

ASSERT Hosts Visitors from Russia

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A group of educators from Russia observe ASSERT in action

A group of nine visitors from Russia recently visited the Autism Support Services: Education, Research and Training (ASSERT) program at Utah State University's Center for Persons with Disabilities. ASSERT serves children ages 3-5 on the autism spectrum.

The visitors, sponsored by the Naked Heart Foundation, included special education professionals and psychologists who would like to open similar facilities in Russia.

ASSERT program director Tom Higbee has worked with Svyatoslav Dovbnya, a pediatric neurologist, and Tatiana Morozova, a clinical psychologist for six or seven years on several projects. Higbee said he's been to Russia four times to provide training at schools for children with disabilities.

The Naked Heart Foundation, Higbee said, is committed to help create the first publicly funded early intervention programs for children with autism in Russia.

"They wanted to come here and see what a model program looks like, get training here, and see a vision of what they would try to accomplish over there," Higbee said. "To see a working program has been very valuable for them.

"They could have gone anywhere," Higbee continued. "They have contacts all over the place. The fact that they came here speaks to what we're doing here and how it's viewed."