



Reflecting on the Most Vulnerable Among Us During Autism Awareness Month



SUBMITTED BY:
THERESA BERGER, M.D.
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

With all the current budget cuts, we are very concerned at Ocean Health Initiatives about the well-being of our most vulnerable citizens.

As health care providers, we see thousands of patients each week at our three community health care facilities in Ocean County. All of our patients will feel the impact of the budget cuts on their access to affordable, high quality health care. Most of our patients are hard working families, some working poor, some who have no health insurance and do not qualify for Medicaid or Medicare, and some whose insurance coverage has already been priced out of reach by their employers. The impending federal and state cuts to community health centers are the tip of the iceberg.

Consider the additional devastating effects all of these cuts will have on families in New Jersey who happen to have a family member living with Autism. Autism knows no racial, ethnic or socio-economic boundaries.

▲ According to the CDC, one in every one hundred and fifty children nationwide is on the spectrum.

The Garden State boasts a much higher number with one in ninety-four.

Currently, about 87,000 people are estimated to have a form of autism in New Jersey. Worth taking into consideration is that the state of New Jersey is also a national leader when it comes to identifying children with autism, and beginning treatment at a younger age than in many other states. The average age of discovery nationwide is eight years old. It is different in New Jersey. Children are typically diagnosed sometime around four years old. Good for us!

The Pediatricians at Ocean Health Initiatives want you to know the early signs of autism so that if your child does exhibit signs, you can take advantage of all early treatment options and available programs.

Possible indications of Autism in infants and toddlers include:

- Lack of or delay in spoken language.
- Repetitive use of language and/or motor mannerisms.
- Little or no eye contact.
- Lack of interest in peer relationships.
- Lack of spontaneous or make-believe play.
- Persistent fixation on parts of objects

The Pediatricians at our Lakewood, Toms River, and Stafford locations are available to meet with you and your child if you have questions and concerns about Autism. Please make an appointment through the Call Center by calling 732-363-6655.

Here in Ocean County, advocacy and support for families living with Autism is available through The ARC, Ocean County Chapter. Please visit them at www.arcocean.org. Another organization that offers services locally is 21 Plus, which serves adults with Autism. Please visit them at www.21plus.org.

To learn more about Autism, please go to www.autismspeaks.org, www.autism-society.org, or for information closer to home, please visit www.autismnj.org.



Left to right, Board member Jorge Rod, Board President Warren Sherard, Deb Levinson, Danny Goldberg, CEO Dr. Theresa Berger.

OHI Updates

The OHI community health facility at 101 Second Street is currently undergoing a vertical two-story expansion, which will add 16,000 square feet of clinical and administrative space. This expansion, scheduled to be completed by November of this year, will enable OHI to offer expanded services to our ever growing patient population.

Ocean Health Initiatives' Mobile Medical Unit is available by appointment to visit companies, organizations, and events around Ocean County. If you would like to schedule a visit for screenings, immunizations, and exams, please call our Community Outreach Coordinator at 732-664-2934.

▲ Scheduled Mobile Medical Unit visits in May include:

- **May 10**, Willow Point in Jackson.
- **May 11**, Women's Health Awareness at the Community Lighthouse Church in Lakewood.
- **Every Thursday in May**, the Mobile Medical Unit will be at the Plumsted Municipal Building.
- **May 22**, OHI will participate in the Community Medical Center Baby Fair, at Community Medical Center in Toms River.

Ocean Health Initiatives, Inc. Your Community Health Care Center

DEDICATED TO PROVIDING ACCESSIBLE AND AFFORDABLE PRIMARY HEALTH CARE WITH DIGNITY, COMPASSION, AND KINDNESS
Pediatrics • Internal Medicine • Podiatry • Social Services • Obstetrics • Gynecology • Dental Health • Family Medicine



101 Second Street, Lakewood
(732) 363-6655



301 Lakehurst Road, Toms River
(732) 552-0377



333 Haywood Road, Stafford/Manahawkin
(609) 489-0110



Mobile Medical Unit schedule available online go to www.ohinj.org. For more information call (732) 664-2934

Ocean Health Initiatives is a United Way of Ocean County Certified Agency



Visit us at www.ohinj.org

To become a patient of OHI, call a representative in the Call Center at either 732-363-6655, Lakewood, 732-552-0377, Toms River or, 609-489-0110, Manahawkin. Visit www.ohinj.org for further information.

★ At OHI, we believe health care is a right, and we are here to provide it to you. Do not be stressed – make the call today. We are all here for you.