

Sally Burton-Hoyle, Ph.D., of Brighton, assistant professor, special education. She was executive director of the Autism Society of Michigan from 1994-2006. Hoyle received her doctorate in special education from the University of Idaho; her master's degree in special education from the University of Kansas; and her bachelor's degree in elementary education from Avila College.

Dr. Burton-Hoyle was 14 when her brother was diagnosed with autism in 1967. Her parents each found ways to cope with the diagnosis — her father used humor, her mother built lots of structure into her son's days. But having a member with a disability takes a toll on the whole family. Burton-Hoyle, an Eastern Michigan University assistant professor in special education, remembers all too well the emotional cycle each time a new professional claimed they could cure her brother. First there was hope; then disappointment when it didn't work; and then blaming when the "expert" suggested her family must not have done what was prescribed.

As a past director of the Autism Society of Michigan, she heard the same heartbreaking story from many families before coming to EMU a year ago. Along with other EMU faculty and local agencies, she's working to build support for those touched by autism into a system that sometimes falls far short.

Dr. Burton-Hoyle is known for her advocacy for people with autism. Her brother Tim, who passed away in July of 2009 remains her inspiration. When Tim was 30 years old he moved to Michigan to be near his sister, his strongest advocate. He lived in his own apartment and worked in the community. Dr. Burton has three sons and two step children. Two sons are still in college.