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**Portraits of Courage: Families Bravely
Testify in
AUTISM HEROES**

An excellent entry in the literature of autism and disability...

★ Starred Review from Library Journal

While the growing crisis of autism gains awareness, families facing an autism diagnosis can still feel isolated. Thirty-eight exceptionally courageous families share their stories in **AUTISM HEROES: PORTRAITS OF FAMILIES MEETING THE CHALLENGE** (Barbara Firestone, Photography by Joe Buissink, November 2007, Jessica Kingsley Publishers; Hardcover, \$34.95; ISBN: 978-1-84310-837-5; 240 pages, 120 b/w photographs). Even celebrities, normally protective of their personal lives, open-up on this difficult subject to inspire others just beginning the journey. Actor Gary Cole and his wife Teddi vividly remember the day when the word *autism* came into their lives: “The doctor said, ‘I need you to know that I’m leaning toward autism.’ And our brains just stopped.”

Dr. Barbara Firestone has touched the lives of thousands of families with special needs children. She handpicked these stories to create **AUTISM HEROES**. Firestone founded The Help Group, one of the largest, most innovative and comprehensive nonprofit organizations of its kind in the United States serving children with special needs. As part of their many services, The Help Group runs six specialized day schools in southern California for children with autism. All the royalties from **AUTISM HEROES** are being donated to The Help Group to support its efforts on behalf of children with autism spectrum disorders and their families.

With empathy and expertise, Dr. Firestone engages the families in candid, powerful and deeply affecting conversations about their lives, set against the backdrop of her insightful essays about dignity, hope, opportunity and love. Several of the families profiled in **AUTISM HEROES** are those of well-known celebrities (Gary Cole, John Schneider, Joe Mantegna, etc.). Others are parents simply willing to come forward and share their experiences. The stunning black-and-white photographs of Joe Buissink perfectly complement the intimate testimony of these families. A regular contributor to *In Style* magazine, Buissink’s award-winning work also appears in *People*, *American Photo*, *Gourmet*, *LA Times*, *LA Weekly* and *Los Angeles Magazine*.

The openness and honesty of the families, as elicited by Dr. Firestone, helps demystify and destigmatize autism. “Few have the combination of compassion, rigorous knowledge, passion for the field, and accomplishments in helping literally thousands of children as does Barbara Firestone,” writes Michael E. O’Hanlon, senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, “She is also an extraordinary listener, and a great observer of people.”

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