



Community Connection

Autism Connections: a Pathlight program

Newsletter

Register now for the Autism Conference!

10 Things you might not know about the conference this year

1. The conference is not a fundraiser—it is for YOU. It is a commitment from us to provide a local event with statewide appeal that offers current resources, information about supports and services, and the opportunity to connect with your autism community.
2. The Sheraton Springfield Monarch Place Hotel is our new venue.
3. Getting to the Sheraton is easier than it may seem. As we approach the event date, we will post very clear parking directions, noting the lots that will be free to park with validation.
4. You can stay overnight at the Sheraton with an exclusive room rate, just ask for the conference discount!
5. Our Autism Specialists have done the work to research new, and favorite books for children and adults which we will be selling at the conference.
6. The conference has something for everyone. Many of the supports and resources for people with autism overlap with support for people who have other challenges.
7. Our keynote speakers Gina Terrasi Gallagher and Patricia Terrasi are incredibly funny and uplifting and inspiring. They will put a smile on your face.
8. The conference is a unique experience in western Massachusetts. It is the only local autism event to offer a keynote, breakouts, and a large range of exhibitors.
9. This is our 29th consecutive year of bringing speakers and inspiration to western Massachusetts.
10. We have breakout sessions! The list is diverse and will offer something interesting for all. See page 3 for complete descriptions.

Visit our website for more info!



PRESENTING SPONSOR
Radcliffe is the Reason and Arthur Too Fight for Autism



Your conference committee and hotel event planner working out the details!

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¡Hola! Hablamos español
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Easthampton, MA 01027
413.529.2428

Berkshire Office

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Pittsfield, MA 01201
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, March ACBC Meeting

Attorney Matthew Engel is our Spotlight Speaker for our meeting on March 15 from 10-12pm at BCARC Training Room, 877 South Street, Third Floor. Parents who are dissatisfied with their child's special education services don't always know when they should hire an attorney or what they should expect if they do. Attorney Engel will describe how attorneys assess the merits of a special education case, which may be different than a parent's assessment.



He will use case examples to illustrate how parents and attorneys can most effectively work together to achieve positive outcomes. The presentation will also highlight some of the legal issues which arise frequently when representing children with autism. For complete information, view the flyer [HERE](#).

ACBC April Autism Awareness Calendar of Events

For more info, click [HERE](#).

Puzzle Pieces & Pizza

April 3, 6pm-8p

UCP of Western MA Offices:

2 locations; Pittsfield- 208 West Street; North Adams, 535 Curran Highway, \$5

Resource Fair & Art Show

April 5, 5pm-7pm

Autism Collaborative of Berk Cnty:

Ad Lib, 215 North St, Pittsfield, FREE

Blue Art Show & Artist Reception

April 5, 5pm-8pm

Downtown Pittsfield, Inc

33 Dunham Mall, Pittsfield, FREE

Functional Communication Training

April 9, 6pm-8pm, Positive Behavior Supports:

Autism Connections, 75 South Church St, Suite 402, Pittsfield, FREE

Art for All!

April 17, 4pm-6pm, BFAIR & CATA:

The Green, 85 Main Street, Suite 105, North Adams, FREE

Autism Awareness Paint 'N Snack

April 17, 6pm-8:30pm, AdLib

Ad Lib, 215 North St, Pittsfield, \$25

Sensory Friendly Movie Night

April 17, 6:30pm,

Hillcrest Educational Foundation

Hillcrest Academy, 400 Columbus Ave, Pittsfield, FREE

Autism Connections: Autism Conference

April 23, 8am-4pm

Sheraton Springfield Monarch Place Hotel, Registration Fee Applies

Autism Collaborative of Berk. County: Creativity for Action!

April 24, 6pm-7:30pm

Ad Lib, 215 North Street, Pittsfield, FREE

Berk. Spring Drama Production

April 25, 7pm, CIP:

Spectrum Playhouse, 20 Franklin St, Lee, FREE

Autism Collaborative of Berk. Cnty: Autism Awareness Month - Rally

April 25, 5pm-7pm

Park Square, Pittsfield, FREE

Berkshire County Arc

April 26, 8am-4pm, Family Support Conf.

Country Club of Pittsfield, Registration Fee Applies

Conference Breakout Sessions

Breakout Sessions will be offered in both the morning and afternoon. Please choose your preferred workshop for each session when registering for the conference, either online or with a hard copy. Register online here: <http://bit.ly/ACconference2019>

1. Weaving the Way to a Successful School to Adulthood

Rick Hawes, Director of Employment Services at Berkshire County Arc

In-depth overview of the key concepts and methods to facilitate young adults smoothly transitioning into adulthood and employment. This presentation will review best practices in the transition process to assist parents, educators, and human services agencies to provide quality outcomes.

2. Autism and Me

Alison Butler (paraprofessional), Milan Bonilla-Cruz (student)

Allison Butler (Paraprofessional) along with her former student (and book illustrator) Milan Bonilla-Cruz co-authored a children's book together, and this workshop will describe their process. This book is written through eyes of Milan as he describes himself to show how he is similar to his typical classmates, as well as what might be harder for him, and specific strategies that help him that might also help other students with autism.

3. Teaching Boundaries and Relationships to Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities or Autism

Brian Melanson, Program Assistant at Whole Children and Maggie Rice, Program Director at Whole Children

This presentation will focus on the Whole Selves curriculum and the practical skills teachers employ to create meaningful classroom experiences. This sexuality education program provides a basic foundation for learners of all abilities in a variety of topics pertaining to self-esteem, healthy relationships, healthy boundaries and sexuality; we would like attendees to understand the basics of our curriculum while also learning some skills for facilitating meaningful conversations and interventions in their own setting.

4. No More Books Not More Parent and Teacher Dirty Looks

Keynote speakers Gina (Terrasi) Gallagher and Patricia Terrasi

Helping special needs children get the services they need to learn can be a stressful experience for parents as well as educators operating in the constraints of tight school system budgets. In

this fun and interactive workshop, presented at colleges and universities around the county, Patty and Gina share both the parent and educator perspective and provide real solutions for how parents and teachers can come together and meet in the middle of the IEP table.

5. ARICA: Autism and Insurance - What Families Need to Know

Amy Weinstock, Director of the Autism Insurance Resource Center at the University of Massachusetts' Medical School's Eunice Kennedy Shriver Center

This presentation will discuss autism insurance for families in Massachusetts, including MassHealth and recent changes; eligibility and how to figure out what coverage you need; Premium Assistance; The Health Connector; covered treatments and how to access them; frequently asked questions, and where to get assistance; and the relationship between ARICA and your MassHealth plan.

6. Communication Supports for Individuals with Autism

Maggie Wurm, Assistive Technology Specialist at Collaborative for Educational Services and Jeanne Tuthill, SLP, Assistive Technology Specialist at Collaborative for Educational Services

Many individuals with autism experience significant challenges with communication and social skills. These difficulties can be pervasive, affecting all areas of life. These individuals often benefit from visual strategies to support effective communication to help build relations as well as aide their comprehension of the world around them. A variety of visual supports and strategies to supply daily functional communication needs will be discussed, along with low and high tech Assistive Technology options.

7. Bridging the Gap: Intersection of ABA and Mental Health Counseling

Yvette Stoddard, Director of Academic Services – ASD; April Roche, Clinical Director/Clinician; Danielle Miller, Behavioral Analyst; Hillcrest Educational Centers

Panel discussion for attendees to ask questions on how to get professionals to collaborate

respectively, while aligning with their codes of conduct and ethical consideration. The workshop will also review an introduction to Trauma Informed Care and the therapeutic model and how those are bridged.

8. Grief-Strategies for People With Autism

Shelly Lenn, The Garden: A Center for Grieving Children and Teens, and previously Rick's Place

Youth ages 5-18 can fully benefit from knowing the truth when someone close in their life dies. In this workshop participants will learn how to explain what death means, the range of feelings that can come up, and the importance of commemoration. Simple language will be shared, as well as readily available resources.

9. The Journey Continues: Successes and Challenges in Adulthood

The Panel is comprised of DDS Autism Service Coordinators and adults with autism who will share their experiences.

What happens after school and transition are over? DDS has now extended eligibility for adult services to adults with autism who do not have intellectual disabilities. This panel discussion will address the unique challenges that these adults experience.

Areas of focus include living independently and other housing models, job training and the journey to maintaining competitive employment, attending college, and forming relationships and a social network.

Psychological and Neuropsychological Evaluations: Navigating the Process and Making Sense of the Results

David Kieval, Clinical Psychologist with specialty working with children, adolescents and families

A comprehensive psychological evaluation can be a uniquely valuable tool in understanding a child's profile and how to best help him or her find success and fulfillment. Come learn what psychological evaluations are and what they can do for you. This session will address when and why you might seek evaluation, what types of evaluations to pursue for different goals, and what to expect from the discussion of specific instruments and domains that are likely to show up for children with autism.

Center News

The Autism Collaborative at Cooley Dickinson Hospital

The Autism Collaborative of Cooley Dickinson Hospital (CDH) is a workgroup comprised of hospital personnel and community-based professionals, parents and caregivers who are dedicated to improving awareness and understanding of people with autism in a medical setting, particularly during emergencies. The Autism Collaborative Project of CDH has been working on this goal for several years, and has made strides in supporting the Cooley community to better understand the challenges and anxieties that people with autism often experience when needing medical support. Autism Connections is proud to be a member of this diverse group.

In recent years, the Autism Collaborative has facilitated ALEC (Autism & Law Enforcement Education Coalition) trainings for Cooley personnel, including security guards, and continues to offer in-house trainings on autism to various departments in the hospital. Cooley has hosted Grand Rounds and community presentations from Dr. Christopher McDougle, Director of the Lurie Center for Autism. The Collaborative has also fostered ongoing communication with the Lurie Center, which is a program of Mass General Hospital, in order to best utilize the resources that they have to offer.

Cooley has recently upgraded to a new electronic records system, and are now able to input information about the needs of their patients with autism directly into their records! In the past, the Collaborative created an Autism Acute Care Questionnaire, which was a paper form that families could complete and bring with them during an emergency or routine care visit to Cooley Dickinson Hospital and other surrounding hospitals. The new Cooley medical electronic record system now includes the option to upload their Mass General-created version of the Acute Care Questionnaire to a patient's electronic medical record.

If you or your loved one receive routine or emergency care through Cooley Dickinson and you would like a

paper copy of the newly revised Acute Care Questionnaire, please contact danielle.plasse@pathlightgroup.org. This would allow you to complete the paper form in advance and provide it to medical personal at Cooley during your next visit there. Cooley can then input the form into the electronic record for all future visits!

Community Connections: Autism Training at the Athol Public Library for Businesses

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.



The training takes place on March 19, at the Athol Public Library (Program Room), from 10am-12pm.

Center News

Annual Autism Advocacy Day at the Great Hall of the Statehouse

April is Autism Awareness and Understanding Month, and it's full of events and activities to celebrate our local community. In addition, April brings the opportunity to bring our voices directly to our state legislators— join us and the Advocates for Autism of Massachusetts (AFAM) for the 15th Annual Autism Advocacy Day on Thursday, April 11th from 9:00am – 11:30am at the Great Hall of the State House in Boston. Make your voice heard with other families, self-advocates and providers! For more information, go to <http://www.afamaction.org/upcoming-events>.



transition fairs

Springfield/Westfield DDS Transition Fair

Tuesday, April 9, 2019, 6:00pm-8:00pm at The Basketball Hall of Fame, 1000 Hall of Fame Ave, Springfield. More info at 413-887-5773, Rachel Ingraham.

Holyoke/Chicopee DDS Transition Fair

Thursday, April 11, 2019, 4:30pm-6:30pm at Chicopee Comprehensive High School, 617 Montgomery St., Chicopee. More info at 413-534-3299, Karen Fletcher.

Young adults 14 to 22 years of age with an intellectual or developmental disability or autism, who are still enrolled in school are invited (with their families) to attend the Transition Fairs.

Fundraisers

Will you support our Leprechauns?



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.

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

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. To donate/register, click [HERE](#).

SUN

MON

TUES

WEDS

March 2019

AUTISM CONNECTIONS CALENDAR

3

4

Social Skills Gym Class
4:00pm-5:00pm

5

Patterson Field House
Berkshire CC

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

6

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

Leprechaun Plunge
Brunelle's Marina in
South Hadley.

10

11

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

12

Picky Eaters: a FREE Workshop; 6pm-
8pm; Family Empowerment, Hadley

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

17

18

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

19

Community Connections: Autism
Training for Businesses—10am-
12pm; Athol Public Library

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

20

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

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

24

25

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

31

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

Potluck Social, Karaoke &
Video Game Night. 6:30pm-
8:30pm

Inclusive Community Center
41 Russell Street, Hadley
Call 585-8010 for more info

8

Sensory-Friendly Ice
Skating
Hosted by Holyoke Public
Schools
2:30pm-4:30pm
Fitzpatrick Skating Rink, 575
Maple St., Holyoke

9

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

14

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

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

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

Berkshire Teen Group

22

DMH Legislative Breakfast Over-
view and Materials, 10am-11am,
Springfield

23

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

28

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

19th Annual Berkshire Disabilities
Legislative Breakfast,
7:30am-9am, Pittsfield

29

PLEASE CALL OUR
OFFICE AT
413-529 2428 x115 IF YOU HAVE
ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THESE
EVENTS.

30

Coming Up

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

Picky Eaters: a Free workshop

Tuesday, March 12, 2019, 6pm-8pm
Family Empowerment, Hadley

This workshop will focus on the question of what is a parent's role in helping a family member expand their food choices? The topics will include: what is typical behavior around mealtime and trying new foods; what if a child is stuck on one or two foods; what do the experts recommend for best practices, and a review of available resources. Deborah Jones, M.Ed, OTR/L, BCBA will answer these questions and more. Light refreshments will be served. RSVP to michelle.mendes@pathlightgroup.org.

Pressing Issues Facing Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental and Disabilities

Monday, March, 18, 2019, 10am-12pm, Hampton Inn, 60 Memorial Dr., Chicopee. Register by March 14, FREE
Join Leo Sarkissian, Exec. Dir. of The Arc of Mass., for a conversation about pressing issues facing people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and the family members and human service agencies who assist them.

Discuss the Workforce Shortage Crisis and The Arc's new initiative to find a solution, the FY 2020 state budget and how to increase social inclusion. Learn what you can do to be an effective advocate, so you can have an impact on the lives of people with disabilities statewide. To register, click [HERE](#).

DMH Legislative Breakfast Overview and Materials in Springfield, MA

Friday, March 22, 2019, Registration starts at 9:30am and the program runs from 10:00am to approxi. 11:00am, Springfield Tech. Comm. Coll, Scibelli Hall, 1 Armory St.

This is an opportunity for members of the mental health community to meet with their legislators, thank them for their support and discuss how DMH helps people with mental illnesses recover and live satisfying lives in communities. It is also an opportunity for consumers and family members to share good news and success stories about their life experiences. To register click [HERE](#).

Federation for Children with Special Needs - Parent Consultant Training Institute (PCTI)

March 29 – May 31, \$350 - \$495

Friday, March 29-31, 2019, 9am-3:30pm

Holyoke Community College, 300 Homestead Ave, Holyoke, MA), *No class on April 19. Holyoke, MA

The Parent Consultant Training Institute (PCTI) is an intensive training program designed to provide parents and professionals with a solid foundation in special education laws, procedures, and related subjects. Class size is limited, so register early! The training consists of 40-54 hours of classroom instruction. For more information or to register, click [HERE](#).

CONFERENCES

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 FORUM

19th Annual Berkshire Disabilities Legislative Breakfast

Friday, March 29, 2019 at 7:30am– 9am

Berkshire Hills Country Club, 500 Benedict Rd, Pittsfield, Massachusetts 01201

The 19th Annual Berkshire Disabilities Legislative Breakfast – A legislative breakfast forum for people with disabilities, their families, and support organization staff. To find out more, click [HERE](#).

COMMUNITY/FAMILY EVENTS

UCP FREE Swim

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



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.

Potluck Social, Karaoke & Video Games!

Milestones (all ages), 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! Remember to bring a nut-free appetizer, dish, dessert, or a drink to share. Free! Call 413-585-8010.

Sensory-Friendly Ice Skating

Hosted by Holyoke Public Schools
Saturday, March 9, 2019, 2:30pm-4:30pm
Fitzpatrick Skating Rink, 575 Maple St., Holyoke

Enjoy ice skating in a sensory friendly environment, lights turned down. Register with Kim Levy at klevy@hps.holyoke.ma.us

ACBC Meeting

Friday, March 15, 2019, 10:00am–12pm, BC Arc Training Room, 877 South Street, 3rd floor, Pittsfield

Attorney Matthew Engel discusses when parents should hire a special needs attorney or what they should expect if they do. Download the flyer [HERE](#).

12th Annual Sprout Film Festival

Sunday, March 31, 2019 at 12pm – 3pm, \$5
Robert Boland Theater, Koussevitzky Art Center 1350 West Street Pittsfield, MA 01201

Memorable and entertaining short films featuring people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. For more information, click [HERE](#).

Kehillah- Project RIDE (Recreation, Independence, Development and Equipment.)

Springfield Jewish Community Center (JCC)
Kehillah Special Needs Program
1160 Dickinson Street, Springfield, MA 01108

Project RIDE provides special needs children and young adults with modified tricycles and information about adaptive sports programs in Western Massachusetts. Our emphasis is on the importance of recreational activities for children and their families. Participants must be at least 44" tall. For more information, click [HERE](#). **To register for Kehillah programs please contact the JCC by phone at 739-4715.**

Sensory Friendly Swim

Thursday evenings, 5:45pm—6:30pm
Athol YMCA, 545 Main Street, Athol

Enjoy a relaxing sensory –friendly swim at the YMCA. The activity is free with a Y membership, or has a \$5 drop in fee per individual (\$15 cap for a family). For more information, call 978-249-3305

Film Screening: Swim Team

Sunday, April 7, 4pm-7pm,
Chicopee

HOPE Autism Support Group is screening the documentary film *Swim Team*, about members of a New Jersey swim team who have autism. Please email camorgado@verizon.net for more information.

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.

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.	1st Saturday of the month 10:00am-11:30am Bridge Family Resource Center 101 University Dr, Suite A3	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.	Please contact Amanda Gallant at Amanda.gallant@heywood.org with questions or to RSVP.978-257-5143
North Quabbin Caregiver's Resource Group	This group is self facilitated in a setting to engage conversation, share resources, ideas and network.	Second Monday of the month, 6:00pm-7:30pm, 361 Main Street	Call Karon Parker at 413-774-5552 X1047 for more information.
North Quabbin Caregiver's Resource Group	This group will include trainings, workshops and roundtable discussions for those individuals who care for someone with disabilities.	Third Thursday of the month. 6:00pm-8:00pm.	Call Karon Parker at 413-774-5552 X1047 for more information.
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.	2nd Monday is for conversation and networking. 3rd Thursday of the month, presentations, workshops and more 6:00pm-8:00pm, 361 Main Street	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 .
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.	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	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,	For ore 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 ore 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-wly 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
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

2019 March Edition

Community Connection Newsletter

Autism Connections: a Pathlight program

Pittsfield Office has moved!



The Autism Connections' Pittsfield office has moved to a new location. The space is twice as big as our current location and we designed activity space so that we can offer more workshops, social skill groups and support groups. The phone number has not changed.

The location also has better accessibility and parking. The new office is in the Clock Tower Building at 75 South Church Street, Suite 402, which is the old Berkshire Eagle Building for those familiar with Pittsfield.

We are planning an open house in the spring and will be sure to let you know!

Webinars

AANE Webinar: Special Education Law: Rights and Responsibilities

Monday, March 4 @ 1:00pm-2:30pm, \$25.00

Presenter: Peter A. Hahn, Esq

This webinar reviews important aspects of special education law, including eligibility, evaluations, IEPs, placement, and dispute resolution with an emphasis on students on the autism spectrum. To register, click **HERE**.

Visit our [website](#) for more information about our conference!