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[Click on the link to see Colin Farrell speaks out about Angelman Syndrome and his son's diagnosis](#)

## **New Educational Video on Angelman Syndrome Will Reach Millions of Viewers, Thanks to Yahoo!**

In an effort to raise awareness and research funding, FAST and Yahoo! have created an educational video about Angelman Syndrome featuring family stories and interviews with doctors. The powerfully compelling video can be viewed on Yahoo!, the world's most visited website. Having the story of Angelman Syndrome and the hope for a cure reach a broad audience has yet to be accomplished, but with Yahoo!, hosting this video, FAST's message will finally reach millions of people.

Paula Evans, Founder and Chairperson of FAST, states, "The video is simply outstanding and is exactly what we need to drive awareness and research funding to our cause of finding a cure for Angelman Syndrome. FAST is enormously grateful to all the people at Yahoo! who worked so passionately on behalf of our children".

The impetus for Yahoo! producing this compelling video about Angelman Syndrome is one of their own employees, Bryan Thompson and his wife, Tina, who are supporting efforts towards a cure for their son, Finn, age 3 1/2, who has Angelman Syndrome.

Bryan Thompson said, "We are enthusiastic about assisting in raising awareness of Angelman Syndrome. We hope that by sharing this video, Angelman Syndrome gets the attention and focus it deserves".

FAST is extremely excited about the video and the potential it has to educate millions of people, around the globe, about Angelman Syndrome. We are honored that Yahoo! has chosen to assist us in our efforts to raise awareness. To view the video, follow this link:

[http://news.yahoo.com/s/yblog\\_newsroom/20110524/sc\\_yblog\\_newsroom/angelman-syndrome-close-to-a-cure](http://news.yahoo.com/s/yblog_newsroom/20110524/sc_yblog_newsroom/angelman-syndrome-close-to-a-cure)

For more information and to view a longer version of the Yahoo! video, please visit [www.CureAngelman.org](http://www.CureAngelman.org).



## Update

Since this piece was submitted for the newsletter, Dr. Weeber's Neurobiology of Learning and Memory Laboratory has started testing specific drugs. One of these drugs provides significant improvements to the AS mouse in terms of motor coordination and brain function. These results represent the first time a pharmacological agent has rescued the defect in neuronal function in a living Angelman Syndrome mouse. More updates to come as experiments continue!!!



## Mice, twice, thrice...



Scientific dogma follows the common definition of an authoritative principle, belief, or statement of ideas or opinion, especially one considered to be absolutely true. The previous dogma surrounding Angelman Syndrome (AS) was established following the identification of the AS gene and was based upon the current scientific research at that time. Much of this research used the outstanding mouse model that importantly recapitulates many of the symptoms of AS (as much as a mouse can be related to a human). This original dogma contended basic truths associated with AS including the following: (1) that the paternal AS gene is silenced in a few specific brain regions; (2) that AS is a developmental disorder causing structural alterations and irreparable damage to the brain in utero; and (3)

that the profound cognitive disruption associated with AS would be irreversible. As the scientific community expanded, and research continued using the AS mouse model, many of these basic dogmas fell into question.

Let's consider the first: *the paternal AS gene is silenced in a few specific brain regions*. Through a collaborative effort with Vanderbilt University Medical Center, our lab has found that maternal deficiency of the AS gene results in a complete absence of the AS gene product (Ube3a protein) throughout the brain. This result was surprising as it went against established dogma, but appeared to make sense taken in context of the syndromic nature of AS. For example, there are brain regions that control sleep patterns, others that control fear and areas that are involved in movement, speech acquisition and perception. Thus, the absence of Ube3a everywhere in the brain is likely to cause numerous and widely varying symptoms. Historically this makes sense as well.

*Continued page 9*

## 2011 FAST GALA GIVEAWAY

FAST is giving away two (2) tickets to this year's Gala plus two (2) nights' accommodations at the Hyatt Regency Chicago to the individual who gets the most people to sign up for membership to FAST. Signing up for membership is free and simple.

To qualify, you must keep track of whom you get to sign up and submit that list to [info@CureAngelman.org](mailto:info@CureAngelman.org) by September 1, 2011. The winner will be notified on September 15, 2011.

Good luck and we can't wait to see you on December 3<sup>rd</sup>!!!!

## Angelman Syndrome Piece Wins the Prestigious Edward R. Murrow Award

The Edward R. Murrow Award personifies excellence in journalism. Alycia Lane, co-anchor of "Today in LA," won a regional Edward R. Murrow Award for her writing on a video detailing the beginning of a family's journey in dealing with the news that their child has Angelman Syndrome. Ms. Lane wrote a compelling video news story, "Face of an Angel" featuring Ethan Katzman. Ethan is the son of FAST board member, Jamie Katzman and his wife Stephanie.

Ms. Lane is in remarkable company as prior Edward R. Murrow winners include Katie Couric, Peter Jennings, Ted Koppel, Dan Rather, Tom Brokaw, Bryant Gumbel, and Brian Williams. The regional winners are automatically eligible for the national awards competition that will be judged in June and presented in October.

The video news piece details how the Katzmans reacted to the news that their youngest son has Angelman Syndrome. Ms. Lane provides insight into the life of an "Angel" and the daily challenges including numerous therapies, research and the need for a cure.

After completing the news piece, Miss Lane had this to say about her experience, "Not until you meet and get to know a family affected by Angelman Syndrome can you truly understand their plight. Once you even glimpse their struggle, one realizes how crucial it is to find a cure for this little known disorder. I want to thank the Katzman family for allowing our cameras into their world so that their story could be told to all of those who've never heard of A.S. My only hope is that "The Angel" story leads to more significant funding so that real headway can be made. At least then we'll know the "Angels" of the world have been heard."

Ethan's older siblings, Zack and Josh Katzman also featured in the video, describe how they would like to see their younger brother walk and talk one day, even offering all of their savings in their piggy bank, a testament to the love of a family.

To view the video, please visit <http://www.CureAngelman.org/newsandevents-video.html>.

## FAST's Funding Philosophy

### Research Initiative Program

FAST's Research Initiative Program strives to encourage research aimed at finding a specific treatment for Angelman syndrome. The FAST is committed to assisting individuals living with Angelman syndrome to realize their full potential and quality of life. Our goal is to bring practical treatment into current medical practice as

quickly as possible; therefore, preference will be given to research projects that have a clear practical application and the results of which will be shared in a timely fashion.

**Grants** - One of our goals at FAST is to identify and support promising



*Pictured center is Ethan Katzman with brothers Zack and Josh*



*The FAST Path to a Cure. What we're doing, why we're doing it and how we'll get it done.*

research with the hope that results from these efforts will produce significant findings that will be reported in peer-reviewed journals. We also hope that project we fund will lead to additional research support from government or other funding agencies. We are pleased to be able to support many different types of projects, each critical for advancing all phases of Angelman syndrome research, from basic to clinical to treatment. These grants are crucial for allowing investigators to gain enough data to be able to attract even larger, multi-year commitments from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and other traditional medical research funding organizations. Our current grant programs include Grants-In-Aid, FAST-TRAC (Targeted Research to Advance a Cure) awards, and topic-specific requests for proposals (RFPs).

**Fellowships** - Fellowships provide the necessary resources to support and encourage the development of young scientists who benefit from the mentorship of prominent researchers or established scientists new to the field of Angelman syndrome. We believe the investment in Angelman syndrome research training will grow exponentially as our fellows later assume professorial roles in departments around the country and the world, many of which currently have no representation in Angelman syndrome research. We are currently reviewing application for our first Postdoctoral fellowship awards.



*Continued page 5*

vivint.givesback  
**PROJECT**

***FAST has been nominated for the Vivint Gives Back Project.***

Vivint is a home security company that is giving away \$1,250,000 to charities. This is a Facebook-based contest with two rounds of voting. We are currently in Phase I which ends June 11<sup>th</sup>. At that time, the top twenty charities from each of the five specified regions move on to Phase II. Phase II runs from June 14<sup>th</sup> through August 27<sup>th</sup>. At the end of Phase II, the charity with the most overall votes will receive \$250,000! The remaining charities that receive the most votes in each region will receive \$100,000! Anyone with a Facebook account can vote for us daily. At the time of this writing, we are currently in second place in the Central region. We need your help to overtake the region leader and to make a run at the overall leader!!!

Please vote for us daily and spread the word to others to vote for us as well. With the power of many, we can win this contest! With FAST being an all-volunteer organization, we can spend 100% of these winnings on research! To learn more, go to <http://www.vivint.com/givesbackproject/about>. There is also a Facebook page called "Help FAST Win the Vivint Gives Back Project" with more information about voting <http://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=188492087863434>.

A big thank you to Yvonne Hamrick for entering FAST in this contest and spreading the word!

## FAST Grant Review Process

The process commences when the Requests for Applications (RFAs) for a given funding program are published. Before submitting an application for research support, we advise an applicant to carefully review the applicable RFA for all submission criteria.

The first stage of providing fair and expert review for research funding applications submitted to FAST consists of scientific peer review by a group of highly esteemed basic and clinical scientists that form our Scientific Advisory Board. The panel uses standard guidelines established by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for scoring applications with an emphasis on innovation, scientific rigor, and relevance to the mission of FAST. All reviewer conflicts of interest must be revealed prior to the panel review meeting. Conflicts of interest include, but are not limited to, employment at the same

sponsoring institution and collaboration on recent or current research projects. All discussions of scientific merit are conducted in the absence of any reviewers who have declared conflicts of interest. The Scientific Advisory Board recommendations are then reviewed and compiled by the Scientific Director's Panel. This panel is a group of three scientific and medical experts that includes the Chair of the Scientific Advisory Board, the Chief Science Officer and the Science Officer. All recommendations for funding are made by the panel to the FAST Board of Directors. Panel funding recommendations are based on scientific merit (as evaluated by the Scientific Advisory Board), budgetary considerations and discussions of relevancy and priority to the mission of FAST. Final approval is required by the FAST Board of Directors before funding may occur.



## Research Currently Funded by FAST

### The Kendall Morgan FAST-TRAC (Targeted Research to Advance a Cure) Award

***"Effectiveness of established therapeutics for the treatment of Angelman Syndrome"***

Awarded to: Edwin Weeber, Ph.D. and the Neurobiology of Learning and Memory Laboratory at the University of Florida

Dates: December 1st, 2010 - November 30th, 2011

Summary: There is mounting evidence to suggest that a treatment for Angelman syndrome is not just possible, but probable. The lack of known molecular targets associated with AS has hampered the development of

specific therapeutics. However, a recent surge of potential therapeutics for other disorders associated with cognitive disruption has begun to be used in human clinical trials. The molecular modes of action for many of these new

*As of August 2010, less than two years after inception, FAST began its mission of funding research that will lead to viable treatments and a cure for Angelman Syndrome.*



## Update

Since this article was written, our SAB has reviewed the applicants and FAST has awarded our first two fellowships. Our new fellows have accepted and we will provide write-ups on the fellows and their projects in the next newsletter.



therapeutic agents have correlates to counter the molecular defects observed in AS. Thus, this proposal seeks to determine the effectiveness of compounds that are FDA approved and currently being used in clinical trials on the well-established AS mouse model. We propose to look at 4 of these compounds at the level of:

- 1) Degree of cognitive enhancement.
- 2) Rectification of a biological and

genetic abnormality. 3) Increase in synaptic function and/or plasticity. It is our hope that these compounds will have a positive effect on one or more of these aspects. Furthermore, any positive results will prompt a full preclinical evaluation of the compound(s) and may lead to the development of an effective AS therapeutic.

### **The Innovative Mag-Drive Grant-In-Aid**

#### ***"Angelman Syndrome Biomarkers for Therapeutic Treatments"***

Awarded to: Walter C. Low, Ph.D. and Jason B. Nikas, DPT Program for Neuroscience and Departments of Neurosurgery and Physiology at the University of Minnesota

Dates: March 7th, 2011 - March 7th, 2012

**Summary:** Angelman Syndrome (AS) is a neurodevelopmental disorder with genetic causes. It has been observed that altered gene interactions within different areas of the brain give rise to the symptoms characteristic of AS patients. The focus of the study will be to investigate and discover how genes interact with each other in the area of the brain known as the hippocampus. This brain area is involved in learning, and it is of major significance and relevance to the pathology of AS. We will study tissue from the hippocampus area of the brain from normal and AS subjects. By identifying which gene interactions are dysregulated in the case of AS subjects as compared with normal subjects, we will be able to find a number of possible approaches to intervene and steer

the responsible gene interactions toward a normal state. We think that some of those approaches will have the potential to lead to therapeutic treatment for AS patients. We have developed a biomarker platform technology that is capable of identifying not only genes that play a significant role in a given disease but also how those genes are interconnected, how they influence each other, and in what way their networks and overall function differ from the normal state. By applying our technology to the area of AS we think that we will be able to 1) identify the altered gene networks responsible for AS in the hippocampus and 2) find possible targets for therapeutic development to influence those altered gene networks toward a normal pattern.

FAST will be awarding two Postdoctoral Fellowship grants this summer 2011. Postdoctoral Fellowships will increase the number of bright and creative scientists working on Angelman Syndrome. Postdoctoral researchers spend 4-6 years pursuing research under a mentor, following the acquisition of their Ph.D., M.D., or M.D. /Ph.D. The research they choose to focus on will form the basis of their own research program. Thus, providing funding specifically for Angelman Syndrome research will encourage these early career scientists to focus on Angelman Syndrome immediately. These grants consist of salary and some funds for research supplies and travel.

## The Amazing Racers...

FAST is enormously grateful to all of the runners out there who are bringing us closer and closer to the finish line of curing Angelman Syndrome (AS). Through both Angel Runners and Miles for Smiles, our supporters have raised over \$15,000.00 for AS research!!

“Live each day for a purpose. Race for research...race for a cause.” said Jason Bernstein, founder of Angel Runners. “We are not human beings going through a temporary spiritual experience; we are spiritual beings going through a temporary human experience.”

The experience of running for charity is certainly a rewarding one as Sarah Wassner Flynn of *Triathlete* magazine stated in the May 2011 issue, “At the heart of this movement (the business of charity racing) is the personal connection most charity athletes have to their cause. And even if someone does not have a close tie to the particular organization, the simple act of racing for something much more meaningful than a medal is enough motivation to keep them going all the way to the finish line.”

Dee McCurdy, founder of Miles for Smiles and mother to Hayden who has Angelman Syndrome, shared her own touching experiences of how running for Angelman Syndrome research has impacted not only her life, but those around her. “I am continuously amazed and overwhelmed by how many people love our kids – some don’t even know a child with AS – and want to do this for us. My next door neighbor in particular just finished her 4<sup>th</sup> week of radiation treatments for breast cancer, but is determined to run her 2<sup>nd</sup> 5K in 2 weeks, repeating to anyone who asks her that she is running for her inspiration, Hayden. “

FAST is humbled by the dedication, commitment and perseverance of all the individuals running for Angelman Syndrome research and because of you, together we will change lives. FAST personally thanks the following individuals for their efforts:

Erin Allard  
Laura Bender  
Jason Bernstein  
Elaya Beserra  
Maribeth Blair  
Christy Bockmier  
Heather Carson  
Nicole Cherry  
Jackie Ciancia  
Kelli Cooper  
Katie Elwell  
Nora Elwell  
Megan Gradek

Candy Granger-Underhill  
Yvonne Hamrick  
Paula Hawthorne  
Stephanie Headley  
Christopher Learned  
Stephanie Manning  
Mary Manthey  
Deanna McCurdy  
Elise McKnight  
Julie McKnight  
Nestor Melnyk  
Lt. Colonel Wade Mueller  
& his Gettysburg  
Marathon team

Tami Mugler  
Emilie Mullins  
Jason Muxlow  
J. Nielsen  
Amy Orton  
Jennifer Peters  
Cindy Ricketts  
Mary Samaniego  
Stephanie Satterly  
Rachel Steppy  
Jill Suri  
Colette Walsh  
Ron Wedge



*Stephanie Manning at the Music City 1/2 Marathon*

*FAST supporters don their running shoes and race towards a cure.*



*Boston Marathon: Pictured above Miles for Smiles team member Megan Gradek proudly wearing her Miles for Smiles jersey after a 3:36 finish.*



*Yvonne and Joshua Hamrick after The Cowtown Half Marathon in Fort Worth, TX*



Nestor Melnyk at the Heart Mini-Marathon  
By Katy Madine/[runphotos.com](http://runphotos.com)



Ron Wedge Running the Glass City Half Marathon in honor of Kyla.



Jason Bernstein & Kevin Harvey, 10K at United States Air Force Marathon



*Paula Hawthorne Running in October with husband Chris in honor of their daughter Carmyn Hawthorne*



Deanna McCurdy with her husband Dave, Hailey (5), Hayden (3) and her mother Colette Walsh aka "Grammy"

If you are planning to participate in a 5K, 10K, marathon or any other event, please click [here](#) to see how your efforts can benefit Angelman Syndrome research. You don't need to be a seasoned runner to make a difference in the lives of individuals with Angelman Syndrome. In fact, Miles for Smiles provides a "Couch to 5K" training program and Angel Runners encourages everything from 5K's to Wii Challenge competitions. Get up, get out, get moving, make a difference and feel great!!

## The Gift of Giving

For more information on donations in lieu of gifts, [Click here](#).

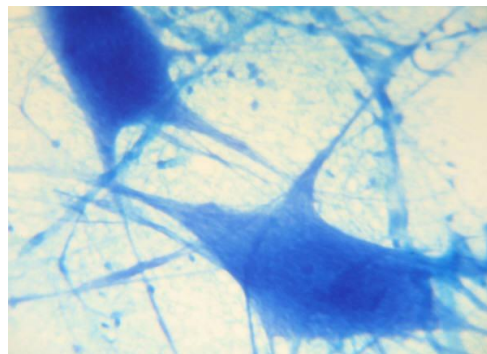


*Pictured above is teacher Debby Stone and her 5th graders at Kelly Elementary in Carlsbad, CA*

When asked by her room parents what gifts she wanted for the holidays, 5th grade teacher, Debby Stone's answer was that, as always, the holidays are all about the kids. So, at the top of her wish list, in lieu of presents, she hoped students would donate to FAST in honor of her nephew, Ethan Katzman and the other angels who were in need. In response to this request, an email was sent with information about Angelman Syndrome and FAST. In the end, her class donated \$650.00 and learned how important it is to give a gift of such impact.

## Mice, twice, thrice...

**Continued from Page 2**

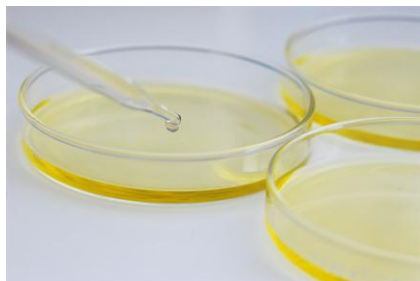


What about the second and third stated dogma: AS is a developmental disorder causing structural alterations and irreparable damage to the brain in utero and that

the profound cognitive disruption associated with AS would be irreversible. I would like to put both of these together as one dogma considering they are two sides of the same coin. Neuronal disruption during development actually is irreversible for the simple fact that rewiring the brain with its 3-5 quadrillion synaptic connections is impossible and therefore cognitive disruption associated with developmental alterations would likewise be irreversible. First consider the model we are using; a mouse with disruption in the

*Mice, Twice, Thrice...  
Reevaluating the  
Dogma of Angelman  
Syndrome  
written by Dr. Edwin  
Weeber  
Associate Professor  
and Director of the  
Neurobiology of  
Learning and Memory  
Laboratory  
University of South  
Florida*

maternal gene for Ube3a showing deficiencies in cognitive ability measured by an inability to recall specific memory tasks. If these memory tasks were rescued in an adult AS mouse, then this would suggest that developmental changes do not underlie the cognitive disruption. How might we challenge the above dogma in a mouse model for AS? Our laboratory is using an adenovirus particle that can associate and “infect” neurons in the brain. This infection is not truly viral as it will not turn the neuron into a viral producing cell like other pathogenic viruses, but it will insert genetic material into the cell. The genetic material we have provided to be inserted is the missing maternal Ube3a gene. This treatment will result in the neurons slowly producing Ube3a protein over a 4-5 week time period. Results from these experiments demonstrate a complete recovery of the learning and memory defects compared to non-viral injected animals, and their learning and memory ability is equivalent to what we see in typical mice. These data are currently being prepared for publication.



What is the likelihood of using a viral-mediated gene therapy approach for AS? It's important to keep in mind that a mouse brain is about the size of a small-shelled almond (and actually has this basic shape). We have the ability to “infect” numerous neurons in the mouse brain, but this becomes impossible in the human brain simply due to its size and the number of particles that would be

needed. Although unlikely to find itself in AS clinical trials, this form of gene therapy works nicely in what we call a “proof-of-concept experiment”. In other words, it shows that recovery of the cognitive defect in an adult AS mouse model is possible and provides strong evidence that the cognitive defect in the AS mouse, and likely in human AS, is not developmental.



What's next? FAST, in its very mission, is committed to pull-in researchers and push research forward to find a cure for Angelman syndrome. Toward this endeavor FAST has implemented 3 methods for funding research:

1. Fund peer-reviewed research grants with high scientific merit designed in response to a Foundation request for proposals (RFP) and that meet the mission set forth by the Foundation. The Foundation's Scientific Advisory Board made up of world-class scientists and clinicians from some of the top research universities reviews these proposals. For more information on the Scientific Advisory Board [click here](#).
2. Promote the commitment of future scientists to Angelman Syndrome research. FAST understands the importance of turning the brightest minds of tomorrow's scientific community on to Angelman Syndrome research. As such, FAST has funding instruments designed to finance

postdoctoral-level fellowships for outstanding individuals endeavoring to develop an AS research program.

3. Engage contracted science to fast-track research in vital areas of therapeutic design and discovery. The process of translating a discovery into a new treatment for a neurological disorder currently takes an average of 10 - 20 years. In effort to accelerate this process, FAST invests strategically in identified underfunded areas along the therapeutic development pipeline that hold the potential to benefit individuals with AS as soon as possible. These areas are brought to the Board's attention in a variety of ways, and are evaluated by the Chief Scientific Officer and members of the Scientific Advisory Board as needed. It should be noted that this method to promote scientific research differs from traditional grant application mechanisms, but it is not unusual. For example, The Michael J. Fox Foundation utilizes a similar method in their ongoing search for therapeutics to fight Parkinson Syndrome.



Excitingly, FAST has raised enough money in its first two years to operationalize two of the above described funding methods. The opportunities were prioritized with the following philosophy - expand the small community of scientists pursuing Angelman Syndrome research and identify if there are

existing drugs that show effectiveness in ameliorating the symptoms of Angelman Syndrome in the mouse model. In this regard, an RFP for postdoctoral fellowships was announced in August, 2010 and proposals are now being accepted and are under review for funding consideration. It is expected that up to two fellowships will be awarded in the current cycle; each for up to a two year period. Then, FAST's Board, with the approval of the Chief Science Officer, Dr. Rebecca Burdine, Ph.D., Assistant Professor at Princeton University, agreed to invest in an approach to test available FDA approved drugs previously or currently used in human clinical trials for disorders such as Rett syndrome and Fragile X Mental Retardation Syndrome with the Kendall Morgan Grant In Aid. FAST engaged the USF Neurobiology of Learning and Memory Laboratory (NLML), of which I am Director, to evaluate a pre-determined panel of existing drugs in the AS mouse model as a pre-clinical trial to determine effectiveness for the treatment of the major symptoms of AS. The NLML is unique in that we routinely and effectively employ a multidisciplinary approach from bench-top biochemistry to whole animal behavior to understanding the mechanisms of learning and memory in general and both Alzheimer's disease and Angelman Syndrome in specific. Our contract enumerates deliverables related to evaluating the efficacy of the given drug panel using biochemical, behavioral and electrophysiological approaches. Importantly, the size of the NLML and the ready technical proficiency paired with the literally hundreds of AS mice available for immediate evaluation were considerations for FAST when identifying a contractee. From concept to initiation took less than 4 weeks, not the usual months or year. FAST, living up to its

Check out Dr. Edwin Weeber's newly re-designed website at [www.WeeberLab.com](http://www.WeeberLab.com)



acronym, was able to reduce the cost of the experimentation and vastly accelerate the speed of the research.

Importantly, if any of these compounds are able to reduce the symptoms in the AS mouse model, FAST will have the needed preliminary data to approach pharmaceutical companies and clinical researchers to encourage the development of clinical trials for the effectiveness of these drugs in individuals with AS. Given that these compounds are already FDA approved for safety and efficacy, it will be less complicated to establish a clinical trial for use of these compounds in a new disorder such as AS. While we continue to better understand the molecular mechanisms underlying the symptoms of AS, the entire scientific community researching AS also continues to break new ground, challenge established parameters about AS and search for potential therapeutics using traditional and innovative research techniques.

## **F.A.S.T.**

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Check out the newly re-  
designed FAST website at  
[www.CureAngelman.org](http://www.CureAngelman.org)



## **About the foundation ...**

FAST is run by an all-volunteer staff and board who dedicate their time and expertise towards finding a cure for Angelman Syndrome. Our goal is to bring practical treatment into current medical practice as quickly as possible. It is our hope that grants we fund will lead to additional research support from government agencies and other funding sources. To make a donation, [click here](#).