Show Your Support and Light It Up Blue!

*Autism Awareness Month*

You’ve read the statistics, the Center for Disease Control estimates that 1 in 110 children in the United States have an Autism Spectrum Disorder; that’s a 600 percent increase in prevalence over the past two decades, according to Autism Speaks (http://www.autismspeaks.org/what-autism). Closer to home, as reported in the Texas Education Agency 2010-2011 Special Education Report of student primary disabilities, there are over two-thousand students in this region with Autism listed as their primary disability. Now, think about the number of children that have gone undiagnosed because of the lack of information about the puzzling spectrum of disorders that make up Autism. While there is no “cure” for Autism, early intervention is the key to helping a child reach his or her full potential. That is what Autism Awareness Month is all about, to educate.

Autism, defined by Autism Speaks, an autism science and advocacy organization, is a general term used to describe a group of complex developmental brain disorders—*autism spectrum disorders*—caused by a combination of genes and environmental influences. These disorders are characterized, in varying degrees, by social and behavioral challenges, as well as repetitive behaviors. Disorders on the spectrum include autistic disorder, pervasive developmental disorder-not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS), and Asperger Syndrome. The disorder can be associated with intellectual disability, difficulties in motor coordination and attention and physical health issues such as sleep and gastrointestinal disturbances. However, some persons with ASD excel in visual skills, music, math, and art.

Terri McGinnis, Region One ESC Specialist has worked in the area of autism since 1978 and reflects on the dramatic changes in the field, “When I started at Region One ESC in 1994, I was asked to do a survey of the districts to see how many students were identified as having autism. Of the 36 school districts, the number of children with autism that was reported to me was 21. Currently in the Region One ESC area, it is reported that we have 2,087 children affected with autism.”

To address the growing needs of teachers, students, and parents affected by autism, McGinnis has developed trainings on how these children learn...
The benefits of these efforts are demonstrated in this final negotiated agreement. Lower costs, superior contract terms, and lower risk. All six energy companies which submitted offers are strong market participants which offered excellent service levels for a district like Laredo ISD.”

TEC school district members include Donna ISD, Edinburg CISD, Edcouch-Elsa ISD, Hidalgo ISD, La Feria ISD, La Joya ISD, La Villa ISD, Laredo ISD, Los Fresnos CISD, Lyford CISD, McAllen ISD, Mission CISD, Monte Alto ISD, Point Isabel ISD, PSJA ISD, Raymondville ISD, Region One ESC, Rio Hondo ISD, Santa Rosa ISD, Sharyland ISD, South Texas ISD, South Texas Educational Technologies, Inc., and Zapata County ISD.

Since the deregulation of electricity in 2002, the Region One Education Service Center, in conjunction with Van Brunt and Associates, Inc., an energy procurement advisory firm which assists large users of electricity and natural gas manage their energy costs, has provided its school districts the opportunity to save money on utility costs by participation in the Texas Energy Center. The TEC, formerly the Region One Energy Consortium, has expanded its membership saving school districts upwards of $12 million dollars in utility costs over the past 10 years. In addition to saving money, benefits of TEC include a focus on one utility, a greater number of eligible suppliers; greater control over contract structure; bidding process management; direct access to expert consultants; and working with local companies.

Laredo ISD is the latest school district to realize the benefits of belonging to the TEC locking in a 56 month contract that will save the district over $5 million over the course of the contract.

In an effort to manage its electricity costs Laredo ISD received and evaluated bids from 6 different electricity providers in anticipation of the expiration of their current electricity contract. The Laredo Independent School District Board of Directors approved a contract that will lock in a rate of 4.851 cents per kwh ($48.51 per MWh) with Just Energy. LISD’s current electricity contract, which serves all of the district’s campuses and administrative facilities, does not expire until September 2012. To protect itself from future price increases and fluctuation in pricing, the district has historically made its purchases well in advance of the contract expiration.

“We are very pleased with the results of this latest contract structure which will provide the district with cost stability until 2017 for one of its larger budget items,” said Dr. A. Marcus Nelson, LISD Superintendent. “Our team worked very hard at ensuring the district received strong contract terms and minimized the price risk to the district.”

Laredo ISD utilized the Texas Energy Center program to assist with the negotiations. “The leadership of Laredo ISD considered a great deal of pertinent energy market information in order to determine their current forward view of energy prices and contracted consistently with those market views,” said Annette Van Brunt, President, Van Brunt & Associates, Inc. consultant for the Texas Energy Center.

The Region One ESC Texas Energy Center Helps Laredo ISD Save Millions

Since the deregulation of electricity in 2002, the Region One Education Service Center, in conjunction with Van Brunt and Associates, Inc., an energy procurement advisory firm which assists large users of electricity and natural gas manage their energy costs, has provided its school districts the opportunity to save money on utility costs by participation in the Texas Energy Center. The TEC, formerly the Region One Energy Consortium, has expanded its membership saving school districts upwards of $12 million dollars in utility costs over the past 10 years. In addition to saving money, benefits of TEC include a focus on one utility, a greater number of eligible suppliers; greater control over contract structure; bidding process management; direct access to expert consultants; and working with local companies.

Laredo ISD is the latest school district to realize the benefits of belonging to the TEC locking in a 56 month contract that will save the district over $5 million over the course of the contract.

In an effort to manage its electricity costs Laredo ISD received and evaluated bids from 6 different electricity providers in anticipation of the expiration of their current electricity contract. The Laredo Independent School District Board of Directors approved a contract that will lock in a rate of 4.851 cents per kwh ($48.51 per MWh) with Just Energy. LISD’s current electricity contract, which serves all of the district’s campuses and administrative facilities, does not expire until September 2012. To protect itself from future price increases and fluctuation in pricing, the district has historically made its purchases well in advance of the contract expiration.

“We are very pleased with the results of this latest contract structure which will provide the district with cost stability until 2017 for one of its larger budget items,” said Dr. A. Marcus Nelson, LISD Superintendent. “Our team worked very hard at ensuring the district received strong contract terms and minimized the price risk to the district.”

Laredo ISD utilized the Texas Energy Center program to assist with the negotiations. “The leadership of Laredo ISD considered a great deal of pertinent energy market information in order to determine their current forward view of energy prices and contracted consistently with those market views,” said Annette Van Brunt, President, Van Brunt & Associates, Inc. consultant for the Texas Energy Center.

“Texas Energy Center
A Cooperative of the Region One Education Service Center

Region One ESC
18th Annual Technology Conference
May 15-17, 2012
(Tuesday - Thursday)

South Padre Island Convention Centre
7355 Padre Blvd.
South Padre Island, TX 78597

Fee:
$125.00 full conference registration

WORKSHOP # 36773
Online registration at
www.esc1.net/staffdevelopment

Questions?
Contact Thelma Longoria
at 956-984-6071

Sponsored By
Region One Education Service Center
Office of Information Technology
and Participating School Districts
and process information and has developed trainings on research-based, best practice and peer-reviewed intervention strategies. All of the trainings are open, not just to teachers working with children with autism, but parents of these children, as well.

McGinnis says that it is important that people understand that autism behaviors are not manipulative or purposeful. The children with autism have a brain that is wired differently than typically developing individuals and they process and perceive the environment and sensations in a different way, so that the behaviors of these children will look odd, inappropriate or disrespectful, explains McGinnis. “Families of these children are living a life that the typical developing person can’t even imagine. The community needs to be aware so that they can support these families to help make the world more successful for these unique and awesome children. “

To help raise awareness and educate the public about autism, April has been designated as *Autism Awareness Month*; specifically, April 2nd is World Autism Awareness Day. World Autism Awareness Day, described by Autism Speaks, “shines a bright light on autism as a growing global health crisis. WAAD activities help to increase and develop world knowledge of the autism epidemic and impart information regarding the importance of early diagnosis and early intervention. Additionally, WAAD celebrates the unique talents and skills of persons with autism and is a day when individuals with autism are warmly welcomed and embraced in community events around the globe.”

To help “shine the light on autism” the Light It Up Blue initiative was started three years ago by Autism Speaks and is held in conjunction with World Autism Day. *Light It Up Blue* activities worldwide have included blue lighting on Rockefeller Center, the Sydney Opera House, Niagara Falls, the New York Stock Exchange, and Empire State Building.

“If you don’t have a major iconic landmark to light up, there are other activities that you and I can do to support autism in our very own community,” adds McGinnis. “Light It Up Blue activities could include changing out the porch light in your home to blue, participating in one of the many school district sponsored autism walks taking place throughout the region or very simply wearing blue to work on April 2nd in a show of solidarity! The important thing is to show support and make an effort to learn about autism; it may not directly impact your family but chances are there is someone in your community affected by autism.”


**Did you Know.....**

- Autism is a general term used to describe a group of complex developmental brain disorders – autism spectrum disorders – caused by a combination of genes and environmental influences.

- A new case of autism is diagnosed every 15 minutes.

- More children will be diagnosed with autism this year than with AIDS, diabetes & cancer combined.

- Autism is the fastest-growing serious developmental disability in the U.S.

- Boys are five times more likely than girls to have autism.

- It is estimated that 1 percent of the world’s population is affected by autism, or 70 million people.

- There is no medical detection or cure for autism but early diagnosis and intervention can improve outcomes.

Learn more about autism at [http://www.autismspeaks.org/](http://www.autismspeaks.org/)
U.S. Secretary of Education Meets with South Texas Superintendents

A delegation of 15 public school superintendents from the Region One area representing the Rio Grande Valley and Laredo, Texas, joined together with superintendents from the Corpus Christi area to meet with Education Secretary Arne Duncan on March 9, 2010 at Fox Technical High School in San Antonio, Texas to discuss a range of local/regional educational topics spanning “cradle to career.” The meeting consisted of a meet and greet event with Education Service Center regional directors followed by a question and answer session with school superintendents.

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan visited Texas on March 8-9, 2012, to participate in a series of educational events in Austin and San Antonio. He visited Austin and San Marcos on Thursday, March 8, and attended a White House Hispanic Education Summit in San Antonio.

In addition to the group of school superintendents, Jack Damron, Executive Director of the Region One Education Service Center and Dr. Linda Villarreal, Executive Director of the Region Two Education Service attended the meeting with Secretary Duncan.

Members of the Region One delegation included:
- Dr. Alda Benavides, La Joya ISD
- Dr. Fernando Castillo, Progreso ISD
- Dr. Nabor Cortez, La Feria ISD
- Dr. Cornielio Gonzalez, Mission CISD
- Dr. Marla Guerra, South Texas ISD
- Dr. Rene Gutierrez, Edinburg CISD
- Mr. Eduardo Infante, Lyford CISD
- Dr. Daniel King, PSJA ISD
- Mr. Roberto Loredo, Donna ISD
- Dr. A. Marcus Nelson, Laredo ISD
- Mr. Roberto Olivarez, Vanguard Academy
- Mr. Rolando Pena, Lasara ISD
- Dr. James Ponce, McAllen ISD
- Mr. Gonzalo Salazar, Los Fresnos CISD
- Dr. Severita Sanchez, Webb CISD

Region One Specialist Invited to Deliver Keynote Address at GT Gathering

Patricia Rendon, Region One ESC Specialist has been invited to serve as the main speaker for the Autonomous Learner Model (ALM) Institute in Colorado this summer to address a group of nearly 200 teachers, parents, counselors and school administrators,

The Autonomous Learner Model (ALM), developed by Professor George Betts and Jolene Kercher promotes self-directed learning in gifted and talented students. The major goal of the model is to facilitate the growth of students as independent, self-directed learners, with the development of skills, concepts and positive attitudes within the cognitive, emotional and social domains.

According to the Institute’s coordinators, this unique institute focuses on the implementation of the Autonomous Learner Model (ALM) and the issues that surround the identification of gifted and talented minority children and gifted children of poverty.

Upcoming Events

Spring Autism Mini Conference
April 13, 2012
Workshop # 36531

Conference for Administrative Professionals
April 20, 2012
Workshop # 34729

Educator Job Fair
June 7, 2012
Workshop # 36281

STAAR Virtual Assessment Conference
Online viewing from February 23-June 1, 2012
Workshop # 36981
Regional Date Selected
The Regional Advisory Council of Superintendents has selected the week of June 4-8, 2012, as the regional date set aside for school districts to participate in “Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day” activities.

The “Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day” program is an annual event, sponsored by the Ms. Foundation, to broaden the discussion about the competing challenges of work and family. The program initially focused on girls to achieve their full potential in the home, workplace, or community, and was extended to young boys to encourage them to reach their potential by participating fully in family, work, and community.

Nationally, the “Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day” is the fourth Thursday in April of each year. However since this date conflicts with state and locally established activities, Texas school superintendents expressed an interest in participating in this event at a time other than the national event date.

For more information about the “Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day” program, visit http://www.daughtersandonstowork.org/wmspage.cfm?parm1=936.

On the Road....
To help promote literacy and to educate students about the many services available to them, the Region One Adult Education Program offered a field lesson to students from the McAllen Adult Learning Center. Approximately 250 students visited the newly opened McAllen Public Library.

While there many students applied for and received library cards and several students have since returned to the library to set up study group sessions and research information for group projects. Approximately 250 students participated in the field lesson.

With Teamwork--Everyone Wins!

A team effort! That’s how to describe the Region One ESC ALL (Advancing Literacy Lines) Tool, a compendium of services for schools targeting the needs of children from birth to grade 12, developed with the collaboration and support from the ELA department, the Division of Instructional Support, and the Division of Administrative and School Support. On a tight schedule and with a small window of opportunity, interested districts/charters received the ALL Tool along with professional development from Region One ESC as they prepared their competitive applications for the Texas Literacy Initiative Grant, explains Virginia Champion, Region One ESC Specialist.

“Through collaboration and support, we hoped to have had a positive impact by providing resources and training which would give our district and charter applicants an added edge which is in the best interest of students served by Region One ESC. We were so pleased at the announcement that among the 30 TLI Grant recipients in the state, five of those are from the Region One area and they will now be able to advance their goals in the areas of language and literacy,” says Champion. The range per award for TLI grants was at a minimum of $200,000 and a maximum of $10,000,000.

Districts receiving the grant are Brownsville ISD, Edinburg CISD, McAllen ISD, Mercedes ISD, and the Tejano Center for Community Concerns, Inc. (Raul Yzaguirre Charter School, Brownsville).

The purpose of the TLI grant program, which runs from March 8, 2012 to August 31, 2012, is to improve school readiness and success in the areas of language and literacy for disadvantaged students in targeted school districts, including their associated ECE providers, who will use the model of Literacy Lines to implement the Texas State Literacy Plan (TSLP).

The goals of the grant program are to:

• increase the oral language and preliteracy skills of participating preschool children
• improve the performance of participating K–2 students on early reading assessments
• increase the percentage of participating students who meet or exceed proficiency on the state English language arts assessments in grades 3–12
• increase the use of data and data analysis to inform all decision making in participating districts, campuses, classrooms, and early learning settings
• increase the implementation of effective literacy instruction through Literacy Lines.
World Down Syndrome Awareness Day

Together with parents of Down syndrome children, Region One ECI staffers Esmeralda Mora and Denice Miranda joined to recognize World Down Syndrome Awareness Day on March 21. Miranda helped to link the families, the majority on her caseload, with other families. The families got together and held a pot luck luncheon giving them the opportunity to network and gave the kids a time to play.

Down Syndrome Awareness Day was established to help raise awareness of what Down syndrome is, what it means to have Down syndrome, and how people with Down syndrome play a vital role in our lives and communities. Established by Down Syndrome International (DSi), a UK based international charity, comprising a membership of individuals and organizations worldwide, is committed to ensuring quality of life and human rights for all people with Down syndrome.

The significance of the day “World Down Syndrome Day” date which takes place on March 21 every year is that it represents the 3 copies of chromosome 21, which is unique to people with Down syndrome, according to DSi.

Texas Energy Center Offering Scholarship Opportunity

The Region One Education Service Center has provided its school districts the opportunity to save money on utility costs by participation in the Texas Energy Center, formerly the Region One ESC Electric Consortium. Supporting Region One in the management of this consortium is Van Brunt & Associates Inc., an energy procurement advisory firm which assists large users of electricity and natural gas manage their energy costs.

Van Brunt & Associates, Inc. and Region One ESC are offering up to ten $1,000 scholarships to graduating seniors attending high school in the Texas Energy Center Consortium. The Energy Scholarship will be awarded this spring to students who plan to attend a four-year degree at a university or college.

Eligible member districts:

- Donna ISD
- Edinburg CISD
- Edcouch-Elsa ISD
- Hidalgo ISD
- La Feria ISD
- La Joya ISD
- Laredo ISD
- La Villa ISD
- Los Fresnos CISD
- Lyford CISD
- McAllen ISD
- Mission CISD
- Monte Alto ISD
- PSJA ISD
- Point Isabel ISD
- Raymondville ISD
- Region One ESC
- Rio Hondo ISD
- Santa Rosa ISD
- Sharyland ISD
- South Texas ISD
- South Texas Education Technologies, Inc.
- Zapata County ISD


“The Region One ESC Energy Scholarship recognizes the achievements of high school seniors who have taken leadership roles in their academic and community endeavors,” says Annette Van Brunt, President and CEO of Van Brunt & Associates, Inc., “we value our relationship with the member districts and wanted to do something for these communities to demonstrate that. Investing in the future through these students is an investment in the communities in which they live.”

In addition to saving money, benefits of the Region One Consortium include a focus on one utility, a greater number of eligible suppliers; greater control over contract structure; bidding process management; direct access to expert consultants; and working with local companies.
Dates to Remember

http://www.nea.org

**APRIL**
April 1-30
National Poetry Month

April 1
April Fool's Day

April 2
Intl. Children's Book Day

April 7
World Health Day

April 8-14
National Library Week

April 15-21
National Environmental Education Week

April 15-21
Public School Volunteer Week

April 30
El día de los niños/
Children's Day

**MAY**
May 1-7
National Physical Education and Sport Week

May 6-12
National Teacher Appreciation Week

May 8
National Teacher Day

May 9
National School Nurse Day