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Maine

Autism



Connections

Spring 2024

A Proud Supporter for a Much-Needed Cause

by Sandy Boyce, Manager of Communications, Spurwink

Spurwink is proud to support the Autism Society of Maine and its 22nd Walk for Autism, as the two agencies share aligned missions and values of supporting those affected by behavioral and mental health challenges.

Among the array of services provided by Spurwink is Shared Living. In the Shared Living service, Spurwink partners with caring families and community members to help adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities create meaningful and connected lives. This is a home and community-based program funded by MaineCare, in which a community member shares their home and provides support for an individual with an intellectual or developmental disability. The provider receives a \$45,645 tax-free stipend along with reimbursement for room and board.

One such provider is Susan, who provides support as a Shared Living Provider to her son, Curtis, who has been diagnosed with Autism and Achondroplasia, a form of dwarfism. After Curtis aged out of school and while Susan worked, he was receiving home support, which did not work out for their family. "Before Shared Living, we had so many in-home workers who didn't get me, who didn't always show up, and who quit on me," Curtis noted. "My Shared Living goals are fun. I do my physical therapy exercises every day. I love to go grocery shopping, to cook, and to go out with mom and do stuff. When the weather is nice, I like to walk outside with my Nordic Poles."



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MaineAutism Connections
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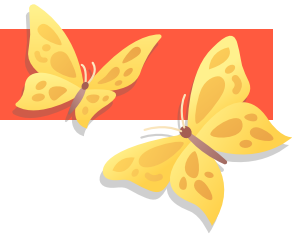
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President's Message



Hello fellow ASM members,

Happy spring. I hope this newsletter finds you and your family well and safe. Spring brings a time of renewal. I am happy to see the longer days. Hopefully, the weather will continue to get nicer, and we can start going outside to play. It is a fun time to involve outdoor sensory play. Just playing in the mud is a great activity or swinging at a local playground.



We at ASM are always busy and this time of the year is the busiest. We are getting ready for Autism acceptance month in April. Keep a look out for different activities and unique events that ASM will be hosting. April also brings the autism walks. The Westbrook walk is on April 21st, and Bangor is on April 28th. Please register for a walk and plan to join us. It is a wonderful opportunity to join fellow families and community members. If you have a business or organization that would like to donate towards the walk, please reach out to ASM and we will be happy to help you with that.

Keep a look out to sign-ups for the family retreat weekend which will be held on June 21st- 23rd. To see kids and families get together and have a fun weekend that provides a great opportunity to gain experience and talk with other families.

Spring is also a time for families to start talking about transitioning younger kids into schools and holding IEP meetings. If you are feeling overwhelmed and would like support, please reach out. We understand this firsthand and can have autism information specialists to support you in whatever you need.

Happy Spring,

Christina Nason, Board President



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.

A Proud Supporter for a Much-Needed Cause

continued from cover

Curtis is quite active in the community and loves volunteering. Every summer, he helps with a Maine Breast Cancer Awareness fundraising golf tournament, held in memory of a loved one who passed away. He reads to kids at a local elementary school, has volunteered for the March of Dimes and local library, and volunteers at his Little People of America meetings. And every holiday season, he donates to Toys for Tots and Coats for Kids.

Susan has been a Shared Living Provider with Spurwink for three years and noted that she appreciates the support offered to her, which enables her to be able to better meet Curtis' needs. "He has his own spaces that he can decorate and organize any way he wants...This is the happiest he has been." When asked why Shared Living is a good option for their family, Susan said that it's "because of the consistency. Having multiple staff coming and going makes it very difficult for Curtis to function at his highest level. It's now much less stressful for both of us. Curtis' quality of life has improved significantly since we have been able to do Shared Living."



SPURWINK

About Spurwink

Spurwink is a nationally accredited nonprofit organization that provides a broad range of behavioral health care, substance use disorder services and support services for people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds, and their 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, or call 207.871.1200.

Sensory Friendly Showing!

“KUNG FU PANDA 4”

FREE tickets for anyone with Autism & their families.

Reserve Seating Only!

April 6, 2024
11:00am
Black Bear Cinemas
6 Stillwater Ave.
Orono, ME

April 6, 2024
10:00am
Flagship Cinemas
730 Center St.,
Auburn, ME

Please join us for this free movie event open to anyone with Autism & their families in either of the 2 locations, Orono or Auburn. Each event you may arrive ½ hour prior to the showtime. This is reserved seating so you must register by calling 800-273-5200 or email info@asmonline.org. We will need to have a phone number and email address so we can send out reminders of the event. This will be a sensory friendly event, the lights will be lowered and sound lowered.

Meet Our New AIS

Last quarter we had an Autism Information Specialist (AIS) training and are pleased to welcome seven new Autism Information Specialists to our team:

Marguerite comes from Piscataquis County where she works with adults on the spectrum. She is a direct support professional and is also certified as a behavioral health professional. She has been attending our Fall Conference for the past 2 years and is excited to learn more and help caregivers and professionals become more aware of all the resources available to them.



Darrin comes to us from Kennebec County where he has his own welding business. He has 2 young kids on the spectrum, one that is using an AAC device and another that is a sensory seeker. He is knowledgeable in business and career studies and is excited to bring a male/dad's perspective to ASM.



Theresa joins us from Somerset County. She is passionate about helping others since she has been so close to her nephews (4 & 23) with Autism and has been there to help them navigate their diagnosis'. She's even working towards becoming a BHP to better support them.



Allison lives in Somerset County where she works in special education at a charter school. Before that she was a labor advocate but decided to make a career change when her son was diagnosed with ASD. She also is knowledgeable about DHHS and Mainecare. She has experienced the gaps and lengths it takes to get support and is hoping to use her experience to be part of the change for good.



Jessica lives in Cumberland County, overseeing a private practice catering to individuals of all ages with neurodivergent needs. Additionally, she founded Wilde School, which provides tailored education from 1st grade to 12th grade for students requiring individualized instruction. As a parent who grappled with dyslexia, Jessica empathizes with the challenges faced by her four children, two of whom are on the autism spectrum.



Alexa joins us from Kennebec County. She has worked as a DSP supporting adults with Autism where she assisted in organizing a book club for clients. She is passionate about the arts and has experience working at Walt Disney World, Waterville Creates, and even started a theater group for children with and without disabilities to work together. She believes that access to information about Autism is essential and looks forward to bringing this info to others.

Cathy lives in York County and is an ed tech substitute for special education classrooms. She also runs a teen group in her area for young adults in their teens and twenties that welcomes anyone wanting to make connections whether they are neurotypical or neurodiverse. She has experienced the IEP and meeting process in public school and has also homeschooled. She has utilized an AIS in the past which helped her, and now she hopes to help other families.



WHERE TO FIND US

Spring 2024

MAR
25th

Maine Parent Federation Spring Conference

The Governor Hill Mansion in Augusta

9am-2:30pm

April
4th

MPF Transition Fair

Scarborough High School

9am-1:30pm

April
7th

Mr. Drew and His Animals Too

Lewiston Mall 20 East Ave Unit 14 Lewiston

10am-1pm

April
9th

MPF Transition Fair

Winthrop High School

12pm-2pm

April
12&13

Adoptive & Foster Families of Maine

Hilton Garden Inn Bangor

Fri: 8am-4pm & Sat: 8am-1:30pm

April
13th

Maine Homeschool Exchange

Homeschoolers of Maine - Augusta Armory

8:30am-5pm

April
14th

Project Play Penquis

Piscataquis Ice Arena, Dover Foxcroft

10am-12pm



APRIL ACCEPTANCE MONTH

The connection is YOU.

ASM provides a number of ways in which individuals and families can connect, attend an event, gain support, and share their experiences with others in their communities

Be the connection this April to spreading awareness for early diagnosis, promoting inclusion in the greater community, and practicing acceptance in everyday life.

COMMIT YOUR SUPPORT

MAKE A DIFFERENCE WITH YOUR SUPPORT FOR ASM.

Share our resources across your social channels, create a Facebook fundraiser, join ASM's membership, get involved with fundraising events, volunteering. There are many ways to contribute

SHOW YOUR LOVE BY PARTICIPATING IN OUR HEARTS CAMPAIGN!



We started our Hearts Campaign during the pandemic for Autism Acceptance Month in April. It allowed us to fundraise AND for people to show support in their communities for their Autistic neighbors.

We continue to offer the Hearts Campaign because businesses enjoy this option as a way to show support. It costs nothing! We supply everything needed. We are looking for places that want to give people a chance to donate \$1 to personalize a heart then display it for Autism Acceptance Month at their business.

To participate, fill out the form on our website or contact us FMI: www.asmonline.org/News/107/Article/8156/

[AUTISM ACCEPTANCE MONTH](#)

[JOIN OUR MEMBERSHIP](#)

[HEART CAMPAIGN](#)

[MAKE A DONATION](#)



WALK FOR AUTISM

Lace up your sneakers and join ASM for an exciting day at the Walk for Autism!

We have been planning activities for this day for months! Sponsors have been amazing, and vendors eagerly signed up for their tables! This event is going to be EPIC! Don't miss out on this incredible day where we come together to celebrate our community, promote acceptance, and foster understanding. It's a day filled with positive energy, excitement, and connection.

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!

Registration and begins at 10:30am and the Walk begins at 12:00 noon - Rain or Shine!

WESTBROOK

Sunday, April 21, 2024
River Bank Park,
Westbrook



BANGOR

Sunday, April 28, 2024
Bangor Waterfront Park



SAVE DATES!

**GOLF TOURNAMENT
BENEFIT**
July 20, 2024
The Meadows Golf Club
Litchfield, ME

RIDE FOR AUTISM
September 18, 2024
Kennebunkport
Conservation Trust
Kennebunkport, ME

**AUTISM FALL
CONFERENCE**
November 2, 2024
Bangor Cross Ins. Ctr.
Bangor, ME

ASM SOCIAL / SUPPORT GROUPS



VIRTUAL MEET-UP FOR KIDS



FIRST WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH 4PM-5PM
EMAIL INFOSPEC@ASMONLINE.ORG FMI

Come hang out online for interesting conversations, show and tell, games, and making connections!

Ages 8-14

Chat will be moderated by Autism Society of Maine

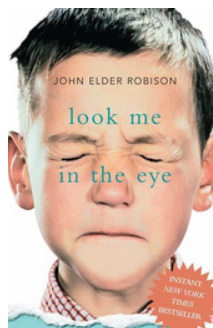
Young Adult Group (In Person)

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 with Kendra Campbell. If you are interested in learning more about this group, please email: Kendra: bridgtonais@gmail.com.

ASM Book Club

for Autistic Adults and their Allies

Location: Bangor Public Library, Edward O. Darling Room or by ZOOM
First Tuesday of the month
Time: 12:00pm - 1:00pm
Contact: Jen, 1-800-273-5200
infospec@asmonline.org
[Book Club Facebook Page](#)



April Book "Look Me in the Eye"
by John Elder Robison

ADULT SOCIAL GROUP

Adult Social Group (Online)

Our Adult Social Function Group meets once 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.

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.

Email: asm@asmonline.org or call ASM at 800-273-5200.

Parents of youth attending this group are welcome to meet at this time in a separate room at ASM.

Friday Fun Group

Play group for Neurodiverse Homeschoolers

Every
2nd Friday
of the
Month!

**Orono
Public Library**

**1:00pm
to
2:00pm**



ASM: 1-800-273-5200 Email: infospec@asmonline.org

ASK CATHY

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



ANNUAL FAMILY RETREAT



The Autism Society of Maine holds a family retreat weekend (Fri.-Sun) for families who have a child(ren), adult(s) with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) and their siblings. The purpose of this weekend is to provide a relaxing, fun weekend for the whole family. The family retreat includes crafts, outdoor play, swimming, rock wall climbing and many other activities for the children. The Retreat also allows parents time to enjoy educational discussions and lectures as well as recreational activities while their children are busy having fun with their friends and Respite providers. This year the Retreat will be held June 21-23rd at St. Joseph's College in Standish Maine.

Each year ASM chooses a new theme for the weekend and this year's theme is Mardi Gras! Be ready to have some fun with us! Wear your favorite Mardi Gras color. (Purple, green or gold) Masks, hats, beads, and boas are all acceptable party wear for this weekend! We are still working out some of the event details but Saturday night we will be entertained By Phil Smith from Abracadabra Productions! Phil is a Magician, Comedian, and Mentalist. From storytelling to juggling to magic and even a rabbit, this is going to be a great show! Applications for this year's retreat will be available April 1st. If you are interested in attending or have any questions, please call the office at 800-273-5200 or email offassist@asmonline.org.



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!

Mid-November thru February Facebook Fundraisers hosted by:

Charity Harris Davis, John Doak, Koriahn Quint, Wendy Anne Middlemass, Jacquelyn Clossey, and Kim Nestle Demado.



Donations / Sponsorships / Employee Matches / Grants

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Laurie Cavanaugh
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Val Scanlon
Peter & Cheri Wilkins
Gerri Bridgman
Theresa Haggett
Spurwink Services
Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary
Widgeon Point Charitable Foundation
Front Street Shipyard
Bath Police Department
Hannaford Bloomin' 4 Good
Ilona Feeny
Irene Kapothanasis
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Woodford's Family Services
Rita & Maurice Dionne
Maureen Zemrak
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Maine Developmental Disabilities Council
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Elizabeth Mahoney

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Webster Lodge 164 AF & AM
People's Choice Credit Union- Saco
Creative Options, LLC
Iris Silverstein
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Christian & Mary McCarthy
Thomas Hansen
Children's Odyssey
Susan & John Morton
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Adele & Roland Martel Charitable Fund
Maine Behavioral Healthcare
Foothills Flooring & Tile
Camden National Bank
Bangor Savings Bank
Brighter Heights Maine
Quirk Auto of Bangor
Kennebec Savings Bank
Meredith & Myron Hamer



In Memory of:

Melissa M. - *Anonymous*

In honor of:

Francis M. Prezioso
Bob & Kathleen Gullo

Maz MacArthur Olsen
Jennifer Tinker

Mark Powell
Cyber Security Services



New Memberships

Matthew Pinkham

Membership Renewals

Peter & Gerri Bridgman
Debra Pennesi
Mary Bishop
Christina Jordan
Nanette Fraser
Priscilla Dorman
Lisa Marin
Children's Odyssey
Dan Pietroski
Minna Brewster
Rita Cote