

The Launch of ASTEP – Asperger Syndrome Training & Education Partnership



Pat Schissel, LMSW
President, AHA
April 2011

I am excited to tell you about a new and unique initiative I am involved with. I am on the Advisory Board of the Asperger Training & Employment Partnership (ASTEP), the nation's only organization focused on creating employer demand for those diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome and related conditions. The advisory board is comprised of some of the most knowledgeable people in the field and I am honored to be among them.

NEW YORK, Feb 15 óAsperger Training & Employment Partnership (ASTEP) was launched to build long-term employment opportunities for those with Asperger Syndrome (AS), a high functioning form of autism. It is the nation's only organization focused on creating employer demand for this segment of those diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

“About 80 percent of the more than 1 million Americans with an ASD are under the age of 20 and over the next 10 years the U.S. will experience a large influx of educated and skilled job seekers who have Asperger’s Syndrome,” said Marcia Scheiner, ASTEP founder and president. *“Many at the higher end of the autism spectrum have AS and they have strong intellectual capabilities, perform focused tasks extremely well and typically make very reliable and loyal employees.”*

Scheiner said large, national employers need to be educated about the talents of adults with AS and the many benefits of providing meaningful employment for them. She said many vocational rehabilitation organizations exist to work with individuals with AS but none are focused on creating employer demand for these individuals. ASTEP has assembled a blue-ribbon Advisory Board to help launch and guide the organization.

“We will concentrate our efforts first in areas where the number of vocational rehabilitation organizations and employers offer the strongest opportunity for us to apply our services of teaching employers how to create environments and jobs to accommodate these highly skilled workers,” Scheiner said.

In launching their offices in Manhattan, Scheiner announced that Michael John Carley has been appointed Executive Director of ASTEP. Carley will continue to serve

as Executive Director of the Global and Regional Asperger Syndrome Partnership (GRASP), the world's largest organization of adults on the autism spectrum. He also is a nationally known author and speaker on issues related to AS. The New York Times, Washington Post, the London Times, Chronicle of Philanthropy, ABC News, the BBC, and other national news media have sought his comments on AS. Along with his son, Carley was diagnosed with AS in November, 2000. His book *Asperger's From the Inside-Out* is widely read and has received considerable praise. *Through my work with GRASP, as well as being an individual with AS, I am acutely aware of the struggles by adults with AS to find employers that appreciate their talents and understand their challenges,* Carley said. *With ASTEP's focus on educating employers nationally we believe we can vault diversity in employment to the next level.*

For more information on ASTEP, visit their website: www.asperger-employment.org.

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