

Community Connection

Autism Connections: a Pathlight program

Newsletter

Inclusion at its finest!

Autism Connections would like to recognize all of those students who work so hard on a daily basis to learn and grow, parents who advocate for their child to receive appropriate supports within the school, and teachers who foster inclusion and opportunities.

Success can only be achieved through hard work and dedication. Congratulations on a year well done and enjoy the summer!



“When inclusion education is fully embraced, we abandon the idea that children have to become “normal” in order to contribute to their world. We begin to look beyond typical ways to be valued members of the community, and in doing so, begin to realize the achievable goal of providing all children with an authentic sense of belonging.”

Autism month activities

Autism Awareness Activities

April was a very full month of activities related to awareness, acceptance, advocacy, and fun! Here are some participants enjoying the events!



Family Event at Bounce!
Trampoline Sports



Interskate Family Event



Rally in Pittsfield

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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
Thank You!



NEWS & UPDATES

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Berkshire ACBC June meeting

Autism Collaborative of Berkshire County, June 21 Meeting



The June meeting will highlight a presentation from Senior Attorney Stefanie Krantz of the Disability Law Center's Northampton Office. The mission of the Disability Law Center is to provide legal advocacy on disability issues that promote the fundamental rights of all people with disabilities to participate fully and equally in the social and economic life of Massachusetts.

Visit their website at <https://www.dlc-ma.org/> for more information. We will use the remaining time of our meeting to recap this year of ACBC events, discuss ACBC's direction for next year, and solicit ideas from participants on topics, presenters, and venues for next year. Please bring ideas! The meeting will be held at the BC Arc Training Room, 877 South Street, 3rd Floor Pittsfield, 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. on June 21.



Some of the hardworking ACBC members during Autism Awareness Month!

information to share with the group or to display on our resource table. You can find out more about other ACBC Collaborative of Berkshire County events [HERE](#) or call Erica at 413.443-4780 or email Erica.donovan@pathlightgroup.org.

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

Support Group in North Adams

Thursday, June 13, 6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Uno Center, 157 River Street, North Adams, MA

Megan Cooper from [AdLib](#) is the special guest at this month's meeting. This group is good for

parents or caregivers who have children with social, emotional, or behavioral needs, and would like to know more about services when a child turns 18. Find more information about the group [HERE](#). Refreshments are provided by the Berkshire Food Project and childcare and transportation is available upon request to Stephanie, at 413-663-7588. If you have questions, or would like to attend, please call AnnaMaria at 413-887-9132.



Center News

Katie Drumm



You may have met Katie Drumm at one of our activities, or an event, or at community collaboration meetings. She's been an amazing part of our team for several years. At the beginning of May her role

changed as she became Associate Director for Family Services. Don't worry, she's not going too far and will still be a part of Autism Connections. Her focus will shift to Adults Supports, Employment, Community Based Day Programs and Agency with Choice.

These are areas of significant growth over the past years and we are excited to have Katie leading the expansion! If you are in the Inclusive Community Center in Hadley, stop by and say hi to Katie- that's where she will be most of the time.

Kansas Brown



With Katie moving onto this new adventure, we needed to find a strong leader to fill her shoes- which is a tough assignment. After rounds of interviews we were lucky to add Kansas Brown to our Autism Connections Team as the

Easthampton and Regional Program Manager. Kansas will be assuming the role as Manager for our Easthampton Site as well as our two Regional Programs of DESE and Autism Waiver. Kansas comes to us with years of experience and strong leadership skills.

Kansas started back on May 13 and wow, he is jumping right in! We are very excited to have him on our team. If you are in our office in Easthampton, stop by and introduce yourself.

Upcoming Activities

The end of June can be a tough week to fill with activities—school is out and summer programs haven't started yet. Well, we have great news for you! Autism Connections has reserved a number of different facilities just for our guests to enjoy a sensory friendly environment. Take a look!

Toy Story 4, Sensory Friendly Movie



Woody, Buzz Lightyear and the rest of the gang embark on a road trip with Bonnie and a new toy named Forky. The adventurous journey turns into an unexpected reunion as Woody's slight detour leads him to his long-lost friend Bo Peep. As Woody and Bo discuss

the old days, they soon start to realize that they're worlds apart when it comes to what they want from life as a toy.

Join us for this sensory friendly showing of the ever-popular Toy Story! This is a family event, and we have rented the entire theater for our group. Tickets are \$5.00 and the theater will hold 75 people only, so please reserve your spot early with Danielle!

Date: Tuesday, June 25

Time: 9:30-9:45 arrival; movie—10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Location: West Springfield 15, 864 Riverdale Street, West Springfield (previously called Rave Cinema)

Tickets: \$5.00

RSVP required: 413-529-2428 or

Danielle.plasse@pathlightgroup.org.

Autism Connections cannot do its work without friends like you! Please [GIVE](#) and help us provide summer programs and activities!

Center News/Activities

The Quarters! Arcade (limited space, please sign up early)

Join us for our very first outing at The Quarters! — a local vintage arcade destination! The Quarters is located at 8 Railroad Street, just off Route 9 in Hadley. This is a FREE family event, with a capacity of 20 only, so please register early!



Here is what some folks are saying about The Quarters:

“We had such a fun time playing all our favorite games from way back in the day, frogger, Mrs Pac man, Q Bert, Donkey Kong and others! “

“Really cool place. They have a lot of throwback arcade games, including favorites from my childhood like X-Men and The Simpsons.”



“i will say all the boys have a great time playing on the arcade machines like Rampage, Q-bert, Rolling Thunder, Froggers, Galaga, Asteroids, The Simpson's, X-man, Space Invaders.”

Date: Wednesday, June 26

Time: 10 a.m. —12:00 p.m.

Location: 8 Railroad Street, Hadley

Attendee ages: 13+ (if you would like to bring a younger child please call Danielle for more information)

Tickets: FREE play on machines (food and beverages available for purchase)

Please note that the capacity for this event is only 20, so please register early if you would like to attend!

RSVP required: 413-529-2428 or

Danielle.plasse@pathlightgroup.org.

Bounce! Trampoline Sports, sensory-friendly



Bounce! has become one of our favorite family events! We are renting out this popular venue for a sensory-friendly hour just for us. The music is off and it is closed to the general

public. Limited tickets for \$5/child are available for those with financial need. Inquire when registering. **Please bring CASH ONLY for tickets.**

Date: Thursday, June 27

Time: 12:00 p.m. —1:00 p.m.

Location: Bounce! Trampoline Sports, 1250 St. James Avenue, Springfield

Tickets: \$10 per child, one parent/caregiver free per child

RSVP required: 413-529-2428 or

Danielle.plasse@pathlightgroup.org.

Autism Connections Picnic in Athol

We are taking our Family Summer Picnic on the road to Athol (more info about Easthampton summer picnic to come later in the summer).



We will celebrate the season with families in the community at the beautiful Silver Lake Park and Pavilion. All are invited for food and beverages (sandwiches+), arts and crafts and activities!

Date: Friday, June 28

Time: 11:00 a.m. —1:00 p.m.

Location: Silver Park and Pavilion in Athol

Tickets: FREE

RSVP required: 413-529-2428 or

Danielle.plasse@pathlightgroup.org.

Please note that the picnic will take place rain or shine, and that swimming in the lake will not be part of the picnic activities.

WEBINARS

Strengthening Family Relationships: Ways to improve Communication

A webinar for parents of teens/adults with autism
Thursday June 27, 6:30 p.m.—8:00 p.m., ONLINE
Host: Robin Lurie-Meyerkopf, M.Ed (AANE)
Fee: \$5.00

This webinar will help families learn better ways to communicate with their teen or young adult with autism. Some of the topics covered include: learning to have conversations about uncomfortable topics; helping teens/young adults to be more proactive with self-advocacy; learning how shared experience build family bonding; and assisting all family members in communication skills. At the end of this presentation, families will have the tools to get started on moving forward with goals and motivation techniques. Please register by Wednesday June 26.

For more information about this and other webinars, visit the [AANE webinar page](#).

UMASS RESEARCH STUDY

This study will investigate the speech and vocal quality of individuals with and without autism between the ages of 8-14 years. The study will include reviewing a students’ speech and voice when speaking, and how they plan and sequence their speech for communication purposes.

During the study session, students will be given some speech, language, and listening tests and will engage in conversations. Only one 2 hour session at UMass Amherst is required and short breaks will be provided as needed. This study has been approved by the University’s office for the protection of human subjects (IRB).

Participants will receive a \$35 gift card to Amazon. If you are interested in hearing more or participating in this study, please contact Colleen Gargan, M.A. at (978)766-9116 or cgargan@umass.edu or Dr. Mary Andrianopoulos at (413) 545-0551 or mva@umass.edu.

YOUNG ADULTS

Potluck Social/Video Game nights

Friday, July 19, August 23, Milestones, 41 Russell Street, Hadley, 6:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m., (all ages), FREE

Live music, food, karaoke and video games. Please bring a nut-free appetizer, entrée, dessert or drink to share. Call 413-585-8010 for more information or visit [HERE](#).



Milestones

41 Russell St., Hadley, MA

Recreational programs for young adults. Summer session starts Monday July 8. See the full offerings [HERE](#).

CHILDREN’S ACTIVITIES

Whole Children

41 Russell St., Hadley, MA

Recreational programs for young children. Summer session starts July 8. Call 413-585-8010 for more information or visit [HERE](#).



OTHER ACTIVITY RESOURCES

CHD: activities including therapeutic summer camp and many adaptive recreational opportunities in the greater Springfield area

CSO: The Bridge Family Resource Center: Amherst based activities

The 413 Mom: community based events in western Massachusetts for all children and families

SUN

MON

TUES

WEDS

AUTISM CONNECTIONS CALENDAR: JUNE 2019



2

3

4

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

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

9

10

11
**Supporting Friendships
Workshop**
6:00pm-8:00pm, Inclusive
Community Center, Hadley

12
Yoga Class 4 :00pm-5:00pm
(see above)

Autism Connections,
Parent Support Group
5:30pm-7:30pm, Holyoke
CALL FOR INFO: 413-529-2428

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

16

17

18

19
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

23

30

24

25
Toy Story 4
West Springfield 15
10:00am-12pm
RSVP

26
The Quarters!
Hadley
10am-12pm
RSVP



THURS

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

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

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

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14

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

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ACBC monthly meeting
10am—12:00pm
BCArc Training Room
Pittsfield

21

22

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

27

Autism Connections
Summer Picnic in
Athol
Silver Lake Park
11am-1pm
RVSP

28

29

JUNE 2019

EVENTS & CLASSES

CONFERENCES

Employment First: Expanding job opportunities and pathways to work

Tuesday, June 11, 2019, 8:30-4:00 p.m.

*Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel and Trade Center, Marlboro
Fee based*

The Department of Development Services is presenting this conference in partnership with The Institute for Community Inclusion. Don't miss this opportunity to learn about strategies and resources that you can use to expand employment opportunities for people served by DDS. More information [HERE](#).

Shared Living and AFC Conference



*Thursday, October 3, 2019,
8:45 a.m. —5:00 p.m.*

*Best Western Royal Plaza
Hotel and Trade Center,
Marlboro, Massachusetts
Fee based*

This popular annual event is coming up in the fall. Be sure to save the date!

The Shared Living & AFC Conference is a program of Pathlight's vision is to provide and exchange practical information and innovative ideas that promote community living as model of choice where people can live in a dignified, normative arrangement.

Work Without Limits

Thursday, October 10, 2019

Four Points Sheraton, Norwood, MA, Fee based

This one-day annual conference features prominent national keynote speakers, educational sessions, exhibitors, networking opportunities and sharing of best practices on disability employment. For more information, visit <http://raisethebar2019.org/>. Early Bird Registration opens June 3.

WORKSHOPS/TRAININGS

Family Empowerment's *Supporting Friendships: A workshop for parents by parents*

Tuesday, June 11, 6:00 p.m. –8:00 p.m.

41 Russell Street, Hadley, MA, FREE

The goal of this workshop is to help our family members develop and sustain friendships that are meaningful and freely given, between people with and without disabilities. Join presenters Ingrid Flory from DDS and parent Brittany Antuna explore how to create friendships. The workshop will address the following topics:

- What is a friendship?
- How friendships can be inclusive
- How friendships benefit us individually, benefit our families and benefit our communities
- What gets in the way of friendships
- 10 things that parents can do to help children make friends
- How to invite people into your life and your home to expand your social circle
- How to use an IEP, ISP and other tools to support friendship goals
- Have a game plan!



This workshop was created by Ingrid Flory and Brittany Antuna as a part of Creating Our Common Wealth, an initiative of the Department of Developmental Services. Please RSVP with Michelle Mendes at 413-585-8010 or michelle.mendes@pathlightgroup.org.

WORKSHOPS/TRAININGS

Autism Collaborative of Berkshire County Monthly Meeting: Disability Law Center

Friday, June 21, 10:00 a.m.—12:00 p.m.

BCArc Training Room, 877 South Street, 3rd floor,
Pittsfield, FREE



The June meeting will highlight a presentation from Senior Attorney Stefanie Krantz of the Disability Law Center's Northampton Office. The mission of the Disability Law Center

is to provide legal advocacy on disability issues that promote the fundamental rights of all people with disabilities to participate fully and equally in the social and economic life of Massachusetts. Visit their website at <https://www.dlc-ma.org/> for more information. We will use the remaining time of our meeting to recap this year of ACBC events, discuss ACBC's direction for next year, and solicit ideas from participants on topics, presenters, and venues for next year. Please bring ideas!

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. You can find out more about other ACBC Collaborative of Berkshire County events [HERE](#) or call Erica at 413.443-4780 or email Erica.donovan@pathlightgroup.org. Learn more about [past events](#) or visit the [ACBC facebook page](#).

WORKSHOPS/TRAININGS

Emergency readiness for caregivers of young children with disabilities and health care needs

June 23, 2019

Shriners Hospital for Children, 516 Carew Street,
Springfield MA, FREE



This is a free parent and caregiver training presented by Susan Wolf-Fordham, JD, MPA Candidate.

Susan sits on MA Department of Public

Health and MA Emergency Management Agency advisory committees and is a member of a National Association of City and County Health Officials work group and a subject matter expert for a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response online information and resource hub.

Registration is required to 413-783-5500 or Amy Clark, ext. 116 or Karen Klimek, ext. 127.

* (Interpreter services are available upon request)

[Learn more](#) about this event.




HAPPY
SUMMER

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.	1st Saturday of the month 10:00am-11:30am Bridge Family Resource Center 101 University Dr, Suite A3, Amherst	Group meets on Saturdays. Childcare available, refreshments served. Please call 413.549.0297 with questions.
ATHOL			
Autism Caregiver's 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, 6:00pm-8:00pm, Athol Memorial Hospital, The Hillis Board Room 2033 Main St., Athol	Please contact Amanda Gallant at Amanda.gallant@heywood.org with questions or to RSVP.978-257-5143
North Quabbin Caregiver's 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.	2nd Monday is for conversation and networking. 3rd Thursday of the month, presentations, workshops and more. 6:00pm-8:00pm, 361 Main Street, April	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. Please note this group is on hiatus for the summer.	For more information or to RSVP, please contact Cathy at camorgado@verizon.net .
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, 10:00am. Pathlight Office, Greenfield Corporate Center, 101 Munson St., Greenfield	For more information please call or email Caroline Wenck at 413-585-8010 x122 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	Email Linda Manning at wynne92@aol.com for RSVP and more info. Childcare is offered and requires a reservation one week in advance. 413.529.2428.
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
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.	Fourth Wednesday of the month. Western Mass Training Consortium 187 High Street, Suite 2303, Holyoke	For more information, call Ness at 413-997-4205 or emailed at nbellini@wmtcinfo.org .
Leadership Through Advocacy (LTA)	Come have your voice heard, learn and develop skills to speak up for yourself, grow individually and make the world better by participating in legislative advocacy.	First and third Wednesday of the month, Holyoke Community College, Frost 309 5:30-7:30pm	For more information, call Ness at 413-997-4205 or emailed at nbellini@wmtcinfo.org

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.	First Monday of the month, 6:30-8:00pm Northampton Area Pediatrics 193 Locust St.	For more information call 413-584-8700 x226
Northampton Women's Drop-In Support Group	Support group for women with Autism, ages 18+. This free group is being offered by the Asperger/Autism Network (AANE).	Second Monday the month, Forbes Library, 20 West Street	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 like grand, step, foster, and any mama who cares for a child.	Every other Monday evening 6:00pm-7:00pm, 1 Market Street,	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
Self Advocacy Network (SAN)	Come have your voice heard, learn and develop skills to speak up for yourself, grow individually and make the world better by participating in legislative advocacy.	2 nd and 4 th Monday of every month, 11 Wilbraham Rd, 2 nd floor in the SC@N 360 Conference room, 5:30pm-7:30Ppm	For ore information, call Ness at 413-997-4205 or emailed at nbellini@wmtcinfo.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			
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
Asperger/Autism 101: For parents and adult family members 	This online support group is designed for parents and other adult family members of children and teens who have recently been diagnosed with autism feel they need a better understanding of the diagnosis. This is limited to 14 participants. Email Stephanie.birkdale@aane.org for more information.	6:30—8:00pm \$90, financial assistance is available DATES: 6/17/2019, 7/1/2019, 7/15/2019, 7/29/2019, 8/12/2019 8/26/2019



Autism Connections
A Program of Pathlight, Inc.
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Easthampton, MA 01027

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EASTHAMPTON, MA

2019 June Edition

Community Connection

Autism Connections: a Pathlight program

Newsletter

Buddy's Sunshine Angels Golf Tournament for Autism

It is the season for Golf Tournaments, and please be sure to put this one on your schedule! Proceeds from the event benefit Autism Connections' programs. Join Jennie and Joe Clark in honoring their son Buddy, and other children and adults with autism, by joining the event as a team with your friends.

Date: August 24, 2019

Location: Bas Ridge Golf Course, Hinsdale, MA

Time: check-in at noon, shot-gun start at 1pm

Contact Joe Clark 413-212-2443 to register, sponsor or for more info.

Autism Connections cannot do its work without friends like you! Please [GIVE](#) and help us provide summer programs and activities!