



For Immediate Release:
July 19, 2010

What: The Coryell Autism Center is Now Open

Where: Santa Cruz

When: July 2010

Why: Prepare teenagers and young adults with autism to lead meaningful, productive, and independent adult lives.

For more information go to www.coryellautismcenter.org or call (831) 713-5186

A non-profit center to prepare young people with autism to lead meaningful, productive, and independent lives is now enrolling students. The Coryell Autism Center in Santa Cruz will provide educational services to people with autism between the ages of 14 and 22. Unique to Santa Cruz County, the center will offer individualized programs to help autistic individuals prepare for adulthood.

Autism is a lifelong neurological disorder that impairs a person's ability to communicate, learn, and relate to others. Those challenges often limit participation in daily activities, making it difficult for autistic individuals to live independently.

"Planning a whole life is the greatest challenge young people with autism and their families face as they prepare to leave school to work, live, and participate in the community," said Marianne Sullivan, the president of the Coryell Autism Center.

The center aims to ease those challenges by teaching a wide array of skills to help students get and keep a job, open and manage a bank account, use an ATM machine, get on and off a bus, function in society, and live independently.

"We teach the skills that will unleash the potential that many young people with autism have," said Mary Ann Powers, a senior behavior analyst at the Coryell Autism Center.

Center instructors will analyze each student's strengths, preferences, interests and abilities, then draft an individual transition plan and assemble a team to help the students succeed. The campus includes a garden, cafe, laundry room, copy center, and work room so students can participate in real-life activities to help prepare them for adulthood.

There is a critical need for transition services, Sullivan said, noting that the number of people with autism worldwide has grown tremendously in recent years. Autism has increased by 15 to 17 percent over the past 10 years, and now affects as many as one out of every 110 people. Currently, there are over 50,000 autistic individuals living in California, and more than 500,000 in the United States. Without specially designed transition services for young adults with autism, many individuals will require extensive support for the rest of their lives.

The Coryell Autism Center has been certified by the California Department of Education as a Nonpublic School, and all its instructors have been certified by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing as Special Education Specialists.

Tours of the campus have been scheduled for July 28, August 10, and August 25. To reserve a spot on a tour, call Lisa Hyde at (831) 713-5186.