

## **Report to the Pathfinder Membership**

For the year ending September 30, 2005:

Our first full fiscal year with a September ending date was indeed an exciting one for Pathfinders!

**NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:** As previously reported, our first Executive Director, Alisa Rock, resigned from that position early in the fiscal year and subsequently joined the Board of Directors. After a thorough search effort, Pathfinders then selected Dawn Koplos as its new Executive Director. Dawn was formerly the Director of Development for Civic Works, a non-profit providing community services in Baltimore, and had also worked in development at the Baltimore Zoo. Dawn has both a son and an uncle with autism, providing her with a unique perspective on the lifespan issues affecting these individuals.

**PASSAGE OF EARLY DETECTION LEGISLATION:** In November 2004, Pathfinders made a presentation in Annapolis to the House of Delegates' Committee on Health and Governmental Affairs, chaired by Delegate John Hurson of Montgomery County. The purpose of this hearing was to make the legislature aware of conditions with regard to autism in the state of Maryland. In particular, we sought to make two key points:

-- the importance of the early detection of autism, because it is scientifically demonstrable that the earlier the intervention, the better the outcome; and

-- the coming demographic surge in the number of individuals, now in school all day, who will be in need of adult services such as housing, employment and meaningful daytime activities when they age out of the school system.

At the conclusion of the presentation, Chairman Hurson, who is the uncle of a boy with autism, requested that the Pathfinders group present the Committee with a proposal for legislation that would enhance the early detection of autism in Maryland. A few weeks later, a bill was proposed, passed by both the Senate and House of Delegates during the legislative session and signed into law by the Governor. This bill establishes a three-year pilot program to study and improve screening practices for autism spectrum disorders. *The objective of this legislation is that children with autism be identified earlier and thus receive intervention services earlier, resulting in improved outcomes.*

**MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS AT THE RESOURCE CENTER:** Through September, our website pages had been visited over 120,000 times, indicating that there were as many visits during the past year as in the prior 17 months. Additionally, Resource Center Coordinator Linda Pearl has now assisted over 900 families who have contacted her directly for help via email or telephone.

Redesign of the website was undertaken for rollout in early calendar 2006. In addition to an up-to-date look and feel, the website will importantly have a text-based search function (like standard internet search engines), permitting greater ease of use in locating information or service providers. We are also developing whole new categories of available information, service providers, research, treatment, education, books and articles, as well as links to other websites.

Pathfinders also made arrangements to share their website software with a non-profit organization in Florida seeking to create a similar service for families with autistic individuals in that state.

CONTINUED FUNDING SUCCESS: Once again, under the guidance of Golf Chair Ray Brusca, we had another hugely successful golf tournament. Thanks in particular to Family Sponsors Alisa Rock and her husband Jim Wade as well as Corporate Sponsor Legg Mason, Pathfinders succeeded in raising over \$140,000 net of expenses at this year's event. Pathfinders was also the beneficiary of funding raising events held at the Hillendale Country Club and Morton's Steakhouse, each of which raised over \$10,000 for Pathfinders. Additionally, Pathfinders found grant funding support from the Bearman, Knott and Verizon Foundations. Pathfinders also partnered with Cure Autism Now to raise funds for autism research by co-sponsoring the CAN Walk Now event in Landover, Maryland.

IN SUMMARY: With a new Executive Director on board, the pace and energy has picked up, but one thing remains totally unaltered--our commitment to our mission:

**“To find a path for our children.”**

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Pathfinders, Inc.,

Brian R. Mund  
President  
December, 2005