



OAR Awards \$19,000 in Graduate Research Grants

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Arlington, VA- The Organization for Autism Research (OAR) is proud to announce the results of its fourth annual Graduate Research Grants Competition. After reviewing 13 proposals from graduate students across the country, OAR has selected three master's and eight doctoral students—including a doctoral student from South Africa—conducting research related to autism and autism spectrum disorders as 2007 grant recipients. Doctoral students receive grants of \$2,000 each, while master's level students receive \$1,000. The grants for this year total \$19,000.

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 \$68,000 in research grants to 38 graduate researchers. This is the first year OAR has awarded a grant to a student researcher outside the U.S.

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 85 percent selection rate, the highest in the program's short history, is indicative of the across the board quality of the research proposals OAR received.

The 2007 grant recipients are:

Nalan Ayvazoglu, Indiana University

Physical activity determinants in adolescents with high functioning autism

Michelle Benjamin, University of Florida

Assessment of motor abilities, praxis, and motor imitation in young children with autism

Kerry Dos Santos, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

Facilitating initiating joint attention in children with autism

Mary Martha Douglas, Michigan State University

Physical activity for children with autism: Parent perspectives

Kate Fiske, Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey

A cross-sectional study of patterns of renewed stress among parents of children with autism

Rhiannon Luyster, University of Michigan

Word learning in children with autism spectrum disorders

Marie-Christine Potvin, University of Vermont

Intensity, variety, and types of recreational activities in school age children with high functioning autism

Matthew Roth, Long Island University

Puberty and relationships 101: A guide to growing up for high functioning adolescent males with autism

Matthew Segall, University of Georgia

Factors relating to educational professionals' classroom practices for the inclusion of students with autism spectrum disorders

Aurelie Welterlin, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

The Home TEACCHing Program: A study of the efficacy of a parent training early intervention model

Amie Williams, University of Alabama

Language development in preschool children with ASDs: Investigating fast-mapping abilities and utilization of word learning constraints.

“The OAR graduate grants program is one of those rare win/win/win scenarios 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, 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.”

Dr. Gerhardt’s estimation of the program was borne out in the testimony of Heidi Graf, a 2007 graduate of George Mason University. Commenting on the grant she received in 2006, now Dr. Heidi Graf, said, “Your grant was instrumental in my dissertation research. I was able to accomplish the study as proposed knowing that I had the funds needed for the equipment and teacher stipends and defend my dissertation in March.”

In 2008, OAR hopes to expand the program and increase the total funding level to \$30,000. For information on the 2008 Graduate Research Grants Program, please visit OAR’s Web site, www.researchautism.org or contact Alyssa Napolitano, Research and Programs Associate, 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 five years, OAR has awarded more than \$1,000,000 for applied research studies and published four 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*, and *A Guide for Transition to Adulthood*.