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Maine

Autism



Winter 2023

Connections

Racing to the Top

by Cathy E. Dionne

The Autism Society had the good fortune of meeting a young man by the name of Max Cookson last year at the walk for autism. You are immediately drawn to him, not sure if it's his personality or his knowledge of racing or his 6'4" stature. He sticks out in a crowd. Right away you feel like this young man is going places. I was so impressed with how mature he was for a 20-year-old. He wanted to raise money for the ASM and offered to bring his car to events. I wanted to introduce this young man and his racing career to our readers in our newsletter. ASM followed his racing all season.



When did the love of racing start? Max said, "it started when I was 4 years old and was racing go carts". From the age of 4 Max was very interested in driving and racing alongside others. This led to racing online through iRacing (www.iracing.com) which Max won \$10,000 in one of the races.

With that win he moved onto racing Pass Modify Car and to where he is now racing Super Late Model for the last 2 years. He is competing in the Kulwicki Driver Development Program which had hundreds of applicants apply and only 7 were chosen. This prestigious award will be announced later in November. He has officially become the PASS (Pro All Stars Series) North and National Champion.

Racing is a full-time sport starting in March and going through October. The days are long and there is never a time that Max is not working on one of two cars he races. He participated in 27 races this year and won 5 of them, being in the top ten 24 times and top five 16 times. He only had one weekend off all season. When you think about that and add all the extra activities, he also participated in from visiting schools, attending a fundraiser for Travis Mills Foundation, setting up his trailer at a Camden National Bank to coming to ASM Family Retreat Weekend where he met lots of children and teens interested in racing. His interaction with the kids was very impressive, he even let them sign his car.

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President's Message

Maine Autism Connections
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Dear Autism Community,

Welcome to the end of 2023. I hope this message finds you and your family in a healthy place. As the year comes to an end it is a time to look back at where we have been and make new goals for the future. As I have ended my first full year as president, I am still honored to be able to represent a group of people committed to helping the Autism community.



The two walks that we held this year brought a large group of the community together. It was nice to see everyone. The retreat weekend was a big success. To be able to connect with past families and to meet and welcome new families is always such a great thing.

The golf tournament was a great day and we had wonderful weather, which this summer was a feat within itself. Next came the annual meeting. It was nice to be able to sit in a room together and celebrate the Autism Society's efforts and some great people that have added to the Autism community. We moved onto the ride in October, and we had a smaller turn out, but still had a great day. The rain held off and everyone had a nice ride. Lastly, we just held our 7th conference in Bangor on November 4th. We had a great conference and welcomed Russell Lehmann. He had a great message. What a year and we are already starting to plan next year.

As the holiday season is approaching, I hope everyone gets some time to relax. I understand the wanting to fit everything in but let remember that are Autism individuals need to have constancy and warning if things are going to change. I know for my own now adult sons they still need a place to get away from the large groups when we go places. Having a plan either before or after we arrive and find a safe place, they can go is a big help. Melt downs will happen, be easy on yourself. This is a hard time of year for all involved. Try to find time for a peaceful walk or drive to look at lights. When snow comes find time to do the basics of playing outside. People honestly just want our time; it is one of the best gifts we can give.

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ASM's Mission Statement

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

This material is being provided for informational purposes only. ASM does not endorse or provide any specific therapies or treatments for Autism Spectrum Disorders. ASM has not validated and is not responsible for any information, events, or services provided by third parties. The views and opinions expressed on our website do not necessarily reflect the views of ASM. If you elect to use providers listed in the material, you assume any risks in doing so, and you are urged to check references and perform your own assessment of the efficacy and risks involved.



Racing to the Top



continued from cover

Sponsors are very important to continue racing, without them some drivers can't continue because of the cost of keeping their cars in good working order. During our interview, he wanted to mention the ones who have been with him from the start like JM Builders and Steeves Property Maintenance to name a few. Max doesn't miss an opportunity to thank his sponsors. For someone so young he has a good understanding of what sponsors mean to him and his racing.

All this doesn't happen without a good pit crew and sponsors. Max said he has around 15 different people who help him fix his car or attend races with him. It's all hands-on deck when it's race day. They usually arrive early in the morning and leave late at night. Of course, it makes it better when you leave with a win which Max did all season long. The race itself is not long but it can get hot inside the car, one race it was 120 degrees in the car. When I asked him what his favorite racetrack is, no hesitation "Oxford Plan Speedway".

He also really likes to give back. Another activity Max did was ask anyone who had an unused bike to donate to him so he could refurbish them and give them away to families in need. He did this through our agency. Right now, we have 6 bikes with another 2 being worked on. ASM will hold a free raffle for families in need and they can get the chance to receive a bike. We will post a picture of the bike and have families decide which one they want to put their name in for the raffle. Remember Max does this on the side. He truly is incredible.

When I asked him about why he chose the Autism Society to support his answer was not a surprise as he has an older brother Patrick that is on the spectrum. Watching his brother and seeing everything he has accomplished he felt that he needed to give back. We are the ones who need to thank him.



Speaking with his mom Christine, I asked what drives Max to give back to his community? Christine replied that it's the people he has met and the opportunities that he has been given to use his racing platform to give back to the community and people, especially kids that may have nothing or that will ever have anything. One thing that he always tells his fans/kids/young adults is to "Never give up on yourself, follow your dreams, have confidence in yourself, to know that you are worth it".

For someone to have that kind of insight at a young age is pretty remarkable. Max has a super bright future and I'm looking forward to next season and all he will accomplish.

If you want to follow Max's journey you can on Facebook IMaxCooksonRacing, Twitter IMaxJCookson, or email him at Maxcookson39@gmail.com

Max's wins were on April 22, May 7, May 13, August 13, and September 3.



Here is his on the track highlights:

- 2023 Oxford Plains Super Late Model Champion
- Champion of Pass (North and National)
- Fourteen Top Ten Finishes in a Row
- Zero DNF's in 2023 (27 Races)
- Over 235 Green Flag Passes
- 119 Laps Lead in Oxford 250
- Boss Hogg 150 winner (10K)
- Three Consecutive Oxford Plains Wins
- Feature Wins at Three Different Tracks
- NHMS-2nd Place Pass

Annual Ride for Autism



ASM's 17th Annual Ride for Autism on October 7, although the weather forecast was horrible, and unfortunately brought our ride numbers down, 58 riders showed, and the rain held off until our event was over! This year's ride brought in \$17,170, all to help fund our programs and resources here at ASM. We also had the event catered by Moe's famous BBQ. What a good decision, the food was amazing! Nothing like some great BBQ after a long ride!

A huge thank you to all the riders for raising money to help ASM help children, families, and individuals here in Maine access the resources and programs that are very much needed.

We also want to thank our volunteers; we could not have this event without your help. Your work does not go unnoticed and is greatly appreciated. Plans are already in the works for the 18th Ride for Autism. Keep an eye on ASM for information. Thank you again everyone!

We want to congratulate this year's top three fundraisers:

1st place: Mike McDade \$2669



2nd place: Kristi McKenna \$2255

And a tie for 3rd place: Nathan Scoville and Phil Moore both raising \$500.



[See more pictures on ASM's online photo gallery!](#)

President's Message

Continued from page 2

I don't want to close out my message without sending my thoughts and prayers to everyone effected by the mass shooting in Lewiston just a few weeks ago. For the wonderful people we lost, their families will be having their first holidays without them. I hold all of them in my heart.

I hope it is a time of peace and love.

Happy Holidays from ASM and my family to yours.

Sincerely, Christina Nason, President of the Board



ASM Book Club Update

by Jennifer Frey

ASM Book Club

Book Club for Autistic Adults and their Allies



The ASM Book Club started meeting this past Fall and readers already have 3 books under their belts. *Neurotribes* by Steve Silberman, *Unmasking Autism* by Devon Price, and *The Electricity of Every Living Thing* by Katherine May. These books sparked interesting topics of conversation including the history of Autism, masking, Autism representation in media, the future of Autism, developing group rules, and much more. So far, the book club has welcomed parents,

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As a group we discussed having a forum where we could continue the conversation and discuss books online. From that the **ASM Book Club Facebook Group** was started. If you are unable to attend the in-person or ZOOM meeting you can still share your thoughts online. This is a forum where we can respectfully discuss how different representations made us feel and what we thought of the storylines. Together we learn about Autism by discussing books and sharing life experiences.

ASM book club will be taking January off. Starting in February we will be reading from genres selected by members via a poll conducted in the FB group. The top genres were fiction, memoir, short story, young adult, and non-fiction.

If this sounds like something you'd be interested in, join the **ASM Book Club fb group**. While you're on there, take the poll and help decide what we'll read next. You can also email Jennifer at infospec@asmonline.org or call **1-800-272-5200** for more information.

ASM Upcoming Events



22nd Annual Walk for Autism
SAVE DATES!
 Westbrook: Sunday, April 21, 2024
 Bangor: Sunday, April 28, 2024

ASM's Annual Family Retreat
SAVE DATE!
 June 21st - 23rd, 2024
 St. Joseph's College, Standish



| | |
|--|---|
| <h3>Friday Fun Group</h3> <p>Play group for Neurodiverse Homeschoolers</p> <p>At the Orono Public Library 1pm-2pm</p> <h2>Winter Schedule</h2> | |
| DECEMBER 8TH | <p>Stop by the community room to create your top 5 wish list and play some games!</p> |
| JANUARY 12TH | <p>Join us outback for sledding and snow play!</p> |
| FEBRUARY 9TH | <p>Community Room = Makerspace! Make, take, & bring home a Valentine from the group! <small>*A variety of craft items will be provided</small></p> |

ASM's Annual Meeting & Awards Banquet



ASM's Annual Meeting & Awards Banquet in person at the Augusta Country Club on Friday, September 22. Being our first year back in person since COVID, we had a nice turn out. Cathy gave updates on all that ASM has accomplished this year with our fundraising events and talked about our new programs. We welcomed our two new board members, Roy Ulrickson and Jeanne Ives and said thank you and goodbye to Jon Youde who has served as on the ASM Board of Directors since 2017

Dennis & Lynne Duguay and Mike Lamoreau

Christina Nason, ASM President, presented two ASM awards. The first going to Maggie Saucier for her continued contribution to the community to enhance the lives of all individuals with Autism. Maggie was nominated by her husband, Brandon. The second award was presented to Lynne and Dennis Duguay for selflessly giving of their time providing social opportunities and friendship to other families and autistic adults. The Duguay's were nominated by Mike Lamoreau. Many thanks to the Augusta Country Club for the wonderful meal and to all who joined us at the meeting.



Maggie & Brandon Saucier

Autism Fall Conference



Once again, the Autism Fall conference, held at the Cross Insurance Center in Bangor was a huge success! The keynote speaker, Russell Lehmann captivated the audience with the story of his journey from childhood to adulthood with ASD, giving us all a glimpse into the mind of one of many individuals on the spectrum and how it has affected and helped him become the successful person he is today. Such an amazing speaker!



I LOVED the keynote speaker. I think it was absolutely amazing to hear directly from someone who has Autism. I feel that it was raw, insightful, and highly engaging. I loved that he took the time to answer questions as well.

Making connections and learning about resources available. The entire day was excellent. We feel less alone in this process. The keynote speaker was excellent!



Thank you to all the speakers who came and made this possible. The 20 vendors who attended also provided much needed info and resources for the participants. It was another successful year. ASM would like to thank all the sponsors and vendors who helped to make this conference possible and also to everyone who attended. We have already booked the Center for next year's conference on November 2, 2024, save the date and look for more information from ASM.



Russell's Book "On the Outside Looking In: My Life on the Autism Spectrum" can be found [here](#).

ASM Social / Support Groups



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

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, please email asm@asmonline.org or call ASM at 800-273-5200.

The ASM adult social group (pictured) connect online and periodically meet up for a field trip. This Month was a trip to "Gardens Aglow" in Boothbay harbor

Young Adult Group (In Person)

A Social group for young adults (17-22) meets in Bridgton Community Center 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: bridgtonais@gmail.com.

Youth Social Group (Online & In Person)

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

Parent Support Group (Online) with Cathy Dionne, Executive Director on the last Friday of the month at 12:00pm. 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 email: asm@asmonline.org



ASM is Now Hiring Autism Information Specialists

- Participate in trainings to learn how to help Autistic people and caregivers.
- Talk one-on-one with families, guardians and individuals to help navigate services.
- Attend & help prepare for educational, transitional, and vocational planning meetings.
- Provide presentations and workshops to organizations Statewide in-person and virtually.
- Spread the word of what we do by attending events, consulting, or helping during fundraisers.
- Pay is \$20hr and based on a "per diem" status, mileage to and from assignments is reimbursed.

Get your application in to be part of our next training!

Trainings take place over a course of 2 days and will include webinars for you to watch on your own. A Stipend of \$150 will be paid to you after completing both the ZOOM and in-person training and watching assigned webinars.

January 18th 9am-12pm (ZOOM)

January 26th 9am-3pm (In-Office) *In-Office Snow Day Feb 1st





Happy Holidays!

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

Sending you our warmest wishes to you and your loved ones for a safe and happy holiday season. With the new year coming to us with renewed hope, we look forward to a bright new year with you!

No-Sew Sock Snowman Craft by Easy Peasy and fun



What you will need: rice, 1 white sock, buttons, ribbons, rubber bands, glue gun, markers or paint, 1 sock for the hat, pom-pom for nose.

Start by filling your sock with rice Tie top with rubber band or string Use another rubber band and place in the middle to form the head shape, cut the foot part of colored sock for the hat and glue on snowman now it's time to decorate! Have fun!

[*See more details and visuals here](#)

Gumdrop Holiday Tree by Betty Crocker Holidays

This gumdrop tree is so easy and satisfying to create! The kids will be proud to have their gumdrop tree as a table centerpiece!

What you will need:
Cone shaped Styrofoam
Toothpicks
Wire cutters
Gumdrops



Cut the toothpicks in half with wire cutters, the cut piece will go in the gumdrop & the sharp side is pushed into the Styrofoam. That's it! Now you can make your tree!

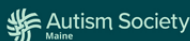
[*see more details and visuals here](#)

[Visit ASM's Website for more holiday resources and fun stuff!](#)



Looking for that perfect gift? Consider a donation on behalf of a loved one.

The connection is you.



[Make your donation here](#)



Autism news and updates delivered to your email inbox from ASM!



The ASM website has trusted Autism information and resources.



Join our Facebook Community for all things Autism.



Visit our channel on YouTube for recorded webinars.



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

Donations

Donations / Sponsorships / Employee Matches / Grants

Spurwink Services
Evelyn Lutz
Charities Aid Foundation America
Katahdin Middle/High School
Bull Run Striping
Walmart
Adoptive Foster Families of Maine
Town Fair Tire Foundation, Inc.
Fraternal Order of Eagles FOE # 4030
Creative Options
Penobscot Foundation for
Developmental Services
Jeffrey and Joyce (Fidelity Charitable)
Creative Works
Maine CITE

Living Innovations
KidsPeace
The Courageous Steps Project
STRIVE Worldwide
Watch Me Shine
Help Me Grow
Adaptive Outdoor Education Center
Maine Parent Federation
Heartleaf ABA
Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine
Maine Developmental Disabilities Council
NAMI Maine
United Way of Kennebec County
Brighter Heights of Maine
Max Cookson Racing

Membership Renewals

| | |
|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Evelyn Lutz | Frank Freeman |
| Ilona Feeney | Amanda Karpowitz |
| Debra Crump | Jeanne Ott |
| Tena Hinds | Mark & Allison Hodder |
| Jeanne Laflamme | Charles Calligan |
| LoriAnn Holmes | Robin Marland |
| Diane Walp | Jennifer Civiello |
| Sandra Merrick | Susan & Alan Marston |



In Memory of:

Isabell "Izzie" Dolloff

Kathy Boivin
Sally Boivin
Faith Nichols
Mattey Richards
Edward & Nancy Nemethy
Livermore Falls Fire Department

New Memberships

Amity Watts
Christine Knudsen



We want to express our heartfelt appreciation to those who have organized online facebook fundraisers to support ASM, as well as to all the generous individuals who have made donations.



Mid-September into November Facebook Fundraisers were hosted by:
Delaney Dunn, Matt Noragon, Sara Elizabeth, Kurt Lyons, Ken Russell Barber II,