Elizabethtown Healthcare Foundation has funded “Social Skills Facilitation Program for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders” (SSFP) project. Susan Mandel, Clinic Coordinator for the Center for Communication Disorders, and Dr. Barbara Glazewski, Professor and Coordinator of the Graduate Program in Speech-Language Pathology, are the Principal Investigators and will also serve as Program Coordinators.

This program will provide opportunities for children with ASD to develop the social/pragmatic skills necessary to live well-rounded, enjoyable lives.

Services to children will be provided by graduate students in the Speech-Language Pathology Program during the fall, spring and summer semesters. Initial groups will provide services for children ages six to ten. As the model evolves, pilot groups of pre-school children will be added. The children will be grouped by language skills and level of social/pragmatic development.

Individual goals will be developed for each child based on parental input, formal and informal assessments, and observation. Progress monitoring through continuous review of data will result in the development of activities necessary for clients to meet individual goals. End-of-semester review of objectives will be used to measure progress and plan for future goals.

Parents will be encouraged to periodically observe group sessions and participate in activities and will be provided with guidance to carryover learned skills into the home and school/community settings. While the children are participating in group activities, parents will be provided with a support/training group.

Once the program is initially established, future plans include collaborating with other units within the University and expanding our services to include such initiatives as team sports, cooperative arts and dramatic arts activities. Ideas to enhance and expand the social interaction opportunities for children with ASD are endless, and they will allow them to experience the success and pleasure that comes from “just being a kid!”