

LAND USE

# Northside neighborhood planning on the horizon

The City of Madison is beginning a neighborhood planning initiative for Northport-Warner Park area.

A neighborhood-based steering committee of 7-9 individuals will be appointed by the Mayor in April to guide the planning process.

The committee will review the original plan created in 1992 and update it to determine what is still important to Northsiders as well as new issues that residents and the business community would like to have addressed.

The committee will be a diverse group of long-term residents to newcomers to the area, homeowners and apartment residents, business tenants to business owners, and individuals from different ages, income, race and ethnicity.

The committee will look at the existing plan and see what is important for

the community in the next 5-10 years.

The process will include established neighborhoods, business community, centers of worship, public and private schools, and other important stakeholders to ensure a relevant, workable strategy is developed.

Through the planning process, neighborhood residents, the business community, centers of worship, and not-for-profit organizations will work to identify and formulate strategies for key neighborhood issues.



Northport-Warner Park planning area

For more information, contact city neighborhood planner Jule Stroick at 267-8744, ext. 218.

Other contacts are district 12 & 18 alderpersons at 266-4071, and local contact Jim Powell, Northside Planning Council, at 661-0060.

# Cherokee Marsh restoration continues



Photo by Jim Powell

**In February a grove of box elders was removed along Wheeler Road, creating this desolate scene. In April, the area will be planted with oak saplings and hundreds of prairie plants as invasive species removal and conservation restoration efforts continue in Cherokee Marsh.**

The recent tree removal along Wheeler Road is part of an oak woodland restoration project that was initiated about five years ago with a more limited clearing of trees that were hanging out into the road obstructing traffic, according to Russ Hefty of the Madison Parks. "Volunteers then helped plant oak trees to replace the removed box elders," he said.

The oak trees grew well reaching heights of 10 to 15 feet. Unfortunately the remaining box elders also grew taller, overtopping the oaks and causing them to start to grow towards the road for light. Thus the need to remove the competing box elder trees. Exotic honeysuckle and buckthorn were also removed.

The removals created a half-acre clearing that will be restored with native shrubs and oak trees.

In a few years the area will grow into a dense shrub thicket amongst a new oak grove. These trees and shrubs will provide both food and cover for a variety of wildlife species.

This winter Hefty continued restoration efforts in the wetlands adjacent to the Yahara River.

This wetland is a diverse combination of sedge meadow, wet prairie and fen plant community habitats. Past management efforts over the past eight years focused on use of prescribed fire to reduce the presence of exotic brush thickets.

Unfortunately in some areas the fire could not penetrate the thickets because the dense shade eliminated the fuel cover (sedges and grasses) necessary to carry a fire.

Hefty said Parks chose to mow them

down this winter with a forestry mower, which can handle brush up to four inches in diameter and reduce it to wood chips.

It wasn't until February that the weather finally got cold enough to freeze the ground in the wetland, which was required to support the weight of the equipment on the soft peat soils. A total of 10 acres were mowed.

Next spring herbicide will be carefully applied to the foliage of buckthorn and honeysuckle. Seeds of native sedges, grasses, and wildflowers will be planted on areas of bare ground within the cleared areas.

The goal is to restore this wetland to the open treeless habitat that existed prior to European Settlement. Today this type of habitat is very rare and has led to the drastic decline of birds (marsh hawk, short-eared owl) that require it for feeding and nesting. Ironically while scoping out the project with a contractor we spotted a short-eared owl flying overhead.

Hopefully someday soon it will return to once again nest in this wetland.

## Volunteer for Earth Day in the Marsh

On Saturday, April 21, Madison Parks invites volunteers to assist in planting 350 native shrubs (10 different species) in the recently cleared Wheeler Road area of South Cherokee Marsh

Contact Laura Whitmore at 266-5949 for more information



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# Fisherman takes a stake in the lake

Northsider Jack Hurst discusses the winter fish kill at Warner Park and more

By Dorothy Wheeler

The Northside News

One of Madison's Northside treasures is Warner Park with its lagoons.

Jack Hurst is a fisherman whose special close connection to the lakes causes him to care a great deal about the welfare of these lagoons.

Recently, when making one of his inspections, he found thousands of dead fish in the lagoon near the park shelter that gave him pause. He called his friend at the DNR who said the fish probably suffered a lack of oxygen in the shallow water beneath the heavy snow.

Jack thought that maybe these fish could have been saved if other problems could be solved regarding the major run-off with pollutants that enter the lagoons.

First and foremost, the run-off from the parking lot and streets flows directly into the lake near the park shelter carrying a lot of sand and silt which makes the lagoons shallower.

The banks of the lagoons are deteriorating which causes more sand and silt to settle into the lagoons. Excessive fertilizer from lawn care pollutes the lake causing the weeds to flourish.

These conditions seem to favor carp that have multiplied and taken over the lagoons. Another serious pollution matter is the debris that finds its way into the lagoons from careless park users who don't clean up after themselves.

Another problem which Jack has been working on for years is evident at the other end of the lagoons where they open into Lake Mendota. This channel, which flows under the railroad tracks, is filled with so much sand and debris that the fish can't migrate into the lagoons to spawn. Jack has wanted this channel



The fish kill in Warner Park lagoon

cleaned out and dredged for years. The City of Madison is responsible for this channel.

Dredging the lagoons and installing aerators would be one possible solution to provide more oxygen for the fish. Stabilizing the banks of the lagoons would further protect fish habitat. Putting a removable mesh fence at the four-foot culvert entry to the lagoons during the carp spawning season would help control the carp population.

Jack also feels that littering laws should be enforced with higher fines.

The good news is that recently city engineers built a long-promised catch basin in the lagoons near Woodward Drive.

The basin will catch pollutants, especially sand and silt running off the streets and out of the storm sewer before they enter the lagoons. These basins, which are being installed at



Thousands of fish died during the winter in the lagoon due to a lack of oxygen in the shallow water under the ice. The fish only became visible after the ice melted.

various storm sewer outlets, can be cleaned out periodically to keep them working effectively. Jack would like to see more of these basins installed in the lagoon area to control run-off.

Earth Day is coming up this month and *Take a Stake in the Lakes Week* is scheduled for the second week in June. Both celebrations will turn our attention to the lakes and give us opportunities to help with the clean up!

Jack Hurst and his fellow fishermen in the Yahara Fishing Club give the lake their full attention all year round



Most of the winter fish kill are small panfish, but numerous larger fish were spotted as well.

and work hard to solve the problems they find.

A volunteer clean up, organized by Mendota Hills neighborhood resident Susan Hill, was scheduled for April 7.

Photos by Jack Hurst

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ENVIRONMENT

# Your mother's calling Mother Earth wants her care

By Marcus Watson  
*The Northside News*

On April 22, the entire civilized world celebrates mother's day, mother earth that is. The coming Sunday will mark the thirty-seventh anniversary of the celebration of Earth Day. When first decreed in 1970 by Wisconsin Senator Gaylord Nelson, the event was feted by 20 million people. Now it is recognized by half a billion souls in 175 countries. And our little corner of the planet is no less enthusiastic.

Madison's Recycling Coordinator George Dreckmann offers an excellent way to lighten your electronics load.

"We will be holding our semi-annual Computer and Electronic Recycling Round-Up on Saturday, April 21. The event takes place at our transfer station, 121 E. Olin Avenue from 9 am to 1 pm," says Dreckmann. The city will charge \$5 for recycling monitors and laptops and \$25 for TVs. There is no

charge for other electronic items.

"This is for home products only," reminds Dreckmann. "We don't accept equipment from businesses." For more information, go to [www.cityofmadison.com/streets](http://www.cityofmadison.com/streets).

Saturday is also the day of the annual Earth Day Challenge to help clean up Madison's City Parks. Every year thousands of volunteers rally together to give our 260 parks a good wash and brush up. Call (608) 266-5949 before April 18 to register your group. The event runs from 9am to noon. For more information go to [www.cityofmadison.com/parks](http://www.cityofmadison.com/parks).

Local schools and organizations are also planning events. Check newsletters or calendars of upcoming events so you don't miss out on the fun. Whatever you do, make sure you take some time to do something good for our earth. It's the only mother we have.

## Habitat for Humanity ReStore Earth Day Celebration

Saturday, April 21, Noon to 4 pm, Habitat ReStore, 208 Cottage Grove Rd

Sixth annual Earth Day Celebration featuring over twenty-five earth-friendly exhibitors providing information on green building, sustainable living and other recycling options. Some examples of our fantastic displays include: Sustain Dane's Rain Barrels, Eco Friendly Flooring bamboo and recycled glass, Blue Jean Insulation, Community Car, and all sorts of alternative fuels/energy booths. Join the fun at the April 21 Habitat ReStore Earth Day Celebration. Open to the public, no fee, free refreshments, and activities for children including balloon art and greetings from Mother Earth!

*Habitat ReStore is an environmentally conscious building material store that sells used and new building materials at low prices. Since opening in Sept. 2001, Habitat ReStore diverted 3750 tons of materials from Dane County landfills and raised enough funds to build 16 Habitat for Humanity homes. Habitat ReStore is open Wednesday through Saturday, 10 am to 6 pm.*

# It's hard being green ...

But your efforts are worth saving your earth

By Marlene Hardick  
*The Northside News*

Be kind to Mother Earth. It isn't always easy, but here are a few ideas:

Don't use lawn chemicals. They wash straight to the lakes, poison the water, and make it a yukky green by mid-summer. Compost works great as a natural fertilizer, and it is free for a small quantity and \$10 for a pickup load. Westport County compost site on Hwy 19 opens in a few days. See details at the Public Works page of [www.countyofdane.com/](http://www.countyofdane.com/). Buy a compost bin on May 12 at the Alliant Center and make your own compost (\$39 plus tax).

Recycle cooking oil, computers and cell phones and athletic shoes. And bicycle parts and wheelchairs and lots more. See Streets at [www.cityofmadison.com/](http://www.cityofmadison.com/). Leaf, yard waste, and brush collection began on April 2 to replenish the public com-

post piles.

Buy local. Don't waste gas driving across town to shop. Don't buy veggies shipped across the country or globe when you can find better quality at the Northside Farmers Market. Carry a tote that can be reused over and over. Walk. Bike. Take the bus.

Pick up all the litter in your neighborhood. Don't buy unnecessary packaging. Recycle every scrap of what is on the list. Take plastic bags to Pierce's Northside Market to recycle. Carry your own beverage cup around with you and refuse to use Styrofoam. Ask the burger guy to wrap yours in paper instead of that plastic cardboard. Send an email to the big corporate headquarters. (Getting the big guys to change is the hardest thing on this list. Maybe they will listen when you stop giving them your money!)

HAPPY SPRING!!

# Earth Day April 21

## 2007 Activities

### Cherokee Marsh Clean-Up

Sponsoring group: Cub Scout Pack 127  
Location: Cherokee Marsh at School Road and Wheeler  
Time: 9:30-10:30 am  
Cub Scout Pack 127 and their families will pick-up litter and debris in Cherokee Marsh.

### Neighborhood Clean-Up

Sponsoring group: Berkley Oaks Neighborhood Association  
Location: Berkley Park at Dryden drive and Browning road  
Time: 9-10:45 am  
Beginning at Berkley Park, volunteers will pick-up litter along Thackeray Road and Packers Avenue.

### Lake View Hill Park's 10th Annual Earth Day Clean-Up

Sponsoring group: Dane County Parks (with volunteer signup supported by Friends of Lake View Hill Park)  
Location: Lake View Hill Park (meet at trailhead near watertower atop hill)  
Times: 11 am -1 pm  
Meet neighbors, while picking up winter's trash and other "treasures" from hidden caves below; treats/water provided!

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# Old kits create colorful conundrums

By Mary Schumacher

The Northside News

Last October a cheerful and energetic Northsider named Forrest Espinoza made her dream a reality. A stay-at-home mother with two small sons and a supportive husband, Forrest launched a successful business after many months of research and planning.

Forrest's business, Arttogo LLC, is a one-of-a-kind website store offering high quality, mixed material craft kits for people of all ages. Kits include the supplies to make jewelry, ornaments, felt soap, kites or other beautiful articles, and require only household items to complete, such as scissors or glue. Every kit provides the opportunity to create a unique and beautiful piece, especially if crafters add their own materials to their projects.

The spark for Forrest's business



Images provided by Forrest Espinoza  
**Arttogo, a business run by Northsider Forrest Espinoza, offers craft kits for all ages. A Decoupage Ornament Kit (above) and a Creativity Kit (left) are two of many projects provided on the website [www.myarttogo.com/](http://www.myarttogo.com/).**

came several years ago after a disappointing search for a Valentine's Day project she could make with her young son. The kits she found on the market provided mostly cheap, plastic materials and tacky themes.

"I couldn't find anyone selling the kind of craft kit that I wanted to use, so I decided to make my own. I've always loved art and being creative, and I wanted to have a viable business," she said. "So Arttogo was born!"

The concept behind Arttogo is art blended with convenience. The kits provide busy people with just about everything they need to make their own art. They are also ideal for parents to take along on vacations to give kids something fun and creative to do. However, the kits are not just for children.

"I designed these kits so that a person of any age would enjoy them," Forrest said. "Parents can use them with young kids, but adults really like them too. I look for quality materials, like beautiful wire and textured felt balls, items that look and feel wonderful. They make people want to make their own art, to try something new. That's what I want," she added, smiling.

Forrest's constant creativity supplies

Arttogo's kit selection with ever-expanding options. She hopes soon to offer a pine needle basket but even though she searches globally for supplies, she has not yet found the quality she demands.

"I have a lot of ideas in my head but sometimes I have trouble finding the right kind of materials for the kits," she laughed.

Forrest also offers workshops at various venues around Madison. She noted that felting is growing in popularity, particularly because it can be done with very young children. Her felt soap and felt bead ornaments kits are already popular items.

To learn more about kits and workshops, see Arttogo's website at [www.myarttogo.com](http://www.myarttogo.com).

## Rod Tippery joins Strategic Wealth Management Group, LLC

Rod Tippery has joined Strategic Wealth Management Group, LLC a general agency of Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company (MassMutual). As a Financial Services Professional, Mr. Tippery will be responsible for assisting professionals, small business owners, and individuals with their financial future. Mr. Tippery recently retired from 30 years in the Air Force and Air National Guard. He has lived in Madison with his wife Cheryl and family since 1978.

Tippery has been very involved in the Northside community as a coach and program Director at Warner Park Youth Football, has served on several boards including past President of Dane County Area Youth Football, has been Church Chairman and Treasurer at Bethany Church, is a former parent group president at Gompers (now Blackhawk) Middle School and past co-president of the East High School Parent Group.

The Strategic Wealth Management Group, LLC office is located at 525 Junction Road in Madison (608) 829-0015.

## New doctor joins Madison Chiropractic

Drs. Ross Royster and Brent McNabb, who first met while serving in the Peace Corps in Brazil, opened their chiropractic practice at 2205 North Sherman Avenue in 1981. They have provided chiropractic care for thousands of Northside residents over the past 26 years. Two years ago Dr. Dan Soderholm, who is a Northside native, joined the clinic after practicing on the East side of Madison for 24 years. Recently, these three doctors welcomed a newcomer to their practice, Dr. Joel Kirchberg.

"We're very excited to have the input of a younger doctor in our practice," said Dr. McNabb. "Dr. Kirchberg brings expertise in working with athletes and treating sports-related injuries." He is skilled in a wide variety of chiropractic adjusting techniques and therapeutic approaches for patients of all ages. Dr. Kirchberg is proficient in treating extra-spinal problems including ankles, knees, hips, wrists, elbows, shoulders and the jaw. He is completing the Certified Chiropractic Sports Practitioner post-graduate program, which places special emphasis on treating athletes of all

abilities, from the "weekend warrior" to the professional. He is also currently enrolled in the Wisconsin Chiropractic Nutrition course to expand his ability in nutritional counseling.

Dr Kirchberg, a graduate of Palmer College of Chiropractic and UW Madison, recently moved back to Wisconsin to be closer to family after practicing for five years in Illinois. He currently lives in Columbus with his wife, Mary. The Kirchbergs enjoy being active members in their community, where they participate in church and school activities, community events and the local Kiwanis club. Dr Kirchberg, an accomplished athlete himself, looks forward to being involved in baseball as a coach, player and team chiropractor.

"I am committed to providing effective quality care and working together with my patients to promote a healthy lifestyle," says Dr. Kirchberg. "I look forward to serving the Northside and contributing to Madison Chiropractic's reputation for excellence in health care."

## Welcome Dr. Joel Kirchberg



Drs. Brent McNabb, Ross Royster, and Dan Soderholm proudly welcome Dr. Joel Kirchberg to their practice.

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TROY GARDENS

# Bulbs away baby! Springtime at Troy is here

**By Marge Pitts**  
*Friends of Troy Gardens*

**Good Fences Make Good Community Art at Troy Gardens**

Join us to celebrate the new Mosaic "Living" Fence around the Kids' Garden at Troy Gardens on Mon., May 14, 4-5 pm. Last summer, over 100 neighborhood participants—including children, teenagers, and senior citizens—helped create the Mosaic Fence. Now the time has come to dedicate this shining example of public art, and to plant corn and tall flowers along its length. Attendees will be treated to tasty snacks along with a ribbon cutting and seed planting ceremony.

**Farm & Field Environmental Leadership Summer Program Seeks Teens**

Troy Gardens' Farm & Field Program is a paid job-training program for teenagers (age 14-17) interested in gaining real experience in organic farming, natural areas restoration, and teaching younger children about nature and gardening. The program runs June 25-August 23, on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 8 am-noon at Troy Gardens. Check

Troy Gardens' website at [www.troy-gardens.org](http://www.troy-gardens.org) or contact Nathan Larson at 240-0409 for more information.

**Easy Fundraiser for Troy Community Gardens—You "Can" Help!**

Troy Community Gardens is calling for your recyclable aluminum cans. Bring all you "can," bagged up, to Troy Gardens by noon on Sat., Apr. 21. This is Opening Day of the Community Gardens, so there will be plenty of interesting activity on the site that day. In case of rain, please bring your cans to Troy Gardens on the following Sat., Apr. 28. Troy Community Gardens will sell the cans to a recycler, and the money will go for much needed tools and other items in the Gardens this season. Start saving cans now—and don't hesitate to enlist your friends, neighbors and relatives.

**Natural Areas Need A Hand**

Volunteers play a vital role in the management of the Natural Areas at Troy Gardens. We need many helpers each season to keep invasive weeds in check and make conditions favorable for our restored prairie, edible woodland, and herb/prairie gardens. We offer two levels of participation: Natural Areas Stewards take a lead



Photo by Nathan Larson

**As part of a holistic learning and working experience, Farm & Field participants plant and grow a plot of vegetables for a local food pantry each year at Troy Gardens.**

role. They train volunteers, lead work parties, and contribute their own ideas and skills to maintaining and developing Troy's natural areas. Six hours per month time commitment is required; some training is provided. Natural Areas Volunteers help maintain the natural areas and walking trails during

volunteer days, scheduled for one Saturday per month (usually the 3rd Saturday), March through October, from 9 am to noon. Alternative volunteer times can be arranged. Contact Christie Ralston at 240-0409 for more information.

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## Third time's a charm...

### Northside Artists Group fetes three years

By Callie Reger

Northside News

Photography, paintings, and picasette are a few of the showpieces to be exhibited at the North Side Artist's Group Third Annual Art Exhibit. This year's exhibit will feature 30 artists, beginners and veterans to the art scene, who wish to show off their creative fusion with the community.

"There are very interesting and different pieces at the show that I think people haven't seen before," observed planning volunteer Kristi Hall.

NSAG's co-founder and overseer of the exhibition, Dana Slowiak, said that as more new faces participate in the show, the wider the variety of artwork gets.

Planning for the show has been in progress since last November. Slowiak recruited additional volunteers Dee Czarniecki, Linda Falkenstein and Marcia Yapp to help plan the exhibit.

"The planning process is rewarding," Hall remarked, "We are reminded every time we interact with the artists, we are giving them an avenue to show their work. They appreciate having that opportunity."

All artists are required to live or work on the Northside in order to participate in the exhibit. Artists may submit one piece of work that can hang on a gallery wall. Each artist decides

whether or not to sell the work and may exhibit work not for sale. There is no registration fee to participate.

"It's amazing how many artists live on the Northside," Slowiak said. "Many of us never knew about each other prior to NSAG. Some of us knew each other through other life things but never knew each other was an artist."

"Each year we aim to make the exhibit more and more professional," Slowiak continued. "As we garner more help from people and more funds, we are able to move the exhibits forward. The neighborhood's and artists' commitment to NSAG is what will help the group flourish."

A goal for the group is the building of both the artistic community and the Northside community. In the future, the artists hope to pair up with the Northside Farmers Market and the Northside Timebank, to help spread the word about NSAG and the individual artists. They are also applying for a show for 2008 in the Overture Center.

"As more people commit to helping coordinate various aspects, I hope to see NSAG show throughout Madison," concluded Slowiak.

The exhibit will be held May 1-31 at Lakeview Library and the Coffee Gallerie. The opening reception will be held on Saturday, May 5, 1-3 p.m..

## Third Annual Community Art Exhibit

May 1-31



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GOOD WORKS

# Doctors, and people, without borders

## Local foundation aids struggling city

By Callie Reger  
The Northside News

On March 1, members of the Northside community joined forces with the Madison-based Hackett Hemwall Foundation to bring supplies and medical services to the struggling city of La Cieba, Honduras.

Palms sway in the salty sea breeze as steep cliffs set a picturesque backdrop behind Honduras's banana and pineapple plantations. Unfortunately, the breath taking scenery can't disguise the thousands of villagers who make up the poverty-stricken population.

"Rather than shipping what we think they need, we ask what they really need. We pin point what they ask for," says Chet Hermanson of Chet's Car Care. Hermanson is a patient of Dr. Jeffrey Patterson, the director of the foundation. Patterson asked Hermanson for years to become involved, and when Hermanson turned his business over to new owners, he had more time to get involved.

"The Foundation developed from a small organization to now a whole family. The desire to participate has been remarkable. Doctors and their families from across the nation and across the world have shown interest in the foundation," says Hermanson.

Over the course of three weeks, 110 of the Hackett Hemwall Foundation's

physicians and volunteers will treat around 4,500 people with Prolotherapy, Ultrasound guided sclerotherapy, ENT surgeries and some general medicine. Prolotherapy is a chronic pain treatment for the field-workers of La Cieba's many Dole fruit plantations. Often it is a one-time treatment that gives most patients long-term relief.

"Our goal is to leave a foot print in the lives of the people there," says Mary Doherty, executive director of the foundation "They feel better after treatments, but we want their lives to be better."

The primary purpose is to service the people of Honduras. The second is to train and assist physicians and residents in the hospitals of Honduras in learning and practicing the most used treatments and procedures.

The volunteers start their days at 7 am. After a day of treating patients, these doctors gather for conferences and case studies and wrap up around 9 pm.

"By the end of the day, we are hot, dirty, tired and exhausted," Doherty explains, "but we are rewarded with hugs, kisses, 'I love you's' and pineapples."

Honduras's government provides inadequate funds for medical services. La Cieba has a 70-bed government-run hospital serving 250,000 people in surrounding villages. Six to eight births occur each day in La Cieba, and the

hospital offers only one birthing bed. Patients must bring their own sheets, surgical gloves and food.

Over many months, the Hackett Hemwall Foundation purchased medical supplies and medications and collected donations from hospitals, medical clinics, and private individuals, to assist the Honduran hospitals.

Doherty estimates that the medical and school supplies the foundation collects will help 3,000-4,000 people. "We are buying and shipping suit cases, and on the plane we ask that each volunteer

*"By the end of the day, we are hot, dirty, tired and exhausted. We are rewarded with hugs, kisses, 'I love you's' and pineapples."*

takes one personal bag, and one bag filled with medical supplies to get as much as we can down there."

A huge addition for the hospital this year is an old camper that Hermanson and his shop renovated into a "Blood Mobile". The Blood Mobile is still waiting to be shipped, and it will allow the foundation to collect blood from the residents of rural Honduras.

**To donate medical supplies, money or time to the Hackett Hemwall Foundation,**

please contact Dr. Jeffrey Patterson (Director) at [info@prolotherapy-hhf.org](mailto:info@prolotherapy-hhf.org) or at 2532 Balden Street, Madison, WI, 53713. Learn more at [www.prolotherapy-hhf.org/](http://www.prolotherapy-hhf.org/).

You may also contact Chet's Car Care at 249-9887 or drop off supplies or donations at the business located at 2020 Aberg Avenue.

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PEOPLE

# Local family learn, teaches, reaches out

## Son with autism takes lead in new journey

By Jennifer Fetterly  
The Northside News

The numbers are alarming. Earlier this year researchers announced that one in every 150 children in the United States is diagnosed with some form of autism.

Northside resident Kryisia Braun knows those numbers intimately; to her it's not just a statistic, it's reality. In August 2004, her then 19-month-old son, Mitchell, was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. According to the Autism Society of America, Autism is a developmental disability that typically appears during the first three years of life and affects individuals differently and to varying degrees. The neurological disorder affects the normal functioning of the brain, impacting social and communication skills.

Braun, a third grade teacher, had a gut feeling something was different about her toddler. "He was my second child, and I noticed that he was not trying to communicate in the ways of my first child," she said. "I started to be aware, but not alarmed." By the time Mitchell was 18 months old, Braun pushed her pediatrician for more information. Her doctor referred her to Bridges for Families, Birth to 3 program where Mitchell was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

"My immediate reaction was that he was not going to be able to do basic things. I asked myself 'Is he ever going to say Mommy or Daddy, or even know who we are?'" she said.

They are thankful that the diagnosis came relatively quick so Mitchell could start benefiting from intensive therapy. Since the diagnosis Braun and her husband take caring and teaching for an autistic child day by day.

"It has taken me probably at least a year and a half to let it slowly sink in," Braun said. "I try not to think of the future and what it will mean for Mitchell. What I believe, with any child, is you can not predetermine

how successful in life they're going to be. So to fear for the fact that he is only going to meet the lowest common denominator isn't going to do me any good to worry about that, and it is not going to do him any good."

One of Braun's focuses is to teach others about Autism and help raise money for organizations the work with Autistic children and adults. Last December, Braun and her husband both turned 40 years old. The couple wanted to find a way to celebrate in a special way by organizing an autism benefit.

The benefit raised more than \$1,500, which will be used to help The Autism Society of Greater Madison and Imagine a Child's Capacity. Some money will be used for scholarships for parents of children with autism to attend conferences and workshops of the disorder.

Braun also wants to also reach out to parents that may concerned about their child's early development to find help. She remembers what it was like before Mitchell was diagnosed, when others discounted her fears of his slow development.

"If parents have a fear, they have to ask questions," she said "When Mitchell was 15-18 months I didn't get a lot off positive support, people would say 'Oh, he's a late speaker, it will be just fine.' If you have a gut feeling about it is better to check it out."

Today, Braun and her entire family are adjusting to dealing with autism and celebrating the little triumphs in Mitchell's life. She never would imagine how life has changed.

"In some ways I sometimes feel, 'Wow, we are the lucky ones'. I don't know many parents with autistic children that feel that way," she said. "He has taught us more about ourselves that we would every have known."

For more information of Autism visit the Autism Society of Wisconsin website at [www.autism-society.org](http://www.autism-society.org)

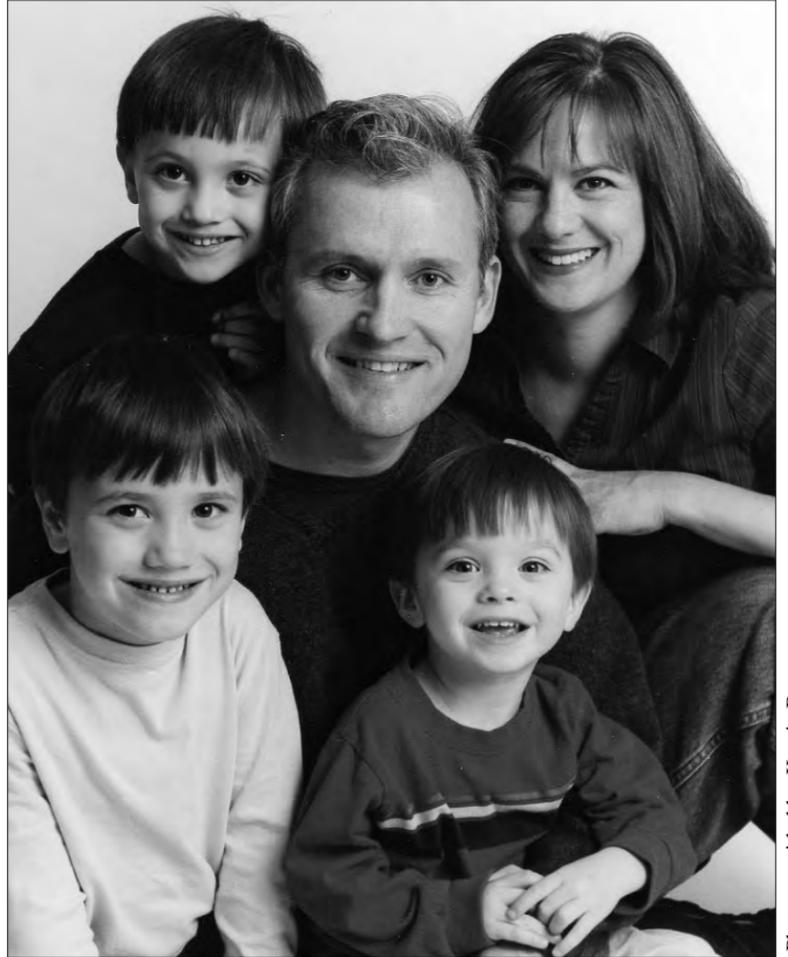


Photo provided by Kryisia Braun

The Braun family is busy raising three boys and sharing their experiences with autism. The family organized a benefit to raise money for local autism organizations and increase awareness about autism.

### Week of the Young Child (WOYC) ~ April 22-28

Dane County Association for the Education of Young Children (DCAEYC) teamed up with the Madison Children's Museum The Museum will be open FREE to the public to celebrate WOYC, on **Friday April 20th from 6-8 pm** with free refreshments, compliments of DCAEYC! Please join in this event to celebrate young children.

For more information, call Kia Karlen at 256-6445, X21, email [kkarlen@madisonchildrensmuseum.org](mailto:kkarlen@madisonchildrensmuseum.org) or visit [www.childrensmuseum.org/](http://www.childrensmuseum.org/).

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