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spread the
word on
AUTISM

AUTISM SOCIETY
Improving the Lives of All Affected by Autism
Maine

Maine Autism Connections

Sesame Street and Autism—See Amazing in All Children

by Susan Vincent

Winter 2015



For so many years, Sesame Street has been educating and raising awareness on different topics.

Recently, Sesame Street announced a new addition to its muppet family – a young girl named Julia who is on the autism spectrum.

Julia was introduced in a digital storybook called “We’re Amazing, 1, 2, 3” as part of the launch of a new autism awareness initiative, “Sesame Street and Autism – See Amazing in All Children.” The program was designed for families with young children ages two to five, teachers, and others in celebration of the uniqueness of each and every child. The Autism Society served as an advisor in the development of this new initiative.

Sesame Workshop based Julia on years of research, says Jeanette Betancourt, Sesame Workshop’s vice president of outreach and educational practices. “We wanted to demonstrate some of the

characteristics of autism in a positive way,” she says. The choice of gender was also deliberate. “We wanted to break down some of the myths and misconceptions around autism. It’s not only impacting boys, but girls as well.”

Available on the Sesame Street website are videos such as: Benny’s Story, A Sibling Story, Being a Supportive Parent, Nasaiah’s Day, and Family Time with Grover to name a few. An additional feature are digital routine cards designed to help with daily life tasks such as brushing teeth, crossing the street and going to the store. These animated routine cards can be customized with a choice of voice to narrate and the sequence the routine cards are

presented. Modifications can be saved in your “favorites” folder to keep for later. In addition, there are resources on subjects that will help the parent/caregiver and free apps are available to download.

Please visit the Sesame Street and Autism Website:

<http://autism.sesamestreet.org/>



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Stay up-to-date for
Legislation issues, fund-
raising events, volunteer
opportunities, and
upcoming happenings.



<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Autism-Society-Of-Maine/107781499258293>



President's Message

Greetings everyone! Over the past several weeks, the Autism Society of Maine has been busy on many fronts. We conducted our annual meeting and awards ceremony in September, immediately followed by our Ride for Autism which raised almost \$25,000. Although the day was chilly, the enthusiasm was contagious and I cannot say enough positive about our wonderful sponsors and volunteers!

On the social policy side, we shared the proposed Behavior Regulations from the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Aging and Disability Services, on our website. The Maine Parent Coalition, a group of parents and providers, we are members of, voted to send a comment letter. The letter essentially indicates that the 40 pages of regulations are complex, difficult to understand and that there was not adequate time for us to review and understand them. Public comments and questions were originally being accepted until October 19, 2015 but with input from many parents and providers we have been advised that these proposed regulations will again be posted and additional comment time provided. So, there is time to understand these and share your views. The Secretary of State posts public notices on Wednesdays. They anticipate this rule will be reposted on November 4th or November 11th. On the same day that the public notice is posted an electronic notice will be sent out via Maine Care and Office of Aging and Disability Services list serves.

These regulations would apply to all individuals 18 years or older with ASD/ID who receive services funded in part or full by DHHS. The exceptions are schools and correctional settings. These do apply to individuals under private and public guardianship. There is no distinction made in a person's living environment (i.e. living with family, on own or in group home setting). More information can be found on our website (the actual proposed regulations). You can also see a summary of these with a list of questions to consider at the Maine Parent Coalition website (www.maineparentcoalition.org). It is a good time to check out this site as it has just been revamped!

Plan Description

- Level 1 and 2: Includes Positive Support Plans, Functional Behavior Assessment and Psychiatric Medication Plan which are developed, approved and monitored by the Planning Team (Person Centered Planning Team)
- Level 3: Includes Positive Support Plan, Functional Behavior Assessment, Psychiatric Medication Plan (as indicated) and Behavior Management Plan. This level plan includes elements that restrict rights in some way.
- Level 4: Includes Positive Support Plans, Functional Behavior Assessment, Psychiatric Medication Plan (as indicated), Behavior Management Plan with approval of the Planning Team and Review Team (formerly 3 Person Committee). This level plan may include restraints or coercive measures but not prohibited practices.
- Level 5: These are "exceptional and rare." These include a Positive Support Plan, Functional Assessment, Behavior Management Plan, Psychiatric Medication Plan (as indicated), Psychological Assessment (within 6 months), Physician Assessment, Second Clinical Opinion, Statewide Review Panel. All go to the Commissioner or Health and Human Services for consideration.

Additional Points:

Definition of Challenging Behavior includes "imminent risk to health and safety/damage to others" but also to behaviors that "seriously interferes with a person's ability to have positive life experiences and maintain relationships"—this will include many of the behaviors that our loved ones may exhibit.



Editorial Notes: Maine Autism Connections and Autism Society of Maine programs and services are made possible by donations from people like you and funding from the Maine Department of Health & Human Services. We hope you will also visit us online at <http://www.asmonline.org>, where we have a great deal of information available about autism, programs, resources, news, a calendar of events, legislation and more.

President's Message (continued)

Positive Support Plans must be the first approach for all plans. These plans must include a Functional Assessment (see description p. 9) and a written Positive Support Plan (see description p. 10) that is approved by the Planning Team (Person Centered Planning Team) and must be reviewed every 3 years. The regulations say teams must “strive to avoid” token economies and if you have an “artificial reinforcer” you must have a written plan to move toward “natural reinforcer and personal control.” The plan must also include medical and mental health assessments by “licensed professionals”.

Use of Psychiatric Medication for any behaviors (which is what most behavioral health diagnoses are based on) must include a Psychiatric Medication Support Plan and Positive Support Plan (p. 12 see #1-8 required). This is to be approved by the Planning Team (Person Centered Planning Team) with specific monitoring required. This is outside of the doctor/patient/guardian relationship and discussion. This must be updated when medications change which for some can be frequent.

Behavior Management Plans are required when a behavior threatens injury to self/others/property/loss of placement. Such plans can be developed and monitored by qualified professionals—psychiatrist, psychologist, psychological examiner, LCSW, LCPC or Board Certified Behavior Analyst. (see p 14-15, #1-13). Training and monitoring requirements (see A-H on p 16). The Review Team must approve these quarterly (this is formerly the 3 Person Committee and does not include a clinically trained professional). No Behavior Management Plan can be implemented without the external Review Team's approval, including any modifications/changes.

In- Home Stabilization (for safety only) has explicit restrictions and expectations (see p. 17 and 18). If community access is limited more than an hour, it is a “level 3 restriction” which requires a Behavior Management Plan.

Behavior Management Plans are reviewed monthly by the qualified professional (p20). Plans are expected to cross settings and agencies.

See the list of required documentation for Level 1, Level 2, Level 3 Level 4 and Level 5 (helpful visual p 22 and 23) and requirements for oversight.

Prohibited practices (p.24 and 25) include any “seclusion”, even where there is constant monitoring and can be a safer alternative for individuals to de-escalate in a low stimulation setting. Prohibited practices also includes withholding money for behavior management, and “manipulation of personal property” unless with “imminent risk”. “Aversive” practices are disallowed and described as “intervention/action to modify behavior that could arouse fear and distress in that person” --- this broad definition would include several evidence-based therapeutic techniques (for example, systematic desensitization for phobic responses to stimuli).

Emergency Interventions: if restraint occurs 3 times in a two week period or 6 times in a year, the Planning Team must do a Functional Assessment and Positive Support Plan reviewed in a meeting (IST). If you have 3 IST meetings in a year, the Planning Team must develop a plan to address the challenging behavior.

Safety Devices (see p. 33-39): Definitions include gloves, locked cabinets. These need approval of the Review Team. Some safety practices do not need approval (i.e. seat belts in vehicle).

The use of helmets for safety require a Level 3 Behavior Management Plan.

Some Questions to Consider:

How would these regulations impact my loved ones and their day to day activities/routines?

Do the regulations improve and protect? Are there areas that it does not or interferes with other important areas (such as confidentiality, privacy)?

Are the right people making the recommendations and overseeing the plans for our family members? (i.e. credentials, qualifications, experience)

Should there be any difference for people living in family homes, on their own or in group homes?

What is the role of probate court who oversees the private guardianship? Do these regulations supersede the responsibilities of private guardianship?

What are the issues when you have a plan with multiple settings/providers? What if one agency is not in agreement with the plan? Who is ultimately responsible for the plan?

Does the Planning Team (Person Centered Planning Team) have the necessary skills and qualifications to develop, implement and review Positive Support Plans, Medication Administration Plans and Functional Behavior Assessments (Level 1 and 2 Plans)? Do team members have the ability to attend the number of meetings that would be required?

Are there conflicting rules in these draft regulations? What are they and how can they can clarified?

Given the numbers of plans outlined in these regulations, there will be a significant increase in the numbers of approvals being requested. How will the Teams deal with the backlog to insure that people with unsafe behaviors do not have to wait for adequate support plans?

Do the procedures outlined in the safety device section meet our loved one's needs? It covers a range from video monitoring to seat belts. Do the requirements provide the access to and protections needed?

We are encouraged by the Office of Aging and Disability Services (OADS) commitment to seek feedback on the regulations so inform yourselves and share your thoughts---your voices are really important.

On another topic, The Supporting Individuals Success initiative continues to be worked on at D.H.H.S after receiving feedback from the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (often referred to as CMS). CMS recommended that DHHS request an extension of the implementation of the Supports Intensity Scale (SIS) to allow for some issues to be worked through. The roll-out has been postponed until January 1, 2016 which means that individuals who have a Person Centered Plan beginning July 1, 2016 would be the first group impacted. We will keep you posted as new information is learned. Again, your voice and involvement is important to help inform the best social policies for our loved ones. As always, let us know if you have questions or concerns. Best, Laurie

Program & Event Highlights

2015 Ride for Autism

On October 3rd the 9th Annual Ride for Autism was held in Kennebunkport. The day was windy and cold, to say the least, but the cyclists proved their dedication by rising above the elements to complete their ride. All riders returned to enjoy a wonderful BBQ in the back yard of the Conservation Trust Building.

Awards were given to the top fundraisers: Conrad Sastra, Gwen Mulligan, Nathan Poore and Francie Butler. Matthew McLaughlin was the lucky recipient of a bicycle raffle for raising over \$100.00.

We want to thank our top sponsors: Conservation Trust; Flagship Cinema; Dennis Paper & Food Products and all the dedicated riders as well as the many families and volunteers for their support during and after the event. Together, we raised \$25,000! See you next year on October 1st!



Big Give for Autism

Thank you for supporting the Autism Society of Maine during the Big Give for Autism on September 17, 2015. Each and every donation is appreciated!

Together we raised \$950.00 towards programs in Maine that will help children, families and individuals whose lives have been affected by autism.

[#autismbiggive](https://www.facebook.com/autismbiggive)

Collectively worldwide with all affiliates \$133,413 was raised!



4th Annual Car Show for Autism

Held on September 13, 2015 - Parsonfield, ME

Once again we are amazed at the turnout of this event and how much money was raised for the Autism Society of Maine! A total of \$19, 893.65!

This is a family friendly event with entries of all types of cars, truck, motorcycles and more. The motto is "Bring What you Run!" What a fun event with endless food dishes that are not priced, but offered at a donation of any amount.

A Special "Thank You" goes out to the event hosts: Wendy and Richard Humphrey for putting on a wonderful show. We also want to thank their family, friends, volunteers, and participants that made this event such a huge success.

The 5th Annual Car Show will be on September 11, 2016



Program & Event Highlights

ASM Annual Meeting and Awards Presentations September 25, 2015

The Autism Society of Maine (ASM) provides education and resources to support the valued lives of individuals on the autism spectrum and their families. Laurie Raymond, Board of Directors Chair, opened the meeting and announced that re-elected Board members were Richard Farnsworth, Lynda Mazzola and one new member Sarah Tackett-Nelson. Cathy Dionne, Director of Programs and Administration, presented on various fundraisers and programs. Noting the past fundraiser events all together raised \$130,000. She shared the final report with the audience of intakes, calls and did a brief overview of the ASM activities. A major milestone achieved this year for the Society was reaching over 1 million visitors to the ASM website.

The keynote address was Lora Perry, MS, BCBA who presented on "Transition to Adulthood, A Parent's Perspective" She is a Board Certified Behavior Analyst and former National Director of Autism Services for Providence Human Services. She is founder of Providence's Merrymeeting Center, a school for children with autism. Lora and her husband Steve are the parents of 22 year old twins who have autism.



Chris Heel received an award for his dedication to raising awareness in his community. This award is given to family members or persons with autism.



Board Chair, Laurie Raymond and Dr. J C Edelberg who received an award for his work and commitment to making a difference in the state of Maine in the field of autism.



Representative Richard Farnsworth received an award for Lifetime Achievement in the Field of Autism from Board Chair Laurie Raymond

Enjoying the banquet are Ellen and Richard Farnsworth, keynote speaker, Lora Perry, Keara Lynch, Cathy Dione, Laurie Raymond, Dr. Ellan Popenoe and Dr. JC Edelberg.



Upcoming Events

APRIL 24, 2016 14th Annual Walk for Autism

Bangor, Belfast, Biddeford and Farmington are the sites for this year's event. With four locations to choose from there is bound to be one in your area. This fun filled family event has become a tradition for many families and schools. It is a way to come together and unite for one cause, all on the same day.

Registration will be open by January 5, 2016. Get your teams ready!

Northeast Harbor Sea of Blue – Walk and 5K will be on April 30, 2016.

Spurwink On The Slopes - A ski program for children with autism

Spurwink on the Slopes is a ski program at Sugarloaf Mountain in Carrabassett Valley, Maine, for children ages 4-14 with

autism spectrum disorders (ASDs). The program's goal is to offer opportunities for children with autism to learn to ski in a supportive environment with other children. 1:1 support is provided by Spurwink volunteers who have experience with and understanding of autism.

The program is available on Saturdays and Sundays in the months of January, February, and March. Lesson times are 10-12 and 1-3. FREE!!! Through fundraising efforts, this program is offered totally free on a first come/ first served basis. There is no charge for the lesson, rentals, lift ticket, or 1:1 support.

To register or for more information call 866-348-1271 or email Sue Murphy at smurphy@spurwink.org.



Family Holiday Tips

Tips on Reducing Holiday Stress for Families of Children with Autism

Holidays can be stressful and over-stimulating for anyone, but particularly so for children with autism. Here are some helpful tips on how to lessen your child's anxiety and increase your family's enjoyment of the holiday season:

Decorating

- Decorate in gradual stages, rather than changing everything at once.
- Allow your child to interact with the decorations and help put them in place.
- Flashing lights or musical decorations can disturb some children. To see how your child will respond, experience these items in a store or someone else's home first.

Shopping

- Last minute holiday shopping can be stressful for children who rely on routines.
- If you do take your child shopping, allow enough time to gradually adapt to the intense holiday stimuli that stores exhibit this time of year.

Family Routines

- Meet as a family to discuss how to minimize disruptions to established routines and how to support

positive behavior when disruptions are inevitable.

- Continue using behavior support strategies during the holidays. Try social stories to help your child cope with changes in routine, and visual supports to help prepare for more complicated days.
- Try using a visual schedule if you are celebrating the holidays on more than one day (e.g., Hanukah) to show when there will be parties/gifts and when there will not.

Gifts

- If you put gifts under the Christmas tree, prepare well ahead of time by teaching that gifts are not to be opened without the family there. Give your child a wrapped box and a reward for keeping it intact.
- Wait until just before the holiday to set out gifts, especially large tempting ones.
- When opening gifts as a family, try passing around an ornament to signal whose turn it is to open the next gift. This helps alleviate disorganization and the frustration of waiting.

Play Time

- Prepare siblings and young relatives to share their new gifts with others.
- If necessary, consider giving your child a quiet space to play with his/her own gifts, away from the temptation of grabbing at other children's toys.

Article found at: <https://www.sandiegofamily.com/resources/flourishing-families-special-needs-resources/346-tips-on-reducing-holiday-stress-for-families-of-children-with-autism>

by Autism Spectrum Therapies (AST)

ASM on Social Media!

The Autism Society of Maine has a wonderful Facebook Community including parents, professionals, individuals and anyone interested in autism. If you are not already a friend of our Facebook page, we welcome you to join us!

By "liking" ASM's Facebook page you can help us spread the word to hundreds of new supporters!



<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Autism-Society-Of-Maine/107781499258293>



We have a great collection of videos and will be adding more throughout the year!
<https://www.youtube.com/user/AutismSocietyofME>



Follow us on Twitter as we 'tweet' about autism!
<https://twitter.com/autismsocietyme>



My Autism Team logo A reputable and friendly place to connect with other parents in Maine.
<http://www.myautismteam.com/>



A young man from Maine has designed a blog to provide personal insight into overcoming the challenges of living with a disability. Here you will find helpful disability resources and tips on: social issues, improving oneself, and technology. <http://zachfly.com/>

"Say What?"

by Deb Lipsky

I recently read an article on communication difficulties in autism. It baffles me how it appears that the autistic population seems to be out of sync with the rest of society when it comes to understanding language. Really?? I just watched a TV car commercial where a person gets into a new car and obviously loves it. Their comment was, "This is really dope". That statement is just as stupid as the person using it thinks that comment describes wonderful. Another person in the same commercial said, "It was the jam". When did we burn Webster's dictionary and adopt amazingly nonsense expressions adopted universally by a few who skipped English in high school? (Fact: most of these new expressions are started by teens that trend them on social media). Why are the masses adopting such language without question? When I was young I joined my fellow peers in pretending to be Evil Knievel and did some daring stunts on my bicycle. My mom sat me down and asked, "If all the kids jumped off a cliff would you do it too?" I realized only years later that she meant it rhetorically but at the time I answered with, "That depends on the particular situation. If we are all being chased by flesh eating aliens, well yes I would jump off the cliff with them." I went on to give her numerous examples of when I deemed it appropriate to jump off a cliff when other people were doing it. Needless to say I got in even more trouble for "sassing" my mom but she had a point. How can we the autistic population grapple with the complexity of language if it keeps morphing into illogical expressions that don't even fit the situation they are discussing? Why must we blindly and unequivocally go along and not question statements that don't make any logical sense?

I decided to take notice of the things people said to me as I went about my business to see if the article I read really deserved to blame us for not keeping up with societal vernacular. I was running late for a dentist appointment and after frantically unsuccessfully searching for my wallet everywhere, I called for my husband to help me search for the lost wallet. The first thing he said to me was, "Did you leave it in your dresser"? Of

all the dumbest things to say in the world this ranks number one. If I knew where I left it then it wouldn't be lost. right?" I snapped at him. Isn't that a frustratingly ridiculous statement to say to someone panicking over a misplaced item?

After finding my wallet (which wasn't in the dresser) I arrived at the dentist's office. I was a new patient and I had a terrible toothache. The receptionist gave me a new patient questionnaire to fill out. It was 3 pages long! The first page was the usual name, address, and insurance info. The next 2 pages were very intrusive. I understand medical history as it pertains to dental procedures but it asked if I had any female complaints and if so to explain. I was flabbergasted! What has that to do with my teeth and I sure hope they know which is end is up when I am sitting in the dental chair. That question begged to be answered. I answered "yes" followed by my explanation; "I have one serious female complaint. My husband doesn't like to shave daily. While a 5 o'clock shadow looks stunningly handsome on a young Chris Soules from the TV show "The Bachelor", on my husband who is 72 it makes him look like an old geezer. The only thing missing would be him wearing Bermuda shorts, black socks and sandals to complete the ensemble of a creepy old man look."

The questions got even further off track from dental issues so I just answered "classified" or "top secret" to each one and left it at that. After handing in my questionnaire I was deeply disappointed that they didn't even thumb through it. I was escorted into the dental office where a dental assistant asked me the reason for my visit. I told her I had a terrible toothache and that I was feeling miserable. She nodded and then explained to the dentist as he came in that I was in a lot of pain. You wouldn't believe what came out of the dentist's mouth! He asked, "So Deb how are we feeling today"?

"First off who is this "we" you are talking about (as I looked around the room emphatically), and secondly that is the second dumbest thing someone could ask when they already know how you are feeling." I don't know who was more

shocked: me for hearing such a stupid question, or him for getting my scathing response. Is it nerve pain or autism that has a way of getting you to really speak your mind?

After my dental appointment (that visit alone is worthy of its own ASM article) I headed over to a very popular chain home improvement store looking to buy an electric space heater. I enlisted the help of a young freckled face store associate barely out of high school to help me sort through the various makes and models. After narrowing the choices down to 3, I asked him which one is the better quality and has the best durability. His response was, "Well Miss, it really just comes down to apples and oranges."

"What the hec?" I thought to myself, how is that expression even relevant and what is he trying to say? Rather than get upset I asked him a question. I asked, "Tell me then Fred, (I read his name tag) if I were to bake a pie what would work better, freshly sliced apples or freshly sliced oranges....is there a difference?"

"Well now you have clearly confused me. All I meant was same difference" he replied.

I retorted, "That's not one but 2 oxymorons in one sentence!" He thought I insulted him by calling him a moron (which I didn't but it surely crossed my mind). "You have a 2 word expression with opposite meanings which ends up canceling each other out" I exclaimed.

"What are you, like an English teacher?" he quipped back.

"No" I replied. "I am the one who society says has a disability and difficulty with communication." Oh how ironic. I just walked away shaking my head pondering the slow torturous death of the English language.



SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY HELP

Applying for Disability Benefits with Autism in Maine

Children and adults with autism can potentially receive disability benefits through the Social Security Administration (SSA). These benefits can help pay everyday living expenses and medical bills. Disability can make additional support services or have other costs associated with special needs more affordable as well.

Disability Programs Available for People with Autism

The SSA has two programs for which applicants may qualify:

- Supplemental Security Income (SSI) – is the program through which disabled children most often receive benefits. This is because SSI has no work history requirements. It does however have income and asset limits, because it is a program based on not only medical disability but also financial need.
- Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) – is a program for disabled workers who paid into the Social Security system through income taxes.

People with autism will more often qualify for SSI benefits, because autism is a lifelong disorder and most adults with autism who are unable to keep a job have not been able to have a job throughout their lives.

People who qualify for SSI benefits also often qualify for Medicaid. In Maine, SSI comes with immediate eligibility for Medicaid and no additional application is required. Your Medicaid benefits start the same day that SSI benefits commence.

Qualifying Medically for Benefits with Autism

One of the basic requirements for getting disability benefits is meeting the SSA's severity level requirements. In other words, your autism must be severe enough to prevent gainful employment, or if you're applying for benefits for a child, his or her autism must prevent your child from participating in normal, age appropriate activities.

Your medical records and the details you provide in your disability application can prove severity level. However it's also important to understand that the SSA uses disability listings to review claims. These listings are set standards against which disability determination on services standards compare disability applications.

The autism listing appears in section 12.10 for adults and section 112.10 for children. These listings are in a manual known as the Blue Book. You can find the full Blue Book online [here](#).

Although technically qualifying will be different for children than adults, people with autism of all ages must have medical evidence showing the following:

- Difficulty with social situations, such as making friends, following instruction, and communication with others.
- Difficulty with selfcare, such as paying bills, taking public transportation, or keeping clean.
- Difficulty with maintaining concentration on and pace, such as finishing assignments or chores without becoming distracted.

Applying for SSD in Maine

SSDI and SSI applications are separate, though they do both require medical information, work history details or school records, and other similar information. The application processes for these two programs are also different:

- For SSDI, you can apply in person or online via the SSA's website.
- For SSI however, you must apply through a personal interview and these interviews are usually conducted at local SSA offices.

Here are just a few of the SSA branches in Maine at which you can submit an SSDI and/or SSI application:

- Auburn – 600 Turner St., Auburn, ME 04210
- Augusta – 330 Civic Center Dr, Augusta, ME 04330
- Bangor – 202 Harlow St., Bangor, ME 04401
- Portland – 550 Forest Ave., Portland, ME 04101
- Yarmouth – 36 Yarmouth Crossing Dr, Yarmouth, ME 04096

Initial applications for disability benefits in Maine are approved about 30 percent of the time, which is similar to the national average.

If your application is denied, you can request a reconsideration review. This is the first step in an appeal. If you're denied again, you must request an appeal hearing. Although the appeals process adds time to your wait for benefits, about 60 percent of hearings in Maine result in an approval for benefits.

Information from this article and more can be found at:

www.ssa.gov

Social Security Disability Help:

www.disability-benefits-help.org/

Email: Social Security Disability Help:

help@disability-benefits-help.org

Legislative Update

By Dennise Whitley, ASM's Legislative Liaison

On the national congressional scene, Maine's Senator Susan Collins has introduced the RAISE Family Caregivers Act. This bill would implement the bipartisan recommendation of the federal Commission on Long-Term Care that Congress require the development of a national strategy to support family caregivers. Please call your congressional members and tell them how important it is that they support the RAISE Family Caregivers Act. Senator Angus King (202) 224-5344; Representative Chellie Pingree (202) 225-6116; Representative Bruce Poliquin (202) 225-6306

The Second Session of the 127th Maine Legislature begins January 6th, 2016. This session is typically short and deals with a limited number of bills per the Maine Constitution which are budgetary matters, legislation submitted by the Governor, bills held over from the first session, citizen initiatives, and legislation deemed to be an 'emergency'. According to the State of Maine Constitution, emergency legislation is only supposed to be legislation for an immediate need to protect public peace, health, or safety, but that provision is often broadly interpreted. Proposed bills have been submitted by title and have been reviewed by the Legislative

Council. 395 bills were requested and 33 were accepted for legislative action. There were also 18 that were tabled, 20 Agency and Department bills and a total of 176 were carried over from the First Session. The ASM Legislative Committee will be reviewing the proposed bills when the full content of the bills is printed to determine which bills may have an impact on families and individuals on the autism spectrum.

Late in the last session, LD1421 An Act to Establish a Tax-Free Savings Program for Individuals With Disabilities was introduced which paves the way for the federal ABL Act of 2014 to be enacted in Maine. Achieving a Better Life Experience Act of 2014 or the ABL Act of 2014 states as the purposes of this bill to: (1) encourage and assist individuals and families in saving private funds for the purpose of supporting individuals with disabilities to maintain health, independence, and quality of life; and (2) provide secure funding for disability-related expenses of beneficiaries with disabilities that will supplement, but not supplant, benefits provided through private insurance, title XVI (Supplemental Security Income) and title XIX (Medicaid) of the Social Security Act, the beneficiary's employment, and other sources.

The Bill was allowed to be "carried over" to the Second Session. Passage of this bill will likely be a top priority for the Board of ASM. Sponsors of the Maine ABL Act bill are listed below. If one of them is your Representative or Senator, please call or e-mail them with a "thank you" for sponsoring the bill and offer to meet to share with them your story and the benefit that the passage of this would bring to your family. LD 1421 An Act To Establish a Tax-free Savings Program for Individuals with Disabilities.

Sponsors of the Bill:
Representative POULIOT of Augusta
Representative BICKFORD of Auburn
Representative CHACE of Durham
Senator DAVIS of Piscataquis
Speaker EVES of North Berwick
Representative GOODE of Bangor
Senator LIBBY of Androscoggin
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Representative SEAVEY of Kennebunkport
Representative TEPLER of Topsham



Information Specialists Needed!

Upcoming Information Specialist Training

We are presently planning a training for NEW Information Specialists. Information Specialists provide resource information to families, schools, the work place, and the community to support the valued lives of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders. Some prefer to concentrate on attending and participating in educational, transitional, and vocational planning meetings such as: Early Childhood Team meetings, Person Centered Planning meetings, or Individual Educational Plan meetings. Others give presentations and workshops on various topics related to autism for agencies and community organizations around the state.

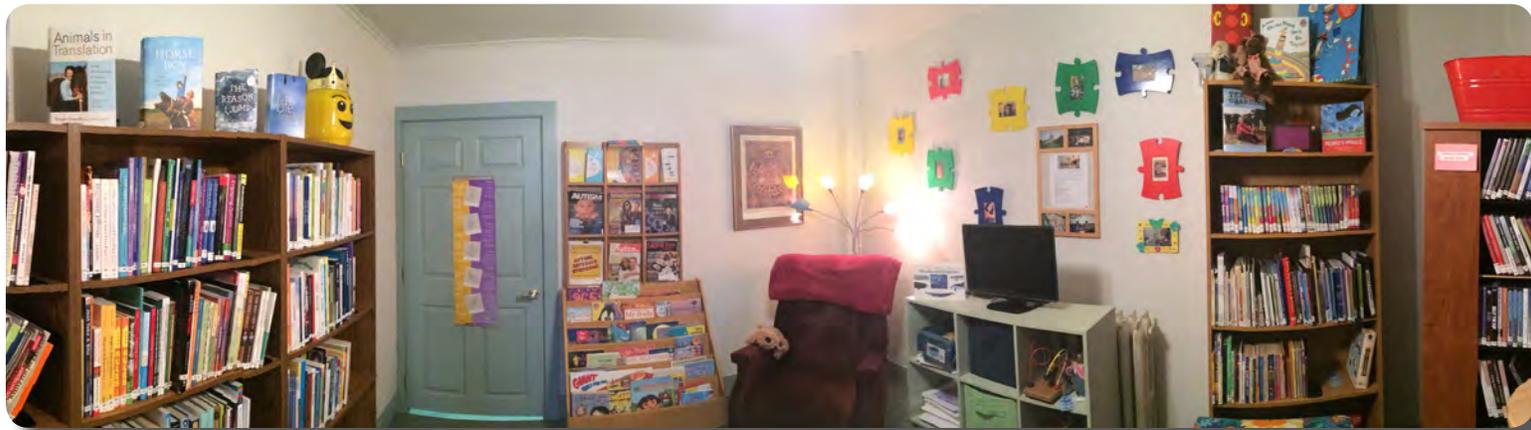
This training will involve 2 full days, one in February and one in March. Interested persons are expected to attend both trainings. In particular, we are hoping to add a few new specialists in the areas between **Bangor** and **Millinocket**, and between **Ellsworth** and **Machias**.

If you have interest in joining the "Information Specialist Team" please contact me at infospec@asmonline.org for more information.

Tena Hinds, Autism Information Specialist Coordinator



Welcome to the Autism Society of Maine Library!



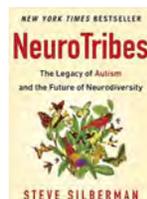
ASM's Lending Library is a valuable and free resource for parents, caregivers, educators, children and professionals working with children and adults on the autism spectrum. The Lending Library is a FREE resource for Maine residents. The collection can be viewed on the ASM website or you may request a printed list to be mailed to you. Stop by the office, or have material sent to you (we will include return shipping label) by calling or emailing: 1-800-273-5200 email: library@asmonline.org
Online library page: www.asmonline.org/library.asp

Throughout the years, the ASM Lending Library has strived to keep up with technology and making resources available in the format that is typically preferred by our readers; from vhs's to dvd's and cassettes to cd's.

We now are looking into the possibility of offering digital books to borrow. In a recent meeting at the Maine State Library (MSL) with Peggy O'Kane, Digital & Special Collections Coordinator and Scott, Director of Collections, Digital Initiatives and Promotion, we shared ideas and I gained a lot of great information of the process involved lending digital books. We will keep you informed of our progress!

by Susan J. Vincent

NeuroTribes: The Legacy of Autism and the Future of Neurodiversity by Steve Silberman



An account of the medical history surrounding sweeping changes to the autism diagnosis in the last century. Includes narrative of Leo Kanner and Hans Asperger, the research pioneers who defined the scope of autism in a profoundly different ways; the parents who insisted on their children's right to an education during a dark time when they were being falsely blamed for causing their children's autism; autistic people themselves, who are now coming together to demand that they be treated with humanity and respect.

The Loving Push: How parents and professionals can help spectrum kids become successful adults by Debra Ph.D. Moore and Temple Ph.D. Grandin (Available Dec. 23)

A roadmap to prepare our youth for being successful adults in today's world with steps you can take to restore your child's hope and motivation, and what you must avoid. Eight life stories told by people on the autism spectrum, including chapters on subjects like how to get kids off their computers, how to build on their strengths and get back to caring about their lives, and how to find a path to a successful, meaningful life.



Donations

In Memory of:

Madeline Ranger

Emmanuel Assembly of God
Lillian Miller
Amy Lindholm
John & Ruby Allen
Kenneth & Marion Durrell
Maine Elks Association
Conrad Turcotte
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Lois Hartigan
Riverton Elementary School
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Raymond Jacqmin

In Honor Of:

Paula Forget by Patrick & Lisa
Vaillancourt

Madisyn and Ayden Cochran by Franklin Ober

Donations / Fundraisers

Richard & Kathleen Gielarowski, Eliza Vattaso, Lorraine Melendy, Melissa Williams, Blaine & Rena Gordon
Mary Chris Semrow Library Donation
Migis Hotel Group & Shipyard Brewing Company "Raise Your Glass" July fundraiser
Portland Pirates April Awareness Fundraising Efforts



Gel Autism Awareness Bracelet
\$3.00



Autism Ribbon Keychain
\$5.00



Autism Awareness Mug
\$10.00



Mini Magnet
2" x 4"
\$3.00



Autism Awareness Magnet
8" x 3.5"
\$5.00



Silver Cuff Bracelet
Puzzle piece design cuff bracelet
Sterling silver plated 7" and flexible
for fit (gift box included)
\$10.00



Big Heart Autism Ribbon Key Chain
1.5" x 1.5" and comes in embossed
gift box. Sterling Silver plated
\$6.00



Multicolored Puzzle Piece
Heart Hanging Charm
1" x 1" and Sterling Silver plated
\$3.00



Autism Ribbon Earrings
Sterling Silver plated
Includes Embossed Gift Box
\$8.00



Baseball Cap
Black/Yellow Wave Cap
with yellow font
\$15.00



Autism Awareness Lanyard
\$6.00



Puzzle Piece Car Magnet
4" x 8"
\$6.00



Autism Awareness Lapel
Pin
\$5.00



Autism Stretch Bracelet
Sterling Silver plated
\$4.00



Autism Touches Us All Hanging
Charm
1" x 1" and Sterling Silver plated
\$3.00



Silver Ribbon Cuff Bracelet
Sterling silver plated (flexible for fit,
embossed gift box included)
\$10.00



Hand Crafted Dichroic Glass
Earrings

Sterling silver plated wire fish hooks;
5/8" x 7/8" random design & color

\$15.00



Angel Pin
Sterling silver plated with
clear crystals; 1" by 1" (gift
box included)
\$8.00



Hand crafted Dichroic Glass
Pendant
with Sterling Silver Plated bail
(includes black silk cord); 5/8" x
7/8" random design and color

\$8.00

You may purchase these and more items on the ASM website at:

<https://www.asmonline.org:4441/productcart/pc/home.asp>

or call 1-800-273-5200.



Support our Services: Give to the Autism Society of Maine!

The Autism Society of Maine is a statewide nonprofit organization that for over 36 years has served Maine individuals with autism and their families, professionals, and communities by providing education, advocacy, referrals, and resource development. We rely on donations and fund-raisers to help cover the cost of our programs and activities that bring awareness and community to individuals and families affected by ASD. Here's how you can help:

- General donations may also be made anytime of the year online using our secure donation forms (or you can download and print our PDF forms) at: http://www.asmonline.org/involved_donations.asp
- Memorial donations to the Society in memory of a friend or loved-one may also be made at: http://www.asmonline.org/involved_donations.asp
- Donations through Network For Good may be made at: <https://www.networkforgood.org/donation/ExpressDonation.aspx?ORGID2=010407346>
- Donations through United Way can be directed to the Autism Society of Maine. For more information, visit: http://www.asmonline.org/involved_donations_united_way.asp
- Host a fund-raiser with proceeds going to ASM. Some of the past and current fund-raisers have included: Avon, Pampered Chef parties, Mary Kay parties, bake sales at events, selling autism awareness items at conferences or craft events, selling holiday wreaths, selling T-shirts. If any of these fund-raisers interest you, please call us for more information.

Become a Member!

The Autism Society of Maine invites you to join families and professionals in the pursuit of knowledge about autism spectrum disorders, treatments and support for Maine children and adults with autism.

You may register online at:
www.asmonline.org/involved_joinasm.asp
or call ASM at 1-800-273-5200

For other ways to contribute, contact us at asm@asmonline.org. Thank you for supporting our mission!

Call us at: 1-800-273-5200 or visit us online at www.asmonline.org