2018—The year in review: A message from our Director

By KAREN SERRA
Director

Thank you for making 2018 another amazing year for Autism Connections! It was a year filled with familiar faces along with many new people. Our dedicated teams have done an incredible job furthering our outreach, strengthening our programs and honoring our mission. Autism Connections’ mission is to help individuals, families, schools, professionals, agencies and communities understand autism, promote the well-being of individuals with autism, and foster their inclusion in the community. We work to help individuals and families build on their strengths, create a positive vision for the future, and help children with autism learn, grow, and be welcomed, fully included members of their communities.

Here are some highlights of our accomplishments in 2018:

♦ 47,400 newsletters sent to individuals, families, and professionals
♦ 3,216 connections made through information phone calls and walk-ins
♦ 522 individuals and families who attended one or more of our events
♦ 32 community outreach events to help connect with new individuals and families
♦ 21 family events, including sensory-friendly holiday parties, picnics, movie nights, and school vacation events
♦ 11 workshops to support individuals, families and professionals
♦ 5 parent and peer groups that meet weekly or monthly
♦ 73 adults currently in our newly established Supports Program
♦ 28th Annual Autism Connections Conference held

It’s been an honor and a pleasure working with all of you this past year and 2019 is going to be even better! We are starting the year with a newly formed Adult Support Program led by Program Manager Danielle Scibelli. She and her team are dedicated to providing high quality, flexible, individualized supports to adults with autism in western Massachusetts. Their span of expertise and experience supports a multi-tiered approach that focuses on a person’s wants, needs and goals. It has certainly solidified quickly in the first few months of its development.

As you may know we have many offices throughout western Massachusetts. In the early months of 2019 our office located on North Street in Pittsfield is moving to a bigger space with better parking. Our new office will be in the Eagle Building at 75 Church Street, Pittsfield. We can still be found at our North Street office until at least March. Look for the official announcement and Open House details in one of our monthly newsletters.

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2019 February Edition

Community Connection

Autism Connections: a Pathlight program

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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.

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Cont. on page 3

Conference registration is now open, please visit our website for more info!
The Autism Collaborative of Berkshire County, January ACBC Meeting

The Autism Collaborative of Berkshire County (ACBC) resumed monthly meetings in January. The topic of January’s meeting, Relationships, Sexuality, and Autism, focused on two different ways to approach teaching the subject to people with Autism. Rebecca Cachat of Berkshire County ARC presented material from the Elevatus curriculum. She gave us some insight on the lesson plans and how she is teaching them to her current classes.

Our second presenter, Regina Mason, talked about her experience teaching a class for adults who come with lots of knowledge and education. Regina is co-teaching this class with Kelly Summers, an Autism Specialist at Autism Connections. Kelly works with some of the participants outside of class time, helping them to apply classroom strategies in the community.

During her presentation, Regina talked about how the curriculum they are creating is based solely on the needs that emerge from conversations in the group. The curriculum is a mesh of role playing, teaching concrete skills, and working to “fill the holes” in learning. Her goal is to make these classes as applicable to real life as possible. The title of the class, **Navigating Social Nuances**, does just that, prepare the participants with a real life understanding of relationship building, social communication, and safely engaging in intimate relationships.

If you would like information on either group, please contact Rebecca Cachat, BCARc at RCachat@bcarc.org or 413-464-8000 ext 20. Or Kelly Summers, Autism Connections at Kelly.summers@pathlightgroup.org or 413-443-4780 ext 23.

The next meeting of ACBC is February 15, 10am-12pm, at the new BCARc Training Room location, 877 South Street, 3rd floor, in Pittsfield. The topic is Transition Services and Community Day Supports (CBDS). For complete information, view the flyer [HERE](#).

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**Yoga Class with Paula Boyajian**

**Wednesday January 16—April 10, 2019, 4:00 p.m.—5:00 p.m.**

**For ages 16+; Free**

**Autism Connections, 100 North Street, Suite 322, Pittsfield**

This is a wonderful new community partnership for Autism Connections! The goal of these free classes is to provide supported, guided yoga instruction to teens (16+) and adults with autism. Different types of relaxation methods using chair yoga and well as floor yoga and breathing will be explored. Contact kellysummers@pathlightgroup.org for more information or to register. Download the flyer [HERE](#).
Our annual Autism Conference will be held in April again this year - and a lot has changed. We have restructured our conference to include breakout sessions that focus on a wide variety of topics that relate to individuals, families, and professionals. To accommodate this major change we have relocated our event to Sheraton Springfield Monarch Place Hotel. Please join us on April 23rd for a day of fun, information and collaboration. Registration is now open at https://autismconnectionsma.org/news-and-events/autism-conference/.

**29th Annual Autism Connections Autism Conference**
**April 23, 2019**

Did you know that our Autism Conference will offer breakout sessions this year? Download the breakout descriptions [HERE](https://autismconnectionsma.org/news-and-events/autism-conference/).

**Choose from sessions on Transition, Boundaries and Relationships, ARICA, Communication Supports, Neuropsychological Evaluation Results, Grief Strategies and much more!**

**Free Sensory Friendly Skate Opportunity!**
Friday, February 22 from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
Boys & Girls Club, 16 Melville Street, Pittsfield

The City of Pittsfield Recreation Program has teamed up with the Boys & Girls Club of the Berkshires and Autism Connections to provide a **free** sensory skate opportunity. For more information email [parks@cityofpittsfield.org](mailto:parks@cityofpittsfield.org).

**A Goodbye to Kimberly LaMothe Marchese**

We would also like to take this time to bid a fond farewell to Kimberly LaMothe Marchese. Kimberly was a Behavioral Specialist here at Autism Connections and she had the opportunity to work with many families in our IFFS program. Kimberly will certainly be missed by the families whose lives she touched, and she will be missed by her peers. We wish her the best in her future endeavors!

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**A welcome to our new team members!**

**Lee Guilbault**

Lee Guilbault is the mother of two beautiful kiddos, and a graduate of Mount Holyoke College. She brings with her a background working with adults, children with autism and/or disabilities, ABA/RBT, as well as resource and advocacy work. She is excited about making Autism Connections her home as an IFFS Specialist and is looking forward to helping our families live their best lives.

**Joemary Rodriguez**

Joemary is happy to be working as an IFFS Specialist at Autism Connections. She is looking forward to serving our community by providing a wide range of services and supports. Prior to joining Autism Connections, Joemary was a preschool teacher at Head Start for 22 years. She is a devoted mother of two and is passionate about traveling, animals and life.

**Erica Alberti**

Erica is also excited to be joining the Autism Connections team! She is originally from the Berkshires and attended UMass Amherst, receiving an undergraduate degree in Psychology. She also plans to attend graduate school in the future to obtain a Master’s in Social Work. She has been working in the mental health field for years in a variety of settings, such as residential homes, a private school for children with autism, and the CBHI In-Home Therapy and Therapeutic Mentoring program. She is extremely passionate about working with children and their families and will surely be a valuable asset to the IFFS program!
Center News

February Fun Week!

Come in out of the cold and let the good times roll with us during February Vacation Week! Pick one or two activities, or try them all! Please register in advance for any or all of our activities with Danielle Plasse at 413-529-2428 x 115 or danielle.plasse@pathlightgroup.org.

Sensory Friendly Movie: "The Lego Movie 2: The Second Part."

Tuesday, February 19, 2019, 9:30 am
Cinemark Theater (formerly RAVE)
864 Riverdale St., W. Springfield

Everything is AWESOME in this sensory-sensitive showing! The house lights will be up and the sound will be lowered. The cost is $5 per person and please bring CASH ONLY for tickets.

Table Tennis at Zing!

Wednesday, February 20, 2019
10am-11am or 11am-12pm
Zing! Table Tennis Center at the Keystone Building,
122 Pleasant Street, Suite 111, Easthampton

Autism Connections has reserved half of the center for open table tennis play. Have a Zinging good time with us at our region's only full-time table tennis center! There is no charge for this activity. Please choose a time slot to ensure there is enough space. It may be possible to book 2 time slots for extended play.

Sensory Friendly Trampoline Hour

Friday, February 22, 2019, 9am-10am
1250 St. James Ave, Springfield

By popular demand, Autism Connections has again rented out Bounce! Trampoline Sports for a sensory-friendly hour! Join us for a chance to enjoy this popular venue when the music is off and it is closed to the public. The activity cost is $10 per child for the hour. Parents and caregivers are free. Limited tickets for $5/child are available for those with financial need. Inquire when registering. Please bring CASH ONLY for tickets.

Community Connections: Autism Training for Businesses

Tuesday, February 12, 2019, 10am-12pm
Athol Public Library (Program Room)
568 Main St., Athol

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.

Holyoke/Chicopee DDS Transition Fair

The Holyoke/Chicopee Office of the Department of Developmental Services is hosting their annual Transition Fair at Chicopee Comprehensive High School, 617 Montgomery St., Chicopee.

Young adults 14 to 22 years of age with an intellectual or developmental disability, including autism, who are still enrolled in school are invited (with their families) to attend The Transition Fair on Thursday, April 11, 2019, from 4:30-6:30 p.m. Mark your calendars!
**Fundraisers**

**Support our Leprechaun Plunge Team!**

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.

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.

[Donate to Autism Connections at the Leprechaun Plunge!]

**Webinars**

**Autism Insurance in Massachusetts**

*Tuesday, February 5, 2019, 10:00 am-Noon*

*Presenter: Amy Weinstock, Director, Autism Insurance Resource Center*

The webinar will discuss Autism Insurance in Massachusetts including ARICA info, MassHealth and the Autism Omnibus Bill, how to figure out what coverage you need/eligibility, Premium Assistance, The Health Connector, covered treatments and how to access them, frequently asked questions, and where to get assistance. There will be time for questions.

Space is limited, so to reserve your space please contact Angelica.Aguirre@umassmed.edu. After sending in your email to register you will receive a confirmation email by Monday, February 4th containing information about how to join the webinar.

**AANE Webinar: Preparing Students for College: Information for Professionals**

*February 6, 2019, 7:00pm-8:30pm, $25.00*

This webinar will focus on preparing students with autism for the transition to college. Some of the topics to be discussed include the differences between the high school and college, entitlement versus eligibility, access versus success, documentation and assessment requirements, special education versus disability services and reasonable accommodations at college.

The webinar will emphasize accommodations available in higher education. In addition, the social, academic, and interpersonal expectations of beginning college students will be discussed, as well as how to help students and parents begin preparation for this major life transition while still in high school. This information is geared toward special education teachers (middle and high school teachers), school counselors, advisors, case managers, directors, and building administrators. Click [HERE](#) for more information or to register.

**Autism Conference registration now open, please visit our website for more info!**
## Autism Connections Calendar

### February 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sun</th>
<th>Mon</th>
<th>Tues</th>
<th>Weds</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Open Swim</strong></td>
<td>3:00pm-3:30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Social Skills Gym Class</strong></td>
<td>4:00pm-5:00pm</td>
<td>Patterson Field House Berkshire CC</td>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>Yoga Class</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Sensory-Friendly Showing:</strong></td>
<td>&quot;The Lego Movie 2: The Second Part,&quot;</td>
<td>9:30 am</td>
<td><strong>Yoga Class</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Table Tennis at Zing!</strong></td>
<td>10am-11am or 11am-12pm, Easthampton</td>
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<td>4:00pm-5:00pm</td>
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### February Fun Week!
*School vacation week activities*
(More details on page 4)

- **February 19, 2019**
  - **9:30 am**
  - Sensory Friendly Movie: *"The Lego Movie 2: The Second Part."*

- **February 20, 2019**
  - **10am-11am OR 11am-12pm**
  - Table Tennis at Zing!

- **February 22, 2019**
  - **9am-10am**
  - Sensory Friendly Trampoline Hour at Bounce!

### April 2019

- **April 23, 2019**
- Autism Connections’ Annual Autism Conference
  - *The Sheraton Springfield Monarch Place Hotel*
  - Keynote speaker and Breakout Sessions!
  - Register [HERE](#)!

### Autism Connections’ Newsletter

**Coming Up**

**Sweetheart Dance and video game night**
6:30pm—8:30pm
Inclusive Community Center
41 Russell Street, Hadley
Call 585-8010 for more info

**Berkshire Teen Group**

**April 2019**

**Bounce! Trampoline Sensory Friendly**
9am - 10am, Springfield
**ACBC monthly meeting**
10am—12:00pm
BCArc Training Room, 877 South Street, 3rd floor, Pittsfield
**Berkshire Teen Group**
Potluck Social (Milestones)
6:30 pm—8:30 pm
41 Russell Street, Hadley

**Special Needs Family Alliance**
10:00am, Pathlight Office
101 Munson Street
Greenfield

**Adult Social Group**
4:00pm-6:00pm
Autism Connections’ Pittsfield Office

**Open Swim**
6:00pm-7:00pm
Gladys Allen Brigham Center, Pittsfield

**April 23, 2019**

**Berkshire Teen Group**

**Adult Social Group**
4:00pm-6:00pm
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6:00pm-7:00pm
Gladys Allen Brigham Center, Pittsfield

Please help us go green. Contact Danielle at Danielle.plasse@pathlightgroup.org if you are receiving a hard copy of this newsletter and would prefer an electronic copy.
**EVENTS & CLASSES**

**WORKSHOPS/TRAININGS**

**CANDO Educational Series (Worcester)**
Tuesday, February 5, 2019, 6:30pm-8:00pm
712 Plantation St., Worcester, MA—FREE
Presenter: Pamela P. Ferguson, DDS
Learn the importance of the 688 process in regards to funding, and understand why the DDS Autism Service Coordinator is your point of contact. More info at https://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/eventReg?oeidk=a07efxr1p38e46e3b9c&oseq=&c=&ch=

**Western Mass Medical Home Meeting**
Tuesday February 12, 2019, 9:15am-10:30am
Shriners Hospital Auditorium, 16 Carew St., Springfield
A team from the MA Dept. of Public Health in Boston will facilitate a discussion of the needs faced by children and youth with special health needs in western MA. This is an important venue to have direct input in the statewide needs assessment. Parents, caregivers, youth, and providers are all encouraged to participate!

Please park across the street at the Springfield Boys & Girls Club, 481 Carew St. If you have an accessible parking placard/plate, feel free to park in the Shriners lot.

**SSI and SSDI—Understanding and successfully applying for benefits**
Tuesday, February 12, 2019, 6:00 pm- 8:00 pm
Family Empowerment, 41 Russell Street, Hadley FREE
Completing paperwork for Social Security Income or Social Security Disability Income properly can make a big difference in getting approved for benefits. The workshop will answer the following questions and more: what is the difference between SSI and SSDI, what happens to benefits when my child with a disability turns 18, what effect does my work income - and my child’s, have on overall benefits, and when I retire, what happens to my child’s SSI benefit? Please contact Michelle Mendes, to RSVP or for more information at michelle.mendes@pathlightgroup.org, or 413.585.8010.

**ACBC Meeting**
Friday, February 15, 2019, 10:00am—12pm, BCArc Training Room, 877 South Street, 3rd floor, Pittsfield
The topic is Transition Services and Community Day Supports (CBDS). Download the flyer HERE.

**Bureau of Special Education Appeals Presentation**
Tuesday, February 19, 2019, 6:30pm–8:00pm FREE
Dudley Middle School, 70 Dudley Oxford Rd., Dudley
Join us for a free presentation by the Bureau of Special Education Appeals (BSEA). The BSEA Presentation will provide an overview of the special education mediation process. BSEA Mediator Steve Lilly-Weber will present. This presentation is during February Break and will be in the DMS Auditorium. Visit https://www.facebook.com/events/2002635576491282/ for more information.

**CONFERENCES**

**Federation for Children with Special Needs**
Planning a Life, Saturday, February 7/8, 2019, 8:30am—4:00pm, 529 Main St., Suite 1M3, Boston
For more information contact Nancy Mader at 800-331-0688 x336 or email nmader@fcsn.org, or visit https://fcsn.org/linkcenter/pal.

**AANE Jody Acford Benefits Conference**
Asperger Syndrome and Adult Life: Navigating the MA Public and Private Supports and Service Systems
Saturday, February 23, 2019, 8:15am—4:30pm, $100
Crowne Plaza, 320 Washington Street, Newton, MA
This is a conference for adults with Asperger Syndrome, family members of adults and older teens. For information or to register call 617-393-3824 or click to register HERE.

**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/FAMILY EVENTS

UCP FREE Swim
Gladys Allen Brigham Center
Thursdays, 6:00pm–7:00pm
165 East St, Pittsfield
Berkshire Family YMCA
Sundays, 2:30pm–3:30 pm
22 Brickyard Court, N. Adams
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.

Be sure to sign-in and indicate which agency you are with (UCP or Autism Connections).

Focus on Disability—An Evening of Film and Discussion
The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art
February 10, 2019, 5:00pm-7:30pm
125 West Bay Road, Amherst, MA 01002
The screening will be following by a discussion and Q&A. This event is FREE, but to support community events at Whole Children, we welcome all donations.

Pathlight Interview Day
February 12, 2019, 9:00am-6:00pm
101 Munson Street, Greenfield
Are you interested in working in a rewarding field where you can help individuals with medical, physical, and or developmental delays live fulfilling, happy lives? Have you thought about going into the medical or psychology fields but do not know where to start?

Direct Care positions with Pathlight may be the start you need! Nursing (LPN/RN), as well as supervisory positions, are also open and positions are available in Hampden County, Hampshire County, and Franklin County.

Come prepared with your personal references, driver’s license, and a great attitude. If you choose, you can jump-start the process by applying online prior to attending at https://www.facebook.com/events/2321688884725970/.

J Summer Camps Open House
Saturday, February 16, 5-8 pm
Springfield JCC, Neal Webber Building,
1160 Dickinson Street, Springfield, MA 01108
Come have fun in the pool and celebrate J Summer Camps with counselors and fellow campers. For further information, contact Seth Stutman JCC Summer Camps Director 413.739.4715 sstutman@springfieldjcc.org.

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.

YOUNG ADULT

Sweetheart Dance and Video Night
February 8, 2019, 6:30-8:30, FREE, all ages
41 Russell Street, Hadley, MA
Call 413-585-8010 for more information.

Potluck Socials and Video Game Nights
Milestones (all ages)
February 22, and 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! If video games are more your thing, there is space for you and your friends. Remember to bring a nut-free appetizer, dish, dessert, or a drink to share. Free! Call 413-585-8010.

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.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP NAME</th>
<th>GROUP DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>MEETING DETAILS</th>
<th>CONTACT/MORE INFO</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>AMHERST</strong></td>
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<tr>
<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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<tr>
<td><strong>ATHOL</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Autism Support Group</td>
<td>This is a monthly support group for parents, caregivers, grandparents and siblings of autistic children. RSVP is required.</td>
<td>4th Sunday of the month Athol Memorial Hospital, The Hills Conference Room, 2033 Main St., Athol</td>
<td>Please contact Amanda Gallant at <a href="mailto:Amanda.gallant@heywood.org">Amanda.gallant@heywood.org</a> with questions or to RSVP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The United ARC, Caregivers’ Resource Group</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>3rd Thursday of the month 10:00am-12:00pm 6:00pm-8:00pm 361 Main Street, Athol, MA</td>
<td>Refreshments will be provided. RSVP is not required, but is helpful for planning purposes. Call Karen Parker at 978-249-4052, x 1047.</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>Group meets on the 2nd Friday of each month.</td>
<td>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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<tr>
<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 questions.</td>
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<td><strong>GREENFIELD</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 <a href="mailto:stephanie.birkdale@aane.org">stephanie.birkdale@aane.org</a>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special Needs Family Alliance</td>
<td>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</td>
<td>3rd Thursday of each month 10 am Pathlight Office, 101 Munson St., Greenfield, MA</td>
<td>For more information please call or email Caroline Wenck at 413-585-8010 or <a href="mailto:carolinewenck@pathlightgroup.org">carolinewenck@pathlightgroup.org</a></td>
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<td><strong>HOLYOKE</strong></td>
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<td>Autism Connections Western MA 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>Email Linda Wynne at <a href="mailto:wynne92@aol.com">wynne92@aol.com</a> for RSVP and more info. Childcare is offered and requires a reservation one week in advance. 413.529.2428.</td>
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<tr>
<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. Jericho will supply drinks and refreshments. Bring something to share!</td>
<td>Jericho 537 Northampton Street Holyoke, MA</td>
<td>For meeting times and to RSVP contact Linda LaPointe at <a href="mailto:lindal@jerichobeca.org">lindal@jerichobeca.org</a> or calling 413.538.7450.</td>
</tr>
<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:eszele@ppal.net">eszele@ppal.net</a>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rainbow Support Group of Western Mass.</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</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><strong>NORTHAMPTON</strong></td>
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<td>Growing Strong Skills Training</td>
<td>The group is for children and their caregivers and will use the Attachment Regulation and Competency Framework to help children learn different skills.</td>
<td>Tuesdays 4:45-6:15pm CSO Outpatient Clinic 8 Atwood Dr, Suite 201, Northampton</td>
<td>For more information and to register please contact Dave at 413.582.0471 ext. 5080 or Kim ext. 5032.</td>
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### Online Support Groups

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<tr>
<th>GROUP NAME</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>NORTHAMPTON</strong></td>
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<td>Valley ADHD Parent Support Group</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>1st Monday of the month, 6:30-8:00 pm Northampton Area Pediatrics, 193 Locust St., Northampton</td>
<td>For more information contact <a href="mailto:ValleyADHDFamilies@gmail.com">ValleyADHDFamilies@gmail.com</a>.</td>
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<td>Florence Women’s Support Group</td>
<td>Support group for women with Autism, ages 18+. This free group is being offered by the Asperger/Autism Network (AANE).</td>
<td>Third Thursday of the month, Lilly Library, 19 Meadow Street, Florence</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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<tr>
<td>Wire Monkey Mama’s Coffee Club</td>
<td>A bi-weekly meetup and solidarity circle for all mamas like grand, step, foster, and any mama who cares for a child.</td>
<td>Every other Monday evening 6:00 pm - 7:00 pm 1 Market Street, Northampton</td>
<td>At The Roost in Northampton. For more information, text Yoshi at 413-347-2517</td>
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<td><strong>PITTSFIELD</strong></td>
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<td>Asperger’s Support Group of the Berkshires</td>
<td>This group is for individuals with Asperger’s syndrome to come together and offer friendship, fellowship and support.</td>
<td>Wednesdays, 5:00 pm - 6:30 pm Group will meet in various locations.</td>
<td>Please contact Elizabeth Flaherty at 443.4780 x16 or <a href="mailto:Elizabeth.Flaherty@pathlightgroup.org">Elizabeth.Flaherty@pathlightgroup.org</a> to RSVP.</td>
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<tr>
<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><strong>SPRINGFIELD</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Impact Center Support Group</td>
<td>A monthly support group for parents and caregivers of youths’ 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</td>
<td>English Group: 1st Friday of the month 12 pm - 1:30 pm Grupo Español: 1st Thursday of the month 10 am - 11:30 am 41 Taylor Street, Springfield</td>
<td>For information and to RSVP, please contact Cynthia Santiago at <a href="mailto:csantiago@wmtcinfo.org">csantiago@wmtcinfo.org</a> or 413-218-5055 Informacion de RSVP: Cynthia Santiago at <a href="mailto:csantiago@wmtcinfo.org">csantiago@wmtcinfo.org</a></td>
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<td><strong>SOUTH HADLEY</strong></td>
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<td>LGBTQ and the Autism Spectrum</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 information or to join, please contact Stephanie Birkdale at <a href="mailto:stephanie.birkdale@aane.org">stephanie.birkdale@aane.org</a>.</td>
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<td>Support Group for Adults with Asperger’s Syndrome</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Building Autistic Community, Inc 507 Southampton Road #1</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><strong>WILLIAMSBURG</strong></td>
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<td>Families of Spirited Children (It Takes a Village)</td>
<td>This is a 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, 10:00 am - 11:30 am Anna T. Dunphy School 1 Petticoat Hill Road</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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<td>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.</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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Stepping Out for Autism and the Autism Conference

For the past 15 years, we’ve kicked off the new year by getting all dressed up to celebrate, dance, and raise money for Autism Connections at our Stepping Out event. Earlier last year, when we decided to greatly expand our Autism Conference to include breakout sessions and a new venue, we realized that we could only offer one of these events, and we put Stepping Out on hiatus.

But now that leaves us with a potentially large funding gap for all the important work we do every day at Autism Connections. The money we raise each year allows us to provide services to thousands of local families.

The 29th Annual Autism Conference takes place on April 23, 2019, at The Sheraton Springfield Monarch Place Hotel, and will give you an opportunity to contribute to the effort of supporting local families and programs—especially if you have supported Stepping Out in the past. We are so excited to share our new event format and location. We hope you will join us as an attendee, sponsor, advertiser, exhibitor or donor! Thank you.