

TACA Executive Director Honored: Experts rewarded for furthering autism awareness



WHOLE LOTTA HEART-Recipients of the inaugural Hearts 'N' Arts Autism Awareness Awards are honored for their efforts at a recent fundraiser held in Agoura Hills. From left, Dr. Bruce Hensel, Lisa Ackerman, Drs. Robert and Lynn Koegel, and Danielle Paskowitz.

The inaugural Autism Awareness Awards were presented to several individuals whose efforts have furthered awareness of autism, a baffling disorder which affects 1 in 166 children in the United States.

The evening, a glittering event held recently in the Agoura Hills home of actor John Schneider and his wife, Elly, brought together individuals from many fields, as well as parents and autism advocates.

It was a varied group of people all joined by a common challenge, to conquer autism. Conversation buzzed as guests shared information on therapies, successes and much-needed exposure for the disorder which has been dramatically on the rise in recent years.

Nicki Fisher, editor of "Tap: The Autism Perspective" magazine, presented the awards.

Those honored included Drs. Robert and Lynn Koegel of the UC Santa Barbara Koegel Autism Research & Training Center, cited for excellence in collaboration and service in autism.

Lisa Ackerman, founder of Talk About Curing Autism Now (TACA), received the award for establishing a grass-roots organization and service in autism.

Medical correspondent Dr. Bruce Hensel and his team at NBC4 were recognized for producing "Autism: The Hidden Epidemic." Hensel's team was credited with bringing awareness of autism to the community.

Danielle Paskowitz of Surfers Healing accepted the award on behalf of herself and her husband, Izzy, for bringing an alternative therapy approach to the service of autism.

The evening also threw the spotlight on a new feature film directed by Taylor Cross, a young man with autism, and co-directed by his mother, Keri Bowers, autism activist and founder of PAUSE for Kids. A brief excerpt of the film, "Normal People Scare Me," which explores the many facets of autism through interviews with autistic individuals, ran throughout the evening. Joey Travolta produced the film.

For more information, go to www.theautismperspective.org.