



OAR CHOSEN AS BENEFICIARY FOR NEW “SONGS OF THE SPECTRUM” CD

Unique Holiday Gift of Uplifting Music Lets Families Share Hope; Serves as Fundraising Tool for Autism Organizations Large & Small

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Contact: Wendy McKinnon, Programs and Outreach Associate
(703)243-3466, scholarship@researchautism.org

Dec. 9, 2009 – The Organization for Autism Research (OAR) was accepted today as a beneficiary of the new SingSOS/Songs of the Spectrum CD, an album of original songs about autism. The album can be downloaded at www.singsos.org for a \$15 donation or ordered as a CD for \$20. The proceeds of each sale go to one of the 37 nonprofit groups listed, as chosen by the donor. Please select OAR when downloading or purchasing the album.

SingSOS/Songs of the Spectrum is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that enlists the power of music to spread the word about autism spectrum disorders and the importance of early detection and intensive intervention.

On the album and at the site, there is also a hand-selected set of high-quality information for parents and educators about autism spectrum disorders in free downloadable form, including all five guidebooks in the *Life Journey through Autism* series published by OAR, and book excerpts by leading experts in the field. Viewers can also access videos and interactive tools for those with a need to know more.

The original cover image is by Jonathan Lerman, the winner of a recent SingSOS contest for artists on the spectrum. Several other artists with autism contributed art to the CD packaging and the SingSOS Web site, where all contest entries can be seen.

Songs on the album offer both a message of hope and an unflinching look at the realities faced by the families of individuals on the autism spectrum. The tracks are a collaboration between John O’Neil, a New York Times editor whose 2004 essay for the paper about his son with autism, James, was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize, and Jon Fried and Deena Shoshkes, a husband/wife team that performs as the Cucumbers.

Fried and Shoshkes are close friends of the O’Neil family, and have witnessed firsthand James’s struggle and progress. One song was co-written by O’Neil’s oldest son, Chris, about the issues siblings face, and James contributed the final track, a poem about the different point of view of someone on the spectrum.

“This is different from other charity albums, which are usually compilations of unrelated songs. It takes a unified set of songs by writers steeped in the experience, and puts them in the hands of some

of the best vocalists and song interpreters of their generation,” said Jon Fried. “The songs tell a cohesive story that affected families and others can follow. We’ve had listeners tell us ‘You are singing my life’ and ‘Now I feel less alone.’”

“Early intervention and dedicated, relentless treatment can have a genuinely transforming effect,” said O’Neil. “We want to bring listeners inside an experience that is so hard to see and so hard to understand. Autism has understandably been called an ‘invisible epidemic.’ We hope to make it tangible.”

The complete list of SingSOS vocal artists is: Jackson Browne and Valerie Carter (duet), Dar Williams, Marshall Crenshaw, Teddy Geiger, Jonatha Brooke, Richard Julian, Dan Bern and Mike Viola (duet), Don Dixon and Marti Jones (duet), Ollabelle, Christina Courtin, Ari Hest, Kelly Flint and The Cucumbers.

For more information, visit www.singsos.org.

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.

Since 2001, OAR has awarded more than \$2.2 million to fund 112 applied research studies and published six community-friendly resource guides in its *Life Journey through Autism* series. OAR introduced the Schwallie Family Scholarship Program offering college and vocational school scholarships to individuals with autism spectrum disorders in 2007, and in 2009 and 2010 produced Operation Autism, www.operationautismonline.org, a web-based resource for military families touched by autism, and a companion resource guide, *Life Journey through Autism: A Guide for Military Families*.

For more information about OAR, please visit www.researchautism.org.