As Autism Month Ends

At a social gathering a couple of weeks ago I mentioned that a Kindergarten teacher I knew was a bestselling author. “She wrote historical romances. I couldn’t stand to read more than a few paragraphs.” My friend, who has a teenage son with Autism, said, “That’s because she wrote it for women.” My friend continued to expand his thoughts. His son, who had headphones on, interrupted, gesturing. “If there’s a circle with a line through the middle it’s a woman.” His father said,“Stop talking! You never take those headphones off when I talk to you! Go away! You don’t know what we’re talking about!” I said I disagreed because the teenager was trying to participate and related the conversation to what he knew.

Just the other day an administrator told me about his thirty-year-old son who has Autism. The young man volunteers at an animal exhibition which has a lot of children visitors. After one of the scientists talks about the facility, the young man answers questions. “He’s very knowledgeable because they ask about what he’s interested in. He answers the questions and relates well to children,” the administrator told me. He was proud of what his son had accomplished.

A friend of mine was caregiver for a three-year old boy with Aspergers (high-functioning Autism). As he grew up his Aspergers showed itself more strongly. Rather than lose focus he was intense. He would spend hours taking a wind-up clock apart and putting it back together. Many years later I had a brief conversation him at his parents’ Christmas party. He was twenty. He had graduated from a Community College and was pursuing a degree in Computer Science. “With my social skills,” he said, “it’s the best career for me.”

Over the last decade or so, it seems that the number of children and adults diagnosed with Autism has increased. I’ve noticed a reframing. The term disabled is often called differently-abled. That’s another story.

Have you ever tried to understand the puzzle of Autism as Autism Month ends? Please email jcromshow@yahoo.com.