

## Ravenscroft Homeowners Association Newsletter



### **President's Message**

On behalf of the Ravenscroft Homeowners Association Board of Trustees and Mico Management Company, I'd like to extend greetings to all who have been residents of our fine community for a while and a warm welcome to those who recently joined us. The summer seemed to pass very quickly, and now the kids are once again off to school and we find ourselves beginning to prepare for winter. Hopefully, you and your family have enjoyed the summer season, whether away on vacation, at the shore, or relaxing at home in our beautiful community.

Since the start of the year, your Board and Property Management firm have been hard at work handling day-to-day Association management issues as well as working on some of the community improvement initiatives that were mentioned in the last newsletter. I'd like to briefly bring you up to date on some of these initiatives:

**Tree Maintenance Program:** based on the tree survey that was performed in 2006, a multi-year tree maintenance program was begun last year, with critical tree pruning and removals being done to address safety and severe conditions. This year, another contract was awarded to continue tree pruning and removals necessary for safety and to improve the health of our trees. Over the past year, there have been several instances of tree root invasion of sewer lines, necessitating repairs. The Association is planning to assess the extent and severity of this problem to determine any corrective and preventive actions that may be necessary and relevant to the tree maintenance program.



**Turf Management:** a program for enhancing the health and beauty of Association lawn areas is ongoing. Soil analysis, fertilizing, weed/pest control, aerating and seeding are all being assessed and performed with the goal of improving the turf throughout the community.

**Street Pavement Improvements:** No doubt most of us have noticed that our roadways are deteriorating and in need of maintenance, repair or repaving in a number of areas. While few



areas have reached the critical point yet, it is prudent to plan now for the necessary work to keep our community roadways in a state of good repair. To this end, the Board is pursuing two courses of action. First, for the streets that the Township is

responsible to maintain (Country, Raintree, Willowbend, Pinewood); we are

asking the Township to assess our streets and provide the necessary work in a timely manner.

Second, for the rest of our roadways that the Association is responsible to maintain, we are planning a program to assess and implement the needed work starting in 2009.

**Drainage Improvement Program:** a contract has been awarded to evaluate drainage issues and improvement needs throughout the community. This program will address comments from homeowners about poor drainage on their property or nearby common ground and requests for the Association to address those issues. This evaluation will report on the issues, their severity, possible solutions and costs. Following completion of the evaluation, the Board will consider how to proceed based on the solutions presented and costs involved. Should part of a solution require work to be performed on homeowner private property, such as to tie-in roof drains and sump pumps to a central drainage system, homeowners would be advised on the scope and cost of the work for which they would be responsible.

### **Sidewalk Improvement Program**

As you have noticed a large amount of the sidewalks have been replaced throughout the community, this will be an on-going project.

**Website:** thanks to a homeowner's offer of volunteer support in developing a Ravenscroft website, this effort is now underway. The website is being designed to include things such as access to Association structure & management, Association documents, forms, newsletters, announcements, calendar of events, etc. Testing should begin soon for the new website and all Association members will be advised when the website is ready for use.



**Unit Inspection Program:** as previously reported, during 2007 a unit inspection program was implemented to determine if Association maintenance and architectural control requirements were being satisfied. The purpose of this program is to ensure that all community housing units remain aesthetically compatible with Ravenscroft architectural standards to protect the quality of life and property investments of all homeowners. Notification and violation letters have been issued as necessary with requests for necessary maintenance or applications for modifications. This year, the unit inspection program will continue with follow-up on open issues from last year and ongoing assessment of maintenance and architectural control requirements. Should you receive an inspection program notification, please address it at your earliest opportunity and ask for clarification or more information if necessary.

### **Annual Pool Party**

On July 26, we held our annual pool party and a good time was had by all, we had a variety of pizzas, hoagies, ice cream, soda, and of course, ice cream.

### **Volunteers Wanted**

Lastly, no newsletter column would be complete without a call for volunteers. As always, I urge Association members to become involved in your community by volunteering to serve on the Board, a Committee or just to help out planning and implementing an event, such as the yearly

Yard Sale or annual Association Pool Party. Your help is urgently needed, and no offer of help can be too small. So please contact any Board Member or Mico Management and let us know how you are able to participate in your community.

Best regards to all, and have a great autumn,

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Russ Ferretti, President, Ravenscroft Homeowners Association



### Verizon FIOS TV

Verizon FIOS is coming to our community. We would like to tell you a little about FIOS and what you can expect to take place. The Board met with a representative from Verizon in July. Verizon will be sending their work crews into the community to install new communication boxes much like the ones you see now in the community along the edges of yard work will be performed by Verizon in the existing utility easements. damaged turf will be repaired. Verizon will be notifying homeowners and by door hangers before work begins. Homeowners who elect to the new service will then have the new communication lines extended into their homes.



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#### \* What is Verizon FIOS TV?

Using state-of-the-art fiber optic network, Verizon FIOS TV has an extensive channel lineup with more than 300 digital channels and 22+ local and national HDTV channels, as well as other features such as a dual-tuner Digital Video Recorder (DVR) and On Demand titles at any given time.

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Deleted: . The Verizon FIOS network provides unparalleled bandwidth allowing you to get more channels, more high definition programming and more On Demand titles. Inside your home, we use your existing coaxial cable wiring for FIOS TV, making installation easy.

#### \* How does Verizon FIOS TV differ from cable TV service?

While traditional cable TV networks use mostly coaxial cable to deliver service to your home, Verizon FIOS is 100% fiber-optic all the way to your home. The Verizon FIOS network provides extensive bandwidth allowing you to get many channels, high definition programming and On Demand titles. Inside your home, the existing coaxial cable wiring is used for FIOS TV, making installation easy.

#### \* How does Verizon FIOS TV differ from satellite service?

Satellite providers require you to install a dish onto your home and require a clear line of sight to the southern sky in order to receive service. With FIOS, all your Verizon services come to your home on one fiber.

### Trash and Recycling Reminders

Please be reminded, trash pickup is every Wednesday and Saturday, and recycling pickup is every other Wednesday. Residents should place garbage curbside **no**



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**earlier than 7:00PM the night before pick-up.** If you miss the pickup, you must wait until the next scheduled pickup day to place your garbage at the curb and should leave no items at the curb until the night before the next pickup.

Please tie up your garbage bags. Leaving bags open invites animals and bugs. **We have a fox or foxes in the community (have been spotted by many residents on many occasions especially on Tuesday and Friday nights).** Leaving bags open also causes garbage to be blown away by gusts of wind, littering the entire community.

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**Recycling pick-up is every other Wednesday. You should place your recyclables curbside after 7:00PM the night before pick-up only.** Information on recycling, including what to recycle, how to dispose of it and pick-up dates can be obtained from Mercer County.

It has been noted that many residents are overfilling their recycling containers, causing the overflow to fall out or blow away and subsequently littering the community. If you need additional containers please contact Mercer County Recycling Center to obtain them.

### **PET PEEVES**

**Cleaning up after your dog.** It is your responsibility. No one likes cleaning up dog waste. If you take your dog for a walk, clean up the dog mess. You don't want it on your lawn, and your neighbors don't want it on their lawn either. When you own a dog that is part of being a responsible pet owner, plus it is required by the township and the community. And let's face it, bringing "it" in on your shoes really is nasty! Also, please curb your dog to avoid harming your neighbor's grass.



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If you see someone not cleaning up after their dog, please call MICO Management at 609-989-8500 or e-mail Kathy Kish, Property Manager, at [Kkish@gershengroup.com](mailto:Kkish@gershengroup.com). The offending person will be sent a warning letter, and the next time it happens the offender will be fined by the Association.

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Another peeve is getting more and more **prevalent** in the **community**. Dogs are being left out in the yard to bark for long periods of time, late night or early morning with no consideration for neighbors. Some people go out and leave their dog in the yard for hours on end, some are left in the hot sun with no water or left out in the cold with no protection. Remember, if you are hot and thirsty so are they; if you are cold so are they. Please be kind to you pet.

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### **Did You Know that Puppies and Dogs Need Socialization**



When people talk about *puppy socialization* they are generally referring to the first 16 weeks of a dog's life. This is the **window of time in our puppy's lives that determines who they will become as adult dogs.** The temperament, character and behavior habits of your puppy are developed during this socialization period - and will last a lifetime. It affects how your puppy will relate to his **family, strangers, animals and the environment in which he lives.**

Puppy socialization **stimulates the five senses** of your young dog. It is the introduction, exposure and desensitization to the sights, sounds, smells, tastes and touch of everyday life.

The socialization period conditions your puppy to the many different situations needed to be familiar with and comfortable around. It also prepares your dog to deal with the new experiences and challenges which inevitably arise throughout life in an appropriate manner. Puppy socialization is the **crucial stage where you begin to build the close bond** you share with your dog, one that will last forever. It's up to you - any puppy can become a well adjusted and trusted member of society through proper socialization.

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We owe it to our puppies to **provide them with thorough socialization and training** - all dogs need to be socialized regardless of breed type, where you bought the puppy or anything else you may think of.

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- The puppy socialization period (especially the first 16 weeks) is the **most critical time for shaping your dog's future temperament, character and behavior habits**. If you miss out on socializing your puppy during this period you cannot simply go back and fix the problems later.
- Preventing problems through proper socialization is a much better alternative than trying to correct undesirable behavior (barking, object guarding, chewing, separation anxiety, dog to dog aggression etc.) that arises from a lack of socialization.
- Puppy socialization is an **essential ingredient in building and strengthening the bond** you will share with your dog throughout his life. The time you put in now will be well rewarded.

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### **Unsocialized Puppies Take A Very Different Path In Life Than A Dog Who Is Properly Socialized**

- Socializing your puppy has an even **bigger influence over its behavior** than the breed of dog (boxer, beagle etc.) - it's that important.
- A socialized puppy is well placed to think, learn and problem solve (including obedience training), whereas a fearful stressed dog (unsocialized) is severely restricted in this area.
- A well socialized dog will **happily accept change, new people, challenges and will interact appropriately with other animals**.
- Puppy socialization prepares your puppy for the hustle and bustle of everyday life. Things like the vacuum cleaner, dishwasher, lawn mower, cats, TV and whatever else life throws at him.
- Puppy socialization educates your dog about **appropriate social interaction** and how to inhibit aggression towards people and other animals.
- Socialization feeds all of the senses and safely, positively promotes emotional and mental stimulation.

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### What Happens If You Don't Properly Socialize Your Puppy?

- An unfortunate but undeniable fact is that the **number one reason why dogs end up being euthanized** is through a lack of socialization (from the associated problems that arise). The sad part is that socializing your puppy isn't really that difficult.
- If you miss the crucial puppy socialization period it's not something you can catch up on later - you have deadlines you must meet!
- You end up with a dog that is an **outcast to society**, one that doesn't fit in and can't be trusted. Sadly there are many dogs in this very situation living out their days permanently confined to the back yard.
- Dogs who miss the critical socialization period often exhibit **shyness, aggression, timidity**, fear towards people, dogs and other animals. They are also often inept at relating with other dogs.
- If your puppy is deprived of early social stimulation, the result is that its physical and emotional health can be irreversibly compromised.
- Unexpected events and new experiences are not well received by unsocialized dogs. What we strive for in our dogs is a **happy balance between them being cautious** and having the **confidence to accept and explore new things**.

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### KIDS CORNER

#### How to Choose a Pet



Have you ever wanted a dog? Yet not know what dog to get. Well I have a few easy steps on choosing a dog. I will tell you. Did you do any research yet, if not that's okay? If you have research that's great. Do you know you can be looking at the wrong dog?

Now here are some of the materials you will need. First you will need to know if your family has any allergies. Another thing you need to know is if the dog you want is good for your house. Most importantly you need to know what dog breed you want. Those are the materials you need, but there are two more things you need one is a computer. If you don't have one you can go to the public library. You also have to know if your house and yard is puppy-proofed.

The next thing you need is to get extra research. Then you can start looking around. First if your mom is allergic to pet hair and, your sibling is scared of big dogs. I would say sorry to a shedding and big dog.

The following step is to go to your local animal shelter and pet store to look around. If your mom wants a small dog, your dad wants a big dog, your sibling wants a fish, and you want a medium dog. Well here is a way to compromise. You can go look around and let's say you found a perfect pet who is friendly. There are three things you need to know. The first is if it is good

around children. Next you have to know if it's healthy. The last step is to be prepared to buy the things a dog needs.

Now you are ready to buy your dog. Once you buy your dog you really have to take care of it. The thing you need to do is give your dog a name. Now your dog is home you can play with your new dog.

**By: Taylor Thornton**

If you have an article that you would like to go in the Kids Corner then e-mail Michael Thornton at [mpthornton8892@yahoo.com](mailto:mpthornton8892@yahoo.com)

### **CLUBHOUSE**

The community has a beautiful clubhouse, which you can rent for \$110.00. Call MICO and reserve the date you want. There is a deposit required which you will get back if the clubhouse is in the same condition as when you first went in. If interested call MICO Management at 609-586-6900 or e-mail Kathy Kish, Property Manager, at [Kkish@gershengroup.com](mailto:Kkish@gershengroup.com)

### **Tidbits and Reminders**

- Check your dryer and bathroom vents and also your chimney cap for birds' nests. Birds love to make nests in these areas and their nests will clog the vents and chimney causing a potential fire hazard. Be sure to check your dryer and bathroom vents as well as your chimney regularly and remove any birds' nests present.
- Please drive slowly and carefully through the community. Blind spots, sharp turns and parked cars, among other things, make it difficult to see potential hazards.
- Want to go paperless? If you prefer to receive Association notices through email instead of regular mail, please send an email to [kkish@gershengroup.com](mailto:kkish@gershengroup.com) to be taken off the regular mailing list.
- Soda machine for sale! The Association has decided to sell the soda machine in the clubhouse, due to the fact that it just isn't being used. If anyone is interested in it or belongs to an organization that may be interested, please call Kathy Kish at MICO Management at 609-989-8500.
- Pay your fees online! Although credit card and bank draft payments are not available, anyone who uses online banking can pay their Association fees online. You can even set up recurring payments so you don't have to think about it. For more information please contact your bank.
- Window Air Conditioners are not permitted for use in Ravenscroft community housing units. A few have been put into use and the Association has requested their removal.

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**RE: RAVENSCROFT LAWN SIGN DISPLAYS**

All Ravenscroft homeowners should be advised that lawn signs may only be displayed in accordance with the Ravenscroft Homeowners Association By-laws. In summary, the By-laws prohibit all lawn sign displays except For Sale and Open House signs on the day of an open house only and a small family name sign.

The Ravenscroft By-law regulation on signage reads as follows:

“Article IX, Section I, Paragraph (h) – No sign of any kind shall be displayed to the public view on any lot or unit or improvement thereon except a one-family name sign of not more than 144 square inches. One temporary sign of not more than four square feet, advertising the property for sale or rent may be displayed in a window only. “For **Sale**” signs and “Open House” signs may be posted on the front lawn area on the day of the open house only. “Open House” signs are additionally permitted at the entrance to the Association only on the day of the open house. No such sign shall be illuminated; (As amended March 12, 1992)



Enforcement of this community regulation was on hold for a period of time due to NJ Court rulings; however, in late 2007 the NJ Supreme Court affirmed that By-laws such as ours are legal and may be enforced. Be aware that homeowners displaying lawn signs that do not comply with the above By-law regulation will be subject to citations and fines as provided in the Association’s governing documents. **This includes political, contractor, and advertisement signs.**

Should you have any questions or comments regarding this matter, please contact Mico Management or attend one of the Association Board of Trustees meetings, which are normally held on the fourth Thursday of each month in the clubhouse.

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# ***Ravenscroft***

## Unit Information Sheet

This form will be used solely so the Management Company and the Board of Trustees can better serve the homeowners of the community. Please return the completed form to the clubhouse.

**Unit Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

Owner Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_ Alternate Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

E Mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Tenant Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_ Alternate Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_ Alternate Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Does this person have a key to your unit?     yes     no

Vehicle #1 Make, Model, Plate#: \_\_\_\_\_

Vehicle #2 Make, Model, Plate#: \_\_\_\_\_

Vehicle #3 Make, Model, Plate#: \_\_\_\_\_

Vehicle #4 Make, Model, Plate#: \_\_\_\_\_

Pet #1 Species, Breed, Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Pet #2 Species, Breed, Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Pet #3 Species, Breed, Age: \_\_\_\_\_

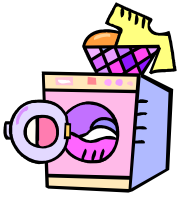
Pet #4 Species, Breed, Age: \_\_\_\_\_



## **Condo News & Updates**

**by Mico Management**

**New Resolution – Mandatory Dryer Vent Cleaning**



The Association cleans out the very end on the outside, but it is your responsibility to clean out the rest. Lint build-up inside dryer vents can create all kinds of problems:

- Shortens the life of your dryer because it has to work harder to dry your clothes
- Increases your energy bills because the dryer has to run longer and harder to dry your clothes
- Becomes a fire hazard due to heat build-up inside the vent

Because of the last reason, the Ravenscroft Condominium Association has passed a resolution that requires all owners to clean their dryer vents once every 2 years and provide proof of the cleaning. It is very important to the Board of Trustees to keep the community residents safe and their property protected, as well as it being their duty. The resolution required all owners to submit proof that their dryer vent has been cleaned by no later than October 31, 2008 and every two years after that.

**Condominium Association Policy Changes**

The new policies are summarized below:

**Policy Concerning Satellite Dishes**

Condominium owners are permitted to install a satellite dish no larger than one meter in diameter on patios, porches and balconies. Satellite dishes must be installed in a manner that does not cause damage to the common or limited common elements and are not creating a hazard. Owners are required to notify the Association after the installation so that it may be inspected for compliance. If the Association needs to perform repairs to the area where the satellite dish is installed, the unit owner will be responsible for removal and re-installation of the dish at the unit owner's expense.

Installation on common areas such as roofs will be allowed only if an acceptable signal can not be received from any limited common element. For installation on common element, a written application must be submitted to the Board of Trustees prior to installation. In addition, the owner must sign an agreement accepting responsibility for the satellite dish and any damage or injury resulting from the installation, which will be filed with Mercer County. The unit owner will be responsible for the filing fee and the agreement will carry with the unit to all successive owners.

**New Light Fixtures**

The Condo Board has been reviewing exterior light fixture samples in an effort to approve additional styles that will be both attractive and able to accommodate a motion sensor. If you are considering replacing any of your exterior light fixtures you must obtain approval from the Board of Trustees prior to doing so. Please contact Kathy Kish at MICO Management (609) 989-8500 for more information.

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## Condo Owners Really Should Have Homeowner's/Renter's Insurance...

As a property manager I have received many calls over the years to assist people in emergency situations. During the winter months, especially during cold spells, it is very common to receive calls regarding pipes that have frozen and burst, severely flooding people's homes. Fires, floods, accidents, even animals seeking shelter inside a home's walls are situations property managers face often. These occurrences cause a lot of damage to the interior of the unit. Accidents and tragedies happen. Even though no one likes to think these things will ever happen, I cannot emphasize enough to all residents and owners how important it is to have adequate homeowner's or renter's insurance so you are prepared. When tragedy strikes, the last thing you want to have to deal with is a huge financial loss on top of everything else.



The Association has an insurance policy, but it does not provide coverage for the interior contents of your unit. In many cases the policy also does not provide coverage for interior damage to your unit, even if the cause was from the exterior. Even for a covered loss there is a \$1,000 deductible that you would be responsible for. The Association's insurance policy covers all structural portions of the buildings up to the sheetrock of your unit.

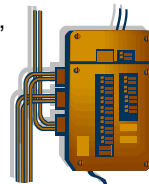
If an incident occurs causing severe damage, this policy will not cover any of your personal items, furniture, appliances, etc. It does not cover any upgrades in the unit such as carpeting, colored paint, wallpaper, etc. The unit owner is responsible for the \$1,000.00 deductible and any cost differentiation between the carrier's payment on the claim and the cost of upgrades. For example, if you have placed a better quality carpet in your unit and it now needs replacement, the difference in cost between "builder's grade" carpet and the higher quality carpet that is being replaced will be paid by the unit owner, which can cost hundreds of dollars.

The Association recommends that homeowners purchase an HO-6 policy specifically designed for communities such as this. If you are renting, be sure to purchase renter's insurance to cover your personal belongings. Generally, homeowner's and renter's insurance is not costly and is well worth having. Having this protection helps you in covering the deductible and cost differences from the pay out of the Association's insurance policy.

If you do not have homeowner's or renter's insurance, we highly encourage you to contact your insurance agent today to discuss coverage choices available to you.

## **ATTENTION CONDOMINIUM RESIDENTS**

The Board and Management would like to make you aware of a potential issue at the condominium units. Due to age, the main circuit breakers to the units have begun to fail. When they fail, the entire unit is without electricity and the breaker needs to be replaced.



**What to do if your entire unit is without power:**

Call PSE&G first. PSE&G will need to come out and investigate the problem. If PSE&G determines that the main breaker is faulty, they must shut off the power to your unit before an electrician can make repairs.

Next, call the management company. MICO Management is available 24 hours a day and will get in touch with an electrician.

Shut off and/or unplug anything that uses electricity to avoid a surge and possible damage to your property.

Please be aware, because of the age of the breakers, they are no longer manufactured and very difficult to find. The Association is in contact with an electrician who keeps the breakers in stock on his truck. In order to avoid unnecessary delays and costs to you, please follow the above steps.

**Notice Regarding Condominium Planting Beds**

Please do not alter the planting bed outside of your condominium unit. This includes size, shape and type of planting inside (other than annual flowers). The Board is careful to ensure the planting beds

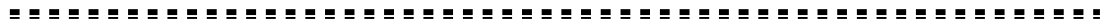


remain consistent with the uniform appearance of the community, which keeps your property values high. If you have a request for landscaping, such as removal or

replacement of a shrub, please submit your request in writing to the Association.

Please note that this does not apply to annual flowers, which the Board allows unit owners to plant in the beds.

Spring will be here before we know it, so please submit your written landscaping requests as soon as possible.



**Resident Outreach and Information**

- Need a helping hand with house cleaning? Give Michelle Monacchio a call at 609-577-9424.
- Get private piano lessons in your own home! Experienced piano teacher invites kids to learn how to play the piano. Call 609-890-2848.
- Need an AVON Lady call Audra Keith (609) 858-0276

**Autism Overview – A Community Awareness Message**

Approximately 1 in 150 children born are affected by Autism. Someone in your family or someone you know may be affected by this disorder. This article is being presented to provide community awareness and may answer some basic questions regarding the condition.

**What is autism?**

Autism is a complex developmental disability that typically appears during the first three years of life and is the result of a neurological disorder that affects the normal functioning of the brain, impacting

development in the areas of social interaction and communication skills. Both children and adults with autism typically show difficulties in verbal and non-verbal communication, social interactions, and leisure or play activities. Autism is a spectrum disorder and it affects each individual differently and at varying degrees.

### **What are the most common characteristics of autism?**

Every person with autism is an individual, and like all individuals, has a unique personality and combination of characteristics. Some individuals mildly affected may exhibit only slight delays in language and greater challenges with social interactions. They may have difficulty initiating and/or maintaining a conversation. Their communication is often described as talking at others instead of to them. (For example, a monologue on a favorite subject that continues despite attempts by others to interject comments).

People with autism also process and respond to information in unique ways. In some cases, aggressive and/or self-injurious behavior may be present. Persons with autism may also exhibit some of the following traits:

- Insistence on sameness; resistance to change
- Difficulty in expressing needs, using gestures or pointing instead of words
- Repeating words or phrases in place of normal, responsive language
- Laughing (and/or crying) for no apparent reason; showing distress for reasons not apparent to others
- Preference to being alone; aloof manner
- Tantrums
- Difficulty in mixing with others
- Not wanting to cuddle or be cuddled
- Little or no eye contact
- Unresponsive to normal teaching methods
- Sustained odd play
- Spinning objects
- Obsessive attachment to objects
- Apparent over-sensitivity or under-sensitivity to pain
- No real fears of danger
- Noticeable physical over-activity or extreme under-activity
- Uneven gross/fine motor skills
- Non-responsive to verbal cues; acts as if deaf, although hearing tests in normal range

### **Prevalence**

Autism is the most common of the Pervasive Developmental Disorders, affecting an estimated 1 in 150 births (Centers for Disease Control Prevention, 2007). Roughly translated, this means as many

as 1.5 million Americans today are believed to have some form of autism. And this number is on the rise.

Based on statistics from the U.S. Department of Education and other governmental agencies, autism is growing at a startling rate of 10-17 percent per year. At this rate, the ASA estimates that the prevalence of autism could reach 4 million Americans in the next decade.

Autism knows no racial, ethnic, or social boundaries; family income levels; lifestyle choices; or educational levels, and can affect any family and any child.

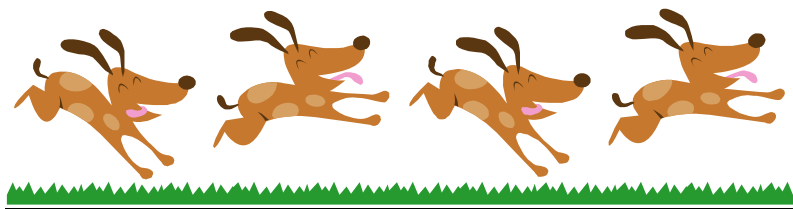
And although the overall incidence of autism is consistent around the globe, it is four times more prevalent in boys than in girls.

### **Causes**

There is no known single cause for autism, but it is generally accepted that it is caused by abnormalities in brain structure or function. Brain scans show differences in the shape and structure of the brain in children with autism versus neuro-typical children. Researchers are investigating a number of theories, including the link between heredity, genetics and medical problems. In many families, there appears to be a pattern of autism or related disabilities, further supporting a genetic basis to the disorder. While no one gene has been identified as causing autism, researchers are searching for irregular segments of genetic code that children with autism may have inherited. It also appears that some children are born with a susceptibility to autism, but researchers have not yet identified a single "trigger" that causes autism to develop.

Other researchers are investigating the possibility that under certain conditions, a cluster of unstable genes may interfere with brain development, resulting in autism. Still other researchers are investigating problems during pregnancy or delivery as well as environmental factors, such as viral infections, metabolic imbalances, and exposure to environmental chemicals.

For more information on Autism please visit [www.nicosac.org](http://www.nicosac.org) or [www.autism-society.org](http://www.autism-society.org).



### **DOG AND CAT CORNER**

### **New Canine Flu Virus**

Canine Flu Virus has been flooding the news and internet. Here are some facts as we understand them. So far, the virus has been discovered in thirteen states, including Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Kansas, Massachusetts, **New Jersey**, New York, Rhode Island, Texas, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. There are possible cases being documented by veterinarians in almost every state but there is not a good communication system between states to determine the full extent of the virus. The virus can cause coughing, high fevers, nasal discharge and a fatal pneumonia.

This new canine virus, being referred to as canine influenza virus, greyhound disease, and race flu, is considered highly contagious. It has been suggested that 80% of dogs exposed to the virus will develop an infection. Most dogs will only have mild coughing however puppies and older dogs are at greatest risk for fatalities associated with the virus.

### **Diagnosis**

A complete medical history may help to reveal recent exposure to a kennel or other dogs. However, it will be difficult in some situations to differentiate this virus from the common "Kennel Cough" virus mentioned above. Diagnostic tests are needed to recognize it and exclude other diseases. These tests may include:

- A chest X-ray may be recommended to determine if pneumonia is present.
- Routine laboratory blood tests—a complete blood count (CBC) or blood chemistry panel is not necessary unless your pet is showing signs of generalized illness, fever or loss of appetite.
- A fecal flotation should be done to exclude intestinal parasites.
- Blood titers – Testing for the virus is being done through Cornell School of Veterinary Medicine diagnostic lab.

### **Treatment**

[Therapy](#) is controversial because in the early stages, it is difficult to determine if this virus is the new virus or kennel cough virus. Most infected dogs will recover with no treatment. A small percentage of dogs will develop severe and possibly fatal pneumonia. It has been recommended that all dogs with a fever and cough should have appropriate blood tests submitted and treated aggressively to minimize fatalities. Treatment may include the following:

- Antibiotics are used in some patients, especially if a secondary bacterial infection is likely.
- Intravenous fluid therapy has been used and associated with improvement and less fatalities in affected pets.
- Antiviral drugs such as amantidine and tamiflu may be effective, however, their usefulness in this syndrome may be limited as they are most effective if given before infection or exposure or in the very early stages of infection.
- Cough suppressants may be appropriate for some pets. Your veterinarian can discuss the pros and cons of this treatment. Injections or pills (butorphanol) are often used, but occasionally, a stronger medicine is needed (codeine-related) to break the cough cycle. Don't use over-the-counter human medicine without first speaking to your veterinarian.



- Dogs should be kept in isolation if treated in the hospital and very good disinfection measures need to be used.

### Home Care

If your dog is infected, to prevent the spread of the virus, keep your dog away from other dogs for at least one week. In addition, do the following:

- Limit exercise and enforce periods of rest; don't exercise or play with your dog. Activity often initiates periods of loud, uncomfortable coughing.
- Encourage adequate fluid intake to maintain hydration. Provide soft food if dry food irritates the throat.
- If your dog normally wears a restraint collar, remove it or replace it with a harness to decrease airway irritation.
- Avoid environmental stresses including house dust, vapors, chemical fumes and tobacco smoke.
- To mobilize secretions and reduce coughing, provide humidified air (e.g. a vaporizer in the dog's room or in a steamy [bathroom](#) for one or two hours).

### Preventative Care

There is currently no vaccination to prevent this new virus.

Here is a webpage where most products for your critters are cheaper than the store

<http://www.petedge.com>.

Also, if you think your dog or cat has ingested poison here is a toll free number:

**Animal Poison Control Center 1-800-426-4435**

