



Karen Shapiro and Soryl Cohen

## Get **INSYNC** by Adriene Fern

Soryl Cohen learned at a recent Weston Rotary meeting, autism is a complex neurobiological disorder that typically lasts throughout the person's lifetime. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have called autism a national public health crisis whose cause and cure remain unknown. She also learned a most frightening statistic, autism spectrum disorders (ASD) are diagnosed in one in one hundred and fifty children in the United States, affecting four times as many boys as girls. "After hearing that presentation and the numbers, I wanted to be part of increasing autism awareness"

Weston is home to many individuals with autism and related disabilities according to the UM NSU Center for Autism Related Disabilities (CARD). Presently, there are two hundred and four families registered with CARD, and another one hundred and forty registered in public school. The numbers increase when you add in the unregistered, private schooled and home schooled children. The CARD Center serves both children and adults of all levels of autism, pervasive developmental disorders, and autistic-like disabilities.

As chairwoman of Weston's Rotary Youth and Scholarship Program, Soryl presented the Rotarians with her mission to bring autism awareness into the community, "the Rotarians response was quick and overwhelming positive!"

In order to spread autism awareness Soryl, reached out into the Weston community to Karen Shapiro. Karen one of Weston's foremost dedicated autism advocates, and a parent of an autistic child, partnered The Rotary

Club with UM NSU Center for Autism Related Disabilities (CARD). Together these shared resources with their common goal created INSYNC WITH AUTISM.

INSYNC WITH AUTISM offers those affected by autism along with their families and friends the opportunity to experience a concert tailored to be "autism friendly. The complimentary inaugural event will be held at the David Posnick Center JCC featuring a musical program under the direction of Roger Lander and the Percussion Ensemble of the Symphony's of America. Karen proudly explains, "The concert is specifically tailored to be autism friendly and will enrich the lives of those with autism through the power of music."

Additional community support has come from Vice Principal Priscilla Ribiero and Interact Advisor Stefanie Sirois at Cypress Bay High School along with Vice Principal Michael Works and Interact Advisor Joseph Franco at Western High School. Student volunteers have enthusiastically joined in the event and will participate in a training course geared to the unique audience they will be working with. Another community participant is Kilwin's Sweet Shop in Town Center. Kilwin's has generously donated empty ice cream tubs for participants to join in on the drumming!

INSYNC WITH AUTISM aspires to improve the quality of life for families affected by autism by providing them with a safe, fun community experience. To participate in the January 6<sup>th</sup> concert "where participation is welcome and full expression is celebrated" call 954.262.7111 seating is limited. **WT**