

Executive Director's Column

by Patricia S. Lemer, M.Ed., NCC, M.S. Bus.



On a cold April weekend, I had the privilege of attending the annual “Being Fearless Conference,” in New York City. Sponsored by the Omega Institute in Rhinebeck, NY, which promotes innovative educational experiences that “awaken the human spirit,” this conference annually attracts over 1000 attendees since its conception after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Its goal is to share the inspiring work of people who carry on extraordinary missions around the world, despite personal danger and hardship.

Fear is a lousy motivator because it is based upon intimidation and coerces people to act against their wills. Our President, insurance companies, the medical community, law enforcement officers, educators and others play upon our fears when trying to convince us that terrorists still loom, robbers may take our possessions, or illness is only one bug away. Furthermore, our children might fail, not get a job, or go to college. Fear-mongers call those who do not cave in “irresponsible,” “unrealistic” or even “stupid.”

Being **fearless** enables one to face danger or hardship resolutely. That quality is universally true for this year’s passionate and eloquent speakers, each of whom captured my attention. Valerie Plame, Mia Farrow and Robert Kennedy, Jr. Plame spoke about being “outed” by the US government from a job she loved as a secret service agent. This action allegedly was in retaliation for a speech her husband gave refuting the administration’s claim that Iraq purchased uranium to proliferate weapons of mass destruction.

Mia Farrow brought the audience, including me, to tears with her stories and photos of the horrific murders that continue in Darfur. She opened my eyes to the relationship among the Chinese, the Olympic Games, the investments of large American companies, such as Fidelity, and the killers. Should the US boycott the summer games? Her website at www.miafarrow.org details how to assure that you are not supporting the genocide and what you can do to help those in need.

It was Robert Kennedy, Jr., though, who really hit home. I was well aware of his fight to decrease mercury emissions from power plants. His *Rolling Stone* article, “Deadly Immunity,” made him a hero in the autism world by endorsing the removal of mercury from vaccines. What I did not know, however, was the extent of his efforts to clean up America, one river at a time. He has watchdogs on virtually every riverbank in America, waiting for factories, power plants, or manufacturers to dump toxic chemicals. The minute the garbage hits the water, Kennedy hits the keys of his computer to file a complaint against them. He single-handedly is protecting the fish our children eat from environmental toxicity.

For the second year in a row, Omega will present another weekend workshop in August, “Autism Through the Life Span.” The program features two tracks: one for Professionals working in the medical, nutrition, therapeutic, and mental health fields, and the other for Families. The former provides the latest information on diagnosis, alternative approaches to treatment, and insights into working productively with families. The latter covers such topics as finding support, taking care of yourself and your family while caring for an individual with autism, and navigating the autism advocacy maze.

Being Fearless

The speakers at this conference are **fearless** folks who are not afraid to offer the hope of recovery for those on the autism spectrum. They include DDR Professional Advisory Board member Sid Baker, MD, along with autism researcher, Martha Herbert, MD and Editor of *Alternative Therapies in Health and Medicine*, Mark Hyman, MD.

Also participating are Sally Pederson, who created The Homestead in Iowa, Theresa Hamlin, EdD, chief of the Center for Discovery, and Valerie Paradiz, PhD, co-founder of the ASPIE School program, both in New York. See *Upcoming Events* for contact information for this exciting program.

Listening to Plame, Kennedy and Farrow, I realized that my world is full of **fearless** heroes. I would like to use this opportunity to applaud those working in the trenches to stop the runaway train of autism and other developmental delays.

- To the **AutisMoms** who are **fearless** about their offspring contracting childhood illnesses because they understand that for their kids, the dangers of the illness are less than the dangers of the vaccine.
- To the **fathers** who are **fearless** about spending money for therapies their insurance companies deny because they know that money spent today buys a brighter future for their children tomorrow.
- To the **physicians** who are **fearless** about the “quackbusters” who threaten that if they do not comply with “mainstream medicine” that they will lose their licenses.
- To the **teachers** who are **fearless** about waiting on academics and letting kids be kids until their bodies and their minds are ready to sit still and pay attention.
- To the **homeschoolers** who are **fearless** about educating their kids themselves rather than send them to schools that babysit them and “dumb them down.”
- To the **therapists** who are **fearless** about having enough clients, and refer some to their colleagues in other fields first.
- To the **advocacy groups** that are **fearless** about lobbying Congress and boycotting the CDC to force change in the “one-size-fits-all” vaccine policy. =
- To the **researchers** who are **fearless** about committing themselves to design scientific studies that prove their conjectures about possible contributors to developmental problems including autism.
- To **free-lance writers** David Kirby and Dan Olmstead who are **fearless** about following the threads leading them to the truth about vaccines and autism. Your articulate, impeccably researched pieces provide the ammunition we need to keep fighting.

Do YOU have the courage to be **fearless**? Let those above be examples on days when you feel that you are running uphill. The next time you face a dragon, think about how you can tap into true motivators like health, fairness, honesty, truth and social justice, rather than fear.