



Community Connection

Autism Connections: a Pathlight program

Newsletter

2018—The year in review: A message from our Director

By **KAREN SERRA**
Director

Thank you for making 2018 another amazing year for Autism Connections! It was a year filled with familiar faces along with many new people. Our dedicated teams



have done an incredible job furthering our outreach, strengthening our programs and honoring our mission. Autism Connections' mission is to help individuals, families, schools, professionals, agencies and communities understand autism, promote the well-being of individuals with autism, and foster their inclusion in the community. We work to help Individuals and families build on their

strengths, create a positive vision for the future, and help children with autism learn, grow, and be welcomed, fully included members of their communities.

Here are some highlights of our accomplishments in 2018:

- ◆ 47,400 newsletters sent to individuals, families, and professionals
- ◆ 3,216 connections made through information phone calls and walk-ins
- ◆ 522 individuals and families who attended one or more of our events
- ◆ 32 community outreach events to help connect with new individuals and families
- ◆ 21 family events, including sensory-friendly holiday parties, picnics, movie nights, and school vacation events
- ◆ 11 workshops to support individuals, families and professionals
- ◆ 5 parent and peer groups that meet weekly or monthly
- ◆ 73 adults currently in our newly established Supports Program
- ◆ 28th Annual Autism Connections Conference held

It's been an honor and a pleasure working with all of you this past year and 2019 is going to be even better! We are starting the year with a newly formed Adult Support Program led by Program Manager Danielle Scibelli. She and her team are dedicated to providing high quality, flexible, individualized supports to adults with autism in western Massachusetts. Their span of expertise and experience supports a multi-tiered approach that focuses on a person's wants, needs and goals. It has certainly solidified quickly in the first few months of its development.

As you may know we have many offices throughout western Massachusetts. In the early months of 2019 our office located on North Street in Pittsfield is moving to a bigger space with better parking. Our new office will be in the Eagle Building at 75 Church Street, Pittsfield. We can still be found at our North Street office until at least March. Look for the official announcement and Open House details in one of our monthly newsletters.

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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.

[donate](#)

Conference registration is now open, please visit our [website](#) for more info!



NEWS & UPDATES

STAFF DIRECTORY

Karen Serra 413.588.1052
Director

Erica Alberti 413.529.2428
IFFS Specialist

Ben Breton 413.443.4780
Autism Specialist

Lora Cortis 413.529.2428 x124
Autism Specialist

Amber Curry 413.529.2428 x122
Autism Specialist/Support Broker

Erica Donovan 413.443.4780 x19
Berkshire Program Manager

Carla Doyle-Florence 413.529.2428 x119
Autism Support Broker

Katie Drumm 413.529.2428 x111
Easthampton Program Manager

Lee Guilbault 413.529.2428 x118
IFFS Specialist

Nancy Farnsworth 413.529.2428 x113
Educational Advocate

Elizabeth Flaherty 413.443.4780
Autism Specialist

Lee Guibault 413.529.2428 x118
Autism Specialist

William Liverpool 413.529.2428 x112
Habla español, Autism Support Broker

Joanne Lucey 413.529.2428 x116
Project Manager

Joyce Paige 413.529.2428
Office Coordinator

Danielle Plasse 413.529.2428 x115
Office Coordinator

Joemary Rodriguez 413.529.2428 x121
Habla español, IFFS Specialist

Gaby Santiago 413.529.2428 x125
Habla español, Bilingual Autism Specialist

Danielle Scibelli 413.585.8010
Adult Support Program Manager

Rhonda Setkewich 413.529.2428 x117
IFFS Program Manager

Kelly Summers 413.443.4780
Autism Specialist

Tanya White 413.585.8010 x127
Autism Specialist

Kim Wyckoff 413.529.2428 x127
Autism Support Broker

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Betsy Benton

Lisa Crouser

Paula Fredericks

Bill Loomis

Pamela Sanders

Michael Wilcox

Jeanne Zobel-Lachuisa

Berkshire Activities

The Autism Collaborative of Berkshire County, January ACBC Meeting



The Autism Collaborative of Berkshire County (ACBC) resumed monthly meetings in January. The topic of January's meeting, Relationships, Sexuality, and Autism, focused on two different ways to approach teaching the subject to people with Autism. Rebecca Cachat of Berkshire County ARC presented material from the Elevatus curriculum. She gave us some insight on the lesson plans and how she is teaching them to her current classes.

Our second presenter, Regina Mason, talked about her experience teaching a class for adults who come with lots of knowledge and education. Regina is co-teaching this class with Kelly Summers, an Autism Specialist at Autism Connections. Kelly works with some of the participants outside of class time, helping them to apply classroom strategies in the community.

During her presentation, Regina talked about how the curriculum they are creating is based solely on the needs that emerge from conversations in the group. The curriculum is a mesh of role playing, teaching concrete skills, and working to "fill the holes" in learning. Her goal is to make these classes as applicable to real life as possible. The title of the class, ***Navigating Social Nuances***, does just that, prepare the participants with a real life understanding of relationship building, social communication, and safely engaging in intimate relationships.

If you would like information on either group, please contact Rebecca Cachat, BCARC at RCachat@bcarc.org or 413-464-8000 ext 20. Or Kelly Summers, Autism Connections at Kelly.summers@pathlightgroup.org or 413-443-4780 ext 23.

The next meeting of ACBC is February 15, 10am-12pm, at the new BCARC Training Room location, 877 South Street, 3rd floor, in Pittsfield. The topic is Transition Services and Community Day Supports (CBDS). For complete information, view the flyer [HERE](#).

Yoga Class with Paula Boyajian

Wednesday January 16—April 10, 2019, 4:00 p.m.—5:00 p.m.

For ages 16+; Free

Autism Connections, 100 North Street, Suite 322, Pittsfield

This is a wonderful new community partnership for Autism Connections! The goal of these free classes is to provide supported, guided yoga instruction to teens (16+) and adults with autism. Different types of relaxation methods using chair yoga and well as floor yoga and breathing will be explored. Contact kellysumers@pathlightgroup.org for more information or to register. Download the flyer [HERE](#).



Center News

Cont. from page 1

Our annual Autism Conference will be held in April again this year- and a lot has changed. We have restructured our conference to include breakout sessions that focus on a wide variety of topics that relate to individuals, families, and professionals. To accommodate this major change we have relocated our event to Sheraton Springfield Monarch Place Hotel. Please join us on April 23rd for a day of fun, information and collaboration. Registration is now open at <https://autismconnectionsma.org/news-and-events/autism-conference/>.

29th ANNUAL
AUTISM CONNECTIONS
AUTISM
CONFERENCE
APRIL 23, 2019

Autism Conference Breakout Sessions!

Did you know that our Autism Conference will offer breakout sessions this year? Download the breakout descriptions [HERE](#).

Choose from sessions on Transition, Boundaries and Relationships, ARICA, Communication Supports, Neuropsychological Evaluation Results, Grief Strategies and much more!

Free Sensory Friendly Skate Opportunity!

Friday, February 22 from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
Boys & Girls Club, 16 Melville Street, Pittsfield

The City of Pittsfield Recreation Program has teamed up with the Boys & Girls Club of the Berkshires and Autism Connections to provide a **free** sensory skate opportunity. For more information email parks@cityofpittsfield.org.

A Goodbye to Kimberly LaMothe Marchese

We would also like to take this time to bid a fond farewell to Kimberly LaMothe Marchese. Kimberly was a Behavioral Specialist here at Autism Connections and she had the opportunity to work with many families in our IFFS program.



Kimberly will certainly be missed by the families whose lives she touched, and she will be missed by her peers. We wish her the best in her future endeavors!

A welcome to our new team members!

Lee Guilbault

Lee Guilbault is the mother of two beautiful kiddos, and a graduate of Mount Holyoke College. She brings with her a background working with adults, children with autism and/or disabilities, ABA/RBT, as well as resource and advocacy work. She is excited about making Autism Connections her home as an IFFS Specialist and is looking forward to helping our families live their best lives.



Joemary Rodriguez

Joemary is happy to be working as an IFFS Specialist at Autism Connections. She is looking forward to serving our community by providing a wide range of services and supports. Prior to joining Autism Connections, Joemary was a preschool teacher at Head Start for 22 years. She is a devoted mother of two and is passionate about traveling, animals and life.



Erica Alberti

Erica is also excited to be joining the Autism Connections team! She is originally from the Berkshires and attended UMass Amherst, receiving an undergraduate degree in Psychology. She also plans to attend graduate school in the future to obtain a Master's in Social Work. She has been working in the mental health field for years in a variety of settings, such as residential homes, a private school for children with autism, and the CBHI In-Home Therapy and Therapeutic Mentoring program. She is extremely passionate about working with children and their families and will surely be a valuable asset to the IFFS program!



Center News

February Fun Week!

Come in out of the cold and let the good times roll with us during February Vacation Week! Pick one or two activities, or try them all! Please register in advance for any or all of our activities with Danielle Plasse at 413-529-2428 x 115 or danielle.plasse@pathlightgroup.org.

Sensory Friendly Movie: "The Lego Movie 2: The Second Part."

Tuesday, February 19, 2019, 9:30 am
Cinemark Theater (formerly RAVE)
864 Riverdale St., W. Springfield



Everything is AWESOME in this sensory-sensitive showing! The house lights will be up and the sound will be lowered. The cost is \$5 per person and please bring CASH ONLY for tickets.

Table Tennis at Zing!

Wednesday, February 20, 2019
10am-11am or 11am-12pm

Zing! Table Tennis Center at the
Keystone Building,
122 Pleasant Street, Suite 111, Easthampton



Autism Connections has reserved half of the center for open table tennis play. Have a Zinging good time with us at our region's only full-time table tennis center! There is no charge for this activity. Please choose a time slot to ensure there is enough space. It may be possible to book 2 time slots for extended play.

Sensory Friendly Trampoline Hour

Friday, February 22, 2019, 9am-10am
1250 St. James Ave, Springfield

By popular demand, Autism Connections has again rented out Bounce! Trampoline Sports for a sensory-friendly hour! Join us for a chance to enjoy this popular venue when the music is off and it is closed to the public. The activity cost is \$10 per child for the hour. Parents and caregivers are free. Limited tickets for \$5/child are available for those with financial need. Inquire when registering. Please bring CASH ONLY for tickets.



Community Connections: Autism Training for Businesses

Tuesday, February 12, 2019, 10am-12pm
Athol Public Library (Program Room)
568 Main St., Athol

Calling all gyms, hair salons/barber shops, libraries, movie theaters, community centers, dance studios, and MORE! Register with Danielle Plasse at 413-529-2428 ext. 115 or danielle.plasse@pathlightgroup.org.

Autism Connections is offering a brand-new FREE training for community-based organizations and businesses. Would you like to learn how to better support your clientele with autism? One in fifty-nine children born today are diagnosed with autism. Lack of understanding and awareness can often be a barrier to allowing this diverse population to be fully active members of their communities.

Learn more about this diagnosis and how businesses and organizations can implement simple but effective supports and strategies to help people with autism have a more inclusive, positive experience in their day-to-day communities. Many of these strategies are also useful for people with Sensory Integration Disorder and ADHD.

This training can also help your organization build its profile in your community! All attendees will receive a certificate of participation.

transition fair

Holyoke/Chicopee DDS Transition Fair

The Holyoke/Chicopee Office of the Department of Developmental Services is hosting their annual Transition Fair at Chicopee Comprehensive High School, 617 Montgomery St., Chicopee.

Young adults 14 to 22 years of age with an intellectual or developmental disability, including autism, who are still enrolled in school are invited (with their families) to attend The Transition Fair on Thursday, April 11, 2019, from 4:30-6:30 p.m. Mark your calendars!

Fundraisers

Support our Leprechaun Plunge Team!



This is the second year of our participation as a selected non-profit in the annual Leprechaun Plunge event on March 10, 2019 at Brunelle's Marina in South Hadley.

The Plunge organizers work tirelessly throughout the year to plan this very generous fundraiser. Last year we were able to raise more than \$4,000 from community donations to support programs for local families and with your help, we hope to double that this year to \$8,000. Will you help?

Autism Connections will again have a team which will brave the cold waters of the Connecticut River in honor of your donations.

You can also register to attend the event and cheer us on! Your ticket includes a luncheon after the plunge, raffles, music and fun for both children and adults.

To donate to our team, click the link below, click the green "ticket" button, and select "Autism Connections". The site charges a small fee for the transaction, so you can deduct that amount from your donation if you would like to keep it at an even amount.

You can also register on the same event site to attend the Plunge and cheer us on! Your ticket includes a luncheon after the plunge, raffles, music and fun for both children and adults.



[Donate to Autism Connections at the Leprechaun Plunge!](#)

Webinars

Autism Insurance in Massachusetts

Tuesday, February 5, 2019, 10:00 am-Noon

Presenter: Amy Weinstock, Director, Autism Insurance Resource Center

The webinar will discuss Autism Insurance in Massachusetts including ARICA info, MassHealth and the Autism Omnibus Bill, how to figure out what coverage you need/eligibility, Premium Assistance, The Health Connector, covered treatments and how to access them, frequently asked questions, and where to get assistance. There will be time for questions.

Space is limited, so to reserve your space please contact Angelica.Aguirre@umassmed.edu. After sending in your email to register you will receive a confirmation email by Monday, February 4th containing information about how to join the webinar.

AANE Webinar: Preparing Students for College: Information for Professionals

February 6, 2019, 7:00pm-8:30pm, \$25.00

This webinar will focus on preparing students with autism for the transition to college. Some of the topics to be discussed include the differences between the high school and college, entitlement versus eligibility, access versus success, documentation and assessment requirements, special education versus disability services and reasonable accommodations at college.

The webinar will emphasize accommodations available in higher education. In addition, the social, academic, and interpersonal expectations of beginning college students will be discussed, as well as how to help students and parents begin preparation for this major life transition while still in high school. This information is geared toward special education teachers (middle and high school teachers), school counselors, advisors, case managers, directors, and building administrators. Click [HERE](#) for more information or to register.

Autism Conference registration now open, please visit our [website](#) for more info!

SUN

MON

TUES

WEDS

February 20 19

AUTISM CONNECTIONS CALENDAR

Open Swim
2:30pm-3:30pm
Berkshire Family YMCA
North Adams

3

4

Social Skills Gym Class
4:00pm-5:00pm
Patterson Field House
Berkshire CC

5

Yoga Class 4 :00pm-5:00pm
Autism Connections'
Pittsfield Office

6

Navigating Social Nuances
6:00pm-7:30pm
Autism Connections'
Pittsfield Office

Open Swim
2:30pm-3:30pm
Berkshire Family YMCA
North Adams

10

11

**Community Connections:
Autism Training for
Businesses, 10-12am,
Athol (see page 4)**

12

Pathlight Interview Day
9:00-6:00 p.m., Greenfield

Social Skills Gym Class (see above)
4:00pm-5:00pm

Family Empowerment Workshop
SSI and SSDI—Understanding and
successfully applying for benefits

Yoga Class 4 :00pm-5:00pm
(see above)

13

**Autism Connections
Parent Support**
5:30pm-7:30pm
Holyoke

**Navigating Social Nuances (see
above)** 6:00pm-7:30pm

Open Swim
2:30pm-3:30pm
Berkshire Family YMCA
North Adams

17

18

Social Skills Gym Class
(see above) 4:00pm-5:00pm

19

**Sensory-Friendly Showing:
"The Lego Movie 2: The Second
Part, 9:30 am**
Cinemark—W. Springfield

Table Tennis at Zing!
10am-11am or
11am-12pm, Easthampton

20

Yoga Class 4 :00pm-5:00pm
(see above)

Aspergers' Support Group
5:00pm-6:00pm
Autism Connections, Pittsfield

**Navigating Social Nuances (see
above)** 6:00pm-7:30pm

Open Swim
2:30pm-3:30pm
Berkshire Family YMCA
North Adams

24

27

25

28

Social Skills Gym Class
(see above) 4:00pm-5:00pm

26

Yoga Class 4 :00pm-5:00pm
(see above)

27

**Navigating Social Nuances (see
above)** 6:00pm-7:30pm

THURS CONNECTIONS BAR

FRI

SAT

Berkshire Teen Group

1

2

Adult Social Group

4:00pm-6:00pm
Autism Connections'
Pittsfield Office

7

Open Swim

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

**Sweetheart Dance and
video game night**

6:30pm—8:30pm
Inclusive Community Center
41 Russell Street, Hadley
Call 585-8010 for more info

8

9

Adult Social Group (see above)
4:00pm-6:00pm

14

Open Swim (see above)
6:00pm-7:00pm

15

16

Special Needs Family Alliance
10:00am, Pathlight Office
101 Munson Street
Greenfield

21

Adult Social Group (see above)
4:00pm-6:00pm

Open Swim (see above)
6:00pm-7:00pm

**Bounce! Trampoline
Sensory Friendly**
9am - 10am, Springfield

ACBC monthly meeting
10am—12:00pm
BCArc Training Room, 877
South Street, 3rd floor, Pittsfield

Berkshire Teen Group
Potluck Social (Milestones)
6:30 pm—8:30 pm
41 Russell Street, Hadley

22

23

**Adult Social Group
(see above)**
4:00pm-6:00pm

28

Open Swim (see above)
6:00pm-7:00pm

PLEASE CALL OUR OFFICE AT
413-529 2428 IF YOU HAVE ANY
QUESTIONS ABOUT THESE
EVENTS.

Coming Up

February Fun Week!
*School vacation week
activities*
(More details on page 4)

February 19, 2019

9:30 am

Sensory Friendly Movie:
*"The Lego Movie 2: The Second
Part."*

February 20, 2019

10am-11am OR

11am-12pm

Table Tennis at Zing!

February 22, 2019

9am-10am

Sensory Friendly
Trampoline Hour at Bounce!

April 2019

April 23, 2019

**Autism Connections'
Annual Autism Conference**
*The Sheraton Springfield
Monarch Place Hotel*
**Keynote speaker and
Breakout Sessions!**
Register HERE!

29th ANNUAL
AUTISM CONNECTIONS
**AUTISM
CONFERENCE**
APRIL 23, 2019

EVENTS & CLASSES

WORKSHOPS/TRAININGS

CANDO Educational Series (Worcester)

Tuesday, February 5, 2019, 6:30pm–8:00pm

712 Plantation St., Worcester, MA—FREE

Presenter: Pamela P. Ferguson, DDS

Learn the importance of the 688 process in regards to funding, and understand why the DDS Autism Service Coordinator is your point of contact. More info at <https://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/eventReg?oeidk=a07efxr1p38e46e3b9c&oseq=&c=&ch=> .

Western Mass Medical Home Meeting

Tuesday February 12, 2019, 9:15am-10:30am

Shriners Hospital Auditorium, 16 Carew St., Springfield

A team from the MA Dept. of Public Health in Boston will facilitate a discussion of the needs faced by children and youth with special health needs in western MA. This is an important venue to have direct input in the statewide needs assessment. Parents, caregivers, youth, and providers are all encouraged to participate!

Please park across the street at the Springfield Boys & Girls Club, 481 Carew St. If you have an accessible parking placard/plate, feel free to park in the Shriners lot.

SSI and SSDI—Understanding and successfully applying for benefits

Tuesday, February 12, 2019, 6:00 pm- 8:00 pm

Family Empowerment, 41 Russell Street, Hadley FREE

Completing paperwork for Social Security Income or Social Security Disability Income properly can make a big difference in getting approved for benefits. The workshop will answer the following questions and more: what is the difference between SSI and SSDI, what happens to benefits when my child with a disability turns 18, what effect does my work income - and my child's, have on overall benefits, and when I retire, what happens to my child's SSI benefit? Please contact Michelle Mendes, to RSVP or for more information at michelle.mendes@pathlightgroup.org, or 413.585.8010.

ACBC Meeting

Friday, February 15, 2019, 10:00am—12pm, BCARC Training Room, 877 South Street, 3rd floor, Pittsfield

The topic is Transition Services and Community Day Supports (CBDS). Download the flyer [HERE](#).

Bureau of Special Education Appeals Presentation

Tuesday, February 19, 2019, 6:30pm–8:00pm FREE
Dudley Middle School, 70 Dudley Oxford Rd., Dudley

Join us for a free presentation by the Bureau of Special Education Appeals (BSEA). The BSEA Presentation will provide an overview of the special education mediation process. BSEA Mediator Steve Lilly-Weber will present. This presentation is during February Break and will be in the DMS Auditorium . Visit <https://www.facebook.com/events/2002635576491282/> for more information.

CONFERENCES

Federation for Children with Special Needs

Planning a Life, Saturday, February 7/8, 2019,

8:30am—4:00pm, 529 Main St., Suite 1M3, Boston

For more information contact Nancy Mader at 800-331-0688 x336 or email nmader@fcsn.org. or visit <https://fcsn.org/linkcenter/pal>.

AANE Jody Acford Benefits Conference

Asperger Syndrome and Adult Life: Navigating the MA Public and Private Supports and Service Systems

Saturday, February 23, 2019, 8:15am—4:30pm, \$100
Crowne Plaza, 320 Washington Street, Newton, MA

This is a conference for adults with Asperger Syndrome, family members of adults and older teens. For information or to register call 617-393-3824 or click to register [HERE](#).

Autism Connections Annual Conference

HOPE in Action: Building Blocks to a Fulfilling Life

Tuesday, April 23, 2019, 8:00pm—4:00pm

Sheraton Springfield Monarch Place Hotel

During Autism Awareness Month in April over 400 parents, educators and professionals gather to build knowledge around the most current information on autism. New this year are exciting breakout sessions and a new location. Visit our [website](#) for information.



A very special thank you to Gina and Radcliffe Kenison and their organization, *Radcliffe is the Reason and Arthur Too Fights for Autism* Foundation, our 2019 Conference Presenting Sponsor!

COMMUNITY/FAMILY EVENTS

UCP FREE Swim

Gladys Allen Brigham Center
Thursdays, 6:00pm–7:00pm
165 East St, Pittsfield

Berkshire Family YMCA
Sundays, 2:30pm–3:30 pm
22 Brickyard Court, N. Adams



Open and FREE to all individuals and families affiliated with UCP and Autism Connections. Registration is required. Call the GAB center at 413-442-5174 X 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 and indicate which agency you are with (UCP or Autism Connections).

Focus on Disability—An Evening of Film and Discussion

The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art
February 10, 2019, 5:00pm-7:30pm
125 West Bay Road, Amherst, MA 01002

The screening will be followed by a discussion and Q&A. This event is FREE, but to support community events at Whole Children, we welcome all donations.

Pathlight Interview Day

February 12, 2019, 9:00am-6:00pm
101 Munson Street, Greenfield

Are you interested in working in a rewarding field where you can help individuals with medical, physical, and/or developmental delays live fulfilling, happy lives? Have you thought about going into the medical or psychology fields but do not know where to start?

Direct Care positions with Pathlight may be the start you need! Nursing (LPN/RN), as well as supervisory positions, are also open and positions are available in Hampden County, Hampshire County, and Franklin County.

Come prepared with your personal references, driver's license, and a great attitude. If you choose, you can jump-start the process by applying online prior to attending at <https://www.facebook.com/events/2321688884725970/>.

J Summer Camps Open House

Saturday, February 16, 5-8 pm
Springfield JCC, Neal Webber Building,
1160 Dickinson Street, Springfield, MA 01108

Come have fun in the pool and celebrate J Summer Camps with counselors and fellow campers. For further information, contact Seth Stutman JCC Summer Camps Director 413.739.4715 [sstutman@springfieldjcc.org](mailto:ssutman@springfieldjcc.org).

Annual Autism Advocacy Day at the Statehouse with AANE

Thursday, April 11, 2019, 9:00am-11:30am
Great Hall, The State House, Boston Massachusetts

Join families, self-advocates and providers to make an impact with your legislators for this important event. Contact Judy Zacek at 781-891-6270 x 6102 or visit www.afamaction.org for more information.

YOUNG ADULT

Sweetheart Dance and Video Night

February 8, 2019, 6:30-8:30, FREE, all ages
41 Russell Street, Hadley, MA

Call 413-585-8010 for more information.

Potluck Socials and Video Game Nights Milestones (all ages)

February 22, and March 8, 2019, 6:30pm-8:30pm
41 Russell Street, Hadley MA

Whether you come to the monthly Potluck Socials to see old friends or to meet new ones (or a little of both), you are sure to have fun with the music to groove to, and a karaoke stage! If video games are more your thing, there is space for you and your friends. Remember to bring a nut-free appetizer, dish, dessert, or a drink to share. Free! Call 413-585-8010.

Milestones

41 Russell St., Hadley, MA

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

Whole Children

41 Russell Street, Hadley, MA

See the catalog [HERE](#).

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.	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.	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 meets 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 .
GREENFIELD			
Special Needs Family Alliance	This support group is a new, very committed and welcoming group for anyone who is caring for a loved one with a disability, no matter the age. The group's goal is providing support, advocacy, education and resources	3rd Thursday of each month 10 am Pathlight Office, 101 Munson St., Greenfield, MA	For more information please call or email Caroline Wenck at 413-585-8010 or carolinewenck@pathlightgroup.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. 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 Mass.	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	For questions or to find out meeting times contact Tammy Nothe-Hebert at 413.536.2401 x3036
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

GROUP NAME	GROUP DESCRIPTION	MEETING DETAILS	CONTACT/MORE INFO
NORTHAMPTON			
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 .
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
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			
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	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	For more information, contact It Takes a Village at 413-650-3640 or Kat at info@hilltownvillage.org or www.facebook.com/hilltownvillage
Support Group for Adults with Asperger's Syndrome	This group is an opportunity for support and discussion among adults on the spectrum. We provide a "safe space" so this is 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.

ONLINE SUPPORT GROUPS

GROUP NAME	GROUP DESCRIPTION	DATES/TIMES
Before formal registration for the below groups, a 1-1 informational meeting with the facilitator is required. The link for more information is https://conta.cc/2DwDWrl		
Online Support Group: Parents of Teen Boys	This online support group will focus on topics of particular interest to parents of tween boys. Meeting dates: 2/28/2019, 3/14/2019, 3/28/2019, 4/11/2019, 4/25/2019, 5/9/2019, 5/23/2019	12:30 p.m.-2:00 p.m.. \$120



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Stepping Out for Autism and the Autism Conference

For the past 15 years, we've kicked off the new year by getting all dressed up to celebrate, dance, and raise money for Autism Connections at our Stepping Out event. Earlier last year, when we decided to greatly expand our Autism Conference to include breakout sessions and a new venue, we realized that we could only offer one of these events, and we put Stepping Out on hiatus.

But now that leaves us with a potentially large funding gap for all the important work we do every day at Autism Connections. The money we raise each year allows us to provide services to thousands of local families.

The 29th Annual Autism Conference takes place on April 23, 2019, at The Sheraton Springfield Monarch Place Hotel, and will give you an opportunity to contribute to the effort of supporting local families and programs—especially if you have supported Stepping Out in the past. We are so excited to share our new event format and location. We hope you will join us as an attendee, sponsor, advertiser, exhibitor or donor! **Thank you.**