

Parents look to books for help and hope in dealing with disabilities and childhood disease.

Special Books for Special Needs

BY KATHRYN E. LIVINGSTON

As autism rates continue to spiral upward—one in every 150 American children, and almost one in 94 boys, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention—parents continue to search for answers. In response to the urgency of special-needs problems, including autism spectrum disorders and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (4%–12% of school-age children, reports the American Academy of Pediatrics), upcoming seasons offer an array of new titles, ranging from the Mongolian adventures of an autistic boy and his parents (*The Horse Boy* by Rupert Isaacson) to pre-eminent child psychiatrist Stanley Greenspan's *Overcoming ADHD*.

The Power of Memoir

In Isaacson's powerful *The Horse Boy: A Father's Quest to Heal His Son* (Little, Brown), the author notes that the Web is the resource most parents of autistic kids turn to for information. But that may be changing, and if so, Isaacson's own riveting memoir may lead the way. Not only is the book imbued with drama and atmosphere (it's not every day that a shaman comes to visit), it's also filled with the challenging everyday details of living with an autistic child.

In April, Isaacson and Little, Brown partnered with the Autism Society of America to spread the word about the disorder. Says Marguerite Colston, vice president of constituent relations for ASA, "We realized that Rupert Isaacson

had a really wonderful message of how parents can dream for their kids with autism, of how kids with autism can have a quality of life." Representatives from ASA joined the author on a 10-city tour, and informational materials were distributed at every event. "The folks who attended the book signings came away with a little more hope, and we got some great media exposure to the fact that you can help your child with autism. You don't have to think of it as the end, it's actually a beginning," Colston says.

A Child's Journey Out of Autism by Leeann Whiffen (Sourcebooks) is also a gripping tale of triumph. Says senior editor Shana Drehs, "Autism is a problem that only seems to be growing, with more and more kids diagnosed every year. This is such a positive story of how a mom, without any special resources or special connections, did everything she could for her son and managed to find a way to pull him out of it. It's a story of triumph and hope and a mother's love prevailing, and I think this is a message that people are looking for right now."

Lynn and Randy Gaston's *Three Times*

the Love: Finding Answers and Hope for Our Triplets with Autism (Avery) chronicles the experiences of "an ordinary American family overcoming extraordinary odds." As the couple struggle to care for three sons—each at a different place on the autism spectrum—they offer an overview of the therapies and resources available to

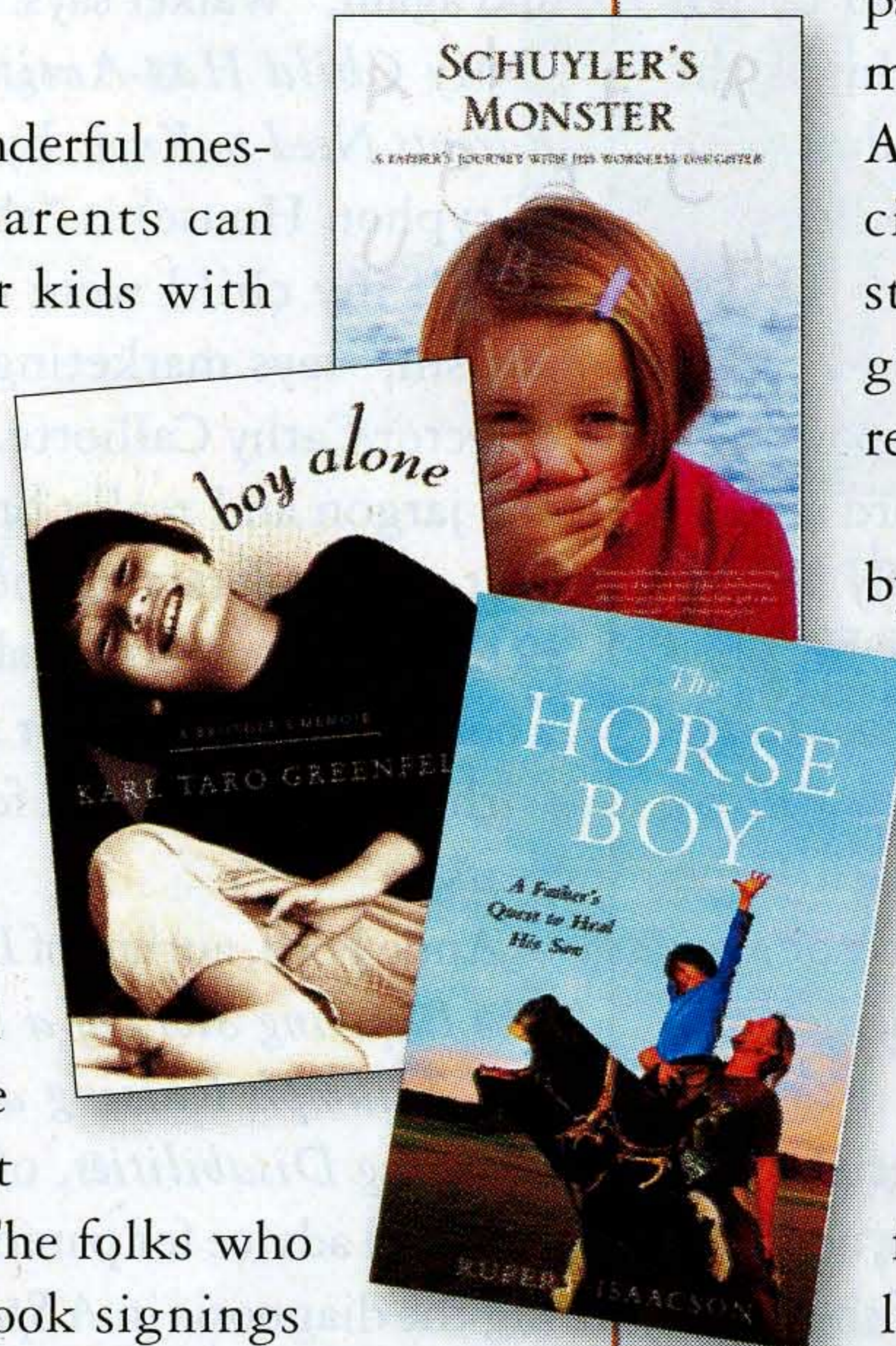
parents of autistic kids. "It's part memoir, part guidebook," says Anne Kosmoski, senior publicist, adding, "It's a heartfelt story, but they also wanted to give advice, since there are no real guideposts to follow."

Boy Alone: A Brother's Memoir by Karl Taro Greenfeld (Harper-

Collins) shines a harsher light on the subject, revealing that not enough is being done for the aging autistic community. Greenfeld, brother of Noah (the subject of *A Child Called Noah*, the first in a trilogy by the boys' father, Josh Greenfeld, published in the 1970s), writes from his perspective as the "normal"

child. As his parents age, it becomes clear that Noah, now 42 and institutionalized, will eventually become the author's responsibility. "It's a complicated family drama and clearly the sibling point of view is important," notes Gail Winston, executive editor, "but in the same way that people read Joan Didion's memoir even if they have not lost a husband, people will read this book as memoir. I see this as a memoir for a general reader as much as for the autism community or for people with children with special needs." It is also, she observes, a book of activism that dramatically underlines the legacy of care.

Parents searching for cures and answers can make for suspenseful stories. *Saving Sammy: Curing the Boy Who Caught OCD* by Beth Alison Mahoney (Crown) is "part



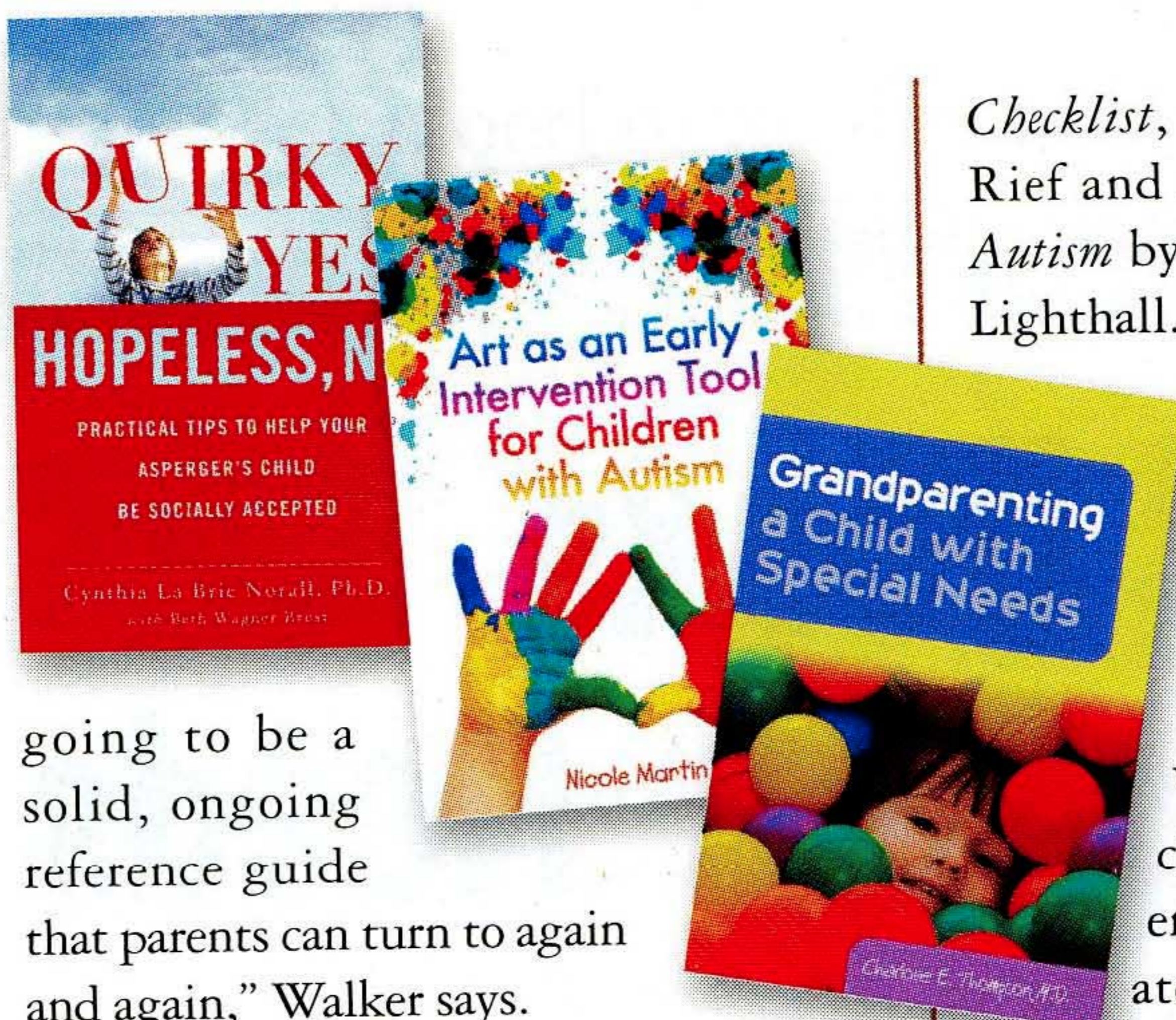
manifesto, part medical mystery.” The book recounts the tale of Sammy, a healthy boy diagnosed with obsessive-compulsive disorder at the age of 12. But author/mom Mahoney follows the clues to find that an undiagnosed strep infection caused her son’s devastating condition. *Schuyler’s Monster* by Robert Rummel-Hudson (St. Martin’s) tells of a wordless little girl and a father’s search to unravel the “monster” behind his daughter’s silence.

For an unusual twist, readers may turn to *Trainwreck: My Life as an Idiot* by Jeff Nichols. From Touchstone, this is the offbeat, funny memoir of an adult with ADD, dyslexia and other disabilities.

Paths to Healing

A number of titles recently or soon to be released offer the straightforward advice, information and support eagerly sought by parents of special needs kids. *Overcoming ADHD: Helping Your Child Become Calm, Engaged and Focused—Without a Pill* by Stanley I. Greenspan, M.D., with Jacob Greenspan (Da Capo) advocates treatment of ADHD without medication. “Any time someone like Stanley Greenspan is talking about special needs issues, people are going to listen, and they need to listen because he’s one of the country’s foremost authorities in this area,” says Lissa Warren, vice president, senior director of publicity. “Greenspan is really known for his behavioral therapy approach. Parents are very concerned about medications and potential side effects, and this is a book, written by a psychiatrist—an M.D.—saying that ADHD can be treated without medication.”

Healing and Preventing Autism by Jenny McCarthy and Jerry Kartzinel, M.D. (Dutton), is McCarthy’s third book on the subject. “All three have hit the New York Times bestseller list, and they’ve sparked a lot of debate,” notes publicity manager Amanda Walker. McCarthy, an autism activist and mother of an autistic son, helped organize a march on Washington to bring attention to the issue and has founded an autism organization called Generation Rescue. “We’re hoping this is



going to be a solid, ongoing reference guide that parents can turn to again and again,” Walker says.

My Child Has Autism: What Parents Need to Know by Clarissa Willis (Gryphon House) is “the first book I’d buy if my child were diagnosed with autism,” says marketing and trade sales director Cathy Calliotte. “It takes out all the jargon and really breaks it down so that you understand the spectrum. The book gives concrete, doable strategies, by a compassionate author who has worked with autistic children for more than 20 years.”

Anne Ford, author of *Laughing Allegra: The Inspiring Story of a Mother’s Struggle and Triumph Raising a Daughter with Learning Disabilities*, offers immediate help and advice for parents just confronting the diagnosis in *A Special Mother: Getting Through the Early Days of a Child’s Diagnosis of Learning Disabilities and Related Disorders* (Newmarket).

William Stillman’s *Empowered Autism Parenting: Celebrating (and Defending) Your Child’s Place in the World* (Wiley/Jossey-Bass) is Stillman’s fifth book on the subject. From his distinct, “inside out” perspective as an adult with Asperger’s syndrome, he urges parents to advocate for their children and to protect them against being pathologized, over-medicated and marginalized. Several special needs titles that are useful for parents and teachers alike are also in the lineup, says Meredith Stanton, Wiley associate publicist, including *The Autism Checklist* by Paula Kluth, *Life Skills Activities for Special Children* by Darlene Manix, *How Can My Child Succeed in School?* by Craig Pohlman, *The ADD/ADHD*

Checklist, second edition, by Sandra F. Rief and *Homeschooling the Child with Autism* by Patricia Schetter and Kandis Lighthall.

At St. Martin’s Press, *Quirky Yes, Hopeless No: Practical Tips to Help Your Child with Asperger’s Syndrome Be More Socially Accepted* by Cynthia La Brie Norall, with Beth Wagner Brust, explores the challenges of kids with Asperger’s in an A to Z format. Associate editor Alyse Diamond says: “Cynthia La Brie started

a fantastic organization for Asperger kids called Friends’ Club, which brings these kids together to practice social skills.” *Quirky Yes, Hopeless No* offers “tons of tips, games and information.”

Raising a Sensory Smart Child: The Definitive Handbook for Helping Your Child with Sensory Integration Issues by Lindsey Biel and Nancy Peske will be reissued by Penguin with updated and expanded information. With an introduction by the brilliant autistic and author Temple Grandin (*Thinking in Pictures*), the work explores the topic of sensory integration dysfunction, a condition in which the body doesn’t properly register and process sensations.

Parents dealing with learning problems will be interested in *Light Up Your Child’s Mind: Finding a Unique Pathway to Happiness and Success* by Joseph S. Renzulli and Sally M. Reis with Andrea Thompson (Little, Brown). The book helps light the fire of learning in every child—from the special needs to the gifted—through the Renzulli method of teaching, now available for parents. Senior publicist Sabrina Callahan says, “What this book shows is that every child is gifted in his or her own way. It helps parents cultivate their child’s unique talents while building skills and confidence.”

In March, Free Spirit published an updated and revised third edition of *The Gifted Kids’ Survival Guide for Ages 10 & Under*. Says author and Free Spirit president and founder Judy Galbraith, “On a