



Community Connection

Autism Connections: a Pathlight program

Newsletter

Easthampton Holidays!

Family Holiday Party



Santa and friend at last year's party

"Oh the weather outside is frightful... " But our Holiday Party will be delightful!

The snow has already made an appearance, so it must be time to get in the mood for that special magic of the holiday season.

Join us to celebrate with food, fun, and our Guest of Honor, Santa Claus!

We will have pizza, snacks, fun activities for everyone, and a chance to visit with Santa. We'd love to see you!

Danielle.plasse@pathlightgroup.org can take your reservations. The party is from 5:30-7:30 p.m. in our Eastworks building, in the first floor event space.

ARICA Workshop

ARICA Workshop with Amy Weinstock at Palmer Library



Do you need help interpreting some of the details of ARICA law? Our workshop will discuss topics including,

MassHealth, eligibility, Premium Assistance, The Health Connector and accessing covered treatments.

Amy Weinstock is the highly respected Director of the Autism Insurance Resource Center at the University of Massachusetts Medical School's Eunice Kennedy Shriver Center.

The workshop on December 11 is at the Palmer Library, from 5:30pm-7:30pm.

To register, please email Danielle.plasse@pathlightgroup.org.



Autism Conference School Lottery is open!

We are offering three western MA schools the opportunity to win three complimentary admissions to our annual conference! Register [HERE](#).

Autism Connections' Annual Conference is coming up soon on Tuesday, April 23, 2019, at our NEW venue, the Sheraton Springfield Monarch Place Hotel.

We are offering our neighborhood schools an opportunity to win complimentary admissions to our conference through a lottery. Register at <http://bit.ly/SchoolConferenceLottery>.

Our exciting new format includes nine breakout sessions to be repeated in the morning and afternoon. Our applications are also in process for both CEUs and PDPs.

Please note that all applications must be completed online by 12/21/18. We will choose the winner on January 4, 2019. Special discounts will be offered to schools not winning the lottery!

Conference general registration opens in January on our website. See back page for more sponsor and exhibitor information.

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CONTACT INFORMATION

Easthampton Office

iHola! 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.

[donate](#)



NEWS & UPDATES

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Berkshire Activities

Please note, the next
ACBC meeting is January 18.

The Autism Collaborative of Berkshire County November Evening ACBC Meeting



Sarah Mitchell of Northwest Mutual presented a workshop on Financial Planning for the Future on November 7th. Sarah's passion and commitment to helping families plan for the financial future of loved ones showed throughout her presentation. She had some very helpful information for families on the process of building a team of professionals to help families navigate the ins and outs of planning. The ACBC is committed to providing some evening events this year

to accommodate working families and professionals. Please visit our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/Autism-Connections-Berkshire-285842931599582/?ref=settings> for more information about upcoming meetings. Our next day time monthly meeting is scheduled for January 18, 2019 at the BCARC Training Room.

You can find out more about Sarah Mitchell's presentation and other Autism Collaborative of Berkshire County events at <https://www.facebook.com/Autism-Connections-Berkshire-285842931599582/?ref=settings>.

ACBC is always looking for Spotlight Speakers. Spotlight Speakers are welcome to talk about their programs, topics of interest to the autism community, events, and/or initiatives that affect our families and individuals we work with. Please contact us at emailacbc@gmail.com if you are interested.

Festival of Trees



Autism Connections is proud to partner with the Berkshire Museum again this year for the Festival of Trees. This year the tree was decorated by our Adult Social Group led by Regina Mason. The group decided to showcase their hard

work and dedication to their Puppet Show *The Minstrel's Journey*.

The tree is decorated with the cast of characters from the play, all hand sewn by the group, and the set design serves as the beautiful tree skirt.

Bring your family to enjoy this Berkshire holiday tradition November 17 through January 6.

The 2018 Festival will feature more than 100 dazzling, decorated holiday trees, each one depicting a popular song. From hip-hop to doo-wop, blues and jazz to pop, country, and rock, can you guess the song titles from the decorations on each tree?

If you do make a visit to the museum, we'd love to see pictures! Take a pic with our tree and tag us on Facebook, Autism Connections Berkshire. We'd love to see your adventures!

Center News

Winter Survival Guide

We've already had the first snow fall of the season, and winter is making itself known! The changing seasons can be a challenging time for us all, and winter can often feel like the longest season.

Holidays, social engagements, and long snow days can bring challenges to all families, but they can be uniquely difficult for people with autism. The contrast between the bustle of holiday parties, family gatherings, gift shopping, decorating, and religious services, followed by the quieter winter days after the hustle of the holiday season can give anyone whiplash. Here's a few tips to help you and your family navigate the transitions of the winter season.



The old New England saying "If you don't like the weather, wait a minute" can make it difficult to prepare in advance for weather-related changes in routine and new clothing and safety

expectations in snow, rain or cold weather. The seasonal change to heavier clothing can be challenging for those who have sensory sensitivities.

Many people with autism prefer the lighter touch of summer clothing, or have difficulty tolerating different fabric textures. For some children, it may help to start with putting that summer clothing away and out of sight so that it is no longer an option. For others, it's easier to add layers – for example, if someone can only tolerate wearing short-sleeves, adding a sweatshirt or hoodie for colder days may be simpler than trying to change an entire wardrobe.

Be aware of barriers like buttons and zips that occur more frequently in winter clothing than summer wear – this may be frustrating for children who cannot express why.

Also consider what sensory sensitivities may influence your child's reaction to wearing certain clothing – does the fabric make a subtle "swishing" sound that can be distracting, or is it a coarser texture than your child usually wears?

Many struggle with wearing a winter coat, and it may be necessary to slowly desensitize your child to wearing it. Set a timer for a few seconds, and have your child practice wearing it for the minimum amount of time they can tolerate. It may just be a few seconds, or your child may only be able to tolerate trying on one sleeve at first. Reward your child with a favorite item or activity immediately after they practice wearing the coat, and slowly extend the amount of time until your child can tolerate wearing a coat for longer periods. Consider buying a coat with a hood, if wearing a hat is also difficult.



It may be helpful to establish a "mantra" that can be used to consistently signal it's time to get ready to go out. For example, "It's cold outside. We wear our coats."



Preparing for social gatherings unique to the season can also require preparation for your child –

consider creating a social story, role playing what may happen, and talking to the hosts or guests at the event so that they are aware of your child's needs.

Here's a link to some additional pointers on navigating the holidays. This article mentions Asperger's, but has relevant tips for all families: <https://www.differentbrains.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Spectrumly-Speaking-Holiday-Spectrumtacular-Handout-Different-Brains-Inc.pdf>.

Once the holiday season is over, January and February can present different challenges – school closings or delays, or long days inside because of bad weather. The unexpected change in routine can be difficult for people with autism, and it can be useful to create a routine for those "expectedly unexpected" situations.

Continued on page 4

Center News

Continued from page 3



There are several websites that have social story templates for snow days or holidays, including Autism Speaks and [http://www.iroqsea.org/social-](http://www.iroqsea.org/social-stories)

[stories](http://www.iroqsea.org/social-stories). This site allows you to edit the text of the story and add your own photos.

Also consider making a list of activities (visual or written, depending on what works best for your child) and allowing them to choose. Being given options and the feeling of control may limit behavioral issues. Depending on your child's needs, you may need to limit choices to two options. If your child has a lot of energy, it may be helpful to purchase a small indoor trampoline or swing to help them expel excess energy and give them sensory feedback.

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is an often-discussed form of depression this time of year, but it's important to note that it can affect children, teens and adults with autism as well.

Symptoms include changes in appetite, sleep, and mood, and lack of enjoyment in activities, as well as difficulty concentrating, and leaden feeling in the arms and legs. If you suspect that your loved one is experiencing SAD, talk to their doctor.



Most important, but hardest to do, is to remember to take care of yourself during the winter. Often the winter is hard for caregivers and parents as well as people with autism, as it's easier to become isolated.

Consider joining an online support group, but also schedule time to do something that helps you reset and is just about you - whether it's binge watching your favorite show, reading a book, or taking five minutes to praise yourself on everything you've done that day. Parents deserve rewards too!

Resources: <https://www.autismspeaks.org/expert-opinion/autism-cold-weather-dangers-teen-needs-help-transitioning-winter>

<https://researchautism.org/best-of-the-oracle-dealing-with-the-holidays/>

<http://www.myaspergerschild.com/2011/11/aspergers-children-and-seasonal.html>

In the words of a parent

Ivy Rodriguez was looking for a way to keep her daughter dancing. She came to us to see if we could help and we were able to assist with her dance classes. Her daughter Anelisse is thriving with involvement in an activity that she loves.

In Ivy's words..."This past year was great for Anelisse! She completed her 2nd year in elementary ballet; one year in level one and one year in level two. After a 2nd year in level two, she can go into intermediate!

She also completed her first year in hip hop. Hip hop has made her move her body in a different way that I think actually helped with the ballet moves and overall strengthening.

She's excited that she's more confident in the moves and it definitely showed during the recital. Her self esteem is high and I love she feels like she's part of a team especially when one of my biggest worries was her becoming a teen and adult and feeling left out/isolated."

We wish Anelisse and Ivy the best of luck, and appreciate that they were willing to share their story. Do you have a story about your child's passion? Please let us know.



Center News

Trainings/Workshops

Autism Connections has a variety of trainings to offer upon request. We tailor our trainings to our audience, be they parents and caregivers, human service professionals, or teachers. Our trainings can also be adapted to all age ranges and ability levels.

In November, we were thrilled to offer our training on "The Hidden Curriculum" (about navigating the unspoken social rules our society lives by) to a group of dedicated teachers at Wahconah Regional High School in Dalton.

We also greatly enjoyed sharing our training on "Understanding and Responding to Challenging Behaviors" with pre-school teachers at Chicopee Child Development Center.

If you'd like to hear more about the trainings we have to offer, please contact Katie Drumm at Katie.drumm@pathlightgroup.org, 413-529-2428, x 111.

ARICA Workshop with Amy Weinstock

Autism Connections is offering a workshop with Amy Weinstock, Director of the Autism Insurance Resource Center. She will present on the ARICA law, and other insurance-funded autism-related supports.

ARICA stands for An Act Relative to Insurance Coverage for Autism which requires private health insurers in MA to provide coverage for the diagnosis and treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorder. Ms. Weinstock has been a strong advocate and resource for families navigating insurance-funded autism supports. Don't miss this chance to hear from her directly! She will discuss autism insurance for families in Massachusetts, including: ARICA, MassHealth, including recent changes, eligibility, Premium Assistance, The Health Connector and covered treatments and how to access them.

A minimum of 15 participants are required for this training. Light refreshments will be provided.

The workshop is December 11 at the Palmer Library, from 5:30pm-7:30pm. To register, please call 413-529-2428 x115, or email Danielle.plasse@pathlightgroup.org.

Upcoming Events

Berkshire Holiday Celebration

Celebrate the tradition of *A Christmas Carol* with the whole family, and revel in the joy and redemptive power of Christmas as told in the timeless story of Ebenezer Scrooge. Journey back to Victorian England and the experience the classic story filled with holiday carols.

The December 12 performance will be modified to accommodate those with sensory input challenges. There will be "relaxed house rules", which mean movement and noise will not only be allowed but expected. The goal is to create an experience where people with sensory challenges and their entire family can enjoy a holiday experience together, in a supported environment.



FREE tickets (limited quantity) are available for families connected to Autism Connections. **Please call Erica at 413-443-4780 x19 to reserve your seats now!** The show is December 12 at 6:00p.m. at the Colonial Theater in

Hanukkah celebration

Springfield JCC, 1160 Dickinson Street, December 2.

Find more information about festivities at <http://www.springfieldjcc.org/jewishlife/holidays/hanukkah/>



Berkshire Sensory Santa Photo op!

Ad Lib Inc., 215 North Street, Pittsfield
December 2, 1-4 p.m. (appointments required)



Join the Junior League of Berkshire County and Autism Connections for a sensory friendly experience with Santa. Appointments are offered with sensory activities and light refreshments. Every child will receive a book, which have been generously donated by Berkshire United Way.

Please register at <http://bit.ly/SantaBerkshires>. Space donated by AdLib of Berkshire County. Santa's accommodations provided by Greylock Federal Credit Union. Photography by Barbara Schmick-Berkshire Visions.

SUN

MON

TUES

WEDS

DECEMBER 2018

KEY: Activity open to the community; Workshop/Meeting open to the community; Regularly scheduled group currently closed to new

<p>Open Swim 2:30pm-3:30pm Berkshire Family YMCA North Adams</p> <p>2</p> <p>First Day of Hanukkah</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>Social Skills Gym Class 4:00pm-5:00pm Patterson Field House Berkshire CC</p> <p>4</p>	<p>Building Successful Relationships Class 6:00pm-7:30pm Autism Connections' office Pittsfield</p> <p>5</p>
<p>Open Swim 2:30pm-3:30pm Berkshire Family YMCA North Adams</p> <p>9</p>	<p>10</p>	<p>Social Skills Gym Class 4:00pm-5:00pm Patterson Field House Berkshire CC</p> <p>11</p> <p>ARICA Workshop with Amy Weinstock 5:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m. Palmer Library</p>	<p>Autism Connections Parent Support 5:30pm-7:30pm Holyoke</p> <p>12</p> <p>A Christmas Carol 6:00pm, The Colonial Theatre, Pittsfield</p> <p>Building Successful Relationships Class 6:00pm-7:30pm Autism Connections' office, Pittsfield</p>
<p>Open Swim 2:30pm-3:30pm Berkshire Family YMCA North Adams</p> <p>16</p>	<p>17</p>	<p>Social Skills Gym Class 4:00pm-5:00pm Patterson Field House Berkshire CC</p> <p>18</p>	<p>Aspergers' Support Group 5:00pm-6:00pm Pittsfield</p> <p>19</p> <p>Building Successful Relationships Class 6:00pm-7:30pm Pittsfield Autism Connections' office Pittsfield</p>
<p>Open Swim 2:30pm-3:30pm Berkshire Family YMCA North Adams</p> <p>23</p> <hr/> <p>Open Swim 2:30pm-3:30pm Berkshire Family YMCA North Adams</p> <p>30</p>	<p>24</p> <p>New Year's Eve</p> <p>31</p>	<p>Christmas Day</p> <p>25</p> <p><i>Autism Connections will be closed</i></p>	<p>Building Successful Relationships Class 6:00pm-7:30pm Pittsfield Autism Connections' office Pittsfield</p> <p>26</p>

THURS

FRI

SAT

AUTISM CONNECTIONS CALENDAR

members

Berkshire Teen Group
Truly Independent Wrestling
Presents: The Clash Before Christmas
Berkshire Mall

6

Adult Social Group
4:00pm-6:00pm
Autism Connections'
Pittsfield Office

Open Swim
6:00pm-7:00pm
Gladys Allen Brigham
Center, Pittsfield

7

8


13

Adult Social Group
4:00pm-6:00pm
Autism Connections'
Pittsfield Office

Open Swim
6:00pm-7:00pm
Gladys Allen Brigham
Center, Pittsfield

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**Autism Connections
Holiday Party**
5:30 p.m.—7:30 p.m.
Eastworks, Easthampton



15

20

Adult Social Group
4:00pm-6:00pm
Autism Connections'
Pittsfield Office

Open Swim
6:00pm-7:00pm
Gladys Allen Brigham
Center, Pittsfield

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Berkshire Teen Group
Winter Solstice
Party/Holiday Jamboree!

22

27

Adult Social Group
4:00pm-6:00pm
Autism Connections'
Pittsfield Office

Open Swim
6:00pm-7:00pm
Gladys Allen Brigham
Center, Pittsfield

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Coming Up

April 2019

April 23, 2019
Autism Connections'
Annual Autism Conference



EVENTS & CLASSES

WORKSHOPS/TRAININGS

How Working Affects SSI and SSDI

Monday, December 3, 2018 5:30 p.m.– 7:30 p.m.

Berkshire Athenaeum Auditorium

1 Wendell Ave, Pittsfield, MA

Work Without Limits consists of a team of benefits counselors certified by Virginia Commonwealth University. This team assists job seekers or working individuals with disabilities and their family members to understand how work earnings or wage increases affect eligibility for public benefits such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), Medicaid (MassHealth), and/or Medicare and other disability and low income benefits and programs. For more information regarding future events, please contact Terry Unwin at terry.unwin@state.ma.us or at 413-447-7381.

ARICA Workshop with Amy Weinstock

Tuesday, December 11, 2018 5:30 p.m.–7:30 p.m.

Palmer Library, A FREE community workshop

Do you need help interpreting some of the details of ARICA law? We have organized a workshop for you to answer your questions. Amy Weinstock is the Director of the Autism Insurance Resource Center at the University of Massachusetts Medical School's Eunice Kennedy Shriver Center, and an instructor in the medical school's Department of Psychiatry. She will discuss topics including MassHealth, how to figure out what coverage you need, Premium Assistance, and covered treatments and how to access them. To register, please email Danielle.plasse@pathlightgroup.org.

Maximizing Community Financial Supports

Tuesday, December 11, 2018 6:00p.m.-8:00 p.m.

Family Empowerment, 41 Russell Street

A FREE community workshop

Are you aware of what income-based resources are available? Have you considered you or your loved one may be eligible for these resources? Come and learn about programs from the Food Bank, Wayfinders, and Community Action. You may be surprised! RSVP to michelle.mendes@pathlightgroup.org.

COMMUNITY/FAMILY EVENTS

UCP Open Swim

Gladys Allen Brigham Center

Thursdays 6:00 p.m. –7:00 p.m.

165 East St, Pittsfield, MA

2
Locations!

Berkshire Family YMCA

Sundays 2:30 p.m. –3:30 p.m.

22 Brickyard Court, North Adams, MA

Open and free to all individuals and families affiliated with UCP and Autism Connections. Registration is required. Please call the Gladys Allen Brigham Center at 413-442-5174 ext. 25 or the Berkshire Family YMCA at 413-663-6529.

Please note there will be no staffing at open swim. All children must be accompanied by an adult and all adults that will need personal care must come with a caregiver.

Be sure to sign-in when you arrive and indicate which agency you are associated with (UCP or Autism Connections).

Autism Connections Holiday Party

Friday, December 14, 2018

5:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m.

Eastworks Event Space

116 Pleasant Street, Easthampton, MA

Come celebrate the holidays at our annual family holiday party! We will have music, activities, and a few surprises. Our sensory-friendly Santa is the best and so wonderful at creating memorable experiences for children (and adults alike)! Make sure to RSVP! Contact Danielle at Danielle.plasse@pathlightgroup.org or at 413-529-2428 ext.115.

SENSORY-FRIENDLY**Sensory-Friendly Performance of Silver Bells...
(It's Christmas Time In The City)**

Saturday December 1, 2018, 2:00 p.m.
Mount Wachusett Community College
444 Green St. Gardner, MA \$10

Back by popular demand! The hustle and bustle of Christmas in New York City comes to the Theatre at the Mount stage in this traditional-meets-untraditional Christmas Spectacular! The elegance and excitement of Times Square, Radio City Music Hall, and St. Patrick's Cathedral are filled with holiday music, love and laughter for the entire family...and a special visit from the big guy in the red suit himself! Please visit www.mwcc.edu/tam or call 978-630-9388 for tickets.

**Sensory and Family Safe Performance of
Pioneer Valley Ballet Nutcracker**

Friday, December 7, 2018 4:00 p.m.
Academy of Music, 274 Main St, Northampton, MA



This performance time will be reduced to 1 hour with no intermission. There will be reduced levels and lighting contrast.

Please visit www.PioneerValleyBallet.org for tickets.

Whole Children

Next session: January 7—March 9
41 Russell Street, Hadley, MA

Whole Children's classes have built-in skill-building components, whether it's teaching the finer points of basketball, how to navigate the playground, or how to talk to friends.

The next session of classes starts on January 7, 2019 - see the catalog [HERE](#).

**Sensory Friendly Performance of A
Christmas Carol**

Wednesday, December 12, 2018 6:00 p.m.
Colonial Theater, 111 South Street, Pittsfield

Celebrate the tradition of *A Christmas Carol* with the whole family, and revel in the joy and redemptive power of Christmas as told in the timeless story of Ebenezer Scrooge. The December 12 performance will be modified to accommodate those with sensory input challenges. There will be "relaxed house rules", which mean movement and noise will not only be allowed but expected. The goal is to create an experience where people with sensory challenges and their entire family can enjoy a holiday experience together, in a supported environment.

Limited FREE tickets are available for families connected to Autism Connections. **Please call Erica at 413-443-4780 x19 to reserve your seats now!**

YOUNG ADULT**Milestones**

Recreational programs for young adults in Hadley, more info [HERE](#).

AANE Pizza and Game Night

December 5: *E. Longmeadow Congregational Church*
December 6: *UMASS Amherst Campus Center*
December 27: *Holyoke at MCS*
All dates—6:00pm-8:00 p.m. \$12

Have dinner, socialize, and play games (feel free to bring your favorite games). Please visit aane.org/events/2018-09/ to register at your preferred location, and call 617-393-3824 for more information.

Jericho Rock and Roll Dance

December 19, 2018, *Castle of Knights, Chicopee, \$3*
Refreshments provided, parents and staff free entry.
For more information call 413-538-7450 or visit <http://www.jerichobeca.org/what-we-do/events/>

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.
ATHOL			
Autism Support Group	This is a monthly support group for parents, caregivers, grandparents and siblings of autistic children. RSVP is required. December's meeting will be held on December 16th.	December's meeting will be held on December 16th. 4th Sunday of the month Athol Memorial Hospital, The Hillis Conference Room, 2033 Main St., Athol	Please contact Amanda Gallant at Amanda.gallant@heywood.org with questions or to RSVP.
The United ARC, Caregivers' Resource Group	Socialize with other caregivers and help support each other through all of the ins and outs of being a caregiver or parent to a person with intellectual or developmental disabilities. Join us to discuss ideas and gain valuable resources.	3rd Thursday of the month 10:00am-12:00pm 6:00pm-8:00pm 361 Main Street, Athol, MA	Refreshments will be provided. RSVP is not required, but is helpful for planning purposes. Call Karen Parker at 978-249-4052, x 1047.
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.	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 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@aane.org .
HOLYOKE			
Autism Connections Western MA 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	Email Linda Wynne at wynne92@aol.com for RSVP and more info. Childcare is offered and requires a reservation one week in advance. Call our office at 413.529.2428.
Mom's Night Out	Moms of people with different abilities are invited to bring their problems, triumphs and their need to laugh. Jericho will supply drinks and refreshments. Bring something to share!	Jericho 537 Northampton Street Holyoke, MA	For meeting times and to RSVP contact 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 MA	This group provides support and info to individuals with intellectual challenges who identify as gay, lesbian, or transgender.	Western Mass Training Consortium 137 Highland Street, Suite 200, Holyoke, MA	For questions or to find out meeting times contact Tammy Nothe-Hebert at 413.529.2428 x2000
NORTHAMPTON			
Growing Strong Skills Training	The group is for children and their caregivers and will use the Attachment Regulation and Competency Framework to help children learn different skills.	Tuesdays 4:45-6:15pm CSO Outpatient Clinic 8 Atwood Dr, Suite 201, Northampton	For more information and to register please contact Dave at 413.582.0471 ext. 5080 or Kim ext. 5032
Valley ADHD Parent Support Group	This group is for parents and caregivers to receive ADHD information and support. It is a place where you can be heard and not be judged	1st Monday of the month, 6:30-8:00pm Northampton Area Pediatrics 193 Locust St., Northampton	For more information contact ValleyADHDFamilies@gmail.com .

GROUP NAME	GROUP DESCRIPTION	MEETING DETAILS	CONTACT/MORE INFO
NORTHAMPTON			
Florence Women's Support Group	Support group for women with Autism, ages 18+. This free group is being offered by the Asperger/Autism Network (AANE).	Third Thursday of the month, Lilly Library, 19 Meadow Street, Florence	For more information or to join this group, contact Stephanie Birkdale at stephanie.birkdale@aane.org .
Wire Monkey Mama's Coffee Club	A bi-weekly meetup and solidarity circle for all mamas like grand, step, foster, and any mama who cares for a child.	Every other Monday evening 6:00pm-7:00pm 1 Market Street, Northampton	At The Roost in 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 locations.	Please contact Elizabeth Flaherty at 443.4780 x16 or Elizabeth.Flaherty@pathlightgroup.org to RSVP.
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.
SPRINGFIELD			
Impact Center Support Group	A monthly support group for parents and caregivers of youths' with social/emotional/behavioral challenges. El Support Network en colaboración con Gandara ofrece un grupo de apoyo mensual para padres y cuidadores de jóvenes con problemas sociales / emocionales y de	English Group: 1st Friday of the month 12pm-1:30pm Grupo Español-Y el tercer Viernes de 10am-11:30am 41 Taylor Street, Springfield	For information and to RSVP, please contact Cynthia Santiago at csantiago@wmtcinfo.org or 413-218-5055 Informacion de RSVP: Cynthia Santiago at csantiago@wmtcinfo.org or 413-218-5055
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 information or to join, 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" 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 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 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

ONLINE SUPPORT GROUPS

GROUP NAME	GROUP DESCRIPTION	DATES/TIMES
<p>Before formal registration for the below groups, a 1-1 informational meeting with the facilitator is required. The purposes of the informational meetings are for you, the participant, and facilitator to get to know one another, to discuss the format of the group, and gain a sense of the needs and interests of the participants. This meeting can take place virtually via Skype, FaceTime or Zoom. Email events@aane.org or call 617-393-3824 x 32 for more information and to schedule a meeting with the facilitator.</p>		
Online Support Group for Parents of Teen Boys	This online support group will focus on topics of particular interest to parents of tween boys.	12:30 p.m.-2:00 p.m.. \$120 2/14/2019, 2/28/2019, 3/14/2019, 3/28/2019, 4/11/2019, 4/25/2019, 5/9/2019, 5/23/2019

2018 December Edition

Community Connection Newsletter

Autism Connections: a Pathlight program



Save the date: Autism Conference!

If you are an educator, parent, caregiver, person with autism, professional, or anyone interested in autism, please save the date for our conference.

General Registration will open in January.

We have new, interesting levels of

sponsorship this year and an exciting new space for exhibitors.

Please contact joanne.lucey@pathlightgroup.org with any questions if you would like more information about sponsorships or exhibitor tables in the Exhibitor Showcase.

*Happy Holidays from
all of us at Autism Connections.
Thank you for sharing
your lives with us.*

HAPPY★NEW★YEAR

**A special thank you to the Berkshire
Autism Initiative for their tireless
support of Autism Connections.**