



OAR Awards \$16,000 in Graduate Research Grants

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Arlington, VA- The Organization for Autism Research (OAR) is proud to announce the results of its fifth annual Graduate Research Grants Competition. After reviewing 11 proposals from graduate students across the country, OAR has selected eight doctoral students conducting research related to autism and autism spectrum disorders as 2008 grant recipients. Doctoral students receive grants of \$2,000 each bringing the total for this year's awards to \$16,000.

OAR introduced the program in the spring of 2004 to encourage applied autism research at the graduate level. Since the inaugural competition and including today's awards, OAR has awarded \$84,000 in research grants to 49 graduate researchers.

In evaluating the research proposals, two members of OAR's Scientific Council reviewed and scored each proposal. The reviewers' task was to identify the studies that best matched OAR's research priorities and whose potential outcomes were most relevant for families.

The 2008 grant recipients are:

Jillian Bennett, University of Massachusetts Boston

The impact of family resources on the ability to access and receive early intensive specialized services for children with autism in Massachusetts

Katherine A. Meyer, Michigan State University

A sibling-implemented imitation intervention for young children with autism

Cheryl Ostryn, The Pennsylvania State University

Teaching non-vocal children with autism to ask a "Wh" question using a picture system

Ariane Schneider, Graduate Center of the City of New York (CUNY)

Comparing and combining accommodation and remediation interventions to improve the written language performance of children with Asperger syndrome

Tia Schultz, University of Missouri

A parent education program: Enhancing social competence in children with ASD and improving parent outcomes

Samara Pulver Tetenbaum, State University of New York Stony Brook

Barriers to effective family-based intervention in autism spectrum disorders

Dawn Volger-Elias, State University of New York University at Buffalo

A shared storybook reading intervention for preschoolers with autism spectrum disorders

Peggy J. Schafer Whitby, University of Central Florida

Investigation of the use of Solve It! To increase the percentage correct on mathematical word problems for middle school students with high functioning autism or Asperger Syndrome.

“The OAR graduate grants program is one of those rare win/win/win scenarios for all concerned,” said OAR President and Scientific Council Chairman Peter Gerhardt, Ed.D. “Young researchers are able to access financial support for some very worthwhile projects, OAR gets to promote bright, young professionals at the start of their careers, and ultimately the autism community gets to benefit from the research outcomes.”

In 2009, OAR hopes to expand the program and increase the total funding level to \$25,000. For information on the 2009 Graduate Research Grants Program, please visit OAR’s Web site, www.researchautism.org or contact Alyssa Kruszyna, Assistant Director for Research and Programs at (703) 243-9717.

ABOUT OAR: The Organization for Autism Research (OAR) is a national, nonprofit organization formed and led by relatives of children and adults with autism and Asperger Syndrome. OAR is dedicated to promoting research that can be applied to help families, educators, caregivers, and individuals with autism find much-needed answers to their immediate and urgent questions. Committed to the excellence in its services to the autism community, OAR seeks to fund applied research that will make a difference in individual lives; provide information that is timely, useful, and cost-efficient; and offer opportunities for the autism community to collaborate and make advances together.

In its first six years, OAR has awarded more than \$1,400,000 for applied research studies and published five community-friendly resource guides in its Life Journey through Autism guide series: *A Parent’s Guide to Research*, *An Educator’s Guide to Autism*, *An Educator’s Guide to Asperger Syndrome*, *A Guide for Transition to Adulthood*, and *A Parent’s Guide to Assessment*. Interested parties can download the guides for free from the OAR Web site.