

# Community Connection

Autism Connections: a Pathlight program

## Newsletter

### Nominate your Hero for a Conference Award

#### Nominate someone for April's Autism Conference *Community Awards* and let them know how thankful you are!

As we make preparations for our 29th Annual Autism Conference, we are again asking you to honor those in your life that really make a difference. The Conference will be held on April 23, 2019 at



The Sheraton Springfield Monarch Place Hotel, and is an excellent opportunity to thank the people who make our lives a lot better! Winners of each award and the person who nominated them will receive free admission to the conference.



Some award winners from last year

**"You Are There for Me Award"** is presented to a person who has demonstrated ongoing support and devotion to a family. Previous winners have included grandparents, neighbors, community helpers, and anyone else who makes that extra effort to be so supportive.

**"Above and Beyond Award"** is presented to a professional who has provided outstanding care and support to a person with autism and his/her family. Previous winners have included

respite providers, para-professionals, PCA's and other staff that work with a family or individual.

**"Community Inclusion Award"** is presented to a person or establishment that has been welcoming to a person with autism. Previous winners have included restaurants, retail stores and salons.

**"Excellence in Advocacy Award"** is presented to a parent, professional or person with autism who has demonstrated ongoing and effective self-advocacy or advocacy for people with autism. Parents, teachers, and people with autism have all won this award in the past.

**"Collaboration & Connection"** honors excellence in teamwork to effect positive change for people with autism.

If you would like to nominate an extra special someone for an award, download the form <http://bit.ly/2019Nomination>, or contact Danielle at 413-529-2428 x 115, or

**Autism and the IEP**  
 Tuesday, January 22, 2019  
 5:30 p.m.—7:30 p.m.  
 Greenfield Public Library  
 Greenfield Room  
 402 Main Street, Greenfield MA  
 More info on page 9

Check out this FREE workshop in Greenfield

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 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

### The Autism Collaborative of Berkshire County January ACBC Meeting



The Autism Collaborative of Berkshire County (ACBC) will resume monthly meetings on January 18, 2019 from 10AM-12PM. This month's meeting will be held at AdLib at 215 North St. in Pittsfield. Rebecca Cachat of Berkshire County ARC and Regina Mason, a consultant from Autism Connections will be discussing the topic of ASD and sexuality. ASD and sexuality has been a big topic among our families of young teens and adults as well as the service providers that work with them.

January's meeting will review ways that Becky and Regina are teaching the skills of relationship building with their current classes, challenges to teaching these skills, navigating social nuances, and training opportunities for parents and professionals. ACBC meetings are open to the public. We welcome anyone who would like to learn more about autism resources in the community to attend. We encourage fellow services providers, educators, and families to bring information to share with the group or to display on our resource table. Download the meeting flyer [HERE](#).

For more information, contact Erica Donovan at [Erica.donovan@pathlightgroup.org](mailto:Erica.donovan@pathlightgroup.org) You can find out more about other Autism Collaborative of Berkshire County events at <https://www.facebook.com/Autism-Connections-Berkshire-285842931599582/?ref=settings>.

### Social Skills Gym Class

Every Tuesday a group of 8-10 rambunctious boys get together with their instructor, Brian Putnam at the Patterson Fieldhouse at Berkshire Community College. They are working on social skills that are embedded within a workout routine and physical activity.

Each class the kids work on being a gracious loser and winner, giving praise to their teammates, taking turns, waiting for a turn, and following directions. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the Social Skills Gym Class and the start wasn't so smooth. In the first year of this

class we used a classroom model. The learned very quickly that having a group of boys sit and attend after being in school all day was a fruitless effort. With some tweaking and reworking of our goal, teaching social skills, Social Skills Gym Class was born!

The gym class has been a successful way to integrate social skills within fun, exercise, and practice of skills all at the same time. We are lucky to be working with Brian Putnam. He is a seasoned personal fitness trainer and runs fitness groups at Retro Fitness in Pittsfield.



## Center News

### Preparing for a medical appointment

Doctor's appointments can be overwhelming for someone with autism. The change in routine, extended waiting periods, unfamiliar social scenarios and infringement on personal space can make a perfect recipe for a stressful day. Planning ahead and good communication with your doctor's office can help make this a more positive experience.

Here's a few tips to help make your child's medical appointments a success:

- ◆ Depending on your loved one's age and the best method that helps them process, consider reading them a picture book or watching a short video in which a favorite character goes to the doctor. Engage in a conversation with your child about what is occurring in the story, and draw comparisons as to what he/she will experience at the doctor's office.
- ◆ Make a Social Story explaining what will happen when at the doctor's. Ask your doctor's office if they can provide photos of their office to include. Review this with your child frequently in the days prior the appointment so they know what to expect.
- ◆ Create a visual schedule that outlines the steps of a doctor's visit (checking in at the front desk, sitting in the waiting room, getting on the scale, etc). Cross off or remove each task once it's accomplished.
- ◆ Consult with your child's support team (teacher, in-home therapeutic staff, etc) prior to the appointment to collaborate on the best way to help your child plan for the visit in advance.
- ◆ Think about your child's preferences and challenges – does he/she find fluorescent lighting, touch, or certain sounds disruptive? Can you practice some of the tasks at home first? This could include getting on a scale, using a stethoscope or blood pressure (toy versions of some medical equipment are available for purchase).
- ◆ Think about the time of day that would work best for your child. Would a morning or evening appointment be less disruptive to their schedule? Don't be afraid to ask your doctor's office when they are least likely to have a longer wait time.
- ◆ Call your doctor's office in advance to plan your child's visit with them. Explain your child's environmental sensitivities, any behavior challenges, and preferred communication style. Explain the approach your child responds to best. Is it a soft voice or a firm one? Should doctors and nurses limit themselves to one-step directions? How much time does your child need to process a statement? Should there be fewer people in the room?
- ◆ The Autism Collaborative at Cooley Dickinson Hospital has created an Autism Acute Care Questionnaire to help alert Emergency Medical personnel to an person with autism's needs. This can also be useful as a reference point when discussing your child's needs with any medical professional. To receive a copy, email [Katie.drumm@pathlightgroup.org](mailto:Katie.drumm@pathlightgroup.org)
- ◆ Prepare a list of questions or concerns you want to discuss at the appointment, whether or not you are able to talk to the nurse in advance. It's hard to remember everything while supporting your child as well.
- ◆ Prepare a bag of fun, distracting activities and "comfort" items to bring to the appointment (for example, video games, DVD movie players, dolls, music, noise blocking headphones, or sensory stimulatory items). Be sure to bring any assistive communication methods your child may use, such as an iPad or PECs board.



## Center News

### Autism Connections was fortunate to host two amazing workshop this fall!



Cathy Boyle from Autism Housing Pathways shared her expert advice on how to maximize your resources for a fulfilling home life on November 27 at Pathlight's Springfield office. The Autism Housing Pathways website has a great deal of useful resources at [www.autismhousingpathways.org](http://www.autismhousingpathways.org).



Amy Weinstock, Director of the Autism Insurance Resource Center and amazing presenter, explained the nuts and bolts of benefits afforded by the Massachusetts Autism Insurance law on December 11 at the Palmer Library. Learn more about ARICA and Amy's important work at [www.massairc.org](http://www.massairc.org)

### Autism Connections also provides private trainings to schools and organizations

Autism Connections' Specialists enjoyed offering trainings for local organizations in November – we presented *The Hidden Curriculum (Navigating the Social World)* to teachers at Wahconah High School, and *Understanding and Responding to Challenging Behaviors* to preschool teachers at Chicopee Child Development Center. Contact [Katie.drumm@pathlightgroup.org](mailto:Katie.drumm@pathlightgroup.org) to learn more about the trainings we offer, or to suggest other training topics of interest to your group.

### Autism and the IEP

Upcoming workshop

Tuesday, January 22, 2019, 5:30 p.m.—7:30 p.m.  
Greenfield Public Library, Greenfield Room  
402 Main Street, Greenfield MA

Are you a parent or caregiver? Join Autism Connections' Educational Advocate Nancy Farnsworth as she guides you through the basic IEP process. This free community workshop addresses needs for students of all ages, with a focus on the particular considerations to keep in mind for a student with autism. RSVP and more information: [Danielle.plasse@pathlightgroup.org](mailto:Danielle.plasse@pathlightgroup.org).

### Holiday Party

Autism Connections had a very merry time with the wonderful members of our community who joined us for our Holiday Party on December 14 at the event space here in our Eastworks office building.

We enjoyed being serenaded by carols from members of the Easthampton High School Chorus. It was a delight to have them share their time and talent with us!

Our gathering was made complete by an appearance from Santa Claus, who took time out from his busy pre-Christmas preparation to visit with us one and all. Thank you so much to John Richards (of Valley Marketing fame) for putting us in touch with the Jolly Big Guy himself!



*Thank you for sharing your holiday with us!*

## Activities

### Yoga Class with Paula Boyajian



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

For ages 16+ and adults; 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 [kellysummers@pathlightgroup.org](mailto:kellysummers@pathlightgroup.org) for more information or to register.

### Power Thru The Powder: An Adaptive Skiing Weekend for People of All Abilities

February 2nd and 3rd, 2019

Ski Sundown, New Hartford, CT



At this adaptive skiing event all equipment and a lift ticket will be included. Register online to participate or volunteer at

[www.powerthruthepowder.org](http://www.powerthruthepowder.org). Email [info@dollargiving.org](mailto:info@dollargiving.org) or call (860) 966-0361.

### Personal Training Sessions

Strides Human Performance Institute  
39 Carlon Drive, Northampton, MA

Dennis Miehl at the Northampton Strides facility is offering personal training sessions for people with autism. Dennis is an experienced psychotherapist who has recently earned his personal training certification and a specialist certification in working with individuals with autism through continuing education with ACSM. Dennis will offer training sessions to children, adolescents and adults, individually or in small groups. Meetings with families are encouraged to determine the best plan of action. Contact Dennis directly at 413-320-3347 or [miehlstd@gmail.com](mailto:miehlstd@gmail.com) for more information.

## Special Interest

### Special Needs Family Alliance

First Wednesday of each month — 6:00 p.m.

Third Thursday of each month — 10:00 a.m.

Pathlight Office, 101 Munson Street, Greenfield, MA

The Special Needs Family Alliance 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 to provide support, advocacy, education and resources.

For more information please call or email Caroline Wenck at 413-585-8010/[carolinewenck@pathlightgroup.org](mailto:carolinewenck@pathlightgroup.org).

### Boston Sped PAC Special Needs Camp and Resource Fair

Thursday, January 24, 2019

6:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m.

Leahy-Halloran Community Center, Boston

This free, public event is hosted by the Boston Special Education Parent Advisory Council (Boston SPEDPac) and the Office of Special Ed at Boston Public Schools. This is an opportunity for caregivers to speak directly with representatives from local groups who provide services to individuals with disabilities and their families.

Please contact [bostonspecpac411@gmail.com](mailto:bostonspecpac411@gmail.com) or 617-297-7335 to RSVP or visit [bostonspecpac.org](http://bostonspecpac.org) website or facebook <https://www.facebook.com/events/274206179916771/> for more info.

### Autism Collaborative of Berkshire County

Friday, January 18, 2019, 10:00 a.m.—12:00 p.m.

AdLib, 215 North Street, Pittsfield MA

Rebecca Cachat of Berkshire County ARC and Regina Mason, a consultant for Autism Connections will be discussing the topic of ASD and sexuality. The meeting will talk about relationship building, challenges to teaching these skills, navigating social nuances, and training opportunities for parents and professionals. ACBC welcomes all members of the community who would like to learn more about autism resources. Attendees are encouraged to bring information to share with the resource table. For more information, contact Erica Donovan at [Erica.donovan@pathlightgroup.org](mailto:Erica.donovan@pathlightgroup.org).

SUN

MON

TUES

WEDS

# JANUARY 2019

Blank calendar cell for January 1st.

Blank calendar cell for January 2nd.

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

**1**

**New Year's Day**  
*Autism Connections Will be closed*

**Navigating Social Nuances**  
6:00pm-7:30pm  
Autism Connections, Pittsfield

**2**

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

**6**

Blank calendar cell for January 7th.

**7**

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

**8**

**Family Empowerment Get Organized Workshop**  
6:00pm-8:00pm  
Hadley

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

**9**

**Navigating Social Nuances**  
6:00pm-7:30pm  
Autism Connections, Pittsfield

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

**13**

**Northampton Area Pediatrics Parenting Workshop**  
6:00pm-8:00pm  
Hadley

Blank calendar cell for January 14th.

**14**

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

**15**

**Yoga Class**  
4:00pm-5:00pm  
Autism Connections  
Pittsfield

**16**

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

**Navigating Social Nuances**  
6:00pm-7:30pm  
Autism Connections, Pittsfield

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

**20**

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

**27**

**Martin Luther King Day**  
*Autism Connections' offices are closed.*

**21**

**28**

**Social Skills Gym Class**  
4:00pm-5:00pm  
Berkshire CC

**22**

**Autism and the IEP**  
5:30pm-7:30pm  
**Greenfield Public Library**  
**Greenfield**

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**Social Skills Gym Class**

**29**

**Yoga Class, 4:00pm-5:00pm**  
Autism Connections, Pittsfield

**Navigating Social Nuances**  
6:00pm-7:30pm  
Pittsfield  
Autism Connections, Pittsfield

**23**

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**Yoga Class, 4:00pm-5:00pm**  
Autism Connections, Pittsfield

**Navigating Social Nuances**  
6:00pm-7:30pm  
Pittsfield  
Autism Connections, Pittsfield

**30**

# THURS FRI SAT AUTISM CONNECTIONS CALENDAR

<p><b>Adult Social Group</b> 4:00pm-6:00pm Autism Connections' Pittsfield Office</p> <p><b>Open Swim</b> 6:00pm-7:00pm Gladys Allen Brigham Center, Pittsfield</p>		
<p><b>Adult Social Group</b> 4:00pm-6:00pm Autism Connections' Pittsfield Office</p> <p><b>Open Swim</b> 6:00pm-7:00pm Gladys Allen Brigham Center, Pittsfield</p>		
<p><b>Special Needs Family Alliance</b> 10:00am, Pathlight Office 101 Munson Street Greenfield</p> <p><b>Adult Social Group</b> 4:00pm-6:00pm Autism Connections' Pittsfield Office</p> <p><b>Open Swim</b> 6:00pm-7:00pm Gladys Allen Brigham, Center, Pittsfield</p>	<p><b>ACBC monthly meeting</b> 10am—12:00pm AdLib 215 North Street Pittsfield</p> <p><b>Teen Group Pizza and Games</b> 5:30 pm—7:00 pm 10:00am, Pathlight Office</p>	
<p><b>Adult Social Group</b> 4:00pm-6:00pm Pittsfield Office</p> <p><b>Open Swim</b> 6:00pm-7:00pm Pittsfield</p> <p><b>Adult Social Group</b> 4:00pm-6:00pm Pittsfield</p> <p><b>Open Swim</b> 6:00pm-7:00pm Pittsfield</p>		

## Coming Up

### February 2019

February 10, 2019

**Focus on Disability: an evening of film and discussion (free)**

The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art

February 10, 2019

5:00 p.m.—7:30 p.m.

The 2019 Film Screening of Dan Habib's "Intelligent Lives" is hosted by Whole Children and Five College Realtors, and will be followed by a panel discussion. Call 413-585-8010 for more information.

### April 2019

April 23, 2019

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



# EVENTS & CLASSES

## WEBINAR

### Planning for the Transition to Adulthood

Wednesday January 16, 2019 12:00 p.m.-1:00 p.m.

[Thearcofmass.org](http://Thearcofmass.org)

*Presenters:*

*Karen Mariscal, Esq. and Pat Nemia, M.A., P.T.*

As students in special education prepare to enter adulthood, there are several areas that need to be addressed. One of the most important is for individuals with I/DD including Autism who are turning 18 years old to apply for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Medicaid. Join us for this informative presentation which will discuss why applying for SSI and Medicaid is important, the steps you need to take to prepare to apply, and then how to apply for this important benefit.

### Clearing the Way to Employment

Wednesday, January 16, 2019, 10:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m.

FREE

*Presenters: Maria Paiewonsky, Institute for Community Inclusion; Jerri Roach, Worcester Public Schools and Sherry Elander, Westfield Public Schools*

Learn how transition specialists and special educators are finding ways to build career development opportunities, utilize school and community resources, and build employment networks. This webinar has elements for both parents and professionals, so please contact Community Inclusion, at 617-287-4300 or visit the website at <http://employmentfirstma.org/signup>.

### Executive Functioning of Adults

Tuesday, January 29, 2019 7:00 p.m.-8:30 p.m.

[AANE.org](http://AANE.org), \$25

Brian Willoughby will talk on the subject of Executive Functioning for Adults. Description and registration will be communicated as soon as it becomes available.

To be notified when registration opens, please contact [onlinelearning@aane.org](mailto:onlinelearning@aane.org).

## WORKSHOPS/TRAININGS

### Northampton Area Pediatrics Parenting Workshop: Autism Spectrum Disorders from Toddlers to Teens

*with David Kieval, Psy.D., BCBA, Peter Everett, MD, and NAP Care Coordinators Jill Quinn and Jacqueline Riel*

Sunday January 13, 2019, 2:00 p.m.

Northampton Area Pediatrics

193 Locust St, Northampton, MA

The presenters will cover red flags to look for in your child's development, the process of getting your child evaluated for autism, the services that are available in the community to children with autism, and an overview of intervention approaches. This workshop is intended both for parents of children diagnosed with autism and others interested in learning more.

### Autism and the IEP

Tuesday, January 22, 2019, 5:30 p.m.—7:30 p.m.

Greenfield Public Library, Greenfield Room

402 Main Street, Greenfield MA

Are you a parent or caregiver? Join Autism Connections' Educational Advocate Nancy Farnsworth as she guides you through the basic IEP process. This free community workshop addresses needs for students of all ages, with a focus on the particular considerations to keep in mind for a student with autism. RSVP and more information: [Danielle.plasse@pathlightgroup.org](mailto:Danielle.plasse@pathlightgroup.org).

### SSI and SSDI Workshop

Tuesday, February 12, 2019 6:00 p.m. –8:00 p.m.

Family Empowerment, 41 Russell St, Hadley, MA

This free community workshop will help you determine when you should apply for each benefit, and learn about the important time frames. Filling out the paperwork properly can mean the difference in getting the services approved or denied, and can affect the amount of benefits you receive.

Please contact Michelle Mendes, to RSVP or for more information at [michelle.mendes@pathlightgroup.org](mailto:michelle.mendes@pathlightgroup.org), 413.585.8010.



## COMMUNITY/FAMILY EVENTS

### UCP FREE Swim

Gladys Allen Brigham Center  
Thursdays 6:00 p.m. –7:00 p.m.  
165 East St, Pittsfield, MA

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).*

### Open House for Miracle League Baseball

Saturday, January 26, 2019 10:30 a.m.—12:30 p.m.  
Extra Innings, 340 McKinstrey Ave, Suite 250  
Chicopee, MA

Come join the Miracle League of Western MA to register your child (ages 4-17 years old) for the spring season, or become a volunteer! This event is open to all current or prospective players and buddies. Please register in advance for the event by emailing us at [miracleleagueofwestern-ma@gmail.com](mailto:miracleleagueofwestern-ma@gmail.com) by 1/24/19.

### Annual Autism Advocacy Day at the Statehouse with AANE

Thursday, April 11, 2019, 9:00 a.m.—11:30 a.m.  
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](http://www.afamaction.org) for more information.

**Locations in  
Pittsfield and  
North Adams**

## YOUNG ADULT

### Potluck Socials and Video Game Nights

Milestones

Fridays: January 25, February 22, and March 8  
6:30-8:30 p.m. (all ages)  
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!

### Tim Tebow's Night to Shine

February 8, 2019, 6:00-9:00 p.m.  
Knights of Columbus,  
1597 Memorial Drive, Chicopee

You are invited to participate in the Tim Tebow sponsored Night to Shine at Knights of Columbus in Chicopee on February 8th. Walk the red carpet and enjoy the royal treatment at this prom while you dance the night away! More info: [Marylou@lifepoint.online](mailto:Marylou@lifepoint.online)

### Milestones

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

### AANE Pizza and Game Night

January 24: 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/](http://aane.org/events/2018-09/) to register at your preferred location, and call 617-393-3824 for more information.

### Whole Children

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

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

# SUPPORT GROUPS

GROUP NAME	GROUP DESCRIPTION	MEETING DETAILS	CONTACT/MORE INFO
<b>AMHERST</b>			
<b>Clinical &amp; Support Options (CSO) Parent Support Group</b>	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.
<b>ATHOL</b>			
<b>Autism Support Group</b>	This is a monthly support group for parents, caregivers, grandparents and siblings of autistic children. RSVP is required. <b>December's meeting will be held on December 16th.</b>	<b>December's meeting will be held on December 16th.</b> 4th Sunday of the month Athol Memorial Hospital, The Hillis Conference Room, 2033 Main St., Athol	Please contact Amanda Gallant at <a href="mailto:Amanda.gallant@heywood.org">Amanda.gallant@heywood.org</a> with questions or to RSVP.
<b>The United ARC, Caregivers' Resource Group</b>	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.
<b>CHICOPEE</b>			
<b>HOPE Autism Support Group</b>	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 <a href="mailto:camorgado@verizon.net">camorgado@verizon.net</a> .
<b>EASTHAMPTON</b>			
<b>Asperger's Social Night for Adults</b>	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.
<b>GREAT BARRINGTON</b>			
<b>Adult Discussion Group</b>	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 <a href="mailto:stephanie.birkdale@aane.org">stephanie.birkdale@aane.org</a> .
<b>HOLYOKE</b>			
<b>Autism Connections Western MA Support Group</b>	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 <a href="mailto:wynne92@aol.com">wynne92@aol.com</a> for RSVP and more info. Childcare is offered and requires a reservation one week in advance. Call our office at 413.529.2428.
<b>Mom's Night Out</b>	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 <a href="mailto:lindal@jerichobeca.org">lindal@jerichobeca.org</a> or calling 413.538.7450
<b>Parent/Professional Advocacy League</b>	Moving Forward: Our Journey. A group for empowering families through transition planning.	Please contact PPAL for locations and times.	For more information visit <a href="http://www.ppal.net">www.ppal.net</a> or email <a href="mailto:eszela@ppal.net">eszela@ppal.net</a> .
<b>Rainbow Support Group of Western Mass.</b>	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
<b>NORTHAMPTON</b>			
<b>Growing Strong Skills Training</b>	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
<b>Valley ADHD Parent Support Group</b>	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 <a href="mailto:ValleyADHDFamilies@gmail.com">ValleyADHDFamilies@gmail.com</a> .

GROUP NAME	GROUP DESCRIPTION	MEETING DETAILS	CONTACT/MORE INFO
<b>NORTHAMPTON</b>			
<b>Florence Women's Support Group</b>	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 <a href="mailto:stephanie.birkdale@aane.org">stephanie.birkdale@aane.org</a> .
<b>Wire Monkey Mama's Coffee Club</b>	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
<b>PITTSFIELD</b>			
<b>Asperger's Support Group of the Berkshires</b>	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 <a href="mailto:Elizabeth.Flaherty@pathlightgroup.org">Elizabeth.Flaherty@pathlightgroup.org</a> to RSVP.
<b>Berkshire Teen Group</b>	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 <a href="mailto:benjamin.breton@pathlightgroup.org">benjamin.breton@pathlightgroup.org</a> or 413.529.2428 x121 for monthly group schedule and outing details.
<b>SPRINGFIELD</b>			
<b>Impact Center Support Group</b>	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 <a href="mailto:csantiago@wmtcinfo.org">csantiago@wmtcinfo.org</a> or 413-218-5055 Información de RSVP: Cynthia Santiago at <a href="mailto:csantiago@wmtcinfo.org">csantiago@wmtcinfo.org</a> or 413-218-5055
<b>SOUTH HADLEY</b>			
<b>LGBTQ and the Autism Spectrum</b>	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 <a href="mailto:stephanie.birkdale@aane.org">stephanie.birkdale@aane.org</a> .
<b>WESTFIELD</b>			
<b>Westfield Support Group for Adults with Asperger's Syndrome</b>	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 <a href="mailto:info@bacautism.org">info@bacautism.org</a> or call BAC at 413.359.0222.
<b>WILLIAMSBURG</b>			
<b>Families of Spirited Children (It Takes a Village)</b>	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 <a href="mailto:info@hilltownvillage.org">info@hilltownvillage.org</a> or <a href="http://www.facebook.com/hilltownvillage">www.facebook.com/hilltownvillage</a>

**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 <a href="mailto:events@aane.org">events@aane.org</a> or call 617-393-3824 x 32 for more information and to schedule a meeting with the facilitator.</p>		
<b>Online Support Group for Parents of Teen Boys</b>	This online support group will focus on topics of particular interest to parents of tween boys.	<b>12:30 p.m.-2:00 p.m.. \$120</b> 2/14/2019, 2/28/2019, 3/14/2019, 3/28/2019, 4/11/2019, 4/25/2019, 5/9/2019, 5/23/2019



**Autism Connections**  
A Program of Pathlight, Inc.  
116 Pleasant Street, Suite 366  
Easthampton, MA 01027

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2019 January Edition

# Community Connection

Autism Connections: a Pathlight program

# Newsletter

## Autism Conference!

29th ANNUAL  
AUTISM CONNECTIONS  
AUTISM  
CONFERENCE  
APRIL 23, 2019

We will hold our 29th Annual Autism Conference on April 23, 2019, at The Sheraton Springfield Monarch Place Hotel. We are so excited to share our new event format and location with you.

Authors Gina Gallagher and Patricia Terrasi will present their keynote address, along with a very exciting selection of morning and afternoon breakout presenters who will share their knowledge about a range of autism related topics.

General Registration will open on our website January 18. We have new, interesting levels of sponsorship this year and an exciting new space for exhibitors. Please contact [joanne.lucey@pathlightgroup.org](mailto:joanne.lucey@pathlightgroup.org) with any questions if you would like more information about reaching our attendees through sponsorship opportunities or exhibitor tables in the Exhibitor Showcase.