



Israel Paskowitz and his son, Isaiah, prepare to surf the healing waves at San Onofre State Beach.

PROFILE

Surf therapy

Bringing the Pacific to autistic kids

Israel "Izzy" Paskowitz was born in Honolulu, spent a formative portion of his childhood living on a Tel Aviv beach, and, in 1972, was one of his father's first instructors at the Paskowitz Family Surf Camp in San Diego. So when Izzy and his wife, Danielle, had children of their own, it seemed perfectly natural to get their kids into the ocean early and often.

One of their three children, Isaiah, now 14, developed signs of autism around age 2. The Paskowitzes spent years seeking treatment for him, but the best therapy proved to be the ocean itself—when Isaiah was in the water riding on a longboard with his surfing-champion dad, the boy's overloaded senses seemed at peace. From Isaiah's experience, Surfers Healing was born.

Go to camp

Surfers Healing (camps Jun 25 in Malibu; Jun 29 and Aug 3 in San Onofre; Jul 15 and 27 and Aug 12 in San Diego; free; www.surfershealing.org or 866/647-4325).

Autistic children, says Izzy, "get into these routines of obsessive-compulsive behavior that are really hard to break." Wading into the ocean and then balancing on a surfboard, it turns out, are effective ways to break such routines. "I've seen kids go out kicking and screaming," says Izzy, "but come back elated when they are riding in."

Surfers Healing instructors include staffers from the Paskowitz Family Surf Camp, Izzy himself, and guest volunteers. Donations from organizations like Variety—The Children's Charity and sponsors like Spy Optic help defray expenses, and Izzy is adamant that the gifts surfing has given him be passed along without charge. "It just seems wrong to do it for profit," he says. —BEN MARKS



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