indiana.

Benefits to Attending

- Participants will learn about the importance of presuming competence when working with individuals with communication, social, and motor impairments.
- Participants will learn about the benefits, validity, and training protocols of supportive typing as Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC).
- Participants will explore the sensory and movement differences of autism that are too often misunderstood and treated as behavioral responses.
- Participants will learn to recognize the brain-body disconnect experienced by many individuals on the autism spectrum and the neurologic music therapy techniques that can and do make a difference.
- Participants will learn how "silent supports" can lead to improved motor functioning, sensory regulation, emotional regulation, communication, academic access, and self-esteem in individuals on the autism spectrum.

Attached you will find the registration packet with all of the available opportunities to get involved. You can reach us at 812-491-9401 or gailkw@optimalrhythms.org . We look forward to having you and your friends or colleagues join us as we begin **RETHINKING AUTISM** in our community this April.

Thank you,

The Board of Directors of Optimal Rhythms, Inc.

RETHINKING AUTISM CONFERENCE

FEATURING: *WRETCHES & JABBERERS*

About the Speakers

WRETCHES & JABBERERS ROADTRIP FILM SHEDS PERSONAL LIGHT ON THE FACE OF AUTISM

"Banishes the myths about autism and reveals its global face." – Parade
"An eye-opening and most entertaining doc... nearly perfect" – The Hollywood Reporter
"Autism finds its voice." – Newsweek
"Ingenious documentary about real autistics" – Wall Street Journal

Oscar® winner and twice Academy Award® -nominated filmmaker, Gerardine Wurzburg, has completed a compelling feature documentary called Wretches & Jabberers. Wurzburg's inspiring documentary chronicles the world travels of disability rights advocates, Tracy Thresher and Larry Bissonnette, in a bold quest to change attitudes about the intelligence and abilities of people with autism.

Until the 1980s, most children and young adults with autism in the US were excluded from normal schooling. Some were placed in mental institutions. Like many children with autism, Tracy and Larry grew up unable to speak. They faced a future of social isolation in adult disability centers. When Tracy was 23 and Larry 34, their lives changed when they learned to communicate by typing. Larry notes, "nothing I did...convinced people I had an inner life until I started typing."

In the film (and again this April), Tracy and Larry take to the road with their support team, Harvey Lavoy and Pascal Cheng, to promote awareness of the hidden intelligence in those who face speech, communication, and movement challenges.

Who Should Attend

PTs & PTAs
OTs & OTAs
Speech & Language
Physicians & PAs
Nurses
Direct Care Staff
Music Therapists
Mental Health Workers
Special & Gen Ed Teachers
Educational Assistants
Social Workers
Students
Psychologists
Law Enforcement
Criminal Justice
School Administrators
Self-Advocates
Parents / Caregivers

RETHINKING AUTISM CONFERENCE

FEATURING: *WRETCHES & JABBERERS*

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will learn about the importance of presuming competence when working with individuals with communication, social, and motor impairments.
- Participants will learn about the benefits, validity, and training protocols of supportive typing as Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC).
- Participants will explore the sensory and movement differences of autism that are too often misunderstood and treated as behavioral responses.
- Participants will learn to recognize the brain-body disconnect experienced by many individuals on the autism spectrum and the neurologic music therapy techniques that can and do make a difference.
- Participants will learn how "silent supports" can lead to improved motor functioning, sensory regulation, emotional regulation, communication, academic access, and self-esteem in individuals on the autism spectrum.

Registration Information

RETHINKING AUTISM Conference

_____The Crescent Room at Milestones_____
621 S. Cullen Avenue, Suite 120
Evansville, Indiana
April 17, 2015 7:30AM – 5:00PM

Welcome to the **RETHINKING AUTISM** Conference registration.
General conference registration includes access to full conference offerings.
#**RETHINKAUTISM** Reception and Meet & Greet with Tracy & Larry is an additional cost.

Additional information about the conference and specific details about CEUs offered will be provided soon. Each attendee will receive an email when this information becomes available. We apologize for the delay but appreciate your patience.

Registration Fees	Early Bird Until April 3	Regular/Onsite April 4 and after
Conference Professionals	$159	$179
5 or more	$129	$179
Family	$129	$149
5 or more	$105	$149
Students	$ 65	$ 85

Group Registration: General Conference per-person discount is available, starting with the fifth registration, when all registrations in group are submitted together.

**Individuals on the spectrum/self-advocates with financial needs, please call us at 812-491-9401 to request help with the registration fees. If financial support can be provided, we will notify you.

All attendees over the age of 18 must register. Children under the age of 18 are complimentary but must be registered. Pre-registration is not available for minors, they must be registered onsite.

Registration cancellation requests received before and on April 3, 2015 will be processed without a cancellation penalty. A full refund will be granted. Registration cancellation requests received after April 3, 2015 will be processed minus a $50.00 cancellation penalty per registration.

If you would like to speak with a person about conference registration, you can reach our contact center by calling 812-491-9401 or email gailkw@optimalrhythms.org

Conference Registration Form

Thank you for your interest in the **2015 RETHINKING AUTISM Conference**. Please fill in the below conference registration form as an individual or for each person attending from your group, company, or organization. Group registrations must be submitted together.

Name: (Please Print)_____
Company/Organization: _____
Title:_____ **Are you interested in CEUs?**_____
Phone: _____ **Email:** _____
Address/ Street: _____
City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip:** _____
Please indicate if you require special accommodations:
_____

Early Bird Rates:

____ $159 Professionals (Includes CEUs) **____ 5 or more Professionals $129 each**

____ $129 Family **____ 5 or more Families $105 each**

____ $65 Students

Day of event Pricing:

____ $179 – Professionals **____ $149 – Families** **____ $85 – Students**

#RETHINKAUTISM Reception and Meet & Greet with Tracy & Larry (6:30 – 8:30 pm)
____ $35 **____ $25 (with paid conference registration)**

____ Please register me for the FREE *Wretches & Jabberers* Movie Screening and Community Forum at 2:00pm on Saturday after the Evansville Walk for Autism and 5K

I'm paying for _____ total registration(s) in the amount of $_____.

Please mail completed form with your check, money order, or credit card payment to:

RETHINKING AUTISM Conference
c/o Optimal Rhythms, Inc.
621 S. Cullen Ave., Ste. 120
Evansville, IN. 47715

***Credit Card Payments:**

Card Type: Visa / Discover / Mastercard
Card # _____
Expiration Date: _____

Signature: _____
***You may also call 812-491-9400 to pay by credit card. Credit cards will also be accepted at event.**

RETHINKING AUTISM Conference

Vendor Information

April 15 – April 18, 2015 **Evansville, Indiana**

Conference Exhibitor Opportunities $ 200

Exhibitors have a reserved space for the entire conference day

One eight-foot, table with two chairs
Promotion in Optimal Rhythms social media
Listing in conference materials
Listing on www.optimalrhythms.org website
One conference registration
If needed, electricity at your table.

Please complete form and return with payment:

(Space is limited and vender requests will be assigned on a first come first served basis.)

Organization Name: _____

Contact Person: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Will you be selling items? ___ YES ___ NO

If yes, describe: _____

Do you need electricity? _____

Are you willing to donate an item for the Attendance Drawing?

___ YES ___ NO If yes, what do you plan to donate?

_____ Value: $_____

Rethinking Autism c/o Optimal Rhythms, Inc, 621 S. Cullen Ave., Suite 120, Evansville, IN 47715
Questions? Call 812.491.9401

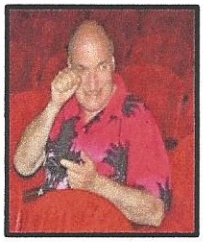
Conference Agenda

Schedule

Friday, April 17, 2015	**RETHINKING AUTISM Conference**
7:30 am to 8:00 am	Continental Breakfast
8:00 am to 10:00 am	Opening Ceremonies – Wretches & Jabberers Trailer / Introductions Keynote Address: Tracy Thresher & Larry Bissonnette With Support Team Harvey Lavoy and Pascal Cheng *Why Presuming Competence is the Least Dangerous Assumption*
10:00 am to 10:30 am	Break
10:30 am to 12:00 pm	Presentation: Marilyn Chadwick, SLP *The Communication Connection*
12:00 pm to 1:30 pm	Lunch Break
1:30 pm to 3:00 pm	Presentation: Casey DePriest, MT-BC, NMT *Creating Optimal Rhythms: Effective Supports for Movement Differences*
3:00 pm to 3:15 pm	Break
3:15 pm to 4:00 pm	Presentation: Tracy Thresher & Larry Bissonnette with John Smyth *Developing Self-Advocacy Skills for Success*
4:00 pm to 4:45 pm	Panel Discussion / Q & A
6:30 pm to 8:30 pm	**#RETHINK AUTISM Reception**



Tracy Thresher is an advocate for people with disabilities. He lives and works in Vermont. Tracy began typing to communicate in 1990 and was one of the first individuals with autism at Washington County Mental Health Services (a community-based service provider) to be introduced to it. Prior to finding his voice, Tracy was excluded from normal education and was presumed to be unintelligent and incapable. However, in addition to starring in the nationally recognized documentary, *Wretches & Jabberers*, Tracy has now presented at local, statewide, and national workshops and conferences. He has consulted with local schools, is a former member of the Developmental Services State Standing Committee, and has worked for the Green Mountain Self-Advocates in Montpelier, Vermont. In Vermont, he mentors teenagers and adults. Most recently, Tracy has consulted at Syracuse University as a Lead Trainer.



Larry Bissonnette is a disability rights advocate and artist who lives in Milton, Vermont. He has been painting and drawing since he was a young child and exhibits his art regularly both locally and nationally. In June 2015, he will have a solo exhibition of his art in the Amy Tarrant Gallery in Burlington, Vermont. His work is in the permanent collection of GRACE (Grass Roots Art and Community Effort), Hardwick, Vermont and in the Musée de l'Art Brut, Lausanne, Switzerland. Larry is both the subject and writer of an award winning film about his life, called, *My Classic Life as an Artist: A Portrait of Larry Bissonnette* (2005). Most recently, he starred in a feature length documentary directed by Gerardine Wurzburg about adults with autism called *Wretches and Jabberer (2010).* In 1991, Larry learned to communicate through typing and began combining words with his art to express his thoughts and ideas. Over the past 15 years, he has been a featured presenter at many national educational conferences and has written and spoken on the topics of autism, communication and art.



Marilyn Chadwick is a Speech/Language Pathologist and has been a part of the Institute on Communication and Inclusion at Syracuse University since 1992. She has previously played the roles of Director of Training and Assistant Director of the FCI, developing the various levels of training and working to publish standards on the method of supported typing. Marilyn has been a leader in supporting FC users to work toward independent typing and speaking. Now as the Senior Consultant, she continues to contribute to the Institute on Communication and Inclusion through conferences, independence clinics and the Training of Trainers program at Syracuse and around the country. Marilyn recognizes the role that rhythm plays in support for individuals with movement differences and communication struggles. She participated in neurologic music therapy training to learn more to assist her in her own work. Marilyn is in private practice, based in Syracuse, New York.



Casey DePriest is a Certified Neurologic Music Therapist and a 1994 graduate of the University of Evansville. Casey began her career working in physical rehabilitation, then child/adolescent psychiatric treatment at Welborn's Mulberry Center. In 2002, Casey started a private practice and became an Indiana Medicaid Waiver provider to serve individuals with developmental disabilities. Since that time her practice, Integrative Music Therapy, has grown to reach over 160 clients per week through the addition of six other talented and qualified music therapists. Casey is the Chair of the Indiana Music Therapy Task Force and a member of the Executive Board for the Association for Indiana Music Therapists, which work to raise awareness and provide increased access to quality music therapy services in Indiana. Casey has specialized in autism treatment through nearly 20 years of experience, advanced training, and professional supervision. She recognized a need for increased access to services and educational opportunities for individuals on the spectrum, recognizing their movement differences, neuro-connectivity differences, and related sensory and communication struggles. In 2014, Casey founded Optimal Rhythms, Inc. (501c3) and a new therapeutic school program, ACCESS Academy, to help support the needs of these individuals in our community. Casey is partnering with Colorado State University to further study the impact of rhythm on movement in individuals on the autism spectrum. Casey was recognized in 2014 as a Health Care Hero by the Evansville Courier & Press and is a 2015 Leadership Evansville Nominee.



John Smyth is a 19 year old young man with diagnoses of autism, communication disorder and seizure disorder. John has been nonverbal since he lost his speech to regressive autism at about 20 months of age. For years he was unable to communicate even his most basic needs; he was considered to have the mind of a 3 year-old, and he struggled with severe behaviors. He was placed in life skills classes for most of his education, having taken a couple of years off to do Verbal Behavior Therapy/ABA in a private setting. At the age of 16 ½ he began taking lessons in Supported Typing. To his parents' complete surprise; he began communicating age appropriate thoughts immediately. At the age of 19, John now attends Brownsburg High School, in Brownsburg, Indiana. Having recognized his high level of intelligence, his school placement was changed to a general education placement which includes some necessary accommodations and supports and he will be graduating with a core 40 diploma in May, 2015. John plans to attend college. His mission in life is to share this story with other families of nonverbal children so that "their children will not have to suffer the years of loneliness that I suffered." He was a presenter at the 2014 ICI Summer Institute at Syracuse University. John is the co-founder of the not-for-profit organization, Saved By Typing, in Carmel, Indiana.



The *Wretches & Jabberers* Support Team

Pascal Cheng (far left), Tracy Thresher (center left), Larry Bissonnette (center right) & Harvey Lavoy (far right)

Harvey F. Lavoy, III

Harvey F. Lavoy, III has worked for Community Developmental Services (CDS), a Division of Washington County Mental Health Services in Montpelier, Vermont since 1994. He has a B.S. in Special Education and has worked in the field of Human Services since 1973.

He currently is the Director of Communication Training and Resources at CDS and provides education, training and technical assistance to adults and children with complex communication needs as well as their families, support staff, educational teams, schools and agencies. He has been a member of the Vermont Statewide Communication Task Force since 2000 providing statewide trainings, workshops, and conferences to enable adults in Vermont with developmental disabilities to communicate, make social connections, and participate in community life more fully.

He is a member of a National network of Master Facilitated Communication Trainers. He received a Certificate of Recognition as a Master Trainer in Facilitated Communication in 2006 from the Institute on Communication and Inclusion, School of Education, Syracuse University and provides introductory and skill building training at the institute two to three times a year.

Pascal Cheng

Pascal Cheng has a M. Ed. and C.A.S. in Special Education from the University of Vermont and has worked for over 30 years with children and adults with developmental disabilities in school and community settings.

He currently works for the Howard Center in Burlington, Vermont as an educational and communication specialist, providing training and consultation in the areas of augmentative communication, assistive technology and literacy for children and adults with developmental disabilities. He has developed specific expertise in facilitated communication, an augmentative communication method for individuals with limited speech. Through his work with individuals served by the Howard Center and continued training at the Institute of Communication and Inclusion at Syracuse University, he has gained extensive skill and experience in the use of this method of communication. As part of a national network of Master Trainers in Facilitated Communication, he works as a consultant to schools and agencies and regularly participates as a trainer in local, regional and national workshops and conferences.

His professional associations involve membership on three different statewide committees: the Vermont Communication Task Force, the Vermont Autism Task Force, and the Vermont Assistive Technology Advisory Council.

April is Autism Awareness Month

Plan to join us for these exciting community events:

- **April 17 – Rethinking Autism Conference** 7:30am-5:00pm, Crescent Room, 621 S. Cullen Ave., Evansville
- **April 17 - #RethinkAutism Evening Reception**, 6:30pm-8:30pm, Crescent Room, 621 S. Cullen Ave., Evansville
- **April 18 – 2015 Walk for Autism & 5K**, Vanderburgh 4-H Center
  - 8:00am 5K
  - 9:30am Kids Fun Run
  - 10:00 1 Mile Walk
  - Visit www.iasf4u.org for details
- **April 18 – Rethinking Autism with *Wretches & Jabberers* Movie Screening and Community Forum**, 2:00pm – 4:00pm, Crescent Room, 621 S. Cullen Ave., Evansville