The Flutie Foundation Grant supports local families

Get your application in today!

We are excited to announce that the Doug Flutie, Jr. Foundation for Autism has once again generously awarded Autism Connections a grant to support local families. The focus of this grant is to enhance the quality of life for people with autism. Autism Connections has been awarded $13,200.00 to provide allocations to families of children with autism, which may be used for a wide variety of purposes related to best supporting an individual.

Families that meet the criteria will be eligible to receive a $300.00 stipend to purchase items or fund activities that empower, enhance and provide opportunities for their child with autism. This grant cannot fund the purchase of iPads.

Those applying for the grant must meet the following criteria:

- **Have a low to moderate household income**
- **Must be a family of a child or adult child with a diagnosis on the autism spectrum residing at home**
- **Must be living in Hampshire, Franklin, Hampden Counties, or the Worcester County towns of Royalston, Athol, Petersham, and Phillipston**
- **Must NOT be receiving services through the MA Autism Waiver Program**
- **Must NOT be receiving services through the DDS DESE Program**
- **Must NOT be receiving Adult DDS Services**
- **Must NOT be receiving services through the DDS IFFS Program**
- **Must be willing to turn in receipts from funds used and submit a thank you note to the Doug Flutie, Jr. Foundation for Autism**

Find the application online at: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FLUTIEGRANT

If you need a hard copy of the application, please call our office.


**ALL APPLICATIONS ARE DUE BY May 31, 2018 AT 5:00 P.M.**

Thank you to the Doug Flutie, Jr. Foundation for Autism for their continuing support of local families through Autism Connections!
Upcoming events and activities

Berkshire Autism Collaborative May Meeting: Friday, May 18

The Autism Collaborative of Berkshire County (ACBC) will meet Friday, May 18, 2018, from 10 a.m. — 12 p.m. for a presentation from UCP of Berkshire County: Assistive Technology Regional Center at the BCARC Training Room, Berkshire Common, 2 South Street, Suite 370, 3rd Floor, in Pittsfield.

UCP believes technology is the key to unlocking human potential and can improve independence and quality of life. Assistive technology can be lo-tech help to support everyday living tasks from dressing to bathing, or hi-tech solutions to help with more complicated communication skills.

Assistive Technologists help with device training and AT Centers also provide workshops, product demonstrations, and can loan out AT devices.

Come learn about all of the services and resources you can receive through UCP of Berkshire County! Our next meeting will be June 15.

Sensory Friendly Movie, *Incredibles 2*

Join the Autism Connections team on Thursday, June 28 at 10 a.m. at Rave Cinemas in West Springfield for a sensory friendly viewing of *Incredibles 2*, the sequel to the hit 2004 film about a loveable family of superheroes. Watch the trailer here.

*Incredibles 2* is a computer-animated superhero film that resumes where the first movie ends. The Parr family struggles to maintain normal lives while Helen, aka Elastigirl, continues to go out and fight crime and Bob, aka Mr. Incredible, stays home with the kids.

Additional school break activities on June 26 and 27

Autism Connections is busy planning a variety of fun activities for the week just after school breaks for the summer. Updates to come soon! Be sure to check our Facebook page for more information!

Contact Danielle at 413-529-2428 x 115 for more information or to RSVP (required) for all activities.
On April 27, we held our 28th Annual Autism Conference for professionals, family members, educators, self-advocates, agencies and exhibitors at The Log Cabin in Holyoke.

Speakers Steve Silberman, author of NeuroTribes, and Al Condeluci, author, consultant and CEO of CLASS (Community Living and Support Services) motivated participants with words of wisdom from their science and sociology perspectives.

An exhibition hall with more than 30 organizations related to autism services offered information about their services and books on many topics related to autism were available for purchase (get in touch with us if you would like a copy of that book list—the children’s books were especially popular).

During lunch, our Director Karen Serra presented Community Awards to deserving individuals and organizations. It is important to us that we take time during our conference each year to honor community members who enhance the lives of children and adults with autism, and their families. We know how critical these relationships are, and how they can change our lives. We applaud all of our nominees this year and encourage our readers to think about honoring that special person with one of our community awards next year. (please see our facebook page for photos of people receiving their awards).

The Above and Beyond award category celebrates people who actively demonstrate extraordinary commitment and creativity in their work with children and adults with autism and their families. Constance Janik, a preschool teacher at Bridge St School in Northampton, received this award. Constance was nominated by Lisa Modenos for the extra time and care she put into easing her son’s transition into the school system and helping to make his daily school experience a success.

The You Are There for Me category honors caregivers who offer unique support and devotion to a family. The award was presented to Glafyra Ennis-Yentsch who was nominated by Lisa Modenos. Glafyra is a devoted grandmother to her grandson with autism, and offers him a unique connection and bond that enriches the lives of him and his parents.

The Excellence in Advocacy award honors professionals who have demonstrated ongoing and effective advocacy for people with autism. This award was presented to Kathleen Moriarty, nominated by Nancy Jenks; and Linda Manning, nominated by Lisa Modenos. Kathleen was recognized for her long-standing support of students with autism in the Granby Schools, and for her ‘tireless knowledge-sharing and fundraising. Linda facilitates Autism Connections’ Western Mass Parent Support Group, and her dedication and practical supports have built this into a thriving group.

The Collaboration & Connection award honors excellence in teamwork to effect positive change for people with autism. There were many recipients of this award, thanks to some amazing collaborative initiatives. Erica Donovan nominated the following people and organizations: Abby Powers of the College Internship Program; Kristen Saharzewski of UCP Berkshire; Katrina Cardillo, Nancy Wiley and Sopheap Nhim of BCARc; Yvette Stoddard of Hillcrest Educational Foundation; Jeb Civello of BFAIR; Kristen Scharceski of UCP Berkshire; and Megan Cooper and Cathy Carchedi of AdLib Inc.

The second team was nominated by Lora Cortis. This is a team of a mother and school, human service and medical professionals working together to help a teenager with autism overcome her fear of the dentist in order to engage in a much-needed procedure. Award winners were Elizabeth DiBuono, Chris Purcell, Su Hoyle, and Paula Fredericks, The May School, and Baystate Medical Center.

We were very fortunate to have the partnership of Radcliffe is the Reason, and Arthur Too! Fight for Autism this year at our conference. The organization was our Presenting Sponsor, and also donated items for a raffle, including a large screen TV, an iPad mini, a FitBit, a Kindle Fire, and a mystery prize. All raffle proceeds directly benefited Autism Connections.

Stay tuned for information about our 2019 Conference!
Recent Community Activities

Holyoke High School Sports Management class organizes benefit event

On April 15, we met with the Holyoke High School Sports Management II class to accept their check from their “Shine a Light for Autism” dodgeball tournament which was held to benefit Autism Connections. Jill Reardon, teacher of the class, was the advisor for the event and has organized previous fundraisers for Autism Connections with other groups.

The students worked diligently to find sponsors for their event and were quite successful! Teams representing both the school and the greater Holyoke community participated in the day.

We are very grateful to the students and Ms. Reardon for choosing Autism Connections, and for all of their hard work in organizing the event. Thank you!

Puppet Show


*The Minstrel’s Journey*, a Puppet Show for all ages, was written, handcrafted and performed in a collaboration with the Berkshire Theatre Group and Regina Mason of the Little Puppet Studio of the Berkshires.

A special thank you to Regina for leading the young adults to follow their passions and execute a beautiful production, and to the Berkshire Theatre Group for continued, unwavering support of our community. The show would not have gone on without your generosity.

Stay tuned... there may be a sequel!
### Upcoming Events

#### Sensory-Friendly

**Sensory-Friendly Southwick Zoo Experience**  
Friday, June 1, 2018, 6:00 p.m.—8:00 p.m.  
Southwick Zoo  
2 Southwick Street, Mendon, MA

This special event is designed for individuals with autism, their families, and others who may benefit from a sensory friendly experience.

Families will have the opportunity to spend two hours exploring the zoo and visiting animals in an intimate, quiet environment with no bright lights or loud noises.

Tickets are specially priced at a discounted rate of $12 each. Please contact Autism Alliance at 508-652-9900, AutismAlliance@Advocates.org or visit their website autismalliance.org.

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**Sensory-Sensitive Weekend in North Conway**  
Saturday, June 23, 2018, 9:30 a.m. to Sunday, June 24, 2018  
Story Land  
850 NH Route 16, Glen, New Hampshire

Join the staff at Story Land in New Hampshire for a customized Story Land experience. This weekend will cater to the Autism Community in hope families will feel more comfortable joining us on this special weekend! All Story Land cast members will be ready to help make your Story Land experience, an amazing one! Head to [www.storylandnh.com](http://www.storylandnh.com) for tickets or check out their event page here.

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**Sensory Friendly Showing of Incredibles 2**  
Thursday, June 28, 2018 10:00 a.m.  
Rave Cinemas  
864 Riverdale Street, West Springfield, MA

Join the Autism Connections team on Thursday, June 28 at 10 a.m. at Rave Cinemas in West Springfield for a sensory friendly viewing of *Incredibles 2*, the sequel to the hit 2004 film about a loveable family of superheroes. Watch the trailer here.

#### Sensory-Friendly

**“Especially for Me” Sensory-Friendly Museum Afternoon**  
Saturday, July 14, 2018, 5:00 p.m.—8:00 p.m.  
Discovery Museum  
177 Main Street, Acton, MA

Come join in all the fun during this free evening for families with members on the autism spectrum. Explore the all-new and accessible Discovery Museum and Discovery Woods, our inclusively accessible nature playscape and treehouse, at your own pace. Dinner, including a gluten free option, will be provided courtesy of Not Your Average Joe's.

You may want to prepare for your visit by viewing or downloading the Story Guide to Discovery Woods and by visiting the Exhibits section of our website. Discovery Woods is open year-round, but closes at dusk during the winter months.

Pre-registration required, as space is limited. A registration link will appear on this listing once registration is open, at least 30 days prior to the event.

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**Monthly-Sensory-Sensitive Sundays at Chuck E. Cheese**  
First Sunday of the Month, 9:00 a.m.—11:00 a.m.  
Chuck E. Cheese  
1716 Boston Road, Springfield, MA

Chuck E. Cheese in Springfield now offers a sensory-sensitive experience on the first Sunday of every month. The Sensory Sensitive Sundays Experience includes less crowding and noise, dimmed lighting, and the show and music turned off or down.
Social Skills Gym Class
4:00pm-5:00pm
Pittsfield

Western MA Support Group
5:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m.
260 Westfield Road
Holyoke

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

Social Skills Gym Class
4:00pm-5:00pm
Pittsfield, MA
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Open Swim</strong>&lt;br&gt;6:00pm-7:00pm—&lt;br&gt;Gladys Allen Brigham Community Center&lt;br&gt;165 East Street, Pittsfield</td>
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<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>Open Swim</strong>&lt;br&gt;6:00pm-7:00pm—&lt;br&gt;Gladys Allen Brigham Community Center&lt;br&gt;165 East Street, Pittsfield</td>
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<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>Open Swim</strong>, &lt;br&gt;6:00pm-7:00pm&lt;br&gt;Gladys Allen Brigham Community Ctr.—165 East Street, Pittsfield</td>
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<td><strong>24</strong></td>
<td><strong>Open Swim</strong>&lt;br&gt;6:00pm-7:00pm&lt;br&gt;Gladys Allen Brigham Community Ctr. 165 East Street, Pittsfield</td>
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COMMUNITY/FAMILY EVENTS

**Pittsfield Open Swim**
**Thursdays • 6:00pm-7:00pm**
Gladys Allen Brigham Community Ctr.
165 East Street, Pittsfield, MA
RSVP: 413-5174 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.

**Gluten-Free and Allergen Free Expo in Worcester**
**July 21, 2018-July 22, 2018**
DCU Center, 50 Foster Street, Worcester, MA

For the special diet consumer, including the Celiac community, those with gluten sensitivities, autoimmune, inflammatory diseases and autism. There will be an vendor fair with over 100 exhibitors, classes related to the gluten free and allergen-friendly lifestyle, and authors, bloggers and workshops. Speakers include Vanessa Weisbrod, Kim Koeller, and Jenna Drew.

**Save the Date!!!**
**September 15, 2018**
**Buddy’s Sunshine Angels Golf Tournament**
Bass Ridge Gold Course

**PATHLIGHT PARTNER EVENTS**

**Whole Children, Milestones**
41 Russell Street, Hadley, MA

**Whole Children**: Programs for school age children and teens (ages 3-16). Visit www.wholechildren.org/ for more information.

**Milestones**: Enrichment classes for older teens and adults. Visit https://www.wholechildren.org/milestones-classes/ for more information.

**Wild Goose Chase**
**May 20, 2018**
Look Park, Florence, MA
**Making Sense of Health Care Financing (FREE)**  
Tuesday, June 12, 6:00pm—8:00pm  
Family Empowerment, 41 Russell Street, Hadley

This workshop is an overview of the Affordable Care Act and Masshealth/Commonhealth insurances, eligibility, accessing benefits and services. RSVP to michelle.mendes@pathlightgroup.org.

**Housing Planning Workshop**  
May 29, 2018  
Fitchburg, MA

This workshop will introduce families to the range of public funds available to pay for housing and supportive services. The speaker will be Catherine Boyle, of Autism Housing Pathways. This workshop is part of the The Full Life Ahead workshops are designed for parents and caregivers as they plan for the future of their loved one with a disability. Topics include friendships, transitions, employment, housing and financial planning. For more information, contact Celia Brown at celia@hmea.org. To RSVP for this event contact iavoryie@sevenhills.org or 978.602.8695 or visit www.facebook.com/SevenHillsFoundation/

**Accountable Care Organization Public Forum**  
May 31, 2018  
Non-Profit Center  
Boston, MA

MassHealth has enrolled close to 100,000 people with disabilities in Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs). Is this working for you? Concerns? What’s going great? Share your feedback at this ACO Forum.  
* Sponsored by Disability Advocates Advancing our Healthcare Rights (DAAHR) and hosted by Boston Center for Independent Living.* For accommodations or more information visit www.facebook.com/events/179956042822454/ or contact Shaya at

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**Meet the New Commissioner of the Department of Developmental Services**  
June 12, 2018  
College of the Holy Cross  
1 College Street, Worcester, MA

Jane Ryder, the new commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Developmental services will be the featured speaker at the 29th Annual Legislative Breakfast.  
**RSVPs are required to** 508-764-4085 or Pauline pdavis@thecenterofhope.org

**Boston University**

Boston University researchers are recruiting parents and high school students with autism to participate in an 18-month longitudinal study. They are looking for students with autism who are in their last year of high school and who will graduate with a regular high school diploma. Parents and students will complete a set of online and mailed measures now and then 1½ years from now. Participation should take 30-60 minutes at each time point. Parents will receive a $25 gift card at each time point and youth will receive a $15 gift card at each time point. For more information, email buroad@bu.edu, call (617) 353-2060 or visit http://sites.bu.edu/roadahead/.

**UMASS**

UMass Amherst 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) or Mary Andrianopoulos (mva@comdis.umass.edu) or 413-545-0551 for more information.

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*The Massachusetts Developmental Disability Council Family Empowerment Funds can provide grants for family members to attend conferences and trainings. Visit www.mddc.com for details.*
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<th>GROUP NAME</th>
<th>GROUP DESCRIPTION</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>AMHERST</strong></td>
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<td>Clinical &amp; Support Options (CSO) Parent Support Group</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Saturdays 10:00am-11:30am Bridge Family Resource Center 101 University Dr, Suite A3 Amherst, MA</td>
<td>Group meets on Saturdays. Childcare available, refreshments served. Please call 413.549.0297 with questions.</td>
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<td><strong>CHICOPEE</strong></td>
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<td>HOPE Autism Support Group</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>If interested in joining, please contact Cathy.</td>
<td>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>.</td>
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<td><strong>EASTHAMPTON</strong></td>
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<td>Asperger’s Social Night for Adults</td>
<td>Autism Connections is happy to provide this social night twice a month for folks 18+ who identify as having Asperger’s.</td>
<td>Autism Connections 116 Pleasant Street, Suite 366 Easthampton, MA</td>
<td>This group will resume in the near future. Please contact Kimberly LaMothe at 413.529.2428 x118 with any questions.</td>
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<td><strong>GREAT BARRINGTON</strong></td>
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<td>Adult Discussion Group</td>
<td>This group is being offered by the Asperger Autism Network (AANE). There is an attendance fee of $5.</td>
<td>Mason Library 231 Main Street, Great Barrington</td>
<td>For more information please contact Stephanie Birkdale at <a href="mailto:stephanie.birkdale@aane.org">stephanie.birkdale@aane.org</a>.</td>
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<td><strong>HOLYOKE</strong></td>
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<td>Autism Connections Western MA Support Group (previously Holyoke support group)</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>2nd Wednesday of the month 5:30pm-7:30pm MCS 260 Westfield Road Holyoke, MA</td>
<td>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.</td>
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<td>Mom’s Night Out</td>
<td>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. Bring something to share!</td>
<td>Call Linda LaPointe for meeting times. Jericho 537 Northampton Street Holyoke, MA</td>
<td>Must RSVP to Linda LaPointe at <a href="mailto:lindal@jerichobeca.org">lindal@jerichobeca.org</a> or calling 413.538.7450</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parent/Professional Advocacy League</td>
<td>Moving Forward: Our Journey. A group for empowering families through transition planning.</td>
<td>Please contact PPAL for locations and times.</td>
<td>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>.</td>
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<td>Rainbow Support Group of Western Massachusetts</td>
<td>This group provides support and info to individuals with intellectual challenges who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or those who are questioning.</td>
<td>Western Mass Training Consortium 187 High Street, Suite 202 Holyoke, MA</td>
<td>For questions or to find out meeting times contact Tammy Nothe-Hebert at 413.536.2401 x3036</td>
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<td>NORTHAMPTON</td>
<td>Support group for women with Autism. This group is being offered by the Asperger/Autism Network (AANE). There is no attendance fee.</td>
<td>Lilly Library 19 Meadow Street Florence, MA</td>
<td>For more information or to join this group, contact Stephanie Birkdale at <a href="mailto:stephanie.birkdale@aane.org">stephanie.birkdale@aane.org</a>.</td>
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<td>Wire Monkey mamas coffee club</td>
<td>A bi-weekly meetup and solidarity circle for: foster mamas, stepmamas, guardians and adoptive mamas. Or anymama who takes care of another mama’s child.</td>
<td>Every other Monday evening 6:00pm-7:00pm The Roost 1 Market Street, Northampton</td>
<td>For more information, text Yoshi at 413-347-2517</td>
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<td>PITTSFIELD</td>
<td>This group is for individuals with Asperger’s syndrome to come together and offer friendship, fellowship and support.</td>
<td>Wednesdays 5:00pm-6:30pm</td>
<td>Group will meet in various places throughout the community; please contact Elizabeth Flaherty at 443.4780 x16 or Elizabeth Flaherty @pathlightgroup.org to RSVP and find out location.</td>
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<td>Berkshire Teen Group</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Will meet regularly, every other Friday evening, throughout the community.</td>
<td>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.</td>
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<td>SOUTH HADLEY</td>
<td>This group is being offered by the Asperger/Autism Network (AANE). There is an attendance fee of $5.</td>
<td>S. Hadley Public Library Conference Room 2 Canal Street South Hadley, MA</td>
<td>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>.</td>
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<td>WESTFIELD</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Building Autistic Community, Inc 507 Southampton Road #1 Westfield, MA</td>
<td>For more information, contact the group at <a href="mailto:info@bacautism.org">info@bacautism.org</a> or call BAC at 413.359.0222.</td>
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<td>WILLIAMSBURG</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Tuesdays, 10:00am-11:30am, starting November 7, 2017 Anna T. Dunphy School 1 Petticoat Hill Road, Williamsburg</td>
<td>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></td>
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Please help us go green. Contact Danielle if you are receiving a hardcopy of this newsletter and would prefer an electronic edition only.
Community Partner Extraordinaire!

Radcliffe is the Reason and Arthur Too! Fight for Autism

Words are not enough to describe how much Radcliffe is the Reason and Arthur Too! Fight for Autism have supported Autism Connections over the years. From holiday gifts to supporting families in special circumstances they are always available to help us with our special requests for families.

Gina and Radcliffe Kenison are the heart of soul of their organization and we applaud their truly extraordinary commitment to the community. Their lives are full with job, parent, and family obligations and they still find time and energy to keep their foundation committee active and meaningful. Thank you so much for all that you do.