



# Community Connection

Autism Connections: a Pathlight program

## Newsletter

### Easthampton Holiday happenings

#### Easthampton Family Holiday Party! December 14

**Sensory friendly Santa, Mad Science, potluck, crafts and more!**

Celebrate the season with us and enjoy the delicious potluck dishes of our community of families. Sensory friendly Santa will be visiting and Mad Science will teach you all to make some take home instant snow! Please RSVP to [Joyce](#) so we can plan for food and crafts. We would love to share this spirit of the season with



you and your family on December 14 from 5:30pm-7:30pm in Eastworks.

#### Pioneer Valley Ballet *Nutcracker!*



The 4 p.m. performance on December 8 is a sensory and family safe presentation that has lighting and sound, and other accommodations for a "reduced sensory experience."

Lights, sound, seat access, and length of show have all been adjusted.

PVB used a grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council and advice from **Autism Connections** to make changes to the show to make it more accessible. Find out more at the event website on the [PVB website](#).

### Holidays have you stressed?

It's the most wonderful time of the year... the holiday season is often full of traveling or visits from family and friends, special meals, parties and presents. All of this celebration and changes in routine can lead to stress and be overwhelming for anyone, but for children with autism it can be a particularly challenging experience.

Below are some tips to help you and child navigate the holiday season. Keep in mind that you know your child best, and use what you think will work!

**Preparation, preparation, preparation!** Any holiday means a change in routine, but the month of

December is often full of special activities, parties and visits. This can be overwhelming to a person who relies on consistency to feel secure.

Prepare your child for upcoming changes in the way they are most able to understand. Some ideas include: making a social story about each visit, party or activity and use it to talk about what to expect with your child both before and during the activity, or using a visual schedule.

It may also be helpful to create a calendar to mark down the days to each special event (for some children, planning far in advance may cause

*Continued on page 4*

#### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Easthampton Holiday Party..... 1
- Holiday Stress Relievers..... 1
- Staff directory..... 2
- Event follow up..... 2
- Berkshire events..... 3
- Holiday Stress cont..... 4
- Stepping Out for Autism, Conference..... 5
- Calendar of events..... 6-7
- Events & workshops..... 8-9
- Support groups..... 10-11
- Holiday Donation Corner..... 12**

#### CONTACT INFORMATION

**Easthampton Office**  
**¡Hola! Hablamos español**  
116 Pleasant Street, Suite 366  
Easthampton, MA 01027  
413.529.2428

**Berkshire Office**  
100 North Street, Suite 322  
Pittsfield, MA  
413.443.4780

*Our Mission: To help families, schools, professionals, agencies, and communities understand autism, promote the well-being of individuals with autism, and foster their inclusion in the community.*



## STAFF DIRECTORY

**Karen Serra** (x123)  
*Director*

**Ben Breton** (x121)  
*Autism Specialist*

**Lora Cortis** (x124)  
*Autism Specialist*

**Ari Damasco** (x115)  
*Autism Center Coordinator*

**Erica Donovan** (413.443.4780 x19)  
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*Habla español*

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*Autism Support Broker*

**Tanya White** (413.585.8010 x127)  
*Autism Specialist*

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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## Recent activities

### Berkshire Autism Collaborative Monthly Meeting



The Autism Collaborative of Berkshire County's monthly meeting on November 17 was excited to hear State Representative Tricia Farley-Bouvier talk with attendees. The representative encouraged us to talk to her about all of our concerns on a regular basis. She reminded us that this is how she can speak up for us on a state level and better represent our challenges. We had a great conversation about Transition services for students graduating from high school and what supports parents should be asking for.

Sue Crosby from Massachusetts Families Organizing for Change also spoke about her organizations' priorities and how they can help.

Our next meeting is December 15, from 10:00 a.m.—12:00pm at the Berkshire County Arc Training Room at 2 South Street, Suite 370 (third floor) in Pittsfield. Our spotlight speakers include AdLIB, who will expand on the November conversation about Transition services and give some helpful information to get families moving in the right direction. The Nutrition Center will also provide information on nutrition counseling and address any questions. The center has five very active locations throughout the county. Please join us!

### Thankful 5K donates proceeds to Autism Connections!

Nearly 400 runners and walkers were up early on Thanksgiving morning to participate in the **Thankful 5K**, sponsored by the Berkshire Running Center in Pittsfield.

The race was free to enter, but all funds generated from the sale of race T-shirts benefited the local programs of Autism Connections, and families.

The Berkshire Autism Initiative also organized volunteers and sold pies to support the effort.

Thank you to everyone involved in this truly "thankful" event!



### Autism Connections' Open House



Autism Connections hosted our second Open House on Saturday, November 4. We were excited to join our greater community as part of Eastworks Open Studios, and it was wonderful to see a steady stream of

visitors throughout the day! We welcomed both familiar and new faces, and it was a great opportunity to share our resources and have fun playing games and doing crafts.

We look forward to another open House in 2018, but all are welcome to visit us at any time throughout the year.



## Upcoming Berkshire holiday events

### Collaboration between our Berkshire Social Group and Funky Phoenix for entry into Berkshire Museum's Festival of Trees

We are so lucky to be able to expand the number of activities this year with our Social Group in the Berkshires. In addition to meeting twice a month for our community outings, we were able to partner this year with The Funky Phoenix in Pittsfield for a 5-session series of art classes, during which participants created a holiday tree entry for the Berkshire Museum's "[Whimsical, Wonderful Festival of Trees](#)".



Everyone who participated had a great time collaborating and creating this very original work of art, and we're looking forward to taking the entire group on an outing to the Berkshire Museum on December 2 to see it in all its glory (and of course, to party, because that's what we do best)!



Members of the Autism Connections' Berkshire Social Group (and a few onlookers) pose with their creation, which is near completion. For the full experience, visit the tree at Berkshire Museum's Festival of Trees Exhibit, on display Nov 18 through January 7.

The Funky Phoenix is an independent art school in Pittsfield which focuses on repurposing materials in a colorful, creative way to bring beauty and light to the city of Pittsfield, as well as people's lives. It is also one of the coolest art galleries around (and we know cool)! You can visit them online at <https://thefunkyphoenix.com/>, or stop by their location at 441 North Street, Pittsfield.

Are you interested in joining the Social Group, or have a teen or young adult that might be interested? Please contact Ben at from Autism Connections at [Benjamin.Breton@Pathlightgroup.org](mailto:Benjamin.Breton@Pathlightgroup.org), or call 413-529-2428 (x. 121) for details.



### Sensory-friendly performance of *A Christmas Carol*, December 13

Would you like to join us when we get together to experience the Berkshire Theater's sensory friendly performance of *A Christmas Carol*? We have 2 free tickets per family for any families connected with BCARC or Autism Connections. Please contact your Autism Specialist at Autism Connections or Nancy Willey at Berkshire County ARC! All additional tickets for this special performance only are discounted at \$5.00! Please contact Erica Donovan at 413.443.4780 x19 with questions.

**Wednesday December 13, 2017, 7:00 p.m.**

**Colonial Theater, 111 South Street, Pittsfield, MA**

**Questions: [Erica.donovan@pathlightgroup.org](mailto:Erica.donovan@pathlightgroup.org)**

**Tickets: 413-997-4444 or [berkshiretheatergroup.org](http://berkshiretheatergroup.org)**



## Center News

*continued from page 1*

increased anxiety, so of course always go with your instincts on what you think will work best for your child).

**Check before you Deck the Halls** – One of the most magical parts of the holidays are the beautiful decorations, but changes in environment may contribute to a child feeling overstimulated or anxious with anticipation, or it may lead to other sensory challenges. This doesn't mean you shouldn't decorate – instead, perhaps start slowly and gradually introduce new items to your home. Or you can make a photo album of past decorations and share it with your child to help him/him know what to expect. If you don't have one, you can take pictures for next year. Include your child in part of the decorating process if possible.

**Set the expectations early** – Most children fixate on what they look forward to or gifts they hope to receive during the holidays, but for children with autism this may be cause for especially high levels of perseveration. Set clear expectations and parameters at the start of the season for when and how they can



share their interests. For example, some parents have had success in a "chip system" in which a child can submit

up to five chips a day when they want to discuss a gift they want. Or it may be more helpful to focus on establishing a routine that accommodates the changes that occur during the month. Either way, make your expectations simple, and clear and enforce them – your child will likely feel more secure if he/she knows what his/her guidelines are. Try to keep sleep patterns and food intake as typical to your child's normal routine as possible.

**Take it step-by-step** – There are often many holiday commitments during the season, and a lot of juggling to get everything done. Help your child break everything down into individual steps (those calendars and visual schedules can come in handy). Only focus on one new activity, task or event at a time.

**Have a safe space and a transitional item** – If you're hosting a party in your home or even if there's just a lot of holiday-related sensory input in your home, it may be helpful to designate a quiet, calm space that your child can go to if he/she is feeling overwhelmed. Practice with him/her before the party. If you're going to a event outside your home have your child to bring an item that they enjoy with him/her to build a sense of security. Also teach your child how to ask for a break if they are feeling upset or overwhelmed. If your child doesn't always understand how to identify what he/she is feeling before he/she becomes overstimulated, using an emotional regulation scale to teach him/her this may be helpful. If you are traveling, you may want to visit the airport to practice navigating the airport beforehand – some airports have special tours they can offer to people with autism.

**Role play** – With the holidays comes all sorts of special rituals and social interactions that may differ from the daily norms. Role playing these scenarios may be helpful – whether it's giving a gift or receiving one, visiting with Santa, or taking part in a school play or a religious practice.

**It takes a village** – No one expects Santa to run the North Pole without his elves, and you can't help make the holidays run smoothly without a support team! Talk to your child's teachers, other care providers and family members about what you can do together. Stay in regular communication. They may have observations and insights that are useful, and it's important they know what you're doing so that they can be consistent in their approach to the holidays with your child. Don't be afraid to ask for help, understanding, or accommodations if you're headed to a party or event.

**Breathe** – There can be a lot of stress to make the holidays perfect, or have them go according to plan. Give yourself permission to set a more realistic standard, for both yourself and your child. And remember to reward yourself for navigating another holiday!

If you would like more information on any of the strategies discussed in this article, we'd be happy to share that information with you! Please contact us at 413-529-2428.

*\*This article was written with input from the Autism Society or America and EasterSeals Crossroads.*

## Upcoming Events

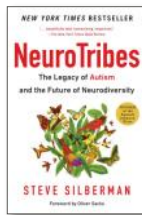


We are well into our planning for Stepping Out for Autism 2018, which returns with *A Night at the Museum*, and an interesting new location at the [Museum of Springfield History](#) on **January 27, 2018** at 6:00 p.m., brought to you by Presenting Sponsor Dowd Insurance Agency.

Please consider joining us for an evening of food, wine and beer tasting, music and dancing, live and silent auctions, and an exploration of all of the museum's exhibits, which will be open to all attendees! Visit the Springfield Museum [website](#) to sneak a peek at the venue and exhibits.

## 28th Annual Autism Conference

Our Annual Autism Conference returns for the 18th year on **April 27, 2018** at the Log Cabin in Holyoke. Join us and speakers [Steve Silberman](#), the author of *NeuroTribes*, and [Al Condeluci](#), CEO of Community Living and Support Services (CLASS). Al teaches at the University of Pittsburgh,



writes, speaks, and consults on issues related to culture, community, and social capital.

We will be offering a school lottery again this year to provide 3 winning schools with 3 free admissions to the conference. Visit the online site to register for the lottery: <http://conta.cc/ConferenceLottery>, and good luck! Email

*At our conference we will be recognizing those people that help make our lives a little easier - both individually and for the community as a whole. If you know someone you would like to honor for their support of yourself or a loved one, or for the work they have done to support all people with autism, please contact us at [katie.drumm@pathlightgroup.org](mailto:katie.drumm@pathlightgroup.org).*

## Hanukkah Celebrations

### First Light Celebration

Join a community wide event starting with the lighting of the largest menorah in western Massachusetts at 5:30pm – 6:15pm at the Springfield Jewish Community Center, 1160 Dickinson Street. The celebration moves to Sinai Temple next door at 1100 Dickinson Street for a concert by Nava Tehila. For more information, please contact Rabbi James Greene at 413-739-4715.

**Tuesday, December 12, 2017, 5:30pm**

**Springfield Jewish Community Center**



### Springfield Museum Festivities

The Springfield Museums culminates Hanukkah festivities with a family event and a selection of activities including "Talking Hands Theater", latke tasting, candle rolling and a planetarium showing of "Night Sky".

**Sunday, December 17, 2017, 11:00am – 3:00pm**

**Springfield Museums, 21 Edwards Street, Springfield**  
For more information call Sonia Wilk at 413-739-4715 or email [swilk@springfieldjcc.org](mailto:swilk@springfieldjcc.org).

## Research Study

UMass is conducting a speech, language and listening study for teens with autism between the ages of 13-18. One of the requirements for the study is the ability to communicate verbally.

The study consists of one session of about 2 hours, and takes place on the UMass Amherst campus. Short breaks will be provided as needed and test findings will be forwarded to parents upon request. Participants will receive a \$40 Target gift card upon completion of all testing. Please contact Colleen Gargan ([cgargan@umass.edu](mailto:cgargan@umass.edu)) or Mary Andrianopoulos ([mva@comdis.umass.edu](mailto:mva@comdis.umass.edu) or 413-545-0551 for more information.

SUN

MON

TUES

WEDS

# DECEMBER 2017



5  
Social Skills Gym Class  
4:00pm-5:00pm  
Pittsfield, MA



12  
Social Skills Gym Class  
4:00pm-5:00pm  
Pittsfield, MA

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Keeping Safe in the  
Community, Workshop  
6:00pm-8:00pm  
Family Empowerment,  
Hadley

13  
Western MA Parent  
Support Group  
5:30pm-7:30pm, Holyoke

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A Christmas Carol  
Sensory Friendly!  
7:00 p.m.  
Colonial Theater, 111 South  
Street, Pittsfield, MA

17

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24/31

18

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25

19  
Social Skills Gym Class  
4:00pm-5:00pm  
Pittsfield, MA

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26  
Social Skills Gym  
Class  
4:00pm-5:00pm  
Pittsfield, MA

20

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27

THURS

FRI

SAT

# AUTISM CONNECTIONS

## CALENDAR

# DECEMBER 2017

Open Swim  
6:00pm-7:00pm  
Gladys Allen Brigham  
Community Center  
165 East Street, Pittsfield

1

2

Open Swim  
6:00pm-7:00pm  
Gladys Allen Brigham Com-  
munity Center  
165 East Street, Pittsfield

7

Teen Group, Pittsfield  
  
The Nutcracker  
4:00  
Pioneer Valley Ballet  
Sensory Friendly  
Academy of Music  
Northampton

8

9

Holiday Party!  
5:30pm-7:30pm  
Easthampton Office  
116 Pleasant Street  
Easthampton  
Open Swim, 6:00pm-7:00pm  
Gladys Allen Brigham  
Community Center  
165 East Street, Pittsfield

14

Berkshire  
Collaborative Monthly  
Meeting  
10am-12pm  
BCARC Training Room  
2 South Street, Suite 370  
Pittsfield  
AdLIB and The Nutrition  
Center (413-443-4780)

15

16

21

22

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# EVENTS & WORKSHOPS

## COMMUNITY/FAMILY EVENTS



### Easthampton Holiday Party

Thursday, December 14 • 5:30pm-7:30pm  
Eastworks Event Space, first floor  
116 Pleasant Street, Easthampton, MA

RSVP: Joyce Paige, [joyce.paige@pathlightgroup.org](mailto:joyce.paige@pathlightgroup.org)



Celebrate with us at our family potluck Holiday Party! We will have music, activities, and a few surprises.



### Pittsfield Open Swim

Thursdays • 6:00pm-7:00pm  
Gladys Allen Brigham Community Ctr.  
165 East Street, Pittsfield, MA

RSVP: 442-5174 ext. 25

Open and free swim to all individuals and families. Registration is required and please note there will be no staffing for this swim. All children must be accompanied by an adult and any adults needing personal care or supervision must come with a caregiver.



### Autism Collaborative meeting

Friday December 15  
10:00am—12:00pm  
Berkshire County Arc  
2 South Street, Suite 370  
Pittsfield, MA

Join other parents and professionals for this monthly collaborative meeting. Voice your concerns and work together toward solutions. This month: AdLIB (transition services, PCA) and The Nutrition Center for information on nutrition counseling and programs available.

## SENSORY-FRIENDLY EVENTS: Holiday

### A Christmas Carol

Wednesday, December 13, 2017, 7:00pm  
Colonial Theater, 111 South Street, Pittsfield, MA  
Questions: [Erica.donovan@pathlightgroup.org](mailto:Erica.donovan@pathlightgroup.org)  
Tickets: 413-997-444 or [berkshiretheatergroup.org](http://berkshiretheatergroup.org)

Join us when we get together to experience the Berkshire Theater's sensory friendly performance of *A Christmas Carol!*

## SENSORY-FRIENDLY EVENTS: Holiday

### PVPA Nutcracker: Sensory and Family Safe Performance

Friday, December 8 • 4:00pm-5:00pm  
Doors open at 3:30pm

*Reduced performance time, one hour with no intermission*  
Academy of Music, 274 Main Street, Northampton  
Tickets: \$13-\$20 plus fees, [PioneerValleyBallet.org](http://PioneerValleyBallet.org)



This newly created performance has lighting and sound accommodations for reduced sensory experiences. A narrator will assist the audience at the start of the performance. Tickets are general admission.

Join the Pioneer Valley Ballet in its 40th production of the classic *Nutcracker* ballet. PVB's productions are reinvented each year by Artistic Directors Maryanne Kodzis and Thomas Vacanti, to celebrate the history of the company and tradition of Clara's magical story. Guest artists include dancers from Carolina Ballet and Festival Ballet join PVB dancers and the community.

## PATHLIGHT PARTNER EVENTS

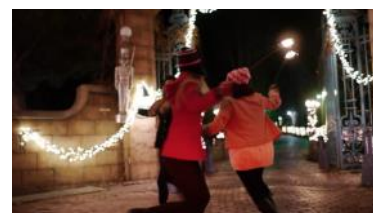
### Whole Children, Milestones Recreation Opportunities 41 Russell Street, Hadley, MA

**Whole Children:** Programs for school age children and teens (ages 3-16). Visit [wholechildren.org](http://wholechildren.org) or get **more info**. Next session January 8-March 10, 2018.

**Milestones:** Enrichment classes for older teens and adults. Visit [wholechildren.org](http://wholechildren.org) or get **more info**. Next session January 8—March 10, 2018.

- **All ages Winter Dance:** Friday December 8, 6:30-8:30 Semi-formal attire (no jeans please). RSVP to 413858-8010

Check websites for more info on all of the above events.





## TRAININGS/WORKSHOPS/TALKS

### FREE WORKSHOP: Staying Safe in the Community, a Diverse Approach

Tuesday, December 15 • 6:00pm-8:00pm  
Family Empowerment  
41 Russell Street, Hadley, MA  
RSVP: [donna.kushi@pathlightgroup.org](mailto:donna.kushi@pathlightgroup.org)

Do you worry about your family member being safe in the community? This workshop will focus on three different ways to build safety into your plan:

1. ALEC teaches parents (and Emergency Personnel themselves) how the connection between local Emergency Services (Fire, Police and EMTs) be most effective and successful if those services are ever needed. Although ALEC has a focus on autism, the process is relevant to everyone with developmental/intellectual disabilities. Lieutenant David Callahan, of the Northampton Police Department, will present this topic. He has been an instructor with the program for more than 10 years.
2. Technology (or assistive technology) has many options that can assist individuals to be safer in the community, ranging from simple to complex. Many solutions create new uses for existing low tech items that we use every day. Cash McConnell, of our Regional Assistive Technology Center in western Massachusetts, UCP Berkshire County, will provide information and insight on the options readily available.
3. Given the recent number of natural disasters, it is a good time to think about what your family could do to prepare. We will share resources from FEMA and the Department of Emergency Preparedness Initiative from the E.K. Shriver Center at UMass Medical Center.

*\*The Massachusetts Developmental Disability Council Family Empowerment Funds can provide grants for family members to attend conferences and trainings. Visit [www.mddc.com](http://www.mddc.com) for details.*

## Annual Autism Conference School Lottery is open



Open until December 22, winner drawn January 3

Online application:

<http://conta.cc/ConferenceLottery>



This is an opportunity for schools in western Massachusetts to enter a lottery to receive 3 free admissions to the conference for their school team. Just sign up online, as easy as that!

## Human Service Forum

### 2018 Legislative Reception

January 26, 2018, 8:30am—10:00am

Knights of Columbus

1599 Memorial Drive, Chicopee, MA

<http://www.humanserviceforum.org/event/hsf-legislative-reception/>

For staff, board, constituents/clients, family members, and volunteers of member agencies of the Human Service Forum, Hampshire Council of Social Agencies (COSA) & Franklin County Resource Network (FCRN).

This **unique event** allows you to share a table with one of the western Massachusetts Representatives or Senators and speak directly with them on topics that are important to you.

**You and your concerns matter** – raise your voice and your issue. Legislators want and need to hear from you.

Don't sit this one out – **engage your voice** and you can impact policy decisions!


**Share your story** – let your representative know what policies and laws actually look like in action, in our families and our communities.

Before the event, plan your "Ask." Read, "[Tips On Talking to your Legislator](#)," created by HSF with the help of The Food Bank of Western MA.



# 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>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.	If interested in joining, please contact Cathy.	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 any 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 or to join this group, please contact Stephanie Birkdale at <a href="mailto:stephanie.birkdale@aane.org">stephanie.birkdale@aane.org</a> .
<b>HOLYOKE</b>			
<b>Autism Connections Western MA Support Group (previously Holyoke 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	For more information and to RSVP, please email Linda Wynne at <a href="mailto:wynne92@aol.com">wynne92@aol.com</a> . Group will meet 2nd Wednesday of each month. Child care is available—you must call our office at least one week in advance at 413.529.2428 if you need child care.
<b>Mom's Night Out</b>	Moms of people with different abilities are invited to bring their problems, triumphs and their need to laugh to Mom's Night Out. Jericho will supply drinks and refreshments. Participants are welcome to bring something to share.	Call Linda LaPointe for meeting times. Jericho 537 Northampton Street Holyoke, MA	Must RSVP to 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.	Meets at Jericho in Holyoke as well as one other location, different each month. 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 Massachusetts</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, MA	For questions or to find out meeting times contact Tammy Nothe-Hebert at 413.536.2401 x3036

GROUP NAME	GROUP DESCRIPTION	MEETING DETAILS	CONTACT/MORE INFO
<b>NORTHAMPTON</b>			
<b>Women's Group</b>	Support group for women with Autism. This group is being offered by the Asperger/Autism Network (AANE). There is no attendance fee.	Lilly Library 19 Meadow Street Florence, MA	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>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 places throughout the community; please contact Elizabeth Flaherty at 443.4780 x16 or <a href="mailto:Elizabeth.flaherty@pathlightgroup.org">Elizabeth.flaherty@pathlightgroup.org</a> to RSVP and find out location.
<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>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 more information or to join this group, 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" for our community 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 new 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, starting November 7, 2017 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>

## Contact us

Not seeing what you want? We do our absolute best to deliver you all the news and events related to autism in western Massachusetts (and beyond). Contact Joyce Paige ([joyce.paige@pathlightgroup.org](mailto:joyce.paige@pathlightgroup.org)) or 413.529.2428 and let us know how we can better serve you and your family through our monthly newsletter!

**Help us go green! Contact Joyce if you are receiving a hardcopy of this newsletter and would prefer receiving an electronic edition only.**



**Autism Connections**

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

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



2017 December Edition

# Community Connection Newsletter

Autism Connections: a Pathlight program

## Donation Corner

### PlayStation 4

Our social groups in the Berkshire office meet monthly and everyone loves to play video games together. We really like that playing games in a group promotes teamwork and socialization with friends, instead of just playing online alone at home.

We have a very specific need for a PlayStation 4 to continue to offer this option to the groups. Do you have a used system you would like to donate? Or would you be willing to help us with a donation towards buying a new system?

If you would like to help, please contact Ben at [Benjamin.Breton@pathlightgroup.org](mailto:Benjamin.Breton@pathlightgroup.org) and he can direct you to the right person for donations, or let you know if we have already reached our goal.

### Holiday Donations for presents and meals

Thanksgiving and the winter holidays are coming soon and we like to be able to help our families in need who are connected to our autism centers.

Please consider offering a holiday donation so we can provide a wonderful, festive dinner or some truly needed children's gifts.

Just mark your gift as a "holiday donation". You can donate online at [autismconnectionsma.org](http://autismconnectionsma.org) (be sure to add a note so we know this is how you would like your donation to be used) or directly by mail to our Pittsfield or Easthampton offices.

***Thank you so much for your consideration, and Happy Holidays!***