

UC SANTA BARBARA

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## **UCSB's Autism Research and Training Center, a National Leader, Receives Major Gift From Brian and Patricia Kelly to Expand Program and Build New Facilities**

The Autism Research and Training Center at UC Santa Barbara's Gevirtz Graduate School of Education has received a \$2.35-million gift from Brian and Patricia Kelly of Santa Barbara that will provide enhanced facilities for what is widely recognized as one of the nation's leading centers for the diagnosis, evaluation, and treatment of autism.

The Kelly gift will help create a new physical home for the Autism Research and Training Center and make it possible for the center to expand its services for children with autism and their families.

The new facility, which will be part of a new, state-funded Social Sciences and Education Building complex on campus, will more than double the center's existing clinical space and feature additional treatment facilities, a recreation area for children, a private entrance, and a garden. The expanded center is scheduled to break ground in January and open in the spring of 2008.

UC Santa Barbara's Autism Research and Training Center is dedicated to improving the lives and prognoses of children with autism, as well as the lives of their families.

It has been recognized by the National Academy of Sciences-and ranked among the country's top 12 such facilities-for its innovative research and teaching methods in a variety of areas, including parent education, language development, and teacher education.

It offers a state-of-the-art behavioral approach to autistic children.

The Kelly gift will also enable the center to more aggressively pursue its goal of providing additional services to more children and families from this region, nationally, and abroad.

"Through our support for this outstanding center, we hope to raise public awareness of autism and help generate additional support to facilitate effective treatment and research on autism," said Brian Kelly.

"UCSB's Autism Research Center is one of the best centers in the country."

Added Patricia Kelly: "This center at the Gevirtz School is a unique resource for families, and we believe that this expansion will make it possible for many more families to take advantage of its services and benefit from its research."

UCSB Chancellor Henry T. Yang thanked Mr. and Mrs. Kelly "for their generous and visionary support of this national asset and renowned center. Their kindness and their consideration of the special needs of families dealing with autism are wonderful gifts that will generate critically important benefits for many, many people."

Professor Gale Morrison, the Acting Dean of the Gevirtz Graduate School of Education, said the expansion of the autism center would result in enhanced services to the community and help continue the center's excellent tradition in autism research. "Our clinical facilities will now be among the country's best," she said, "and the parallel research agenda will increase knowledge about how to help children with autism and their families."

With the expansion, the center will also be given a new name: The Koegel Autism Center, in recognition of Dr. Robert Koegel, the facility's longtime director and a professor of education at the Gevirtz School, and his wife, Dr. Lynn Kern Koegel, the center's Clinical Director of Autism Services. An international authority on autism,

Robert Koegel has published more than 150 journal articles, papers, and books on the subject. He is co-founder and co-editor of the "Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions." Lynn Koegel has published several books on communication and language development and has developed programs to help improve the communication of children with autism. She is the co-author, most recently, of "Overcoming Autism" (Viking/Penguin), written with Claire LaZebnik, the parent of an autistic child.

The Kelly gift will also spur new efforts to raise private support for the autism center and its mission. A new fund-raising committee is being established to focus exclusively on the center's program and staffing needs.

### About Autism and the Koegel Autism Center

Autism is a neurological disability that affects one in every 166 children.

A child with autism is likely to exhibit certain behavioral indicators that may include difficulty socializing with peers, a tendency to avoid making eye contact, a limited number of interests, an inflexible adherence to routine, and communication delays.

Although autism was once thought of as a lifelong devastating disability, appropriate interventions have been shown to help children with autism learn.

Nearly all children with autism can make significant gains, and many can blossom into sociable children with no outward signs of any disability.

The center's methods do not rely solely on a trained instructor working one-on-one with a student, but rather on the assimilation of those methods into the daily life of a busy household. For families unable to visit UCSB, the center makes available training manuals that explain recommended intervention.

Research at the center is supported by, among others, the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). The center is currently conducting a five-year research project, supported by the NIMH, to further investigate the Pivotal Response model of intervention for autism and the use of motivational procedures in improving the communication abilities of young, nonverbal children with autism.

More information about the center and its programs and the resources it has available can be found on its Web site, <http://www.education.ucsb.edu/autism/>.

## About the Donors

With roots in Santa Barbara and Boston, Brian and Patricia Kelly are partners in their philanthropic support for higher education and autism research and education.

Brian Kelly is co-founder of Eastern Development Corporation, a commercial real estate development company headquartered in Massachusetts. The privately held company specializes in the construction of shopping centers and office buildings.

Eastern Development has developed in excess of 10 million square feet of property in the northeastern United States.

He also serves on the executive board of directors of the newly launched Autism Speaks, a national fund-raising initiative that is committed to raising public awareness and support for research and treatment of autism.

Patricia Kelly is a successful business owner and investor.

From 1993 until 2001, she owned Priscilla of Boston, a highly recognized, upscale bridal retailer and manufacturer, which she sold to May Department Stores.

Brian and Patricia Kelly and their five children reside in Santa Barbara.

## Related Links

[Koegel Autism Center](#)

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## **About UC Santa Barbara**

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.