



Autism assistance

Community hub sites offer help to regional residents in need

April is Autism Awareness Month. The condition is called autism spectrum disorder because affected individuals display a range of symptoms across a spectrum from severe to mild. Typically, it impacts a person's social and communication skills, and it may also manifest itself with repetitive behaviors, like hand flapping or rocking. Autism diagnoses, now affecting one in 59 children in the United States, appear to be on an upward trend over the last few decades.

Some people are only mildly impaired and are able to function quite well in society, work-



KEVIN O'NEILL
InSites

ing and raising families. Others are more severely impaired and require constant supervision and help with basic life skills, such as eating and personal hygiene. Others fall somewhere between these extremes. The key to treating autism is early intervention and varying levels of support throughout their lives.

AllOneForAutism.org is the

website for Autism Collaborative Centers of Excellence. ACCE connects people and their families at different points on the spectrum, and at different stages of their lives, to resources available in Northeast and North-central Pennsylvania.

Central service hub

ACCE has five community hubs throughout the region. The executive hub is located at the University of Scranton and directs people to the appropriate hub for their specific needs.

The University of Scranton's online hub presence is on the site. The university's role in the

treatment of autism is mainly in training professional service providers. This includes students studying education, counseling, psychology and related fields who can apply their skills to behavior analysis. Understanding and modifying behaviors is a big part of treating autism.

The Alloneforautism site doesn't have a lot of resources available on its own. It has information about the origin and mission of ACCE. There are links to the hubs, a calendar of events, a list of goals, descriptions of affiliated projects and other information on the organization.

The site is cleanly designed

but very text heavy. There's not a lot of imagery, and much of the text is about marketing the organization. Where it's most helpful for families seeking help is in the links to the other hubs.

Over the course of April, I will review each of the sites for the other hubs. They include the Children's Service Center in Hazleton, Geisinger Autism & Development Medicine Institute in Forty Fort, Hope Enterprises in Williamsport and Misericordia University in Dallas.

KEVIN O'NEILL is a staff artist for The Times-Tribune. Share your favorite websites and apps with him at koneill@timeshamrock.com.