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| **A Sensory Story Time Pilot Project** |
| At Cyrenius H. Booth Library |
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CH Booth Library 25 Main Street, Newtown, CT 06470

Prepared for

Autism Speaks  
743 Madison Avenue  
New York, NY

By   
The Children’s Department  
CH Booth Library  
25 Main Street  
Newtown, CT 06470

Tyler Ostrander, Program Assistant  
Autism Speaks/Dana Research Grants  
745 Fifth Avenue Suite 900  
New York, NY 10151

Dear Mr. Ostrander,  
 I am pleased to submit this letter of inquiry to the Dana Research Grant to determine your interest in receiving a full proposal for the Cyrenius H. Booth Library’s Sensory Story Time Project. We are respectfully requesting your consideration of a grant in the amount of $41,000.   
 This project is our first major outreach effort to serve children on the autism spectrum who live in Newtown, Connecticut, a community which has seen a huge increase in its autism rates over the past 10 years. We thought you might find our project of particular interest, as it aligns with three areas you list as current priorities: (1) provide early pre literary experiences for children who have been identified with sensory issues (2) share helpful activities and therapies to do at home to help with sensory problems and (3) give autistic children the social skills and tools necessary to allow for a successful transition to kindergarten.   
 By offering these sensory story times Cyrenius H. Booth Library is answering a true need in the community. During the past decade, there has been an enormous increase in the number of children diagnosed with autism. This was once thought to be a rare disorder, but autism is now being diagnosed in almost 1% in boys and .25% of girls. Diagnosis is made by three years of age in most cases and represents a heterogeneous syndrome with delays and often regression in social interaction and communication skills. Repetitive and at times self-injurious behavior is also part of the symptom complex. To date there is no biomedical test for the disorder and despite well-defined increases in the familial occurrence of autism, there is no identified genetic abnormality in most cases. There is a strong suspicion of genetic vulnerabilities interacting with environmental exposure. No one has yet determined just why autism appears to be on the rise However, all of the experts do agree on one thing and that’s with early intervention children with sensory issues will greatly improve their academic and social success in schools. The Cyrenius H. Booth Library has a responsibility to provide programs for all of its community members and by providing a sensory story time they are fulfilling their mission.  
 The total cost of implementation of our Sensory Story Time is $50,000. Of this amount $7,000 has already been raised by the Newtown Woman’s Club and $2,000 has been donated by Newtown Youth and Family Services. Your investment of $41,000 will complete the funding we need to fully implement this project, and we are excited about the prospect of partnering with you. If you have any questions or would like to receive a full proposal, please feel free to call me at (203)-333-2121. We deeply appreciate your consideration of our request and look forward to hearing from you soon. Sincerely,  
 Kim Weber  
 Executive Director

CH Booth Library 25 Main Street, Newtown, CT 06470

Tyler Ostrander, Program Assistant  
Autism Speaks/Dana Research Grants  
745 Fifth Avenue Suite 900  
New York, NY 10151

Dear Mr. Ostrander,

The CH Booth Library’s Children’s Department is respectfully requesting a grant in the amount of $41,000 for our Sensory Storytime. As we continue to see an increase in the number of children with autism the library feels a responsibility to provide these members of our community with the pre literacy skills they need to transition into kindergarten in the public schools. The Sensory Storytime will allow children to gain not only reading skills but also gain emotional independence practice important communication skills, meet future friends and provide their families with an important network that will help them navigate the public education system.

Both our library staff and our Board of Directors are in full support of this worthwhile project and will do everything in their power to promote the program. The Library Board and the Friends of the Library have already voted to include a line item in the 2013 budget for the occupational therapist’s salary, the only real ongoing expense after the initial outlay for resources and equipment.

Thank you for your consideration for our request. We commend all of your wonderful efforts on the behalf of Autism and will continue to support your national efforts. Just yesterday my husband and I ran in a 5K road race to support Autism Speaks at the University of Delaware. I will follow up in the next week to answer any questions you may have, as to learn if there is a possibility of meeting with you to discuss the merits of our proposal. Should you have any questions please feel free to contact Alana Bennison, our Director of Children’s Services at 123-345-6677 or [childrenservices@bibblio.org](mailto:childrenservices@bibblio.org).

Sincerely,

Kim Weber

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**Abstract**

The Cyrenius H. Booth Library has been the community library in Newtown, Connecticut since 1932; it was a posthumous gift of Newtown's benefactress, Mary Elizabeth Hawley. The C.H. Booth Library mission is to provide lifelong learning and the love of reading by promoting access for all town residents to the universe of ideas and information. Our vision is to become the best regional source for satisfying the community's information needs by offering professional assistance in discovering authoritative resources, good leisure reading, and local history.

In accordance with our mission to provide literacy experiences for all members of our community we recognize the importance of creating a program that will benefit children that have been identified on the autism spectrum. The proposed story-time is important because of its ability to reach the underserved population in a unique and valuable way. The children will interact with their teacher and with one another through familiar nursery rhymes, singing, finger play and lots of repetitive motions that involve the sense of touch in addition to sight and sound. The sensory story time led by a trained occupational therapist incorporates movement, music, art, messy play, balance body awareness and other activities that fully engage many of the senses.

Early attention to improving the core behavioral symptoms of autism will give the child, and everyone in the family several important benefits that will no longer be present should you choose to wait until the child is school age. Offering free and appropriate early intervention program at the public library is the best way to achieve this goal. A sensory story time can improve social behaviors, build on strengths, remediate areas of weakness, provide a social network for parents and caregivers plus provide information and resources on how to navigate the public school system prior to kindergarten. It is a well established fact that early intervention can make a world of difference.  
 The total cost of the sensory story for the first year is $63,463 with $27,324 coming from in-kind contributions. Your investment of $36,139 will complete the funding we need to fully implement this sustainable project, and we are excited about the prospect of partnering with you. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

**Statement of Need**

Cyrenius H. Booth Library in Newtown, Connecticut is the hometown library to a diverse population where 9,190 (or 34%) of the 27,031 community members are under the age of 17.[[1]](#footnote-1) The library’s mission is to welcome and support the entire community with resources and services that enhance lifelong learning, and there are dynamic programs in place for newborns to ninety-somethings. Story hour programs are a great opportunity for social interaction for babies and their caregivers, they also provide early exposure to pre-literacy skills which are necessary for children to become successful readers. Unfortunately the traditional story times are not meeting the needs of a growing segment of Newtown’s population, there are no story times for children who are on the autism spectrum and/or who have been diagnosed with sensory issues.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, autism affects as many as 1 in every 110 children in the United States. Therefore, it is estimated that 1.5 million Americans may be affected with autism. Also, government statistics suggest the rate of autism is rising 10-17 percent annually, this is certainly the case in Connecticut and Fairfield County. The Newtown school system reports an 85% increase in autism cases over the last 23 years.[[2]](#footnote-2)

An increasing number of families dealing with autism spectrum disorder are turning to their public libraries for resources, programs and a community center where they are welcome. The state run program, ‘Birth to Three’ has services for children three and under but there is a gap in programming for children ages 3-6 years.

Autism is currently the most prevalent disorder effecting babies born in the United States, of the approximately 4 million babies born every year, 24,000 of them will eventually be identified as autistic.[[3]](#footnote-3) Children with autism display a variety of symptoms, some are high functioning and excel in classroom settings, while others on the spectrum may have trouble coping in the simplest of social situations. Children on the spectrum generally have difficulty relating to others, they may hardly speak, and if they do, they may not communicate in ways that other people can’t always understand. They usually can’t make eye contact and have trouble reading facial expressions and body language. They may also be more sensitive than typically developing children, or dramatically less so, to sights, sounds and touch. This is why it is important to develop sensory story times specially tailored to children who are not being served by traditional story times. While the cause and cure for autism is still very much a mystery, experts all agree that early intervention is a child’s best hope for the future.

Early attention to improving the core behavioral symptoms of autism will give the child, and everyone in the family several important benefits that will no longer be present should you choose to wait until the child is school age. Offering free and appropriate early intervention program at the public library is the best way to achieve this goal. A sensory story time can improve social behaviors, build on strengths, remediate areas of weakness, provide a social network for parents and caregivers plus provide information and resources on how to navigate the public school system prior to kindergarten. It is a well established fact that early intervention can make a world of difference.

**Goals and Objectives of CH Booth Library Sensory Storytime**

Our goal is to prepare children aged 3 – 6 years, who have been identified on the autism spectrum, with the pre-literacy and social skills necessary for a happy and successful transition into kindergarten. The C.H. Booth Library located in Newtown, Connecticut has a mission to provide reading opportunities to fit the needs of everyone in the community and children with sensory issues have very specific needs. We have three major objectives, that when met will allow us to reach our goal.

The first objective is to provide autism specialized story times led by an occupational therapist trained in the specific requirements of children aged three to six with sensory issues. These children respond to stimuli in their environment in a different way than other children, requiring more time, space, and teaching approaches specific for children with these needs. For example, many of these children benefit from teaching with touch rather than just sight and sound. To be successful these story times need to be offered year round to assure consistency and always at the same time of day with the same teacher and in the same space. By adding this type of storytime to library programs the library is offering more inclusive services to this often overlooked population.

The second objective is to build the collection in the Juvenile Parents’ Corner and to include current books, games, and videos on strategies and therapies that can be implemented at home by family members. The librarian will grow the collection by 25% and weed materials that have a publication date prior to 1999, unless they have been recognized as a currently relevant resource.

Thirdly the project will increase social skills for children on the autism spectrum by allowing them the opportunity to play and interact with other children in the community in a safe and structured environment. These additional structured playtimes will increase the number of visits to the library by 30%.

By the project’s end 37 of the 45 children enrolled in the program will increase their pre-literary knowledge and 36 will improve their social intelligence as a consequence of the story times and at-home therapy sessions. The occupational therapist in charge of the program will perform pre and post program evaluations on 100% of the enrolled participants. Caregivers will also be asked to keep a log of their home experiences and observations.   
**Methods for Cyrenius H. Booth Library Sensory Story Time** The mission of the C.H. Booth Library is to provide enriching literary experiences for all of the people who live and work in town. Young children aged three to six who have been diagnosed with autism currently have no services specifically designed to help them discover the world of reading and books. A sensory story time with specially designed play structures, games, and literature would fill this void.

The proposed sensory story time will be modeled on the very successful Sensory Story Time first implemented at the Middletown Library in 1998. Children’s Librarian, Alana Bennison has offered to be an advisor on the project and share her twelve years of experience as the developer of the sensory story time at Russell Library.   
**Objective One:**Increase the number of story hours offered at the CH Booth Library and expand the types of story hours offered to include a program specifically designed for children aged 3-6 years with sensory processing issues.

* Hire a qualified occupational therapist with at least three years experience working with children on the autism spectrum.
* Purchase the oversized furniture and climbing equipment necessary for sensory story times.
* Purchase the rhythm and musical instruments important to the success of a story time.
* Purchase oversized books and a felt board to use for the story time.
* Promote the sensory story time with a press release in the local paper, fliers at the local nursery schools and in the library. Information on sensory story times will also be made available in the library’s information kiosk.
* Share information on the sensory story times with professionals in town that work with small children aged 3-6 years including pediatricians, occupational therapists, and the Newtown Family Counseling Center.
* Implement and run a year round story time modeled after Russell Library’s program. Each session will last one hour and take place in the large meeting room of the library on Saturday mornings.

**Objective Two:**

To augment the parents corner collection located in the Children’s Department so as to include strong and well-respected resources on the subject of autism and related issues.

* To develop the special needs collection by researching the best resources available and adding them to the collection.
* To purchase the materials which have been carefully reviewed and recommended by librarians and other professionals with a strong background in collection development.
* To promote the collection through brochures and takeaways and also by highlighting them on the library’s website.
* To promote the resources by outreach in the community at nursery schools and local clubs which have a mission to promote literacy.

**Objective Three:**To create a safe interactive environment where children on the autism spectrum can interact with other children in the community.

* Provide play equipment that encourages interactive and imaginary play for children aged 3-6 years.
* To purchase games from Children Succeed, a trusted source of games for children with sensory issues including; Step Into Conversation, Emotto, and About Faces. These games are designed to improve communication and social skills.
* Train staff on how to play the games with the kids.
* Have staff meetings with the children’s department staff for feedback and problem solving.

**Evaluation**

There will be a detailed evaluation of the sensory story to make sure library and grant resources are being effectively used and also to be sure that the target audience is being reached. We will be using an informal anecdotal evaluation to gather feedback on the success of the sensory story time. First we will ask parents and teachers involved with the sensory story time children if they have noticed any changes or successes in behavior, communication and listening skills. We will also employ more formal evaluation tools and have caregivers fill out two questionnaires asking them to rank their child’s skill at both the beginning and the end of the story time session so that we can chart progress made in the twelve weeks. This information will be available to the parents in case they would like to share the information with future teachers and/or caregivers. Since the testing is being done with children the Cyrenius H. Booth Library will seek a review by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to the program’s commencement.   
 Another evaluation tool to measure the success of the program will be enrollment numbers. If the program has a good return rate and reaches capacity enrollment we know we are filling a need in the community. The occupational therapist will also provide a detailed and confidential report to the library board at the conclusion of the program to make sure all of the objectives have been met.

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| **Activity**  Timeline for Sensory Storytime 2012-2013 | **1st Quarter** | **2nd Quarter** | **3rd Quarter** | **4th Quarter** |
| **Post-Award Planning Meeting** |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **Hire Occupational Therapist** |  |  |  |  |
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| **Research and Purchase Library Resources** |  |  |  |  |
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| **Research and Purchase Equipment** |  |  |  |  |
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| **Outreach to Community Agencies** |  |  |  |  |
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| **PR Campaign** |  |  |  |  |
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| **Storytime  Startup** |  |  |  |  |
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| **Project Evaluation O.T.** |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **Feedback Teachers & Parents** |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **Student Evaluations** |  |  |  |  |

**Conclusion**

The Cyrenius H. Booth Library has been a vibrant part of the Newtown community since it was erected in 1932 by our benefactress, Mary Hawley. Before World War II there were no story times or programming for children, but in the 1950s and 1960s thanks to a dedicated children’s librarian, Miss. Maureen Armstrong the children’s department began to thrive and played a central role the lives of Newtown’s youngsters. Since that time, children’s programs have expanded each year. In 2011 the Children’s Department hosted 779 programs for children, and more than 500 of them were story times. In the last 40 years there has never been a decrease in the number of programs for children.

We anticipate that the Sensory Storytime will be easy to manage and sustain after the first year as costs will decrease significantly once all of the equipment and supplies are in place. 80% of the $63,450 budget is for durable goods that will not need to be replaced for ten years. After the first year, costs will drop to about $10,000, the salary for the occupational therapist. Much of the other financial obligations will be met by the library; room use, supplies, promotional materials, and the salary of the occupational therapist’s assistant. We also anticipate receiving a portion of the program’s funding each year through the Friend’s of the Library Vision Project. Each year the Friend’s group supports worthwhile library projects through the proceeds of their annual book sale. Our board and staff members believe so strongly in this program that they are committed to helping our Children’s Librarian develop support in the community. Our partnership with Youth and Family Services also strengthens our efforts through more grant possibilities in the years to come. The town of Newtown’s Board of Education also has a vested interest in our success because early intervention for children with autism creates successful school experiences and mainstreaming. This means reduced reliance on the special education departments in our schools and a huge tax savings.

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April 13, 2012 Layne Lescault  
 DIRECTOR OF OUTREACH SERVICES

Appendix A

To Whom It May Concern:  
 NYFS is a passionately inspired team of professionals, parents and volunteers who are dedicated to helping families and children reach their potential. The organization continues to establish outreach and form community alliances through education & expanding existing working relationships with schools & other agencies, such as the Women’s Center of Greater Danbury, Danbury Youth Services, Newtown & Danbury area school systems, the Department of Children and Families, Danbury Hospital, Newtown Visiting Nurse Association & the Newtown Prevention Council. Additional agency programs have been awarded through state grants & partnerships with the Connecticut Council of Family Service Agencies to deliver Welfare to Work services through the Employment Success Program.  
 We are especially excited at the prospect of partnering with the CH Booth Library, our town library. We think the sensory story time designed to teach pre-literacy skills to children on the autism spectrum is a very worthwhile use of local financial resources and talent. The professionals who work as counselors for our agency are very supportive of CH Booth’s efforts and plan on playing an active role in recommending clients for the story time. They also will work closely with Jessica Horvath, the Occupational Therapist who is running the program for the library.  
 The partnership with CH Booth Library will also move is in a positive direction with several of our agency’s goals and objectives. It will:

* Raise local community awareness about the needs of children and youth on the autism spectrum.
* Generate additional resources for at-risk and autistic children and youth.
* Make recommendations to improve the special education system in Newtown.
* Encourage collaborative efforts among local stakeholders for assessing the physical, social, behavioral and educational needs of children and youth in their respective communities as it relates to issues in special education and assist in the development of comprehensive plans to address such needs.

I wholeheartedly support the library’s plans to institute a sensory story time in our community. The need is very great. I hope you will join us in this very exciting endeavor.

Sincerely,

Layne Lescault  
Director of Outreach Services

**Kimberley Smarling Weber**[Kim.s.weber@gmail.com](mailto:Kim.s.weber@gmail.com)  
Home: 203 426-8083  
 Cell: 203 470-0913

Appendix B

34 Key Rock Road  
Newtown, Ct 06470

**OBJECTIVE:** To obtain a position as a Library Director

**EDUCATION**: Bachelor of Arts, Bates College, Lewiston, Maine June 1981  
Masters of Library Science, Southern Connecticut, New Haven, CT August 2012  
 **SKILLS:** Computer literate with good working knowledge of Microsoft Word, Publisher, Horizon, ICONN, REQUEST, Library Insight, Constant Contact, Contribute, and FrontPage; completed a grant writing course; creative thinker; excellent written communication skills; effective prioritization and time management skills; ability to adapt quickly to changing priorities; good customer service

**RELATED EXPERIENCE:**

**Adult Program Director/Circulation Desk Clerk October 1998 – Present**Cyrenius H. Booth Library, Newtown, Connecticut  
Develop/organize/publicize/host author talks, lectures, concerts, and demonstrations for adults and families

* Write/create publicity materials for library events -flyers, Eblasts, press releases
* Moderate book discussions
* Update the library’s website on a daily basis
* Develop Readers’ Advisory for adult fiction
* Manage meeting room registration for community groups
* Work the circulation desk

**Sample of Special Projects**

* **Newtown Reads** - a communitywide read with multiple programs coordinated with the schools and other community groups, including an historical reenactment (*April Morning*) and a dramatic production (*To Kill A Mockingbird*)
* **Shakespeare Series** – intergenerational programming, including lectures, drama, crafts, and film
* **Wellness Series** – focus on Alternative Medicine

**COMMUNITY SERVICE:**Girl Scout Leader 1993-2000  
Newtown Soccer Club Registrar 1998-2006  
Cultural Events Chair – Head O’ Meadow Elementary School P.T.A. 1994-1996  
Great Books Discussion Leader 1994-1995  
 **Interests**: love to read, hike, travel, and spend time with my family

**Organizational Background** The Cyrenius H. Booth Library is a nonprofit organization, and was a posthumous gift of Newtown's benefactress, Mary Elizabeth Hawley. It was named after her maternal grandfather who served as a physician in Newtown for fifty years, between 1820 and his death in 1871. More than 75 years later it is still considered to be the heart of the community with a mission to support an informed community, and to encourage lifelong learning, and the love of reading by promoting access for all town residents to the universe of ideas and information. Its vision is to become the best regional source for satisfying the community's information needs by offering professional assistance in discovering authoritative resources, good leisure reading, and local history.   
 The library serves a diverse population of all ages; the only agency in Newtown that provides for babies, seniors and everyone in-between. CH Booth Library’s director, Janet Wick has held the position of Head Librarian for over 30 years watching the library grow from two rooms of dusty books to 700,000 square ft of bustling activity, housing all of the newest technology. The library is governed by an active 18-membervolunteer Board of Directors. The library staff includes 9 fulltime members and 15 part timers plus a very active volunteer group of over 100 who run a very successful book sale; they rise over $100,000 each year for the library.

Appendix C

Programs offered at the library include story times for children aged 0 to six, crafts, science classes, art programs and lots of opportunity for music. There is also a young adult council, writing programs for all ages, plus author talks, literary lectures, how- to workshops, and art appreciation events. Wine tasting, cooking demonstrations, plus author receptions, poetry readings, dramatizations, tax assistance, job hunt help, and computer classes are just a few examples of the types of offerings available to library users.

Currently over thirty different organizations use the library as a meeting place; everyone from the Historical Society to the Garden Club, Cub Scouts to fiddlers, and Arts in Newtown to Film Festival Organizers all consider the library to be their home. With over 376,450 visits a year the CH Booth Library is everyone’s favorite destination.

Appendix D

**Organizational Chart for Sensory Storytime at C.H. Booth Library**

Program Coordinator/ Director of Children Services Job Description

Appendix E

* May coordinate, monitor or supervise the activities of occupational therapist.
* Develops and recommends new or revised program goals and objectives.
* Researches the purchase of all equipment and resources needed for implementation of program.
* Monitors and approves program expenditures ensuring that budget allocations are not overspent.
* Prepares or assists in preparation of proposal for funding and/or funding continuation from outside sponsors.
* Prepares periodic reports, financial statements and records on program activities, progress, status or other special reports for management or outside agencies.
* Reviews applications or other program documents independently or in conjunction with supervisor to determine acceptance or make decisions pertaining to program.
* Recruits program participants, utilizing most appropriate promotional or marketing methods, such as individual letters, brochures or presentations at meetings.
* Develops, compiles and writes communications and promotional literature for distribution such as newsletters, brochures or flyers; coordinates process from development through printing and distribution.
* Interacts and maintains liaison with students, faculty, staff and outside/community agencies in facilitating program objectives.

1. AmericanTowns.com. (<http://www.amerciantowns.com-newtown-ct-06470.pdf> 2012. Web. February 3, 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<http://www.cdc.gov/>) 2012. Web. February 3, 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Autism Speaks. (<http://autismspeaks.org>) 2012. Web. February 4, 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)