

UC SANTA BARBARA

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SESAME STREET CREATORS SALUTE UCSB AUTISM RESEARCHERS

When a New York-based national children's advocacy group looked for heroes to honor, their attention was drawn to Robert and Lynn Koegel, directors of the Autism Research and Training Center at UC Santa Barbara.

The Koegels have devised special education techniques for a range of children with autism that the awards panel describes as not only effective but also gentle and agreeable to the children treated. The married couple joined eight other individuals to receive the first annual Sunny Days Awards last month for efforts to improve and brighten young children's lives. An awards ceremony is to be held at a date to be set in October.

The Sunny Days Awards are given by Sesame Street Parents magazine and its publisher, Children's Television Workshop, the creator of the Sesame Street TV series. "We're so proud to share the good news about these heroes for young children," said editor Susan Lapinski. The July/August issue of her magazine provides details of the awardees' various approaches.

Winning such recognition was a surprise for the Koegels, who have used positive reinforcement methods to treat hundreds of children since establishing their center in the Graduate School of Education. "We didn't even know we had been nominated," said Robert Koegel, a professor of education and clinical psychology. "But we are honored we were."

It gives them another forum to let parents know that autism is no longer a hopeless disorder; its symptoms can be treated successfully. While they acknowledge that much remains to be learned about autism, the Koegels argue that especially young children can be taught ways to neutralize the frustration and turn helplessness into hopefulness.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.