

Annual Report
Families with Autistic Children Together
June, 2007



Helping autistic children reach for the stars

**Information and support for families in the Hopkins School District Area
and surrounding communities living with autistic spectrum disorders.**

Sponsored in Part by Hopkins School District Community Education

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Presentation and Acknowledgements

On behalf of Families with Autistic Children Together (“FACT”), I am very pleased to present this, our second Annual Report to the community on FACT, explaining what we do and what results we achieve.

The history portion of this report will cover FACT since its inception in January, 2003. The primary emphasis of this report is our activities and results for the 2006-07 school year.

The FACT leadership and membership wish to publicly thank Katie Lee, Director of Community Education for the Hopkins Public Schools, and Jan Ormasa, Director of Special Services for the Hopkins Public Schools, for their unwavering support of FACT throughout our history. As the recitation of our organization history in this report will show, FACT would never have gotten created or survived this long without that support.

The FACT membership also owes deep thanks to Cindy Margolis and Marti Nelson for their countless hours of volunteer service over four-plus years as FACT organizers and meeting facilitators. Begun long ago as Cindy’s vision to fill a huge support need in the community, FACT is growing into a vibrant, multifaceted support and information organization that is much bigger than any individual.

Space does not permit full recitation of all the ways in which FACT members have come together to help each other and those new to the life-long journey of living with an autistic spectrum disorder. It will have to suffice to say that I have been involved with numerous very fine community organizations in my lifetime, but I have never been more honored or privileged to be associated with any organization than I am to be associated with FACT.

Sincerely,
Craig Fobes
Administrative Coordinator

1 Introduction

1.1 *Who We Are*

Families with Autistic Children Together (“FACT”) is an informal, voluntary association of people whose families include someone affected by an autistic spectrum disorder. FACT is sponsored by the Hopkins School District Community Education program.

1.2 *Our Mission*

- To provide information and support to families living with autistic spectrum disorders in the Hopkins School District area and surrounding communities
- To educate the public, school staff, and government officials about the challenges and needs of families living with autistic spectrum disorders.

1.3 *Autistic Spectrum Disorders*

Autism is a pervasive neurological developmental disorder that manifests itself differently in each affected person. Accordingly, autism is thought of as a “spectrum” of disorders, ranging from the severely disabling “classic” autism to various “higher functioning” forms. The rate of diagnosed autism in the United States is increasing, and is currently widely thought to affect 1 in 166 children born.

Classic Autism is considered the most disabling form of autism. The individual is usually not able to function independently, and a few need constant care. Many are nonverbal and are extremely sensitive to or stressed by different environmental stimuli, such as sounds, colors, and textures. Daily ritualistic routines are common. An individual with classic autism has great difficulty adapting to changes in surroundings or routines.

High Functioning Autism (HFA) is autism characterized by early language delays, but significant independent functioning as the child ages. Environmental sensitivities are common, but there is a greater ability to handle change with preparation.

Asperger's Syndrome (AS) results in difficult social interactions, preference for sameness and routine, and narrowly focused interests or repetitive behaviors. Individuals with AS have average or above-average intelligence and normal language development. Although they often have exceptionally rich vocabularies, “Aspies” may have an overly literal understanding of language, and their speech patterns may be unusual. Aspies also have difficulty interpreting nonverbal communication, such as gestures and facial expressions.

Pervasive Developmental Disorder Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS) is a diagnostic label for individuals with higher-functioning autistic characteristics who do not meet the formal diagnostic criteria for HFA or AS.

1.4 Reporting Period

This report is the second annual report to the community on FACT. The history portion of this report will cover FACT since its inception in January, 2003. The primary emphasis of this report is our activities and results for the 2006-07 school year. Our fiscal and reporting year is July 1 through June 30, to correspond with the Hopkins School District fiscal year.

1.5 Our History

FACT was organized in late 2002 as a Masters Degree candidate project by **Cindy Margolis**, a Hopkins School District resident and mother of an autistic child.

When Margolis began organizing FACT, Margolis was referred to **John Merges**, then a Hopkins School District social worker who previously had set up a parent group at Tanglen Elementary. To determine the need for a new group, Margolis met with Merges and some of the former parents of this group. Margolis also formally surveyed the parents of that past group. This input indicates a strong need to start an autism support group in the Hopkins School District -- 42 out of 69 surveys were returned with 35 families indicating interested in starting a group.

Merges placed Margolis in contact with **Katie Lee**, then Adult Education Program Director for the Hopkins School District Community Education program (now the overall Director), and the long sponsorship of FACT by Hopkins Community Education was born. Community Education provided free facilities usage to FACT. Moreover, Margolis and Lee recognized that, for the group to be successful and accessible to special needs parents, high-quality childcare during evening meetings was essential. Community Education graciously provided \$600 to finance that childcare and other startup costs for the remainder of the 2002-03 school year.

Working together, Margolis, Merges, and Lee got FACT up and running. FACT launched in January, 2003, as a free, ongoing drop-in support group with monthly meetings during the school year on the first Monday evening and fourth Tuesday afternoon of each month. Childcare was offered for the Monday night meetings at a token fee of \$5 per family, regardless of the number of children in the family using childcare. For the first year and a half of meetings, Merges attended most of the Monday evening meetings as a school liaison.

Through the attendee registrations at these support meetings, Margolis generated an email list of area families living with an autistic spectrum disorder, and began distributing notices of upcoming workshops and other events relating to autism as she became aware of them.

In the summer of 2003, as Margolis planned for the 2003-04 school year, Margolis faced two serious challenges.

First, Margolis needed someone to take over the role of facilitating the Tuesday group, as Margolis had just finished her Masters Degree and was returning to full-time work in

the fall. **Marti Nelson**, another Hopkins School District resident and mother of an autistic child, had attended the Tuesday afternoon group from the outset. Nelson agreed to become the Tuesday group facilitator for the 2003-04 school year, a role she has maintained ever since. Indeed, Nelson is the only FACT member who still has “perfect attendance” at either of the groups.

The second challenge was money. While Community Education was continuing to provide free use of facilities space for the meetings, the startup financial subsidy by Community Education for childcare and operating costs was at an end. Margolis had applied to the Autism Society of Minnesota for a “Steps of Hope” program grant to subsidize the child care for the 2003-04 school year, but decision on that grant would not come soon enough to meet deadlines for Community Education publicity for FACT. Margolis emailed the FACT membership, explaining that she had to raise at least \$300 to continue the group for the 2003-04 school year without charging fees for attending or raising the child care fee to cover the actual costs. In response, one FACT member, on condition of anonymity, stepped forward and offered to match dollar for dollar the first \$150 raised from others in FACT’s name. Margolis sent out a letter with that offer to the FACT members, and the remaining members donated \$165, which the anonymous donor matched in full. The funding goal was exceeded by \$30, and subsidized childcare for the 2003-04 school year was assured.

Margolis and Nelson continued to conduct these monthly support group meetings from throughout the 2003-04 and 2004-2005 school years, with Nelson serving as the Tuesday Group Facilitator, and Margolis serving as both the Monday Group Facilitator and the overall Administrative Coordinator. The Autism Society of Minnesota awarded a \$500 “Steps of Hope” grant to subsidize the childcare for the 2004-05 school year, renewed in like amount for the 2005-06 school year.

In November, 2005, Margolis’ personal circumstances necessitated stepping back from her preeminent role in FACT. The wife and husband team of **Judie Schumacher** and **Craig Fobes** had attended FACT’s Monday meetings faithfully since FACT’s inception, and they agreed to jointly take over Margolis’ role, with Schumacher assuming the role of Monday Group Facilitator, and Fobes taking the role of overall Administrative Coordinator. Margolis continues to serve the membership and the executive leadership of FACT as a resource person, advisor, and initiator/facilitator of summer playgroups, fundraisers, and other special projects.

2 Ongoing Activities

2.1 Monthly Meetings

FACT meets monthly during the school year at the Eisenhower Community Center, 1001 Highway 7, Hopkins, to offer support, information, and an opportunity for families to network with each other. There is no fee, and everyone is welcome regardless of where they reside.

For the **2006-2007** school year, our meeting schedule was:

Monday Meetings - 2nd Mondays: 7:00 - 8:30 pm					
Date	Topic Focus	Guest Speaker	Attendees	First-Timers	Families
9/11/2006	Support	none	11	3	10
10/9/2006	Financial resources overview	none	10	20	10
11/13/2006	Surviving the winter holidays and school breaks	none	10	3	10
12/11/2006	Support – Holiday Edition	none	5	2	4
1/8/2007	Energy Work	Prof. Barbara Stahl, Ed.S.	34	11	26
2/12/2007	Sensory Processing Deficits	Lynn Kopfmann OTR/L	13	2	11
3/12/2007	State Legislative Issues	State Representative(s)	8	1	8
4/9/2007	Care and Feeding of your Primary Adult Relationship	none	8	1	7
5/14/2007	Support	none	3	1	3

Tuesday Meetings - 2nd Tuesdays: 1:30 – 3:00 pm				
Date	Topic Focus	Attendees	First-Timers	Families
9/12/2006	Support	3	2	3
10/10/2006	Support	2	1	2
11/14/2006	Support	4	3	4
12/12/2006	Support	0	0	0
1/9/2007	Support	2	0	2
2/13/2007	Support	2	1	2
3/13/2007	Support	2	1	2
4/10/2007	Support	1	0	1
5/8/2007	Support	2	1	2

For the **2007-2008** school year, our meeting schedule will be:

2nd Mondays: 7:00 - 8:30 pm, Sep 10, Oct 8, Nov 12, Dec 10, Jan 14, Feb 11, Mar 10, Apr 14, May 11

2nd Tuesdays: 1:30 – 3:00 pm, Sep 11, Oct 9, Nov 13, Dec 11, Jan 8, Feb 12, Mar 11, Apr 8, May 12

Childcare is provided for the Monday evening meetings only, for children over age 2. Reservations must be made by the Thursday prior to the Monday meeting date. The Childcare fee is \$5.00 per family per meeting.

2.2 Resource Sheets

There is now so much ASD information on the web it can be overwhelming. In November, 2005, FACT began authoring resource sheets on an ever-growing variety of

subjects. We use our experience to help sort through that sea of information, and our resource sheets point families to the most useful information we can find. We also gathers redistributable documents from other sources, which, together with FACT resource sheets, are distributed electronically to members and anyone else who is interested in receiving them. The resource sheets are also printed and included in the welcome packet given to first-time meeting attendees. Finally, these resource sheets are available on our website, launched in November, 2006.

The table below provides an alphabetical listing of the various FACT-written resource sheets (shown in bold) and other documents FACT distributes (shown in regular type).

Table 1: FACT authored or distributed documents through June 2007	
Document	Revision Date
10 Things The Student with Autism Wishes You Knew	Dec 2005
A Newly Diagnosed Autistic Spectrum Disorder – Now What?	12/31/2006
Advise For Parents New to ASDs	Undated
ASD Parent Daily Affirmations	9/12/2006
ASD-Related Books and Multimedia	11/12/2006
ASD-Related Therapy Centers	02/12/2007
Autism Society of Minn. Resources Directory	Jan 2005
Behavior Management Perspectives and Tips	4/5/2006
Behavior Management Resources and Links	4/5/2006
Camps for Children with Special Needs	1/1/2007
Disclosing the Diagnosis	5/7/06
Financial Assistance Programs Links and Tips	1/6/2007
Gluten-Free Casein-Free Diet, The	5/7/2006
Gluten-Free Casein-Free Foods List	Jan 2006
Guardianship and Power of Attorney Compared	2/8/2006
Hennepin County Developmental Disabilities “Front Door” Flyer	1/1/2007
IEPs for Students with Disabilities	June 2004
Individual Education Plan -- Procedures and Resource Links, The	4/5/2006
Parental Rights for Public School Special Education Students (PDF)	Oct 2005
Primary ASD Links	12/31/2006
Recommended Pediatricians	1/1/2007
Recommended Psychologists and Psychiatrists	11/13/2005
Residential Housing Options	1/1/2007
School Discipline of Students with Disabilities	June 2004
Special Education Transition Planning	June 2004

Table 1: FACT authored or distributed documents through June 2007	
Document	Revision Date
Sports, Recreation, and Leisure Resources	5/20/2006
Toilet Training and Autistic Spectrum Disorders	1/1/2007

2.3 Lending Library & Resource Sharing

In the 2005-2006 school year, FACT established a member-to-member lending library for books and other resource materials relating to autism. We work to facilitate any kind of resource sharing we can among our members.

Table 2: Cumulative Library Item Donations			
Statistic	Through Aug 2006	Through June 2007	2006-07 School Year
Items donated	28	37	9

2.4 Member-to-Member Networking Directory

Registered families may choose to be included in our member-to-member networking directory. The directory helps families identify and contact other near-by families with children of similar age, to facilitate play dates, adult socialization, and the like. The directory was published and distributed electronically in September 2006, January 2007, and May 2007.

3 Current Membership, Leadership, and Governance

3.1 Membership and Families Served

Participation in FACT is open to all families having a member with an autistic spectrum disorder, or similar challenge such as Tourette’s Syndrome. While FACT is sponsored by the Hopkins School District Community Education program, we do not enforce any geographical restriction on participation.

People attending FACT meetings or initially contacting FACT by email are encouraged, but not required, to complete a FACT registration form, or at the least, to provide their name and email address to facilitate ongoing communications. However, a person is able and permitted to attend FACT meetings and remain anonymous, and a very few choose to do so. Families that complete a registration form are termed “registrants” or “members.” Families providing basic contact information, but who chose not to register, are referred to as “non-registrants.”

Statistic	Through Aug 2006	Through June 2007	2006-07 School Year
Registrant families	89	110	21
Identified non-registrant families	23	56	33
Total identified families served	112	166	54

The identified families have the following distribution among school districts, based on residence address. Some FACT families living outside the Hopkins District have chosen to open enroll their child with the autism spectrum disorder in the Hopkins District.

District	Through Aug 2006	Through June 2007	2006-07 Change
Hopkins - 270	50	65	15
Undetermined	22	38	16
Minnetonka - 276	6	14	8
Robbinsdale - 281	12	14	2
Eden Prairie - 272	7	7	0
St. Louis Park - 283	4	6	2
Shakopee - 720	4	4	0
Wayzata - 284	2	4	2
Edina - 273	2	3	1
Minneapolis - 001	1	2	1
Osseo - 279	0	2	2
Becker - 726	0	1	1
Belle Plaine - 716	1	1	0
Bloomington - 271	1	1	0
Burnsville - 191	0	1	1
Centennial - 12	0	1	1
Westonka - 277	0	1	1
White Bear Lake - 624	0	1	1

3.2 Executive Leadership

During the 2006-07 school year, the executive leadership of FACT consisted of the following individuals:

Monday Evening Group Facilitator: Judie Schumacher is a 15-year Hopkins School District resident and the parent and stepparent of two teens with Asperger's Syndrome. She has regularly attended FACT's Monday evening group since it started. Schumacher has a Bachelor degree in Electronics Engineering Technology.

Schumacher is a Six-Sigma Black Belt business process analyst at Wells Fargo Auto Finance, and regularly facilitates large group meetings analyzing business problems and processes as a part of her employment. She recently created an internal disability awareness program for her company focusing on autism, and co-chairs the Wells Fargo Twin Cities DisAbility Awareness Team Member Resource Group. Locally, Schumacher has been an ardent promoter of the Minnesota State High School League's Adapted Athletics program.

Tuesday Afternoon Group Facilitator: Marti Nelson is an 18-year resident and 9-year parent in Hopkins School District, and is the parent of a son with Asperger's Syndrome. Nelson has a Bachelor degree in Theatre. Nelson is currently serving her fourth year on the Hopkins Public Schools Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC). This committee, made up of parents, staff and community members, advises the Special Services Director on matters pertaining to special education services throughout the district. Nelson owns a small pottery and jewelry business, finding that her art gives her a wonderful outlet for the stresses of parenting. She is famous for asking support group attendees, "And what are you going to do to take care of *yourself*?" Pottery is what Nelson does for herself. Nelson has facilitated every Tuesday FACT support meeting since September 2003. To date, Nelson has also served as FACT's chief grant writer.

Administrative Coordinator: Craig Fobes is a 6-year Hopkins School District resident and the parent and stepparent of two teens with Asperger's Syndrome. He has regularly attended FACT's Monday evening group since it started. Fobes holds Bachelor degrees in Creative Communications and Computer Science, as well as a Law Degree. Fobes previously served the Madison, Wisconsin, community as an advocate for the Wisconsin Welfare Rights Organization, as an advocate, lobbyist, and lawyer for the Madison Tenants Union, as the volunteer Executive Director of the Madison Sustaining Fund, and as the paid Executive Director of the Wisconsin Housing Coalition. His eight-year Wisconsin law practice focused on Social Security and SSI disability claims throughout the state. Locally, Fobes has been an ardent promoter of the Minnesota State High School League's Adapted Athletics program.

Special Projects / Advisor: Cindy Margolis is a 14-year Hopkins School District resident and the parent of a son with High Functioning Autism. Margolis has a Masters degree in Early Childhood Special Education. Margolis has previously served on the Board of the Autism Society of Minnesota and is currently on the Temple Israel Special Needs Committee. Margolis is employed as preschool teacher in the West Metro area. Margolis currently organizes FACT fundraisers during the school year, runs FACT's playgroups, and continues as a part of the executive decision-making team.

For the 2007-08 school year, Judie Schumacher will be stepping down as the Evening Group Facilitator, and Craig Fobes will take over that function, while continuing as Administrative Coordinator.

3.3 Organizational Governance

As an unincorporated, voluntary association, FACT does not have a governing Board of Directors. FACT is small and close-knit enough that its executive leadership is guided by its ongoing, direct dialog with the membership. This dialog takes several forms: issues identified on registration forms, member surveys, and direct feed back at meetings and in emails.

The FACT registration form has always had a listing of issues and concerns which the registrant is asked to rank. Originally, the registration form contained seven concerns or issues which the registrant was asked to prioritize (1-7). In the 2005-06 school year, this list was revised and greatly expanded, and each concern or issue was rated and weighted individually, rather than relative to the others, as follows:

- 0 – Not currently interested/concerned
- 1 – Somewhat interested/concerned
- 2 – Strongly interested/concerned

Prior old-format responses were translated into the new format and recompiled. Every time a family updates its registration, the family has the opportunity to update the family's prioritization of issues and concerns.

The following is the tabulation of the latest prioritization by each family completing this section of the registration form. This tabulation has been reviewed by the leadership throughout the 2006-07 school year, and is very instructive.

Table 5: Weighted Concerns of Identified Families as of June 2007	
Weight	Concern
125	Networking with other ASD families
112	Talking with other parents about daily stresses or for advice
108	Support with parenting issues
96	Hearing professionals speak on topics that relate to my child
93	Community resources / organizations
90	Advocating for my child's educational needs
71	Sibling / family / extended-family issues re ASD
68	Behavior management and discipline strategies
61	Summer-time recreational activities
58	Summer-time friendship / socialization opportunities
53	School year friendship / socialization opportunities
51	Treatment and therapy alternatives for ASD
49	Helpful books or websites on topics that relate to my child
48	School year recreational activities
44	Government financial assistance
41	Books and materials to help my child understand ASDs
36	Post-secondary education options with ASD

Table 5: Weighted Concerns of Identified Families as of June 2007	
Weight	Concern
32	Transition (to adulthood) planning and services
31	Respite care (time off from parenting)
21	Toilet training or other age-level hygiene issues
20	Teen Issues: Dating, Driving, Sexuality, Drugs, Employment

This cumulative ranking is very largely consistent with the results of Margolis' original 2002 survey used to assess the need for starting FACT (see Our History on p.2).

4 Funding and Fund-Raising

Much of the early funding and fundraising has already been described above in the "Our History" section beginning on page 2. As an informal, unincorporated association, a lot of FACT's operational costs in the early years have been donated in kind by members and Hopkins Community Education in the form of facilities use, printing, postage, and the like, and were not formally tracked by FACT.

The following table summarizes FACT's actual operational budget for the past three fiscal years ending June 30, 2007, and the projected budget for 2007-08. A ? denotes amount not available and no estimate made.

[continued on next page]

Table 6: Multi-year Operations Budget Summary				
	2004-05 Actual	2005-06 Actual	2006-07 Actual	2007-08 Budget
Revenues				
Cash donations	\$0	\$0	\$ 50.00	\$0.00
In Kind donations – estimated	?	\$80	\$ 116.66	\$80.00
Childcare fees paid by meeting attendees	?	?	\$ 100.00	\$100.00
FACT fundraising events	\$0	\$80	\$ 88.00	\$150.00
Value of Hopkins Community Education contributions	CE Don	CE Don	CE Don	CE Don
Autism Society of Minnesota “Steps of Hope” grant	\$345 ¹	\$420 ²	\$ 525.00 ³	\$1,195.00 ⁴
Other grants	\$0	\$200 ⁵	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total Revenues	\$345	\$780	\$ 879.66	\$ 1,525.00
Expenses				
Meeting space costs	CE Don	CE Don	CE Don	CE Don
Childcare service providers & snacks cost	\$345	\$420	\$ 525.00	\$720.00
Publicity costs, including related printing (& website in 2006-07)	CE Don	CE Don	\$ -	\$200.00
Other Printing	?	\$50	\$ 144.13	\$150.00
Office Supplies	?	\$20	\$ 194.61	\$150.00
Postage	?	\$10	\$ 12.61	\$150.00
Lending Library acquisitions			\$ -	\$100.00
Total Expenses	\$345	\$500	\$ 876.35	\$1,475.00
Net Operations (Rev - Exp)	\$0	\$80	\$ 3.31	\$ 55.00

5 2006-07 Goals and Accomplishments Towards Mission

Beginning in July, 2006, the executive leadership publicized a membership steering meeting, ultimately convened on August 26, 2006, to set the organizational goals and direction for the 2006-07 school year. The goals formulated by the assembled members and FACT leadership, and the action steps taken, for the 2006-07 school year were as follows:

¹ \$500 grant awarded for childcare expense. Unused funds must be returned, so actual expense shown.

² \$500 grant awarded for childcare expense. Unused funds must be returned, so actual expense shown.

³ \$720 grant awarded for childcare expense. Unused funds must be returned, so actual expense shown.

⁴ Pending grant application for childcare expense, printing, postage, and lending library acquisitions. Includes carryover of unused funds from prior year's grant.

⁵ \$200 grant from Walser Corporation, received 7/7/2005, applied to general operations.

5.1 Mission: To provide information and support to families living with autistic spectrum disorders in the Hopkins School District area and surrounding communities

5.1.1 Goal 1: Expand the number of families served by increased publicity about FACT.

Actions taken:

- We printed and distributed an estimated 400 copies of the new FACT brochure to various service providers and through our membership's personal connections.
- The efforts of FACT leadership and members culminated in a 3/8th page article on FACT appearing on page W-3 of the October 4, 2006, Minneapolis Star-Tribune newspaper.
- The Comcast takeover of Roadrunner in the FACT service area presented the opportunity to establish a free FACT website, which went live in November, 2006, with all the FACT resource materials and organizational information.
- Starting in November, 2006, we replaced distribution of many single-topic/item emails with a more polished and readable multi-item eNewsletter, issued 1-2 times a month. This enhanced the usability and interest in our information among our members and other organizations.

FACT received the following feedback on these efforts:

Source	Feedback
Email from FACT Member	<p>Sent: Friday, September 29, 2006 10:38 AM Subject: Re: Star-Trib story on FACT scheduled for Wed, Oct 4</p> <p>Thank you for such great resources and updates. You have been able to use the talents and experience of fellow parents so well!! I really appreciate being part of FACT, even though I am not so faithful about meeting attendance.</p>
Email from FACT Member	<p>Sent: Sunday, January 07, 2007 3:20 PM Subject: Kudos</p> <p>Great job on the website.</p>
Email from Program Coordinator U Special Kids Program, Dept. of Pediatrics - Medical School	<p>Sent: Friday, February 09, 2007 10:30 AM Subject: RE: FACT eNews - Feb 6, 2007 - Date-sensitive</p> <p>Thanks for putting me on your distribution list. I'm quite impressed with your newsletter. It sounds as if your group is quite active and informed. Kudos!</p>
Email from Hopkins School Board member	<p>Sent: Monday, June 04, 2007 2:27 PM Subject: Re: FACT eNew June 3, 2007 -- Tons of Summer Info!!!</p>

Source	Feedback
	Thank you for all of the wonderful work you do on behalf of our families!

5.1.2 Goal 2: Strengthen the fundamental support function of FACT.

The assembled membership strongly reaffirmed that the fundamental purpose of FACT meetings is to provide the support that attendees need, even if that sometimes means deferring a scheduled discussion topic.

Actions taken:

- Starting in January, 2007, our evening group meeting expanded to two rooms, so that support could always be offered in one room without compromising program presentation or topic discussions in another room.
- The effort in creating a website to make our resource materials and contact information instantly available enhanced our ability to provide support outside the context of a formal support meeting.
- Starting in November, 2006, we replaced distribution of many single-topic/item emails with a more polished and readable multi-item eNewsletter, issued 1-2 times a month. This enhanced the usability and interest in our information among our members and other organizations.
- We electronically published and distributed our member-to-member networking directory of families electing inclusion to those families in September, 2006, January, 2007, and May, 2007.
- FACT leadership continuously offers one-to-one support between meetings via phone or email.

FACT received the following feedback on these efforts:

Source	Feedback
Email from FACT Member	<p>Sent: Monday, July 24, 2006 8:51 AM Subject: Re: WMLC News July 2006</p> <p>Craig, Thanks for recommending the book, "Baj and the Word Launcher", my son [age 11] and I are reading it together and he really enjoys it. He likes to talk about the "stop and think" section. Last night at bedtime I told him to remember his lycra that he likes to sleep in at night, he then asked me if it was a "have to" or "choose to" [that he got from the book]. Thank you,</p>
Email from FACT Member	<p>Sent: Monday, August 28, 2006 7:34 AM</p> <p>...I also wanted to let you know that I think you guys do a</p>

Source	Feedback
	<p>great job at the meetings. I think they are a good balance of topic and support-and you always would open it up for people to address their concerns. The meetings we missed were not due to us not wanting to hear the topic-mostly it was just the usual busy-ness of life and driving kids around, needing to be in two places at once. Regardless of topic, we find the meetings very supportive and positive and we always leave feeling educated-and that is thanks to you! You have created an environment that is welcoming</p>
Email from FACT Member	<p>Sent: Tuesday, September 12, 2006 4:30 AM Subject: Re: meeting</p> <p>...Thanks for all you do for the group!</p>
Email from FACT Member	<p>Sent: Tuesday, September 12, 2006 3:09 PM</p> <p>Keep me on your email list. Though I never reply and don't participate in the meetings any more I still like to know what's going on, especially concerning older, transitioning, kids. ... Thanks for all your hard work</p>
Email from FACT Member	<p>Sent: Thursday, October 12, 2006 8:05 AM Subject: New format</p> <p>I like the new format because it allows me to choose information that I am interested in reading and learning more about. Thank you for all of your efforts and contributions. I appreciate remaining connected to FACT via the internet.</p>
Email from FACT Member	<p>Sent: Thursday, November 02, 2006 8:34 PM Subject: Thank you!</p> <p>This is just a quick email to say thank you for your support and all of the great advice during a stressful week. It is so appreciated. We are having a meeting tomorrow and we are so glad that both Wendy Watson from ARC and Ruth Wolf from Hennepin County will be there.</p> <p>The emails, info and kindness were just great. Many thanks!</p>
Email from FACT Member	<p>Sent: Monday, June 04, 2007 7:37 AM Subject: RE: FACT eNew June 3, 2007 -- Tons of Summer Info!!!</p> <p>... what a tremendous contribution you are making. Thanks!</p>

5.1.3 Goal 3: Improve FACT fundability and fundraising by formalizing and strengthening FACT administrative controls.

Actions taken:

- The FACT Administrative Coordinator formalized FACT accounting and better tracking all income and expenses, including donations in kind.
- The FACT Administrative Coordinator began the process of evaluating possible incorporation as a tax-exempt, nonprofit corporation. This effort will continue in the 2007-08 fiscal year.

5.2 Mission: To educate the public, school staff, and government officials about the challenges and needs of families living with autistic spectrum disorders.

5.2.1 Goal 1: Inform school officials and staff on these challenges and needs.

Actions taken:

- Starting in June, 2006, and continuing with the resumption of School Board Meetings in the fall, the FACT Administrative Coordinator testified before the Hopkins School Board during open agenda to provide an ASD perspective on the District’s Policy on the Administration of Medications.
- Starting in April, 2007, the FACT Administrative Coordinator testified before the Hopkins School Board during open agenda and submitted further comments via email to provide an ASD perspective on the District’s Anti-bullying Policy.

FACT received the following feedback on these efforts:

Source	Feedback
Email from Hopkins School Board Member	<p>Sent: Wednesday, May 16, 2007 10:24 AM Subject: Re: Anti-Bullying Policy</p> <p>Hi Craig--</p> <p>Thanks for your comments about this policy. I think it is stronger now, having had your input. ... I wanted to personally thank you for your dedication to the district and to our kids.</p>

5.2.2 Goal 2: Inform state legislators on these challenges and needs.

Actions taken:

- In mid-January, 2007, the FACT Administrative Coordinator and Monday Group Facilitator had a 90-minute private dialog with Hopkins State Representative Steve Simon to provide perspective on state legislative issues related to Autistic Spectrum Disorders. Discussion topics included state special education funding caps and resulting cross-subsidy by general education funds, parental fees for TEFRA medical assistance, and the one-way gate out of school transition programs for 18-21 year-olds.
- State Representative John Benson was the featured presenter at our March, 2007, evening meeting, and dialoged with FACT members present.

- During the 2007 Minnesota state legislative session, we issued several legislative alerts via email to our membership, informing them of upcoming votes of interest and encouraging members to make their views and perspectives known.

6 Contact Information

To get on our email distribution list and receive our communications or for any administrative questions, contact FACT in one of the ways below:

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