

Rosswurm named to autism treatment board

By Matt Werner
Times Sentinel Writer

Mary Rosswurm had quite the adjustment in 1996 when she moved to Indianapolis from California.

She wasn't used to the snow and the cold, but the biggest adjustment for her was not having as many resources for her then 4-year-old autistic son, Brad. Brad is now 23 years old and graduated from Zionsville Community High School.

"We had so many services in California, and there were not a lot here other than developmental preschool," she said. "It was really hard to shop around and find a doctor because, at that point, there weren't even a lot of doctors at Riley (Children's Hospital) that had experience with autism. It was quite different."

At the time, Rosswurm was working at a clinic conducting speech therapy. In 2004, however, the Zionsville resident began working at Little Star Center, Indiana's first center-based applied behavior analysis facility, eventually becoming its executive director.

"When I first came in, there was only four kids," she said. "When I left in 2007, we were up to about 17 kids."

Rosswurm then had the opportunity to become the executive director of a Massachusetts school for children with autism.

"I wanted to broaden my horizons," she said. "I told the board that I would be back because I loved my job here."

After 19 months, Rosswurm returned to Little Star, which now has more than 80 children.

She now has another opportunity to make a difference in helping children with autism. She was recently named to the



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Mary Rosswurm, right, holds a photo of her 23-year-old son, Brad Anderson. Rosswurm, Little Star Center executive director, was recently named to the board of directors for the Association for Science in Autism Treatment. Also pictured is Victoria Blessing, Little Star family services director, holding a picture of her 16-year-old son Connor. Both Connor and Brad are autistic.

Association for the Science in Autism Treatment Board of Directors. According to its website, ASATonline.org, ASAT is a not-for-profit organization of parents and professionals committed to improving the education, treatment and care of people with autism.

David Celiberti, ASAT executive director, said the organization is thrilled to have Rosswurm.

"Her vast experience as an executive director and her business background will be incredible assets to our board," he said. "Her commitment to service and to helping families make the best possible treatment choices for their children has been evident throughout her career. We all look forward to working with her closely in the

months ahead."

Rosswurm said ASAT is a unique tool parents can use to learn more about different types of treatment.

"It's one of those amazing resources for parents that is available now," Rosswurm said. "There's so many treatments out there and, for parents, it's hard to know which ones to use. What ASAT does is have doctors look at each therapy and lets the parents know if it is a legitimate therapy. It really lets parents be savvy consumers because they don't have to do the research because it's all there."

"Anybody can say research shows this and this and this is an effective treatment. This is a non-biased group looking at research and says this is a good treatment or a fad treatment and is helping parents to make these decisions. It's such a useful tool for them to make sure they're getting sound advice. There's nothing worse than finding out a couple years later that a certain treatment was a bunch of hokey."

Rosswurm said she was humbled and honored to be named to the board.

"It's the who's who of the autism field," she said. "I really don't feel worthy to be named."

Rosswurm said she has been an advocate of ASAT since before joining the board and hopes to help the organization with marketing.

"I want to help them reach more people so people are aware it is out there and let them know that when their doctor diagnoses their child with autism, they have this resource," she said. "All the outreach we do costs money, so the more money we can raise, the more outreach we can do and get more exposed to us."