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*Maine*

# Autism



## Connections

Spring 2023

### Legislation

*by Shannon Landry*

I am Shannon Landry, and I was recently elected chairperson for the Legislative Committee for the Autism Society. This is my second year on the Board of Directors where I also hold the office of Vice President. I have a son who is a young adult that was diagnosed with Autism at 10 years old. I am also the Parent Trainee for Maine LEND at the University of New England. I currently attend UNE as a MSW student.

My interest and passion for policy started when I was young. I started my college career as a Political Science major and went on to education and then behavioral health. Earlier this winter the board members attended a legislative training session presented by Cathy Dionne, Executive Director of ASM. We then met to discuss upcoming policy that would be important to us as a group and to learn about giving testimony on behalf of the society. Once we decide on upcoming policy, we can present it to the board and vote on whether to sign on our support for a bill.

There are several local and federal bills I am following, and I report my findings back to the committee. We meet once a month and members of the community can join our committee, you do not have to be on our board of directors. After speaking with a few legislators' parents and self-advocates testimonies on bills seem to hold the most weight. They want to know how a bill would have a direct effect on a family or an individual. If your interested in joining the committee email [asm@asmonline.org](mailto:asm@asmonline.org)



**The Connection is you.**

Story continued on Page 3

**Maine Autism Connections**  
A publication of the  
Autism Society of Maine

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**Maine Autism Connections**

Quarterly publication of the  
Autism Society of Maine  
72B Main St., Winthrop, ME 04364  
Phone: 1-800-273-5200

Graphic Designer: Susan Vincent  
Proofreader: Cathy Dionne  
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Editorial Notes: Maine Autism Connections and Autism Society of Maine programs and services are made possible by donations from people like you and funding from the Maine Department of Health & Human Services. We hope you will also visit us online at <http://www.asmonline.org>, where we have a great deal of information available about autism, programs, resources, news, a calendar of events, legislation and more.



## President's Message

Hello Fellow Members,

I hope this newsletter is finding you all well and that you had a peaceful time during the holidays. As we look ahead to spring which will be here soon, days are getting longer, which always helps me have some hope.



As we talk about spring, it is a big time for Autism families. Here at ASM we are planning and gearing up for the Walk for Autism. We will have two walks again this year. One in Westbrook on April 23rd, and one in Bangor on April 30th to celebrate Autism Acceptance Month. This is ASM's biggest fundraiser that helps us provide resources to families in Maine.

Register today to receive a tee shirt on walk day. Watch for other April events to help spread the word about Autism acceptance. As we all know we need more acceptance for our individuals.

Spring also brings the time for the transitions to start for families with kids going into school and kids changing schools. We here at ASM understand the stress that this can cause our kids and families. We are here for you and willing to help in any way we can. We have Autism Information Specialists that can attend an IEP meeting with you or talk with you before and after the meeting. We have many resources to help with any transition you and your child are going through. Please reach out if there is any way we can support you.

Here is to spring and a good end to the school year, when the next newsletter is published, we will be looking at summer.

*Sincerely, Christina Nason, ASM board president*

## ASM Membership

Join the growing number of families, professionals and community members that make up the Autism Society Maine.

Together we can bring meaningful resources in our community.  
The connection is you. ASM Membership

### ASM's Mission Statement

**The Autism Society of Maine creates connections, empowering everyone in the Autism community with the resources to live fully.**

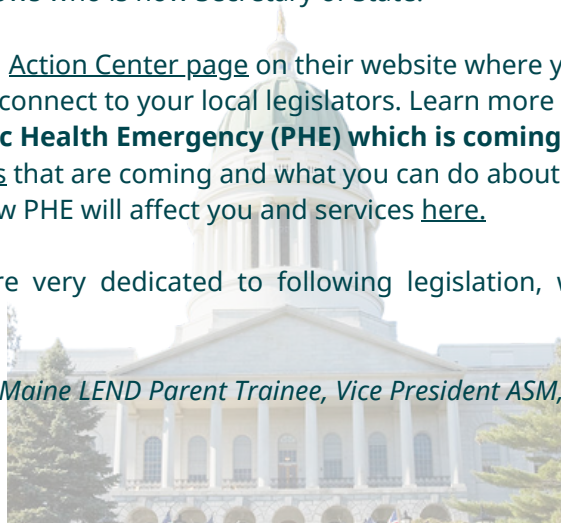
## Legislation *Continued from page 1*

As part of a project, I am working on a webinar for ASM to give information on legislation, how it works and how someone could become more involved. [ASM has a page dedicated to legislation](#) with some short videos that were done by Senator Shenna Bellows who is now Secretary of State.

The National Autism Society has an [Action Center page](#) on their website where you can follow federal bills and see how you could participate and connect to your local legislators. Learn more here. One of the legislative alerts we are following is about the **Public Health Emergency (PHE) which is coming to an end on May 11, 2023**. Learn more about the [PHE changes](#) that are coming and what you can do about. The State of Maine has a site for individuals to learn more about how PHE will affect you and services [here](#).

There are other agencies who are very dedicated to following legislation, we work closely with them and collaborate whenever possible.

*Shannon Landry, MSW Student UNE, Maine LEND Parent Trainee, Vice President ASM, Chairperson Legislative Committee ASM*



## AIS Program



### ASM Introduces Jennifer Frey, Autism Information Specialist Coordinator

Hello, my name is Jennifer Frey and I'm from Orono. I am excited to be working at the Autism Society of Maine as their new Autism Information Specialist Coordinator. Prior to this I worked at the Bangor Public Library. What I loved most about that job (besides never-ending books to read) was working closely with people in the community.

I really enjoyed hosting plant swaps, and while doing that I developed a love of gardening. I am looking forward to participating in the upcoming events we will be putting on at ASM. I have a daughter who is 8, she is an avid gamer and aspiring artist. We found out she is Autistic at the start of pre-k. Coming on as an Autism Information Specialist a few years back helped me to navigate the journey through diagnosis and public school and I'm glad to be in this position where I can help others who may be on a similar journey. We started homeschooling part way through this year and I appreciate the flexibility this job gives me. We recently adopted a 5-month-old Kitten named Coal. She looks like a potato when she curls up in a ball and came with some breathing trouble, so we nicknamed her Darth Tater. We also adopted a puppy who is now 10-month-old named Cube, who came from Georgia, he is the sweetest and loves the dog park, both are slowly learning how to live with an old cat named Ginger, who's kind of a grump.

If you're looking to connect with the Autism Society of Maine through the AIS program, please reach out to me at [infospec@asmonline.org](mailto:infospec@asmonline.org).

There are many ways to utilize the program from having a presentation, inviting ASM to host a table at an event, helping an individual to prepare for at an IEP/PCP or just being a friendly voice on the other end of the phone.

If you're interested in becoming part of the ASM team of Autism Information Specialist, we are having a training in May reach out to me for an application. A stipend will be provided to do the training.

# Walk for Autism



**Sunday, April 23, 2023**  
**River Bank Park, Westbrook**

**Sunday, April 30, 2023**  
**Bangor Waterfront**

Welcome to our 21st Annual Walk in Bangor and Westbrook that will be held on two different Sundays in April. As always, these Walk events are energizing and inspiring that brings together people with Autism, parents, grandparents, siblings, friends, relatives, providers, and the whole community!

The Walk routes are on flat terrain, paved walkways of approximately one mile. We'll have t-shirts, child participation prizes, free games, vendors, face painting, prizes, and finish-line balloon arch and much more!

Help the Autism Society of Maine advance our mission to create connections and empowering everyone in the Autism community with the resources needed to live fully.

If you want to be sure to get your t-shirt, please register by April 3rd. After this date we cannot guarantee you'll get one! **Register Today!**

# Family Retreat

**June 23 - 25, St. Joseph's College, Standish, ME**

It's that time of year again where we look towards the Family Retreat Weekend to come together and celebrate families and their children. The retreat will be at St. Joseph College in Standish.

**Registration will be open April 1, 2023** for families to call and have an application mailed out. We need families to call and ask for the application so we can go over what the weekend is like and what they should expect. No applications will be mailed to case managers. **Call ASM: 1-800-273-5200.**

Families will enjoy time together Friday night and on Saturday parents will have a choice of attending a lecture, kayaking, painting class or just relaxing. Your children will be well cared for in respite during the day.



Saturday night entertainment will be by the Frogtown Mountain Puppeteers with their showing of **"The Legend of the Banana Kid"**.



This year our theme is "Outer Space". Think of outer space in a faraway galaxy like Star Trek, Star Wars, Planets and Stars etc. We will have movie night this year in the gym so we can control the lighting and be able to watch a movie on the big screen. Families will enjoy time together Friday night and on Saturday parents will have a choice of attending a lecture, kayaking, painting class or just relaxing. Your children will be well cared for in respite during the day.



# Autism Acceptance Month



This April, the Autism Society and Affiliates **#CelebratesDifferences** for Autism Acceptance Month. Every day, we work to create connections, empowering everyone in the Autism community to live fully. Be the connection this April to spreading awareness for early diagnosis, promoting inclusion in the greater community, and practicing acceptance in everyday life.

Throughout April, we will be posting daily social media Autism Acceptance Month informational posts and encourage you to share on your own Facebook / Instagram page. Be sure to follow [ASM's Facebook Page](#) and add to your "favorites" follow settings or go directly and check-in to our page often!

If you haven't already, [sign-up to receive ASM informational emails](#) directly to your email inbox. Choose the list that you prefer: Parent information, programs, activities & events, provider information, legislation information, quarterly ASM newsletter, special education directors, and volunteer information.



**Sign up to ASM's parent email listing** for a chance to win free Sea Dogs tickets for your family! If you are already on the email list, or just signing up, be on the look-out for a special email that will have "Sea Dogs Tickets" in the title. There will be two separate email announcements and drawings for:  
**Game on Saturday, April 22nd game at 1:00pm - Sponsored by NautilusSolar**  
**Game on May 27th at 1:00pm - Sponsored by Mast Construction**

[Visit the ASM website](#) and browse Autism information and resources that are available as well as the [Autism Acceptance Month page](#) and [calendar of events page](#) that will be updated throughout the month.

While the Autism Society of Maine is committed every day to creating connections for the Autism Community to live fully, April is a reminder that **The connection is you.**

[Give today to help us support more people.](#)

## "Heart" Campaign

In honor of Autism Acceptance Month the Autism Society of Maine (ASM) is offering businesses or agencies the opportunity to sell paper hearts for \$1 each to your customers or clients.

They would put their name on the heart and your agency would display them. You may have seen a variety of stores/ businesses sell them to show support for a cause. This is a great way for you to support the Autism Society of Maine. ASM would supply you with the hearts free of cost and shipping, and you would provide a check at the end of the campaign for the total amount of hearts sold. It's that simple.



Call ASM if you want to participate at **1-800-273-5200**. We will provide a shout out on Facebook to all businesses or agencies that participate. Share your pictures with us!

## ASM Social / Support Groups

### Youth Social Group (Online)

If you have a teen (11-18) that may benefit and enjoy joining this virtual group that meets on the last Friday of the month from 6:00pm to 7:00pm, send an email: [asm@asmonline.org](mailto:asm@asmonline.org) or call ASM at 800-273-5200.

### Young Adult Group (In Person)

A Social group for young adults (17-26) meets in Fryeburg on the second Monday of each month from 6:00pm to 7:30pm Kendra Campbell. If you are interested in learning more about this group, please email: Kendra Campbell [bridgtonais@gmail.com](mailto:bridgtonais@gmail.com).



### Adult Social Group (Online)

Our Adult Social Function Group is also meeting each month on the second Thursday from 6:00pm to 8:00pm. If you are an adult who would like more information about this group, I please email [asm@asmonline.org](mailto:asm@asmonline.org) or call ASM at 800-273-5200.

### Parent Support Group (Online)

An online Parent Support Group in Aroostook County that meets the second Friday of the month from 6:00pm to 7:00pm to discuss different topics and learn and support each other. For more information, please contact Jenna at [jennacyrdsp@gmail.com](mailto:jennacyrdsp@gmail.com)

### **NEW!** Teen Support Group for Autism (ages 13-17)

For youth ages 13 to 17 years old. 28 Yarmouth Crossing Dr., Yarmouth, Whilde, LLC meets on the third Friday of the month at 3:30pm to 4:30pm: Contact: Jessica Molloy, [jessica@whilde.org](mailto:jessica@whilde.org)

### Parent Support Group (Online) *Ask Cathy!*

Just a reminder that our Executive Director, Cathy Dionne also facilitates an online parent group each month. If you have specific questions, concerns, or would just like to meet others who are going the same things then this group is just what you are looking for. For more information send an email to [asm@asmonline.org](mailto:asm@asmonline.org) or call ASM at 800-273-5200. Meets the last Friday of the month from 6:00 to 7:00pm.

*ASM support group page listings can be found [here](#)*

## NEW! Q & A with the Autism Society of Maine

### In our first Q&A with ASM webinar we will look at the Basics of an IEP

Who needs one and how can one qualify? What are the "ins and out" of an IEP? Finally, what do all the sections on the form mean?

We will share, from a parent's perspective, how to understand an IEP so that you are equipped to advocate for your child."



**You are invited to a Zoom webinar.**

**When: Mar 29, 2023 12:00 PM**

**Topic: The Basics of an IEP**

**Register in advance for this webinar**

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

# Sensory Friendly Movie Event!

**PG Rated Movie**

**Time: 10:00 AM**



April 8, 2023

Movie Event



“Super  
Mario Bros.  
Movie”



Place: Flagship Cinema  
730 Center Street  
Auburn, ME

**RSVP by 4/5/23**

*Sponsored by:*

The **Lewiston -Auburn Rotary Club**  
& **JFM Homes** is sponsoring a movie  
event in support of families whose chil-  
dren/adult with autism live in the  
Lewiston/Auburn area.

The movie will be closed to the general  
public and will start at 10:00 am. You  
may arrive by 9:30 am.. Reserved  
seating is required. Each child will  
receive a popcorn and drink.

*This event is FREE!*

**Contact: RSVP 1-800-273-5200**

Autism Society of Maine

72 B Main Street  
Winthrop, ME 04364

Phone: 1-800-273-5200

Fax: 207-377-9434

Email: [offassist@asmonline.org](mailto:offassist@asmonline.org)



## Save Dates!

**BENEFIT GOLF TOURNAMENT**  
July 22, 2023  
The Meadows Golf Club  
Litchfield, ME

**RIDE FOR AUTISM**  
October 7, 2023  
Kennebunkport  
Conservation Trust  
Kennebunkport, ME

**AUTISM FALL CONFERENCE**  
November 4, 2023  
Bangor Cross Ins. Ctr.  
Bangor, ME

## ASM is Hiring!

### Office Assistant- Part time / Winthrop Office

Do you need a job where you could work around your children's schedule? This position consists of answering the phone, logging in donations, database input, packing for events. [Learn more here.](#)



### Community Outreach Liaison - Part time / Seasonal / Remote

This position includes attending legislative hearings, following rule and policy changes, assist BOD in drafting written testimony, representing ASM in stakeholder meetings, media inquiries, excellent verbal/written communication skills and an understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorder. [Learn more here.](#) **Please send your cover letter and resume to [asm@asmonline.org](mailto:asm@asmonline.org)**

## Email - Social Media

**A Special "Thank You"** for the thoughtful people that created a Facebook fundraiser to raise donations for ASM. We appreciate you sharing your special day with us! Facebook covers all fees for donations made to charitable organizations.

*THANK YOU!*



### November thru February Facebook Fundraisers hosted by:

Sammie Lynn, Emily Lynn Fretz, Michelle Wooley Jacques, Angelica Smith, Todd Delaney, Celeste Farley, Holly Hannon, Elizabeth Larsen Silva, Larry Huntley, Wayne Ladouceur, Charity Harris Davis and Lori Taylor.



Sign up to get interesting Autism news and updates delivered to your email inbox from ASM!



Searching for Autism information on the web can be overwhelming. The ASM website has relevant autism information and resources.



The Autism Society has a vibrant facebook community including parents, professionals, and anyone interested in Autism.



Follow us on Twitter as we 'tweet' about all things Autism.



If you are not already a following our Instagram page, welcome you!



We have a great collection of videos and will be adding more throughout the year!



## Empower the Learner



Maine Parent Federation, The Autism Society of Maine, Empower the Learner, and Maine Developmental Disabilities Council have partnered to offer to parents/caregivers of children with special healthcare needs and disabilities an opportunity to develop a multi-media self-advocacy tool to share with the teachers/professionals in your loved ones lives.

We will be hosting an informational session on this program on May 6th at the Cohen Community Center in Hallowell, Maine from 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM.

Come learn about the tool and how you can use it with your loved one to raise expectations for their community and school environments. In addition we will be looking for you to provide us with feedback about this tool to make this accessible for everybody in the disability community.

[CLICK HERE](#)



### Any Questions? Please Contact

Cathy Dionne  
[asm@asmonline.org](mailto:asm@asmonline.org)  
800-273-5200

Carrie Woodcock  
[cwoodcock@mpf.org](mailto:cwoodcock@mpf.org)  
207-588-1933

**May 6th, 2023**

Cohen Community Center,  
22 Town Farm Road,  
Hallowell Maine

10 am - 3 pm



## Spurwink: A Proud Supporter for a Much Needed Cause



**Spurwink is proud to support the Autism Society of Maine and its Walk for Autism 2023**, as we share aligned missions and values of supporting those affected by behavioral and mental health challenges, including Autism.

The need for autism awareness is greater than ever. The National Center for Disease Control & Prevention's most recent data indicate that about one in 44 children in the U.S. have been identified with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), that ASD is reported to occur in all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups, and is more than 4 times more common among boys than girls.

Spurwink has the depth of resources and people needed to support people and their abilities. Currently, Spurwink serves over 600 people with ASD, and provides individuals and families an array of services, tailored to both youth and adults. Through a focus on the development of the whole person, attention to strengths, and recognition of unique needs, every child and adult with autism or intellectual disabilities is given the opportunity to realize his or her fullest potential, and are supported to lead healthy and engaged lives in their communities. Autism support services Spurwink provides include consultation, case management, community support, outpatient therapy, educational services, and residential treatment. Locations are offered throughout Maine, and in some instances, telehealth services may be available.

If you or someone you know are interested in Spurwink's services or how to support their services, visit [www.spurwink.org](http://www.spurwink.org).

### **About Spurwink**

Spurwink is a nationally accredited nonprofit organization that provides a broad range of mental health, education, and residential services for children, adolescents, adults, and families. Spurwink offers specialized programs throughout Maine with a commitment to caring relationships and treatment expertise, grounded in evidence-based, best and promising practices. For more information, visit [www.spurwink.org](http://www.spurwink.org), or call 207.871.1200.



# Donations

## Donations / Sponsorships / Employee Matches / Grants

Christina Jordan  
 Spurwink  
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 Edwin and Lois Ambrose  
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 Community Bag Program  
 Libra Foundation  
 Heartleaf ABA  
 Elizabeth Symmt  
 Nancy Pinnette  
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 Givinga Foundation  
 Saco & Biddeford Savings Bank  
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 Maine Development Disabilities Council  
 Abbott Diagnostics Scarborough, Inc.  
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 Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary  
 Webster Masonic Lodge #164 A.F. & A.M.  
 Larry Huntley - N. Atlantic Wrestling Association  
 Maine Community Foundation -  
 Meredith & Myron Hamer  
 MEMIC in honor of Alex Dossiema, Sully and Phin  
 Smyth-Shannon and Jordan White  
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 Camden National Bank  
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 Maine Behavioral Healthcare  
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 Theresa Bouthot  
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 Diane Smith  
 Morgan Stanley Gift Fund  
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 Corey McAllister  
 Front Street Shipyard  
 Daniel Aylward  
 Maurice Dionne  
 Christina Jordan



### In Memory of:



Susan Deane  
 Torie Catrett

### In honor of:

Mitchell A. Bagley Philbrook  
 Bob and Claire McGee  
 Danica Cashman  
 Sheila Spencer

### Membership Renewals

Diane Walp  
 Kim Humphrey  
 Gerri Bridgman  
 Carol Sullivan  
 Thomas Hansen  
 Jeanne LaFlamme  
 Melissa Fanjoy  
 Amy Irvine  
 People's Choice  
 Michael Dalleo

Dan Pietroski  
 Maurice Dionne  
 Karen Lipiatos  
 Elizabeth Symmt  
 Children's Odyssey  
 Laurel Porter  
 Christina Jordan  
 Karen MacDonald  
 Wendy Derawiec

### New Memberships

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 Thomas Kelley  
 Nanette Fraser  
 Wendy Smith,  
 Clara's Creamery  
 Louis Camire  
 Anna Nilsen

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