



OAR Announces 2005 Graduate Grant Recipients

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sept. 8, 2005

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Arlington, VA-- Earlier this month OAR announced the results of its second annual Graduate Research Grants Program. This year, the Organization will award \$16,000 in grants to masters and doctoral students conducting research related to autism and autism spectrum disorders. OAR introduced the program in the spring of 2004 to encourage applied autism research at the graduate level. In last year's inaugural competition, OAR awarded \$11,000 to six graduate researchers.

OAR received 12 proposals this year from graduate students across the country. A member of OAR's Scientific Council reviewed and scored each proposal in order to identify the studies that best matched OAR's research priorities and whose potential outcomes were most relevant for families. Of the 12 proposals, seven doctoral studies and two masters-level studies were selected. Doctoral students received grants of \$2,000 each while masters level students received \$1,000.

The 2005 grant recipients are: Dryden Watner, MA, St. John's University, Hannah Schertz, MA, Indiana University, Rachel K. Hammond, Ed.S., University of Kentucky, Erin E. Barton, MS, and Brian Reichow, MS, both at Vanderbilt University, Megan Martins, MS, Rutgers University, Colin Pottie, M.Ed., Virginia Commonwealth University, Anne Snow, The Ohio State University, Karen L. Messmer-Wilson, MS, Ball State University, and Rebecca Thompson, Wayne State University.

Their respective research topics include: psychopathology and stress among parents of children with autism; parent relationships and early intervention protocols that promote joint attention in toddlers with autism; Asperger Syndrome and internalizing symptoms for future treatment; and supporting the siblings of children with autism, comparing the modified checklist for autism in toddlers and the social communication questionnaire in preschoolers' suspect of having pervasive developmental disorders, studying current autism beliefs, diagnostic practices, treatment approaches in Indiana and the transition to adulthood for individuals affected by autism spectrum disorders.

"The OAR graduate grants program should really be seen as a win/win for all concerned," said OAR Scientific Council Chairman Peter Gerhardt, Ed.D. "Young researchers are able to access financial support for some very worthwhile projects and OAR gets to promote bright, young professionals at the start of their careers."

In 2006 OAR will expand this program to include post-doctoral research and increase the total funding level to \$25,000. OAR will publish the next request for proposals in January 2006 for grants to be announced on September 1 of next year.

"Ultimately, the autism community gets to benefit from the research outcomes," Dr. Gerhardt said. "Overall, it is a very worthwhile program."