

WINTER 2023

THE EMPOWERING CONNECTION

Newsletter of the Autism Society of Greater Detroit

Update from the Board

Our board members have been working diligently this past year to increase our capacity to support our community. To that end, we have held charity poker & bingo sessions and applied and received 3 grants.

BINGO

Every week we hold Bingo at [Rosemack Bingo](#) hall at 20791 E 13 Mile Rd, Roseville. We have 2 sessions: Monday mornings & Tuesday mornings, Doors Open at 9:00 a.m. & Bingo Starts at 10:30 a.m.

This hall has a Progressive jackpot that continues after each session. Last week the jackpot was over \$47,500 (in 57 numbers or less)! Everyone is welcome; join us for a good time.

POKER

Every year we may hold 4 Poker sessions to support our programs. The 2024 dates can be found on our [calendar](#) and are as follows:
May 8 - May 11 & May 29 - June 1 & July 17 - July 20
& July 26 - July 29 @ this session there will also be Blackjack!

Therapeutic Garden

In April we received a grant for a local youth-led community project. The youth leadership team decided to create a Therapeutic Community Garden between the cities of Warren & Centerline where there are 5 senior living communities & several Head start and other Preschools nearby to take advantage of the healing & learning space.

This project is on-going, the project will continue next year with the completion of the meditation area on the north-side. You can see their progress on our website.

ADVC

We also received a grant to support holistically addressing health equity outcomes in MI. You can read more on page 4.

Thank you to our hardworking and supportive board for all you do!

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Simple Ways to Bring an Autistic Person Joy

Maybe you have an autistic loved one, an autistic client, or you yourself are autistic and looking to find a little more happiness in your day. Here are some simple, easy ways to make an autistic person feel content.

Many of these tips would work for those with or without Autism. Treat people with kindness always.

Listen to them talk about their special interests. Everyone appreciates a good listening ear, and the same goes for autistic people, especially when they're passionate about something. Take a moment to pay attention and ask questions. They'll really enjoy it!

Take them somewhere soothing. Autistic people tend not to like the hustle and bustle of busy places. Try bringing them somewhere where they can relax. A cozy room, a nature park, and a quiet car for a quick road trip are great ideas!

Compliment them. While it's important not to compliment autistic people just for the sake of it, a genuine, thoughtful compliment can go a long way. Appreciate their passion, their inquisitiveness, their sense of justice, or any other noble trait they have. A self-esteem boost is always wonderful!

Give them a little gift. Some autistic people really enjoy little trinkets, fidgets, art, and treats. Get them something that will be both useful and interesting to them. Consider their special interests, needs, likes, and dislikes. Even something handmade is great!

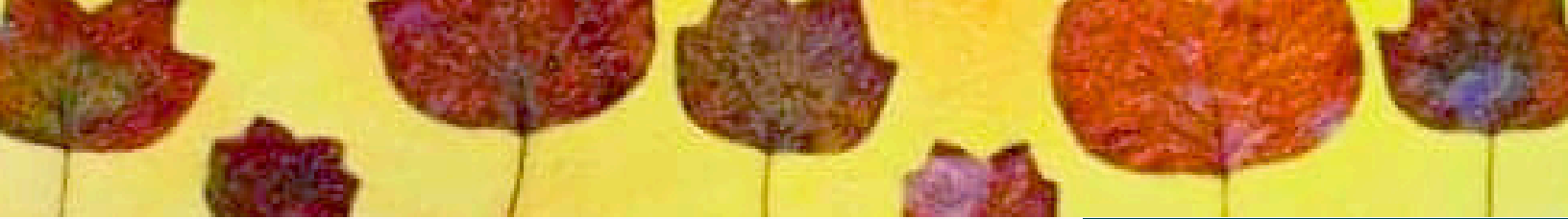
Respect their boundaries. Autistic people often have their boundaries disregarded because of their diagnosis or general neurotypical customs. Ask them how you can help them feel more comfortable and respect their space.

Joke with them. A lot of autistic people love being included in casual conversation, as it's something many miss out on. Don't be afraid to toss them a quick joke or a remark on a situation. They'll appreciate that you thought to talk to them. Just make sure your jokes are kind and understandable to your audience.

There are plenty of ways you can brighten an autistic person's day. Any gesture, however small from your perspective, can be very influential in their life. They're sure to enjoy your thoughtfulness!



Autistic Emmalyn



Sticks and Stones is a book on raising an autistic child from a perspective we usually do not get to hear, from a father.

It is honest and still positive. Here is an excerpt from the book:

This rage is horrible, one of the worst. I watch as my son turns into a raging, spitting animal. Toys become weapons, pounding against my head and back as I force him to the ground and hold him there so he won't hurt himself . . . so he won't hurt me. His teeth sink into my arm, and my world becomes white heat, noise, and pain.

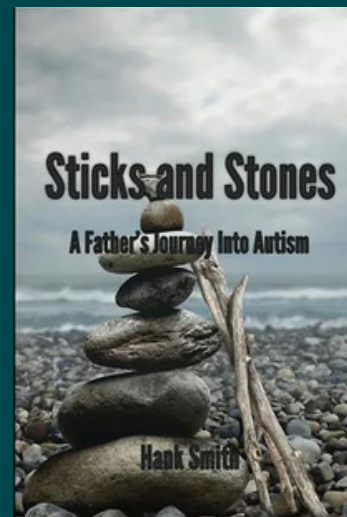
And then it is over. My son returns, shaken and scared by what has happened. It is strangely quiet now, but for our ragged breath and soft tears.

Life with my autistic son often felt like living between one rage and the next. But oh those times in between! What magic and wonder there was to be discovered in that separate world of his. And so I began to wonder. Along with its burdens, had my son's autism brought gifts as well, and would those gifts be enough to sustain us?

*By Hank Smith

A Good Read

BEST SELLER LIST



Get a Free Autism Parenting Magazine

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR THE MOST UP-TO-DATE NEWS AND PROFESSIONAL GUIDANCE FOR YOU AND YOUR CHILD ON THE SUBJECT OF AUTISM?

Find Support, Expertise, and Community on Your Autism Parenting Journey Stay Up-to-Date on the Latest Strategies and Techniques

[GET YOUR FREE MAGAZINE HERE](#)

autistic meltdown

when our surroundings becoming too overwhelming, our sensory structure becomes triggered and we need to escape from the situation

autistic shutdown

when we have suppressed our natural reactions within environments or have been triggered by a situation and have yet to mentally deal with it

autistic burnout

when our brain shuts down because of continual stress which can last from days to years



Did you know?

Children can safely receive other vaccines the same day they receive their Covid-19 vaccine.



ADVC Aging and Disability Vaccine Collaborative

Our purpose

- Foster connections through community partnerships
- Transform the vaccine experience
- Build trust, confidence, capacity, and inclusion

We are grateful to announce that we were recipients of a national ASA grant through USAging. The Autism Society is working holistically to address health equity outcomes including healthcare, mental health, suicide prevention, employment, and home and community-based services.

As part of the ADVC - Aging and Disability Vaccine Collaborative - our purpose is to foster connections through community partnerships & transform the vaccine experience by promoting inclusion.

We do this through outreach to doctors offices, pharmacies, and local health departments. We provide training on our model which transforms the experience with a sensory friendly environment & adaptive supports to help individuals with disabilities as well as the elderly population.

We also provide wonderful vaccine kits for participants which includes a ShotBlocker: a novel application of the Gate Theory of Pain Management, uses a number of blunt contact points to saturate the sensory signals around an injection site distracting the patients from the pain signals of the needle poke. Fidget spinners and glasses for light sensitivities are also included in the reusable tie bag, along with stickers for rewards.

Here are some ways our model helps overcome barriers:

For more information about our clinic models or if you would like to be trained or Co-host a local vaccine clinic with us, please email us at: AS.GreaterDetroit@gmail.com

Barrier	Solutions	Barrier	Solutions
Communication Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Symbol-support resources • Plain language resources • Translated resources • Communication board • Health preferences/profile 	Social Anxiety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce crowding • Offer space & time • Social narratives • Support dogs on site • Car or home vaccination
Barrier	Solutions	Barrier	Solutions
Needle Anxiety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social narratives • Video modeling & prep • Visual barriers & distractors • Pain barrier/"shot blocker" • Car or home vaccination 	Sensory Stimulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sound & light buffers • Visual stimulation tools • Offer music • Reduce crowding • Offer space & time
Barrier	Solutions	Barrier	Solutions
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability Info & Assistance Line <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 888-677-1199 ◦ DIAL@usaginganddisability.org • Lyft -FREE rides • Uber - FREE rides 	Timing and Waiting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use visual timer • Offer fidget tools • Offer "waiting" devices • Offer space & time • Car or home vaccination

Improving treatment for mental health issues among autistic youth

The Autism Care Network works to improve mental health among autistic youth; Over 30,000 children and adolescents supported through coordinated behavioral and medical care annually.

Research shows that people with autism are more likely to have other mental health conditions that affect their overall health and well-being. According to a 2019 study, as many as 28% of autistic people have ADHD, 20% have an anxiety disorder, 13% have a sleep disorder, 12% have a behavioral disorder, 11% have depression, 9% have OCD, 5% have bipolar disorder and 4% have schizophrenia. Careful assessment and treatment of these mental health conditions is essential to quality care for people on the autism spectrum.

Below is a Q&A with Dr. Eric M. Butter, Ph.D., co-chair of the [Autism Care Network Steering Committee](#) and Behavioral Sciences Committee.



Q: A [recent report from the Surgeon General](#) shows a mental health crisis among youth in the U.S. How is the Network working to improve mental health outcomes among autistic youth?

The Network is working to treat three common conditions often associated with autism: ADHD, anxiety and irritability. All three of these can exacerbate depression and suicidality among children and adolescents. We are specifically working on improving the assessment of these conditions over time by understanding which measures are effective at evaluating the autistic population. We've learned that assessing anxiety is still very difficult among autistic children, particularly those with limited verbal skills. How can you tell something is creating anxiety or worry for a kid if they can't talk about how they're feeling? To overcome these challenges, we have a small team of researchers working to develop better anxiety assessments for non-verbal children.

At Nationwide Children's Hospital, we've also incorporated suicide risk assessments for all of our patients, and we've set the age at which we screen for suicide risk younger for children with autism (age 8) than our non-ASD population (age 10). In addition, some Network sites are modifying and adapting their risk assessment processes so they're more concrete, more visual and easier for children with autism to understand.

Q: What are you doing to innovate treatments for ADHD, anxiety and irritability?

The treatments available for these conditions need to be better understood, so we're working hard to monitor the treatments that we are using across the Network and evaluate whether they are working or not. Every child that attends a Network site is enrolled in our learning registry where we track their symptoms over time, contributing to our clinical understanding of these treatments.

For example, we've known for a long time that we can treat irritability very well with medicines. Our network prescribers are using these medications and we're monitoring how well they reduce irritability in kids. But we've learned that when we combine that approach with evidence-based behavioral interventions, we can expand the impact while reducing the unwanted side effects of certain medications. In particular, we have seen value in using parent training as a behavioral intervention. Our network has adopted the [RUBI parent training program](#) to address anxiety, ADHD and irritability in autistic children and adolescents. We've worked hard to train more than 150 clinicians across the U.S. and Canada in 18 months in this intervention.

Learn more about the Autism Care Network check out our [Resource Page](#).

RESOURCE SPOT LIGHT

Leaders in Policy Advocacy (LIPA)

A leadership training program for adults with developmental disabilities and parents of minor children with developmental disabilities. The goal of LIPA is to train and support participants to become leaders in disability advocacy. LIPA will be offered through a hybrid training format of both in-person and online training. Applications for the next session will open in early 2024. Learn more [HERE](#).

FREE tickets to the 2024 Alhambra Day at the Shrine Circus

The Alhambra event will occur on Thursday, April 25th.

We will receive a limited amount of tickets for individuals with Autism and their caregiver/family.

If you would like to be placed on the list to receive these tickets **please email:**

as.greaterdetroit@gmail.com Include the name & age of the individual with Autism & the name and age of the individual(s) who can attend with them. ALL AGES welcome!

*Note: this is set up as a safe place for all individuals with special needs. And this is a regular circus experience; ie: there will be moments of flashing lights, loud noises, it will be mostly dark, and there are clowns. There are spaces for individuals to go if they are overwhelmed.

Sensory-Friendly programs at The Henry Ford.

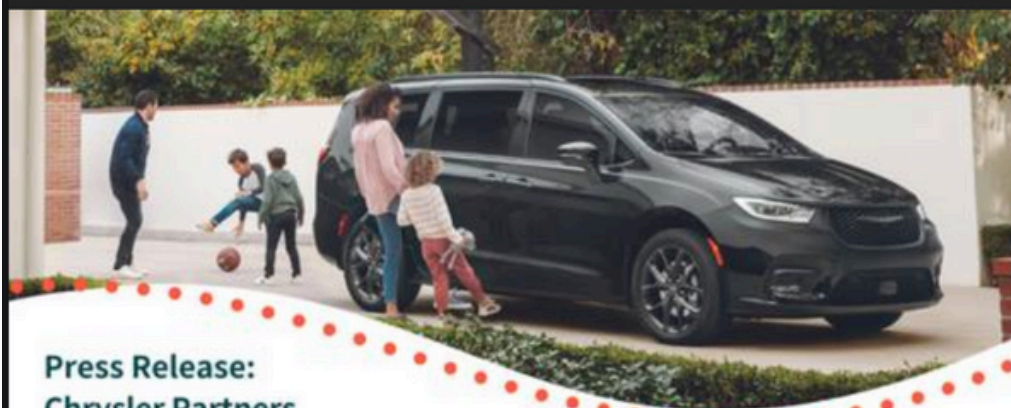
Offer a customized movie experience designed for those with Autism Spectrum Disorder / Sensory Processing Disorder and their loved ones on the second Saturday of every month at 11:00am.

These movies are free to you and your family. Learn more [HERE](#).

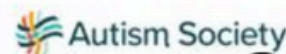
Project ImPACT

The MSU Psychological Clinic is now accepting families in Michigan for Project ImPACT, an evidence-based parent coaching program where caregivers can learn how to use intervention strategies with their child to support social communication skills. Project ImPACT is recognized as one of the most effective programs for parents of young children on the autism spectrum or with difficulties with social communication skills! Here is a link to learn more about Project ImPACT: <https://www.project-impact.org/>

Chrysler and the Autism Society of America are partnering to support the driving needs of individuals with Autism and their loved ones. This includes their new Calm Cabin package that can transform any Chrysler Pacifica into a sensory-supported mobile experience. As a company committed to supporting families, Chrysler wants to ensure that all families are able to have enjoyable, thoughtful experiences in their vehicles.



Press Release:
Chrysler Partners
with Autism Society
of America



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