

Print Page

Real News • Really Local

NORTH COUNTY TIMES

Real News • Really Local

THE CALIFORNIAN

Last modified Wednesday, May 28, 2008 7:09 PM PDT



Murrieta residents Mary and John Mollway have started a nonprofit agency that helps children with autism and their parents. A fundraiser for the agency is scheduled Saturday. (Photo by David Carlson - Staff Photographer)

MURRIETA: New nonprofit addresses autism

By NELSY RODRIGUEZ - Staff Writer

MURRIETA ---- When these children touch soft cloth, it might feel like the fabric is burning their skin. Or they might constantly rub their hands on their knees for no reason. Some chew straws relentlessly; others can't keep a conversation going.

Children who have been diagnosed with autism cope with misfiring receptors in their brains that scramble their sense of touch and mental focus. But the one in 150 children in the nation who, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention estimates, suffers from autism deals with much more and on many different levels. Those children's impairments affect their social, cognitive and physical development, too.

The array of struggles with which autistic children deal was the catalyst for the formation of New Vision Children's Services. The Murrieta-based nonprofit organization offers free treatment and therapy to autistic children and educational guidance for their families who are learning how to best address their child's needs.

"There are so many facets of the disability that I found you have to pick an area and focus on it, and when you prop that area up, you go onto something else," said Helen Robinson, a Temecula mother whose ninth-grade daughter was diagnosed with high-functioning autism at 3 years old. "But it's not like I don't look back and say maybe if I had (found treatment for another of her conditions), she might be further along."

Robinson's experience raising a child with autism falls in line with the stories of hundreds of other families in Southwest County who face similar challenges, she said. Their children need a variety of help, but finding treatment is complicated and ever-shifting and can be incredibly expensive.

"The weird thing is everything works, but it works differently for each child. We're all

snowflakes," said Dr. Marty Carlson, a New Vision board member and Murrieta chiropractor who uses physical therapy to stimulate brain activity in autistic minds.

Mary Mollway, founder of the organization and a teacher of English as a second language, learned from a friend the battle that parents face when trying to find affordable services to help their children.

After watching her friend with an autistic child fall ill, Mollway dove into investigating the disorder. What she found fascinated her, then angered her.

"If the intervention is aggressive and early, it's treatable and kids can get a lot better," Mollway said. "But people have taken out second and third (loans) on their homes and have sold whatever they can sell to help pay for treatment for their kids."

New Vision Children's Services incorporated as a nonprofit in August 2006 and is still in the throes of fundraising to offer the services for free. A benefit will be held Saturday afternoon at a Murrieta residence to raise money as well as awareness of the disorder, the organization and its efforts.

Autistic children vary greatly in the treatment they need ---- some suffer intestinal problems, others are plagued by attention deficit disorder, still others can't control their senses of touch ---- and their specific treatment generates different costs, so estimating the price of offering these services is unreliable. Still, Mollway estimates annual operating costs of about \$2 million.

She hopes to begin providing services in September.

"When they get a diagnosis, we'll give them everything that their child would need to improve," Mollway said.

Contact staff writer Nelsy Rodriguez at (951) 676-4315, Ext. 2626, or nrodriguez@californian.com.

HELPING AUTISTIC KIDS

WHAT: Fundraising event to benefit New Vision Children's Services, a nonprofit organization aimed at offering free resources to children with autism and their families.

WHEN: 4:30 p.m., Saturday.

WHERE: 26656 Peachwood Drive, Murrieta.

NOTE: Attendance is by reservation only. To reserve a place at the May fundraiser or to donate to the organization, visit www.nvlearning.com.