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Maine Autism



Fall 2024

Connections

The Blue Envelope Program

bv Erica Koch

The Blue Envelope Program was designed to help build a relationship between Law Enforcement Professionals and community members with a disability or condition where additional accommodations or awareness could be helpful. We recognize that it can be a nervous experience for people to be pulled over or to otherwise have a police interaction.

The Down Syndrome Advocacy Project of Maine (DSAP) is proud to offer the Blue Envelope Program to local Law Enforcement Agencies and organizations. The program is designed to be an awareness tool between law enforcement professionals and community members with a diagnosis such as Down Syndrome, Autism Spectrum Disorder, dementia, anxiety, or conditions that might require additional accommodations or awareness during a law enforcement interaction.

This program began in 2020 in Connecticut and was later picked up by other police departments in such as New Jersey, New York, and California.



Sqt. Kevin Kennedy, Cape Elizabeth PD and Jack Christensen.

The Blue Envelope Program works by allowing an individual to readily display the Blue Envelope logo or present a Blue Envelope upon contact with law enforcement or other community service personnel. In presenting this to the officer, it will identify if the driver is verbal or nonverbal.

Story continued on Page 3

The Connection is you.

Maine Autism Connections
A publication of the
Autism Society of Maine

President's Message

Hello Fellow ASM members,,

Hope this message finds you all well. It has been a busy summer here at ASM. We had our family retreat in June, which was a big success. We were lucky to have the CEO of the Autism Society of America, Chris Banks, in attendance. He got to eat with families and hear their stories and concerns. He met with some members of the board of directors, which was a very productive meeting.



We had our annual golf tournament in July. It was a beautiful day. We are now gearing up for our ride for autism on September 14th. We will be holding our annual meeting on September 27th. Lastly, we are working on the conference in November that will be held in Bangor. We have some great people lined up; hope you see many of you there.

I hope you all had a great and relaxing summer. Here we are at another transition time for families that have kids going back to school. Hopefully, the transition goes smoothly. Please feel free to reach out to the autism society if there is anything we can help you with. We have many information specialists who can support and talk with you to help you better advocate for your child. Remember you know them best!

This is my last write up for the newsletter as I will be leaving as board president at the annual meeting in September. It has been such a privilege and honor to serve the Autism of Maine community. As a parent, board member, vice president, and now president it was my privilege to serve you all in those areas. I know the board is being left in good hands and can't wait for you to get to know our new board president, and new board members. Thank you to everyone at the society for your support and kindness throughout my time on the board

Sincerely,

Christina Nason, 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.

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Maine Autism Connections

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susan@asmonline.org

Statements made by various authors regarding treatment, products or services represent the views and opinions of soley those authors, and do not constitute a recommendation or endorsement by ASM

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 www.asmonline.org, where we have a great deal of information available about Autism, programs, resources, news, a calendar of events, legislation and more.

The Blue Envelope Program

Continued from cover

The envelope also lists suggestions for the driver such as keeping their hands on the steering wheel, expecting that there may be a flashlight shined in the car, there may be flashing lights behind them, and they may hear a police radio. The Blue Envelope can contain the individual's identification, contact information or pertinent vehicle operations documents such as registration and proof of insurance.



INFORMATION FOR DRIVERS:

- · Keep your hands on the steering wheel until otherwise directed, even if the officer is not at your car.
- The officer may shine a flashlight in your car, may have a radio, and may have flashing lights on their car.
- When an officer gets to your car, let them know you have a Blue Envelope.
- Answer the officer's questions, and ask the officer before moving any parts of your body.
- When the officer asks you for your Blue Envelope, slowly get the envelope and give it to them.
- The officer will take the envelope back to their patrol car.
 DO NOT leave. You need to wait for the officer to come back.
- . When the officer comes back, they will return your Blue Envelope to you.
- . The officer will tell you when you can leave.



The other side of the envelope lists to the officer that the driver may be anxious because of the flashing lights, flashlight, and police radio. It lets the officer know that the driver may exhibit repetitive body movements or fidgeting and may have unusual eye contact. It suggests that we speak clearly and keep things simple. Inside of the envelope is an emergency contact list where the driver or loved one has listed the names and telephone numbers of relatives and others whom we may call if needed.

The Blue Envelope Program does not have a registry component; therefore, all components of the program are voluntary and self-implemented. See participating on the DSAP website.

If you would like to participate in the Blue Envelope Program, contact Erica Koch at ekoch@dsapmaine.org.



Golf Tournament

Our Golf Tournament was held on July 20, 2024 at the Meadows Golf Club. A BIG shoutout to the 88 golfers that made 22 teams, and volunteers who came out to support our cause. We couldn't have done it without you! Special thanks to our sponsors for making this event possible and for our in-kind donations. Together, we raised an impressive \$6,469!

We Give Gratitude to Our Supporters! Thank You to Everyone Who Joined Us!

We want to express our heartfelt thanks to Kevin & Erika Bechard and their Family for their efforts to make this event a success. They all did a wonderful job and can be proud of the tourn-out! A special thank you goes to Chad Hopkins for his Beat the Pro challenge. It wasn't easy to beat Chad, but some (very few) were able to do it! All in good fun! We can't wait to do it all again next year!

See photo gallery!

Prizes Awarded:

Long Drive Mens ~ Chad Fennell Long Drive Ladies ~ Carol Thibeault Closest to Pin #12 ~ Austin Beverage Closest to Pin #6 ~ Nate Lajoie



Putting Contest:

Net 1st ~ Gardiner Eagles Net 2nd ~ Just Happy to be Here Gross 1st ~ Team Fennell Gross 2nd ~ Here for the Cause

Legislation - Autism Cares Act

Statement of the Autism Society of America upon Bipartisan Passage of the Autism CARES Act of 2024 in the Senate HELP Committee

Rockville, MD, July 31, 2024 – The Autism Society of America applauds lead sponsors, Senators Ben Ray Luján (D-MN) and Susan Collins (R-ME), Chairman Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and Ranking Member Bill Cassidy (R-LA) and the rest of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee for its bipartisan passage of the Autism Collaboration, Accountability, Research, Education, and Support (CARES) Act of 2024 (S. 4762), on July 31 with an overwhelming vote of 20-1.

"This decisive action represents a significant milestone in our ongoing efforts to improve the lives of individuals with Autism and their families," stated Christopher S. Banks, President and CEO. "The Autism CARES Act has been instrumental since 2006 in advancing Autism research, enhancing early intervention services, and training health professionals. The continued support and investment affirmed by this bipartisan vote will ensure sustained progress in these critical areas."

S. 4762 incorporates several of the Autism Society's recommendations, which build on the success of the law, including:

- increased capacity of the LEND workforce training programs
- examining how to expand the network of developmental pediatricians
- providing a research focus on those with complex medical and behavioral support needs
- increasing access to support those with communication needs, among other improvements.

We are deeply grateful to the Senate HELP Committee members for their commitment to addressing the needs of the Autism community. During the Senate Committee markup, both Senators Luján and Collins passionately shared personal stories about individuals with Autism and families close to them.

The Committee's dedication to passing S. 4762 underscores the importance of coordinated efforts in research, education, and support services that are essential for improving the quality of life for Autistic individuals.

We look forward to the full Senate's consideration and ultimate passage of this vital legislation, and we remain steadfast in our advocacy for policies that support the Autism community.

Autism Society of America - The Autism Society's mission is to create connections, empowering everyone in the Autism community with the resources needed to live fully. As the nation's oldest leading grassroots Autism organization, the Autism Society and its approximately 70+ local affiliates serve over half a million members of the Autism community each year. It envisions a world where everyone in the Autism community is connected to the support they need, when they need it – including education, advocacy efforts, and supports and services throughout the lifespan. For more information visit the Autism Society at **#AutismSociety.org**

Let your voice be heard this fall – get out and vote this November.

To find who your representative and senators are in Maine click the link below, to go the second tab labeled "Find your Legislators" and from there you will enter your zip code and address. There lots of other great features on the site. **Action Center (votervoice.net)**



<u>Register Here</u>

Back to School - IEP's

Article by Autism Society of America https://autismsociety.org/resources/education/

The <u>Individualized Education Program (IEP)</u> is a written document that outlines a child's education. As the name implies, the education program should be tailored to the individual student to provide the maximum benefit. The keyword is *individual*. A program that is appropriate for one child with Autism may not be right for another.

The IEP is the cornerstone for the education of a child with a disability. It should identify the services a child needs so that he/she will meet their learning objectives during the school year. It is also a legal document that outlines:

- The child's special education plan (goals for the school year)
- Services needed to help the child meet those goals
- A method for evaluating the student's progress

The objectives, goals, and selected services are not just a collection of ideas on how the school may educate a child; the school district must educate your child in accordance with the IEP.

- One or both of the child's parents/care providers
- The child's teacher or prospective teacher
- A representative of the public agency (local education agency), other than the child's teacher, who is qualified to provide or supervise the provision of special education
- The child, if appropriate
- Other individuals at the discretion of the parent(s)/care provider(s) or agency (e.g. a physician, advocate, or neighbor)

IEP meetings must be held at least once annually, but may be held more often if needed. Parents/care providers may request a review or revision of the IEP at any time. While teachers and school personnel may come prepared for the meeting with an outline of goals and objectives, the IEP is not complete until it has been thoroughly discussed and all parties agree to the terms of the written document.

When preparing for your IEP meeting, consider the following:

- What is your vision for your child for the future as well as the next school year?
- What are your child's strengths, needs, and interests?
- What are your major concerns about his/her education?
- What has and has not worked in your child's education thus far?
- Does the evaluation fit with what you know about your child?
- Are there any special factors to consider, such as communication needs or a positive behavioral intervention plan?

<u>Visit the Autism Society's webpage to read this full</u> <u>article</u> on the IEP Meeting and Post Secondary Transition Planning

Learn more about:

- The IEP Meeting
- Related Services
- Teacher/Staff Requirements
- Goals/Objectives/Evaluation



ASM Annual Family Retreat



Chris Banks, ASA Cathy Dionne, ASM



providers.

The theme for the weekend was Mardi Gras, complete with Bourbon Street decorations and delicious mocktails during our Family Happy Hour "Fat Friday" celebration, New Orleans style.



Our Annual Autism Family Retreat Weekend at St. Joseph's College was an incredible experience filled with laughter, joy, and relaxation! Parents were able to take a muchneeded break from their everyday challenges, while their children had an absolute blast participating in safe and fun activities with our amazing and caring respite

> We had a wonderful time this weekend. This is the highlight of our year and never disappoints. Parent



WE HAD THE BEST TIME!



judged. Respite Provider

We had so many exciting activities for everyone to enjoy, including rock wall climbing, swimming, crafts, outdoor adventures, and a huge bouncy house. The highlight of the weekend was the Saturday night entertainment featuring Abracadabra Productions with Philip Smith, a talented comedian, magician, and illusionist.





Parents also had the opportunity to participate in optional activities such as a painting class, canoeing & paddle boarding, presentations, and quality family time. It was truly a weekend to remember, and we can't wait for next year's retreat!



Visit ASM's photo gallery for more pics!



The Coastal Friendship Circle is a support group designed for adults with autism, Asperger's, NVLD, or other neurodiversity. The purpose of the group is to help members expand social and community involvement, make friends, and be informed about programs and services that could be of benefit to them.

The group typically meets on weekend afternoons at the Camden Public Library. Occasionally,

- **Picnics**
- **Outings**
- we will meet in Belfast at the Rockweed Center.
- For more information or to learn about the next meeting or social event,

Contact: Melinda Wildes melinda.adulted@gmail.com (207) 449-6011



Is Halloween really a fun night for kids with Autism?

Some children with Autism may find the sensory overload of Halloween activities overwhelming! Scarv costumes. unpredictable behavior, loud noises, bright lights, and crowded spaces. Wow! That is a LOT to take in.

You know your child best. If heading out into the neighborhood to "trick or treat" or go to a party doesn't feel like a good idea, try one of the many other ways to have fun!

Over the years, ASM has shared Halloween "Tips & Tricks" and we have lots of fun ideas that may be helpful to you and your family. The best tips by far are for safety and preparing your child ahead of time.





- Make sure your child always has some form of identification on them and a way to communicate that they are lost.
- Use glow-in-the-dark tape on your child's costume and yours too for night-time visibility.
- Wear something that distinguishes you from the crowd so your child can easily find you.



PREPARE:

- Use social stories or visuals schedules to help prepare your child for Halloween.
- Practice step-by-step while wearing costume, ringing the doorbell or knocking at the door, have someone open the door, receiving candy, expressing thank you, etc.

CANDY

- Teach your child not to eat anything they get from trick-or-treating without your permission.
- Exchange candy for treats that are safe for them to eat.

COSTUMES

• Keep it comfortable, check out the pajama section of the store for comfortable pajamas that look like costumes.

• Make it simple, too many accessories can complicate things and cause sensory overload.





Upcoming Events



RIDE FOR AUTISM
Saturday, September 14, 2024
Kennebunkport Conservation Trust
Kennebunkport, ME
Registration Available Onsite

There are three rides to choose from: 10-mile, 25-mile, and 50- mile, all are family friendly and have some great scenic views! After the ride, enjoy an amazing BBQ lunch and relaxation at the beautiful grounds of the Conservation Trust. The ride is a great time and a wonderful way to spend some time with family and friends, supporting a great cause. Your ride awaits!



Virtual visit with Santa & Mrs. Claus

The holidays are right around the corner, its time to reserve your child's spot for their visit with Santa!

Santa and Mrs. Claus are accepting appointments for their annual virtual visit with Santa on Saturday December 7.

Just send an email to offassist@asmonline.org to let us know you are interested, you will receive a return email with available time slots as well as a questionnaire to fill out so Santa doesn't miss anything, once we receive the questionnaire and time choice you will receive a link for your ZOOM visit with Santa. Each time slot is 10 minutes, children will be in a waiting room until their time begins. To allow more children to visit with Santa, we ask that siblings share a time slot.

All children will have a special gift mailed to them after their visit!

Time slots are limited, registration closes on November 30, or until all time slots are filled.





ASM's Annual Meeting September 27, 2024 Senator Inn and Spa, 284 Western Ave. Augusta 6:00pm to 8:00pm.

The banquet begins with a delicious dinner. After dinner, learn what ASM has accomplished with your help this year. Introductions of new board members and acknowledgements to those whose terms have ended. In addition, ASM Award recipients will be presented with Autism service awards.

This is a great opportunity to learn more about ASM and the services we provide for children, families and individuals here in Maine. The Annual Meeting is open to paid members of ASM and is also an RSVP event. We really hope to see you there! **Please call ASM to reserve your seat: 1-800-273-5200.**



Autism And Internet Safety

The Autism Society of Maine and Spectrum Generations have been collaborating with a series of videos around Internet Safety. Spectrum Generations wrote the grant under the Innovative Grants through the State of Maine Office of Ageing and Disability (OADS).

The videos series will consist of six mini videos around specific topics using the internet. Both of our agencies have consumers who have been defrauded, bullied, and been in legal trouble due to illegal activity on the internet. Both agencies wanted to help individuals with IDD/Autism understand more about the internet and provide a safe way for them to engage online with websites, people, and when they search sites. Each video was designed to ask each participant prior to watching the video what they know around each topic and at the end to see what they learned.

The series will be released in the fall. We will have a premiere night for all the individuals involved in the videos. From the start of this project individuals with IDD/Autism have been included with the writing of the scripts to participating in the videos. This has been a labor of love.

Stayed tuned for the release date of the series by signing up to **ASM Facebook page** or **constant contact list serve**.

Internet Safety. Here are the six topics of each module:

Module One

Introduction to internet safety. Content Risks, Contact Risk, and Conduct Risk.

Module two

Basic online safety – computers, tablets, and cell phones. Cover passwords, logging out, antivirus, public spaces, and hacking

Module three

Identifying common scams - phishing, spam emails, safe URL's, pop-ups, attachments.

Module four

Using social media – all social media platforms, cyberbullying, blocking people, strangers, personal information, and online dating.

Module five

Sexual content and adult websites – pornography, downloading content, sharing pictures, illegal age, and consensual.

Module six

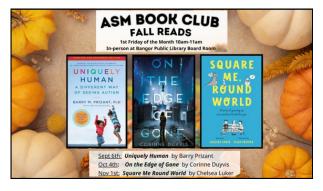
Basic usage guidelines, information online, verify where the information came from, shopping online, internet addiction, and house rules for internet usage.

ASM GROUPS



The Friday Fun Group in Orono is back starting **September 13th**! Join us on the second Friday of the month at the Orono Public Library's community room at 11:30 AM to explore some exciting equipment from the

<u>Maine CITE AT4Maine program</u> FMI: contact Jennifer: infospec@asmonline.org



Join the ASM Book Club, a welcoming space for neurodivergent individuals and their allies, as we explore a selection of thought-provoking books this fall.

Bangor Public Library board room on the **1st Fridays of the month from 10am-11am**FMI contact Jennifer: infospec@asmonline.org

Questions?

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



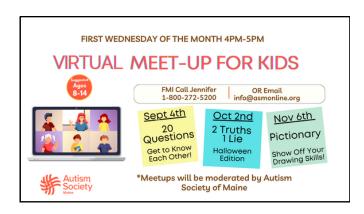
Book Club Facebook Group Page





Tween/teen/ya meet up

Join us for our Fall Tween, Teen, and Young Adult Meet-Up! On Friday, October 11th at 5 PM, come to the Bangor-Brewer Bowling Lanes for a fun evening of bowling with others on the Autism spectrum. ASM has covered the lanes—all you need to bring is \$3 for shoe rental. See you there for some strikes and spares! FMI contact Jennifer: infospec@asmonline.org



Join us for our **Virtual Kids Meet Up for Kids** on ZOOM the first Wednesdays of the month!

Email: infospec@asmonline.org for the Zoom details.

More ASM <u>Support Groups</u>

ASM Parent / Caregiver Support Group Online Teen Group - Winthrop in Person Teen Social Group, Bridgton Community Ctr. ASM Adult Group Social Group Online







Autism Information Specialist Program

Join Our Team

We're looking for people with lived or professional experience!

Become an Autism Information Specialist



LISTEN...

Talk one-on-one with families, guardians and individuals to help navigate services.

EDUCATE...

Provide presentations and workshops to agencies & community organizations Statewide

SUPPORT...

Offer guidance through educational, transitional, and vocational meetings.

PARTICIPATE...

Attend our events, be a vendor at community events, and help fundraise!

To Apply Scan the QR Code EMAIL: infospec@asmonline.org OR CALL: 1-800-273-5200





AIS in the Community:

- Brewer Car Days at the 278 State St at the Twin City Plaza in Brewer- 9/8 9am-3pm -Vendor
- United Bikers of Maine Toy Run at the Windsor Fairgrounds - 9/8 10am-3pm -Vendor
- Waterville Community Collaborative 12pm-4pm 9/10 Vendor
- Build & Bloom with Help ME Grow at the Children's Museum of Aroostook County 830 Main St. in the Presque Isle Mall – 9/12 4pm-6pm -Vendor
- Brunswick Fire Department Annual Open House at the Harold Emerson Station located at 248 Bath Road- 10/9 4pm-7pm -Vendor
- Pumpkins in the Park at the Bangor Shriners Building on Broadway – 10/20 10am-5pm -Participant (sensory friendly hour 4pm-5pm)

October Training Opportunity! Apply Now!

Passionate about supporting individuals with Autism? Become an Information Specialist! We're looking for people with lived experience or professional expertise to provide essential resources to families, schools, and communities. You'll offer one-on-one support, give presentations, and engage in community events.

If you're committed to making a difference. Visit our website to apply!

*We are accepting applications for Information Specialists from all counties but have a greater need in Franklin, Hancock, Knox, Lincoln, and York!

Maine Lit Fest "Everything, Everywhere All at once" Night 10/5 at 7pm via ZOOM



Join neurodivergent picture book authors Samara Cole Doyon, Meghan Wilson Duff, and Steve Asbell, who is also an illustrator, for a conversation about the importance of neurodivergent and autistic-affirming books for children. Thanks to the work of generations of disability rights advocates, the neurodiversity movement, and the publishing industry now seeking more diverse books it is much easier to find stories that center autistic and neurodivergent children's perspectives and experiences.

The panelists are neurodivergent creators, parents of neurodivergent and autistic children, and all write neurodivergent and autistic-affirming stories. They will talk about what makes for positive autistic and neurodivergent representation and what inspires their work, as well as the audiences they hope to reach, the impact they hope to create, and the surprises they've encountered along the way. Session will include time for questions, and attendees will receive a list of books and online resources for further exploration.

This event will include closed captions and will be moderated by Alexa Gallant, Autism Information Specialist with Autism Society of Maine.

Interested in meeting Maine authors Samara Cole Doyon and Meghan Wilson Duff? They will be signing books at the Kid Lit Bookfair at the Portland Library on Saturday, October 12th at 10:00 AM. For more information see the Maine Lit Fest list of events.

Donations / Sponsorships / Employee Matches / Grants

Donations

Cold Stream Cruzers
Anthony & Terri Dostanko
Marston Marina
Gigi McAllister
Linda Grant
Susan Morton
United Way of Kennebec Valley
Gardiner Eagles # 4330
Two Caps Services – Alina Eastman

In Memory of:

David "Nate" Rush

Richard & Patricia Kelley



In Honor of:

Hunter Turner by Cristine & William Turner



New Memberships

Angela Garcia Chandler Davis Jon Palmer

Membership Renewals

Anthony & Terri Dostanko
Sharon Hewett
Sheila Crocker
Lise Tancrede
Christina Nason
Emily Pride
Colleen Lepage
Irene Kapothanasis
Carol Jewett
Gigi McAllister
Susan Morton
Linda Grant
Joanne McMahon
Robin Reed
Karen MacDonald-Fowler

Membership Renewals

Cheryl Young
Cheryl Stalilonis-Francis
Darlene Lepoff
Jeff & Jane Brennan
Joella Michaud
Spurwink Services
Margaret Shaver
Kathy Wingard
David Johnson
Joan Shelton

Facebook Fundraisers Mid-May to August

Kelley Frey Jenni Allyson Robert Lou Beltejar Mitch Boucher Rebecc Collins Buck Mary Pletcher Trysten Silver