

Community Connection

Autism Connections: a Pathlight program

Newsletter

The Flutie Foundation Grant supports local families

Get your application in today!

We are excited to announce that the *Doug Flutie, Jr. Foundation for Autism* has once again generously awarded Autism Connections a grant to support local families. The focus of this grant is to enhance the quality of life for people with autism. Autism Connections has been awarded \$13,200.00 to provide allocations to families of children with autism, which may be used for a wide variety of purposes related to best supporting an individual.

Families that meet the criteria will be eligible to receive a \$300.00 stipend to purchase items or fund activities that empower, enhance and provide opportunities for their child with autism. This grant cannot fund the purchase of iPads.

Those applying for the grant must meet the following criteria:

- ◆ *Must NOT be receiving services through the MA Autism Waiver Program*
 - ◆ *Must NOT be receiving services through the DDS DESE Program*
 - ◆ *Must NOT be receiving Adult DDS Services*
 - ◆ *Must NOT be receiving services through the DDS IFFS Program*
 - ◆ *Must be willing to turn in receipts from funds used and submit a thank you note to the Doug Flutie, Jr. Foundation for Autism*
- ◆ *Have a low to moderate household income*
 - ◆ *Must be a family of a child or adult child with a diagnosis on the autism spectrum residing at home*
 - ◆ *Must be living in Hampshire, Franklin, Hampden Counties, or the Worcester County towns of Royalston, Athol, Petersham, and Phillipston*



Find the application online at:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FLUTIEGRANT>

If you need a hard copy of the application, please call our office.

Haga clic aquí para la traducción en español - <http://bit.ly/FlutieGrantSpanish>

**ALL APPLICATIONS ARE DUE BY
 May 31, 2018 AT 5:00 P.M.**

Thank you to the Doug Flutie, Jr. Foundation for Autism for their continuing support of local families through Autism Connections!

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CONTACT INFORMATION

Easthampton Office

¡Hola! Hablamos español
 116 Pleasant Street, Suite 366
 Easthampton, MA 01027
 413.529.2428

Berkshire Office

100 North Street, Suite 322
 Pittsfield, MA
 413.443.4780

Our Mission: To help families, schools, professionals, agencies, and communities understand autism, promote the well-being of individuals with autism, and foster their inclusion in the community.

NEWS & UPDATES

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Paula Fredericks

Bill Loomis

Pamela Sandler

Michael Wilcox

Jeanne Zobel-Lachiusa

Upcoming events and activities

Berkshire Autism Collaborative May Meeting: Friday, May 18



The Autism Collaborative of Berkshire County (ACBC) will meet Friday, May 18, 2018, from 10 a.m.— 12 p.m. for a presentation from *UCP of Berkshire County: Assistive Technology Regional Center* at the BCARC Training Room, Berkshire Common, 2 South Street, Suite 370, 3rd Floor, in Pittsfield.

UCP believes technology is the key to unlocking human potential and can improve independence and quality of life. Assistive technology can be lo-tech help to support everyday living

tasks from dressing to bathing, or hi-tech solutions to help with more complicated communication skills.

Assistive Technologists help with device training and AT Centers also provide workshops, product demonstrations, and can loan out AT devices.

Come learn about all of the services and resources you can receive through UCP of Berkshire County! Our next meeting will be June 15.



Sensory Friendly Movie, *Incredibles 2*

Join the Autism Connections team on Thursday, June 28 at 10 a.m. at Rave Cinemas in West Springfield for a sensory friendly viewing of *Incredibles 2*, the sequel to the hit 2004 film about a loveable family of superheroes. Watch the trailer [here](#).



Incredibles 2 is a computer-animated superhero film that resumes where the first movie ends. The Parr family struggles to maintain normal lives while Helen, aka Elastigirl, continues to go out and fight crime and Bob, aka Mr. Incredible, stays home with the kids.

Additional school break activities on June 26 and 27

Autism Connections is busy planning a variety of fun activities for the week just after school breaks for the summer. Updates to come soon! Be sure to check our [Facebook page](#) for more information!



Contact Danielle at 413-529-2428 x 115 for more information or to RSVP (required) for all activities.

Annual Autism Conference

On April 27, we held our 28th Annual Autism Conference for professionals, family members, educators, self-advocates, agencies and exhibitors at The Log Cabin in Holyoke.

Speakers **Steve Silberman**, author of *NeuroTribes*, and **Al Condeluci**, author, consultant and CEO of CLASS (Community Living and Support Services) motivated participants with words of wisdom from their science and sociology perspectives.

An exhibition hall with more than 30 organizations related to autism services offered information about their services and books on many topics related to autism were available for purchase (get in touch with us if you would like a copy of that book list—the children's books were especially popular).

During lunch, our Director Karen Serra presented Community Awards to deserving individuals and organizations. It is important to us that we take time during our conference each year to honor community members who enhance the lives of children and adults with autism, and their families. We know how critical these relationships are, and how they can change our lives. We applaud all of our nominees this year and encourage our readers to think about honoring that special person with one of our community awards next year. (please see our [facebook](#) page for photos of people receiving their awards).

The **Above and Beyond** award category celebrates people who actively demonstrate extraordinary commitment and creativity in their work with children and adults with autism and their families. Constance Janik, a preschool teacher at Bridge St School in Northampton, received this award. Constance was nominated by Lisa Modenos for the extra time and care she put into easing her son's transition into the school system and helping to make his daily school experience a success.

The **You Are There for Me** category honors caregivers who offer unique support and devotion to a family. The award was presented to Glafyra Ennis-Yentsch who was nominated by Lisa Modenos. Glafyra is a devoted grandmother to her grandson with autism, and offers him a unique connection and bond that enriches the lives of him and his parents.

The **Excellence in Advocacy** award honors professionals who have demonstrated ongoing and effective advocacy

for people with autism. This award was presented to Kathleen Moriarty, nominated by Nancy Jenks; and Linda Manning, nominated by Lisa Modenos. Kathleen was recognized for her long-standing support of students with autism in the Granby Schools, and for her tireless knowledge-sharing and fundraising. Linda facilitates Autism Connections' Western Mass Parent Support Group, and her dedication and practical supports have built this into a thriving group.

The **Collaboration & Connection** award honors excellence in teamwork to effect positive change for people with autism. There were many recipients of this award, thanks to some amazing collaborative initiatives. Erica Donovan nominated the following people and organizations: Abby Powers of the College Internship Program; Kristen Saharczewski of UCP Berkshire; Katrina Cardillo, Nancy Wiley and Sopheap Nhim of BCARC; Yvette Stoddard of Hillcrest Educational Foundation; Jeb Civello of BFAIR; Kristen Scharceski of UCP Berkshire; and Megan Cooper and Cathy Carchedi of AdLib Inc.

The second team was nominated by Lora Cortis. This is a team of a mother and school, human service and medical professionals working together to help a teenager with autism overcome her fear of the dentist in order to engage in a much-needed procedure. Award winners were Elizabeth DiBuono, Chris Purcell, Su Hoyle, and Paula Fredericks, The May School, and Baystate Medical Center.

We were very fortunate to have the partnership of *Radcliffe is the Reason, and Arthur Too! Fight for Autism* this year at our conference. The organization was our Presenting Sponsor, and also donated items for a raffle, including a large screen TV, an iPad mini, a FitBit, a Kindle Fire, and a mystery prize. All raffle proceeds directly benefited Autism Connections.

Stay tuned for information about our 2019 Conference!



Recent Community Activities

Holyoke High School Sports Management class organizes benefit event

On April 15, we met with the Holyoke High School Sports Management II class to accept their check from their "Shine a Light for Autism" dodgeball tournament which was held to benefit Autism Connections. Jill Reardon, teacher of the class, was the advisor for the event and has organized previous fundraisers for Autism Connections with other groups.



Ms. Reardon, class teacher, Joanne Lucey, Autism Connections, and Dane Brown, interim principal

The students worked diligently to find sponsors for their event and were quite successful! Teams representing both the school and the greater Holyoke community participated in the day.

We are very grateful to the students and Ms. Reardon for choosing Autism Connections, and for all of their hard work in organizing the event. Thank you!



Sports Management II class



Jada, Kiara and Emily sporting their event t-shirts and bracelets

Puppet Show

On April 20, our Berkshire Adult Social Group participated in the original fairy tale, *The Minstrel's Journey*, at the Colonial Theatre Garage in Pittsfield.

The Minstrel's Journey, a Puppet Show for all ages, was written, handcrafted and performed in a collaboration with the Berkshire Theatre Group and Regina Mason of the Little Puppet Studio of the Berkshires.

A special thank you to Regina for leading the young adults to follow their passions and execute a beautiful production, and to the Berkshire Theatre Group for continued, unwavering support of our community. The show would not have gone on without your generosity.

Stay tuned... there may be a sequel!



Upcoming Events

Sensory-Friendly

Sensory-Friendly Southwick Zoo Experience

Friday, June 1, 2018, 6:00 p.m.—8:00 p.m.

Southwick Zoo

2 Southwick Street, Mendon, MA

This special event is designed for individuals with autism, their families, and others who may benefit from a sensory friendly experience.

Families will have the opportunity to spend two hours exploring the zoo and visiting animals in an intimate, quiet environment with no bright lights or loud noises

Tickets are specially priced at a discounted rate of \$12 each. Please contact Autism Alliance at 508-652-9900, AutismAlliance@Advocates.org or visit their website autismalliance.org.

Sensory-Sensitive Weekend in North Conway

Saturday, June 23, 2018, 9:30 a.m. to Sunday, June 24, 2018

Story Land

850 NH Route 16, Glen, New Hampshire

Join the staff at Story Land in New Hampshire for a customized Story Land experience. This weekend will cater to the Autism Community in hope families will feel more comfortable joining us on this special weekend! All Story Land cast members will be ready to help make your Story Land experience, an amazing one! Head to www.storylandnh.com for tickets or check out their event page [here](#).

Sensory Friendly Showing of Incredibles 2

Thursday, June 28, 2018 10:00 a.m.

Rave Cinemas

864 Riverdale Street, West Springfield, MA

Join the Autism Connections team on Thursday, June 28 at 10 a.m. at Rave Cinemas in West Springfield for a sensory friendly viewing of *Incredibles 2*, the sequel to the hit 2004 film about a loveable family of superheroes. Watch the trailer [here](#).

Sensory-Friendly

“Especially for Me” Sensory-Friendly Museum Afternoon

Saturday, July 14, 2018, 5:00 p.m.—8:00 p.m.

Discovery Museum

177 Main Street, Acton, MA

Come join in all the fun during this free evening for families with members on the autism spectrum. Explore the all-new and accessible Discovery Museum and Discovery Woods, our inclusively accessible nature playscape and treehouse, at your own pace. Dinner, including a gluten free option, will be provided courtesy of Not Your Average Joe's.

You may want to prepare for your visit by viewing or downloading the [Story Guide](#) to Discovery Woods and by visiting the [Exhibits](#) section of our website. Discovery Woods is open year-round, but closes at dusk during the winter months.

Pre-registration required, as space is limited. A registration link will appear on this listing once registration is open, at least 30 days prior to the event.

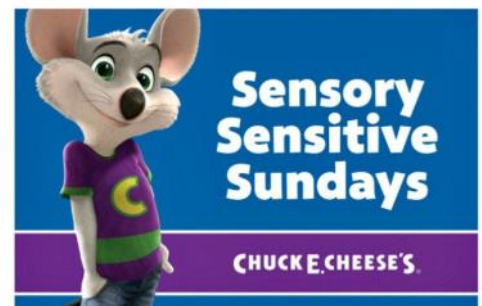
Monthly-Sensory-Sensitive Sundays at Chuck E. Cheese

First Sunday of the Month, 9:00 a.m.—11:00 a.m.

Chuck E. Cheese

1716 Boston Road, Springfield, MA

Chuck E. Cheese in Springfield now offers a sensory-sensitive experience on the first Sunday of every month. The Sensory Sensitive Sundays Experience includes less crowding and noise, dimmed lighting, and the show and music turned off or down.



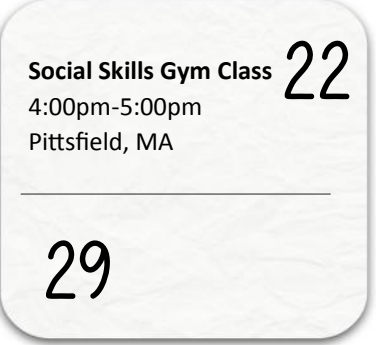
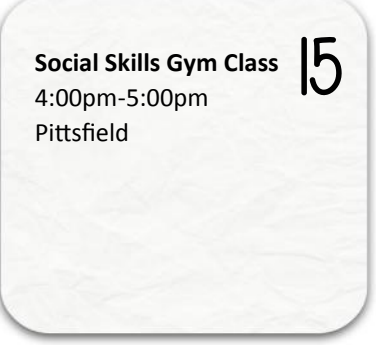
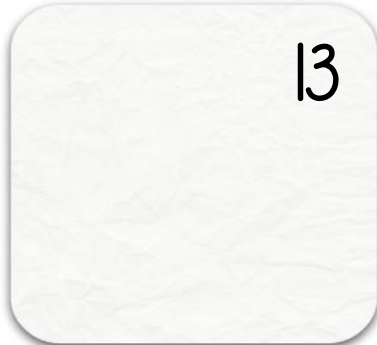
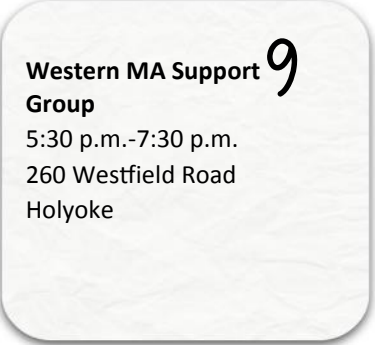
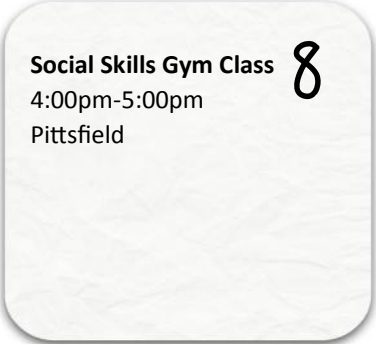
SUN

MON

TUES

WEDS

MAY 2018



THURS

FRI

SAT

AUTISM CONNECTIONS

CALENDAR

MAY 2018

Open Swim

3

6:00pm-7:00pm—

Gladys Allen Brigham Com-
munity Center

165 East Street, Pittsfield

4

5

Open Swim

10

6:00pm-7:00pm—

Gladys Allen Brigham Com-
munity Center

165 East Street, Pittsfield

11

12

Open Swim,

17

6:00pm-7:00pm

Gladys Allen Brigham

Community Ctr.—165 East

Street, Pittsfield

18

19

Open Swim

24

6:-7:00pm

Gladys Allen Brigham

Community Ctr. 165

East Street, Pittsfield

25

26

31

EVENTS & WORKSHOPS

TRANSITION CONFERENCE

Federation for Children with Special Needs: *Planning a Life Transition Conference*

May 31 and June 1, 8:30 a.m.—4:00 p.m.
Berkshire County ARC \$125/individual or \$175/
family

Planning A Life (PAL) is a two-day Transition planning conference in Pittsfield with information and resources for families, educators, and professionals. **Scholarships are available** – please contact the Federation for more information.

COMMUNITY/FAMILY EVENTS

Center For Human Development (CHD) Events

Please sign up and pay online at least one week before each program at CHD.org/DR. Call Jess at 413-788-9695 with any questions.

Kayaking

Thursdays starting June 14, 2018
3:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.
Jones Ferry River Access

Martial Arts

Tuesdays starting July 10, 2018
Kids' Session (ages 4 to 12)
5:45 p.m.– 6:30 p.m.
Young Adults' Session (ages 13-22)
6:30 p.m.-7:15 p.m.

Adaptive Rock Climbing

May 22, June 5 & 26, July 7 & 31, August 21
Central Rock Gym
165 Russell Street, Hadley, MA

Hip Hop Class For Adults (18+)

July 10, 17, 24 and August 7, 14, 21
85 Interstate Drive, West Springfield, MA

COMMUNITY/FAMILY EVENTS

Pittsfield Open Swim

Thursdays • 6:00pm-7:00pm
Gladys Allen Brigham Community Ctr.
165 East Street, Pittsfield, MA
RSVP: 442-5174 ext. 25

Open and free swim to all individuals and families. Registration is required and please note there will be no staffing for this swim. All children must be accompanied by an adult and any adults needing personal care or supervision must come with a caregiver.

Gluten-Free and Allergen Free Expo in Worcester

July 21, 2018-July 22, 2018

DCU Center, 50 Foster Street, Worcester, MA

For the special diet consumer, including the Celiac community, those with gluten sensitivities, autoimmune, inflammatory diseases and autism. There will be a vendor fair with over 100 exhibitors, classes related to the gluten free and allergen-friendly lifestyle, and authors, bloggers and workshops. Speakers include Vanessa Weisbrod, Kim Koeller, and Jenna Drew.

Save the Date!!!

September 15, 2018

Buddy's Sunshine Angels Golf Tournament
Bass Ridge Gold Course

PATHLIGHT PARTNER EVENTS

Whole Children, Milestones

41 Russell Street, Hadley, MA

Whole Children: Programs for school age children and teens (ages 3-16). Visit www.wholechildren.org/ for more information.

Milestones: Enrichment classes for older teens and adults. Visit <https://www.wholechildren.org/milestones-classes/> for more information.

Wild Goose Chase

May 20, 2018
Look Park, Florence, MA

TRAININGS/WORKSHOPS/TALKS

Making Sense of Health Care Financing (FREE)

Tuesday, June 12, 6:00pm—8:00pm

Family Empowerment, 41 Russell Street, Hadley

This workshop is an overview of the Affordable Care Act and Masshealth/Commonhealth insurances, eligibility, accessing benefits and services. RSVP to michelle.mendes@pathlightgroup.org.

Housing Planning Workshop

May 29, 2018

Fitchburg, MA

This workshop will introduce families to the range of public funds available to pay for housing and supportive services. The speaker will be Catherine Boyle, of Autism Housing Pathways. This workshop is part of the The Full Life Ahead workshops are designed for parents and caregivers as they plan for the future of their loved one with a disability. Topics include friendships, transitions, employment, housing and financial planning. For more information, contact Celia Brown at celiab@hmea.org. **To RSVP for this event contact** iavorvie@sevenhills.org or 978.602.8695 or visit www.facebook.com/SevenHillsFoundation/

Accountable Care Organization Public Forum

May 31, 2018

Non-Profit Center

Boston, MA

MassHealth has enrolled close to 100,000 people with disabilities in Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs). Is this working for you? Concerns? What's going great? Share your feedback at this ACO Forum.

* Sponsored by Disability Advocates Advancing our Healthcare Rights (DAAHR) and hosted by Boston Center for Independent Living.* **For accommodations or more information** visit www.facebook.com/events/179956042822454/ or contact Shaya at

**The Massachusetts Developmental Disability Council Family Empowerment Funds can provide grants for family members to attend conferences and trainings. Visit www.mddc.com for details.*

TRAININGS/WORKSHOPS/TALKS

Meet the New Commissioner of the Department of Developmental Services

June 12, 2018

College of the Holy Cross

1 College Street, Worcester, MA

Jane Ryder, the new commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Developmental services will be the featured speaker at the 29th Annual Legislative Breakfast.

RSVPs are required to 508-764-4085 or Pauline pdavis@thecenterofhope.org

Research Studies

Boston University

Boston University researchers are recruiting parents and high school students with autism to participate in an 18-month longitudinal study. They are looking for students with autism who are in their last year of high school and who will graduate with a regular high school diploma. Parents and students will complete a set of online and mailed measures now and then 1 ½ years from now. Participation should take 30-60 minutes at each time point. Parents will receive a \$25 gift card at each time point and youth will receive a \$15 gift card at each time point. For more information, email buroad@bu.edu, call (617) 353-2060 or visit <http://sites.bu.edu/roadahead/>.

UMASS

UMass Amherst is conducting a speech, language and listening study for teens with autism between the ages of 13-18. One of the requirements for the study is the ability to communicate verbally.

The study consists of one session of about 2 hours, and takes place on the UMass Amherst campus. Short breaks will be provided as needed and test findings will be forwarded to parents upon request. Participants will receive a \$40 Target gift card upon completion of all testing. Please contact Colleen Gargan (cgargan@umass.edu) or Mary Andrianopoulos (mva@comdis.umass.edu or 413-545-0551 for more information.

SUPPORT GROUPS

GROUP NAME	GROUP DESCRIPTION	MEETING DETAILS	CONTACT/MORE INFO
AMHERST			
Clinical & Support Options (CSO) Parent Support Group	For parents of children/youth with high functioning autism (Asperger's). Come share your experience, learn about resources, and hear from experts in the field. Childcare available. This is a parent led support group.	Saturdays 10:00am-11:30am Bridge Family Resource Center 101 University Dr, Suite A3 Amherst, MA	Group meets on Saturdays. Childcare available, refreshments served. Please call 413.549.0297 with questions.
CHICOPEE			
HOPE Autism Support Group	This group is designed for parents and caregivers of family members on the autism spectrum to meet and talk with others that are on the same journey in a positive and confidential environment.	If interested in joining, please contact Cathy.	Group will meet on the 2nd Friday of each month. For more information or to RSVP, please contact Cathy at camorgado@verizon.net .
EASTHAMPTON			
Asperger's Social Night for Adults	Autism Connections is happy to provide this social night twice a month for folks 18+ who identify as having Asperger's.	Autism Connections 116 Pleasant Street, Suite 366 Easthampton, MA	This group will resume in the near future. Please contact Kimberly LaMothe at 413.529.2428 x118 with any questions.
GREAT BARRINGTON			
Adult Discussion Group	This group is being offered by the Asperger/Autism Network (AANE). There is an attendance fee of \$5.	Mason Library 231 Main Street, Great Barrington	For more information please contact Stephanie Birkdale at stephanie.birkdale@aane.org .
HOLYOKE			
Autism Connections Western MA Support Group (previously Holyoke support group)	This support group is open to all family members of children and young adults with autism. The group is designed for parents and other caregivers to come together for support and to share information.	2nd Wednesday of the month 5:30pm-7:30pm MCS 260 Westfield Road Holyoke, MA	For more information and to RSVP, please email Linda Wynne at wynne92@aol.com . Group will meet 2nd Wednesday of each month. Child care is available—you must call our office at least one week in advance at 413.529.2428 if you need child care.
Mom's Night Out	Moms of people with different abilities are invited to bring their problems, triumphs and their need to laugh to Mom's Night Out. Jericho will supply drinks and refreshments. Bring something to share!	Call Linda LaPointe for meeting times. Jericho 537 Northampton Street Holyoke, MA	Must RSVP to Linda LaPointe at lindal@jerichobeca.org or calling 413.538.7450
Parent/Professional Advocacy League	Moving Forward: Our Journey. A group for empowering families through transition planning.	Please contact PPAL for locations and times.	For more information visit www.ppal.net or email eszela@ppal.net .
Rainbow Support Group of Western Massachusetts	This group provides support and info to individuals with intellectual challenges who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or those who are questioning.	Western Mass Training Consortium 187 High Street, Suite 202 Holyoke, MA	For questions or to find out meeting times contact Tammy Nothe-Hebert at 413.536.2401 x3036

GROUP NAME	GROUP DESCRIPTION	MEETING DETAILS	CONTACT/MORE INFO
NORTHAMPTON			
Women's Group	Support group for women with Autism. This group is being offered by the Asperger/Autism Network (AANE). There is no attendance fee.	Lilly Library 19 Meadow Street Florence, MA	For more information or to join this group, contact Stephanie Birkdale at stephanie.birkdale@aane.org .
Wire Monkey mamas coffee club	A bi-weekly meetup and solidarity circle for: foster mamas, stepmamas, guardians and adoptive mamas. Or anymama who takes care of another mama's child.	Every other Monday evening 6:00pm-7:00pm The Roost 1 Market Street, Northampton	For more information, text Yoshi at 413-347-2517
PITTSFIELD			
Asperger's Support Group of the Berkshires	This group is for individuals with Asperger's syndrome to come together and offer friendship, fellowship and support.	Wednesdays 5:00pm-6:30pm	Group will meet in various places throughout the community; please contact Elizabeth Flaherty at 443.4780 x16 or Elizabeth.Flaherty@pathlightgroup.org to RSVP and find out location.
Berkshire Teen Group	This group is for teens and young adults who live in Berkshire County and are on the autism spectrum. The group meets regularly for conversation and community based activities.	Will meet regularly, every other Friday evening, throughout the community.	Please contact Ben Breton at benjamin.breton@pathlightgroup.org or 413.529.2428 x121 for monthly group schedule and outing details.
SOUTH HADLEY			
LGBTQ and the Autism Spectrum	This group is being offered by the Asperger/Autism Network (AANE). There is an attendance fee of \$5.	S. Hadley Public Library Conference Room 2 Canal Street South Hadley, MA	For more information or to join this group, please contact Stephanie Birkdale at stephanie.birkdale@aane.org .
WESTFIELD			
Westfield Support Group for Adults with Asperger's Syndrome	This group is an opportunity for support and discussion among adults on the autism spectrum. We provide a "safe space" for our community and as such are not recommended for friends and family members except in a support role.	Building Autistic Community, Inc 507 Southampton Road #1 Westfield, MA	For more information, contact the group at info@bacautism.org or call BAC at 413.359.0222.
WILLIAMSBURG			
Families of Spirited Children (It Takes a Village)	This is a new group for parents, grandparents and caregivers of children with special needs, autism, ADHD or physical, sensory, or medical challenges. Free childcare and refreshments provided.	Tuesdays, 10:00am-11:30am, starting November 7, 2017 Anna T. Dunphy School 1 Petticoat Hill Road, Williamsburg	For more information, contact It Takes a Village at 413-650-3640 or Kat at info@hilltownvillage.org or www.facebook.com/hilltownvillage

Please help us go green. Contact Danielle if you are receiving a hardcopy of this newsletter and would prefer an electronic edition only.

2018 May Edition

Community Connection Newsletter

Autism Connections: a Pathlight program

Community Partner Extraordinaire!



Gina and Radcliffe Kenison at their annual golf tournament

Radcliffe is the Reason and Arthur Too! Fight for Autism



Words are not enough to describe how much *Radcliffe is the Reason and Arthur Too! Fight for Autism* have supported Autism Connections over the years. From holiday gifts to supporting families in special circumstances they are always available to help us with our special requests for families.

Gina and Radcliffe Kenison are the heart of soul of their organization and we applaud their truly extraordinary commitment to the community. Their lives are full with job, parent, and family obligations and they still find time and energy to keep their foundation committee active and meaningful. Thank you so much for all that you do.