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## AGE OF AUTISM

Original content and news about the autism epidemic from the perspective that autism is treatable. Analysis of current media treatment of autism and the environmental causes of autism.

### From the Editor: Nondiscredited

NY Times baffled by high exemption rate in Wash state, says "false" Wakefield paper linked MMR to autism. First of all, it didn't. And, like, second of all, the MMR does cause autism. Ask the parents!

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## Touch, See, Feel, Move: The Brookwood Community in Texas and the Autism Epidemic



Thank you to Leigh Attaway Wilcox for allowing us to highlight this article. To read the full article, please click over to [AutismSpot.com](#).

By Dan E. Burns

“We don’t just believe in miracles,” my guide told me, “we rely on them.” White-haired and in her eighties now, striding ahead of me cell phone in hand, my guide, called “Me-Maw” by some of the residents who to flock around her, prefers to remain anonymous. “I didn’t build this wonderful place,” she explained. “It’s God’s doing.”

She opened door after door as we made our way through clusters of busy citizens in the ceramic workshops, gym, natatorium, and clinic to a fine, on-campus restaurant near the gift shop and gardens of The Brookwood Community, a 495-acre residential/educational village designed to enhance the lives of adults with disabilities. Brookwood provides opportunities to learn, to grow socially, emotionally, vocationally, spiritually, and to contribute to society. That’s the vision. And for most of the 120 residents here, including those with autism, it seems to work.

And “work” is the keynote. Stained glass windows in the non-sectarian chapel portray hands decorating ceramics, potting seedlings, shaping clay. These are some of the community’s enterprises, which also include dozens of greenhouses, swards of poinsettias, bluebonnet place settings, and a hat factory. One measure of their success: Brookwood Community produces nearly \$5 million a year in enterprise income through sales of merchandise created mostly by its citizens. That goes a long way – though not all the way – toward the covering the bills. Brookwood is a private pay facility, but most of the citizens are on scholarships. The community accepts no government funding. How do they manage? Like many other teachers, researchers, and parents, I’d come in search of the lessons of their success.

Brookwood came into being through the efforts of parents, volunteers and donors who recognized that there are 30 million adults with functional and intellectual disabilities in the United States. Due largely to the autism epidemic, “DD” (Developmentally Disabled) adults are among the fastest growing segments of society, a national challenge. As father of a 24-year-old son with autism and chair of the Autism Trust USA, I’m keenly aware that a tsunami of young adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder is surging through the school system. When they graduate, we’re going to need a lot of places like Brookwood in central Texas and beyond. How to replicate the model? “We’re working on that,” my guide told me. “We don’t have all the answers. One thing we know for sure: if God is your co-pilot, you’d better switch seats.” To read the entire article, please click into [The Autism Spot](#).

*Dan E. Burns, Ph.D., is the father of a 24-year-old son on the autism spectrum and the author of **Saving Ben: A Father’s Story of Autism**. Dr. Burns is Adult Issues Liaison for AutismOne. He chairs The Autism Trust USA, ([www.theautismtrustusa.org](http://www.theautismtrustusa.org)), a 501(c)3 charity focused on empowering parents to organize communities where their ASD children and others can live and work, enjoy life, continue to heal, and give back to society.*

Posted by Age of Autism at January 05, 2012 at 5:42 AM in [Dreams](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(3\)](#)

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### Comments

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I am so excited to read about Brookwood. Their financial and funding model is exactly what we're developing at LTO Ventures (www.ltoventures.org). I am very impressed with Dan Berns and The Autism Trust USA, and now grateful that he has written about Brookwood. And thank you AoA for publishing the link to Dan's blog so I could learn about Brookwood. The population we will serve is described in my guest post on the Autism Speaks blog yesterday - <http://blog.autismspeaks.org/2012/01/04/autisms-fly-over-population/>.

Posted by: [Mark L. Olson](#) | [January 05, 2012 at 05:51 PM](#)

Awesome program! What a great story to read. I'm going to learn more about the community. Wish we had something like this in Maryland. My son Rory is 22 and we see every day the dearth of quality adult services.

Anyone local (DC, Maryland, Virginia) who wants to get together with me to plan this, email me privately at doyleab@comcast.net

On a side note, we've had my son in exercise programs since he was 5 -- various adapted sports such as adaptive soccer, Special Olympics, and (most recently) disabled ice hockey. I think it's been great for both his cognitive and his physical health. He's in the middle of the ASD spectrum.

Aimee

Posted by: [Aimee Doyle](#) | [January 05, 2012 at 09:56 AM](#)

Wow - that's a hefty dose of Hope for a Thursday morning! Thank you so much!

Posted by: Donna L. | [January 05, 2012 at 08:40 AM](#)

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