



## For Immediate Release

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**APRIL 1, 2009, ATLANTA** Autism is a disorder that affects 1 in every 150 children, and April is the month designated for autism awareness. Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs) are a growing issue nationwide and in our communities here in Georgia. The CDC states, “The impact of having a developmental disability is great for the families affected and for the community services that provide intervention and support for these families. It is important that we treat common developmental disabilities, and especially ASDs, as conditions of urgent public health concern, do all we can to identify children’s learning needs, and start intervention as early as possible to give all children the chance to reach their full potential.” The CDC estimates that up to 560,000 individuals between the ages of 0 to 21 have an ASD. The incidence of ASDs is greater than that of childhood cancer and Down’s Syndrome combined.

Right here in Atlanta, the issue of autism is addressed every day at The Lionheart School. Lionheart is a non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization, founded by some of the Southeast’s leading Early Childhood Education professionals and a group of families unable to find a school or program which fit the needs of their children. The goal was to create a new type of learning environment - one which combines the area’s finest Special Education teachers, Speech, Occupational and Music Therapy professionals and concerned and active parents.

The Lionheart School’s methods have become a national prototype for the education of children with autism and other disorders of relating and communicating. While many schools for children on the autism spectrum focus on rote learning and compliance, the Lionheart School emphasizes relationships, abstract critical thinking, problem solving, and social cognition. Lionheart is a recognized educational model by the Interdisciplinary Council founded by Stanley Greenspan, M.D. and Serena Wieder, PhD. The Interdisciplinary Council on Developmental and Learning Disorders (ICDL) has been a pioneer in its work to advance the identification, prevention, and treatment of developmental and learning disorders. ICDL has also facilitated understanding and improving interventions with infants, children and young adults with challenges in relating, communicating and thinking, including autism spectrum disorders.

Locally, at The Lionheart School, ICDL’s work has been brought to life in the classroom. By focusing on each child’s individual differences, and maintaining the highest possible staff-to-student ratio, the Lionheart School crafts a program suited to each student’s developmental profile. This results in a nurturing and supportive environment, directly addressing the child’s emotional, social and intellectual development. At The Lionheart School, a child’s development is a cooperative effort, with teachers, therapists, consultants, parents and, of course, the children, all actively involved.