

Pinecrest

HAPPY
MOTHER'S
DAY!

ONE OF MIAMI'S COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS

MAY 5 - 11, 2008

Special Mothers give Autism a voice

BY NANCY EAGLETON

To celebrate Mother's Day on May 11 and Autism Awareness month, which was in April, it is an honor to profile two very special Miami mothers, Alessandra Mion and Teresa Bello. They are both the proud mothers of an autistic child, and they each have three additional children, as well.

It's challenging enough to be a mother, even more demanding when you have a large family, and to be the mother of an autistic child requires a special kind of patience.

Alessandra's son, Gianmarco, showed signs of autism at the age of one.

"He stopped saying words, he cried a lot and was very aggravated," she recalls.

Gianmarco is now 17 and is a great joy in her life.

"I used to say, 'why me?'" she said. "Now, I know he's such a blessing. We have become better people because of him. He's changed our lives for the better."

Things improved for Gianmarco and Alessandra after he started attending the Carrie Brazer Center for Autism and Alternative Approaches at the age of seven.

"My son went to seven schools before he came here," Alessandra revealed. "They focus on the positive. The teachers have such patience and they are so loving."

The Carrie Brazer Center is a non-profit charitable school that provides cognitive training and behavior and educational therapy to children with autism and related disabilities. The center is located at 7425 SW 42 Street and for the last nine years, has helped change the lives of over 250 children ranging in age from two through twenty-two and their families.

See **AUTISM**, page 3

Read at Deer Valley, Utah



Pictured are Shane Reilly and Kieran Foreman, both players for the Marlins in the Midget Division of the Howard Palmetto Baseball and Softball Association, on spring break at the Deer Valley Ski Resort in Park City, UT. Of course they remembered to take along a copy of their favorite hometown newspaper and snapped this shot for us on top of Bald Mountain at 9,400 feet. Thanks for thinking of us guys!

Are you ready for the Millennials?

BY PAT MORGAN

They are sociable, optimistic, achievement-oriented, open-minded, talented, well-educated, collaborative and influential. They are tech-savvy multi-taskers who are global thinkers charged with potential.

Meet the Millennials, the generation also known as the Echo Boom, Gen Y or Gen I (Internet). Born between 1980 and 2000, there are about 80 million of them, nearly as large a group as the Baby Boomers.

See **READY**, page 2

Positive PEOPLE in Pinecrest

These Positive People help add to the quality of life in Pinecrest. Look inside for their stories.



ASHLEY GIDDINGS

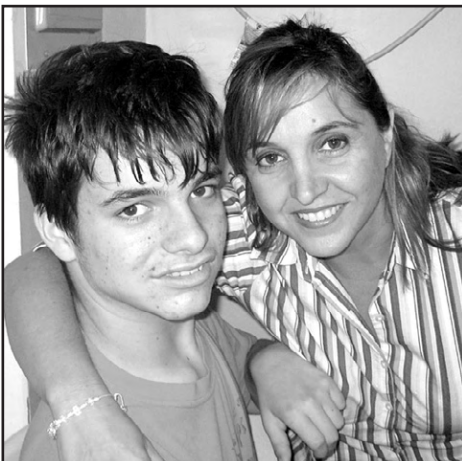


ZACH GUSMAN



EMMA MILLER

AUTISM, from page 1



Alessandra Mion with her son, Gianmarco.

Alessandra remembers the struggles in her son's early years.

"Gianmarco is non-verbal, so he would scream for everything. I couldn't take him anywhere and it wasn't fair for my three other children," she explained.

She recalls the turning point in their lives. The first successful event they went to as a family was a church service when Gianmarco was around 12 years old.

"Now we go every Sunday to St. John Neumann for parents of children with autism," she said. "There's a purpose for him."

Alessandra is determined to help other parents of autistic children.

"We started a ministry at St. John Neumann for parents who have children with autism" she explained. "People weren't going to church because it was too hard, now there's a place for them. These children... they're the purest of souls."

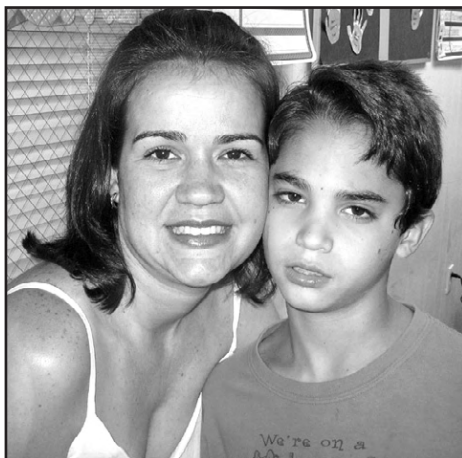
Just months ago, Alessandra started working at her son's school, the Carrie Brazier Center. She is happy to reach out to parents who call or visit the school looking for answers.

"I have the opportunity to be with my son and help other parents, too," she explained. "I can relate to parents who are in the same situation I was in years ago."

Both Alessandra and Terry Bello assisted with Carrie Brazier's seventh annual "Comedy for Kids," a school fundraiser that was held in March. The two mothers also joined other school members to participate in the "Miami-Dade Walk Now for Autism," which was held on February 10th at Crandon Park and raised over \$460,000 for the cause.

Terry Bello remembers when her stepson, Anthony, was diagnosed at age three and a half with autism.

"I remember thinking 'autism, what is it?'" she said. "Today, it's like an epidemic. So many people know someone



Terry Bello with her son, Anthony.

who has a child with autism. So many people are touched by it."

Autism Speaks reports that every 20 minutes, another child is diagnosed with autism. The lifelong neurological disorder impairs communication, behavior, learning and social skills and affects four times as many boys as girls. Thirteen years ago, 1 in 10,000 children was diagnosed with autism. Today, 1 in 150 children are diagnosed in the U.S., making autism the nation's fastest-growing serious developmental disorder.

Terry's son, Anthony, is eleven and has been attending the Carrie Brazier Center for almost one year.

"He was thrown out of a summer camp program last year," Terry recalled. "Then, I found the summer camp at the Carrie Brazier Center. He has made such great strides here. They took a child and they have changed him."

Terry has learned everything she can about autism and about the best treatments and therapies that will help her care for her stepson.

"I have him on a special diet," she explained. "And everything must be routine and consistent. I do everything for him, so people ask me how I do it. I tell them that I'm very patient and I pray everyday."

"We have tried everything... speech therapy, occupational, sensory and horse therapy," she continued. "Everything is so expensive for these children, but the school and the therapies are so essential to these kids."

"Before, Anthony couldn't look me in the eyes," Terry explained, describing her son's progress. "Now, he looks me in the eyes and says 'I love you.'"

In order to better serve more families, the Carrie Brazier Center is proud to announce that they will be opening a second center at the Bet Breira campus at 9400 SW 87 Avenue in the near future. To learn more about the center's school or camp programs, visit the website at www.cbc4autism.org or call 305-262-5999.





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