

Autism INSTITUTE



On Saturday, April 14, the Fifth Annual Autism Conference will be held at the Center for Lifelong Learning.

The Conference will run 9:00am-3:00pm with multiple breakout sessions throughout the day addressing a wide variety of topics.

Professionals, paraprofessionals, preparing professionals and family members are invited to attend the conference which includes a continental breakfast and lunch.

There is no cost for the conference for those individuals who work or live in Montgomery County. For all others, there is a \$50 fee.

The Conference is sponsored by the Montgomery County Child Development Foundation. There are more than one million children on the autism spectrum in America – an epidemic that brings countless concerns and issues for the parents and educators who care for the fastest-growing population of special needs children. Autism spectrum disorders (ASD), cover five disorders – autism, Asperger’s Syndrome, Rett’s Syndrome, Childhood Disintegrative Disorder and PDD-NOS (Pervasive Developmental Disorder – Not Otherwise Specified).

Gwynedd-Mercy College saw a need to address this issue by educating our aspiring teachers and community members, thus becoming the driving force behind the creation of the Autism Institute.

The Institute’s hands-on workshops, professional development activities, on-site service programs and educational presentations at area conferences all provide research-based best practices for students majoring in special education, teachers and administrators, parents of children on the autism spectrum and any interested community members. All offerings carry Act 48 continuing education hours conducted under the authority of the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Hundreds of certified teachers in Pennsylvania have received their hours through our program.

All programs emphasize the importance of early diagnosis and treatment of children showing symptoms of ASD and focus primarily on the preschool level, a critical time for a child’s

development. With a combination of treatment plans, children with ASD can dramatically reduce their symptoms, especially if treatment is started very early in life, as the Institute strongly supports.

Initial Support

The Autism Institute received a grant from the Child Development Foundation of Montgomery County in January 2008. This grant spearheaded the Institute and, as a result, the SPECTRUM (Supporting Successful Practices in Early Childhood – Connection, Training, Resources – A Unified Mission) Project was formed. SPECTRUM focuses on supporting Montgomery County preschools in identifying and responding appropriately to behaviors of students on the autism spectrum.