IN FUCUS

A mother's account

"I feel proud to say that he is a very confident child," says this mother

Pritha Chatterjee

Child is the father of man, said William Wordsworth, and definitely not without reason. Here's presenting a mother's first hand experience in bringing up her autistic son, age 11.

When and how was your child diagnosed?

He was diagnosed properly when he was three years old. Initially we didn't take his problems very seriously, though we were perturbed by his inability to pick up every day skills like other kids around. We thought he would pick up stuff slowly and gradually. But after a while this delay become aggravating and we started etting more and more nxious about his lack of neech, the apparent disiterest in everything bound, and his hyperacvity. Eventually we ok him to a pediaician who told us nat it was more nan a simple delay and there was more than what met the eye. He directed us to Action for Autism where

Do you have any other children? How do they interact with your son?

he was diagnosed.

I have one other son who is now in Class VIII. They have a three-year age difference between them. The equation between them is like that between any other siblings and they get on wo derfully with each other.

How would you rate the education administered a AFA?

My son has been going to AFA for almost seven years now. What I find best about AFA is that he is respected for what he is, and not made to be any different. Apart from basic academic training, he is also trained in social skills, which is very important for autistic childrer He is given a lot of love,

Continued on page 2





JURTESY ACTION FOR AUTISA

emotions children retially, learntience," sums

ith autism do ential to build up i they can be helped early, well-focused Depending on the ual skill profile and eness and intensity of or she receives, chilim can lead relatively lives. According to hildren have been inmainstream schools some of them have raining and are now some

ncrete beginning ton for the autistic was when Merry Barua for Autism in Delhi,



It'sa different challenge, say Nikki & DJ

According to WHO, typically about 20 in a population of 10,000 people will be autistic, 80 per cent of thin a boys/

Three institutions in India offer government-approved diploma courses for training teachers on how deal



sideentre for children with autism. Ealier, the children were put in schols for the mentally retarded though the two disabilities needed different treatments.

The 1990s was a decade of change both in mindsets and policy framework. The Rehabilitation Council of India Act (1992), the Persons With Disability Act (1995) and the National Trust Act for persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, MR and Multiple Disabilities (1999) came with a mandate for early intervention programmes, training of schoolteachers and professionals in Rehabilitation and Special Education.

If a career in teaching autistic children is your calling, you need to be patient, sensitive and caring. A background in psychology would give you an edge over others in the field.

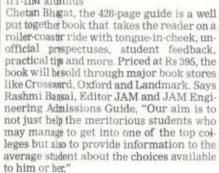
At present, there are three institutions in India offering government-certified diploma courses for the training of teachers for autistic children. Action for Autism, registered with the National Trust of India, however, remains the only pan-Indian organisation providing this specialised training. "Though we prefer people with a background in psychology, we do take in graduates from other fields as well," says Baruah. In addition AFA also conducts intensive three month workshops, on a regular basis, for training parents and teachers.

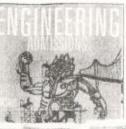
INTHENEWS

JAM parts out engine using admiss ras guide

Mumbai-used youth magazine JAM has published an engineering admission guide with ratings of 500 colleges icross india based on infrascription.









Freescale Semiconductor is inviting entries for its green design contest open to engineering students and professional developers worldwide. The contest have to 'go green' using a range of advanced Freescale technologies to build environmentally-beneficial embedded systems. Organisers are offering cash prizes up to \$61,000 and recognition at the Freescale Technology Forum Design Challenge India, scheduled for November 13-14. The deadline for the India programme is June 20, 2008. More details are available at www.freescale.com/designchallenge.

Mauchin aps 5 Paudig

The Indian stitute of Management-Lucknow organised Prodigies 2008, a pan-IIM leadership summit in Mumbai. The main speakers were J.J. Irani, Director, Tata Sons; Naina Lal Kidwai, CEO, HSBC India; Man-



ish Tripathi, Honorary Director, dabbawallahs, and Raghunath Dondhiba Medge, President, dabbawallahs, who spoke on 'Leadership and the New World Economy'. Tripathi said, "Globalisation cannot be achieved without localisation".



Continued from page 1

A mother's account

respect and this has boosted his self esteem and I feel proud to say that he is a very confident child.

Would you say he is able to interact better with the non-autistic world now?

At AFA they teach kids how to deal with people, interact with the world and

relate to it. It is a behaviour modification that these kids have to undertake. My son can now deal with the difficulties he has in these areas. The problems can obviously not be eradicated. But the point is that he is learning how to deal with them. Also, fortunately he received intervention from a very early age and so he was not ever exposed to a regular school. Probably things would have been very difficult there. He received this specialised form of education right from the start.

Do you plan to try integrating him into a mainstream school now that he has spent some considerable time in AFA? That would have been wonderful. But it has not been possible yet.

Is there an upper age limit at AFA? Do they oversee and direct the child's future employment? The upper limit at AFA is 16 years. After this they are moved to Adhaar, which is their own vocational centre where young adults work. They are currently working on expanding this unit. Some former students are even working as part of the training team at AFA There are other vocational units available across the country. But frankly speaking, I haven't planned that far.

Names withheld on request





