



Let ME  
spread the  
word on  
AUTISM

**AUTISM SOCIETY**  
Improving the Lives of All Affected by Autism  
Maine

# Maine Autism Connections

## Off to College

By Sue King and Adam King

When Adam was 4 years old, we received the diagnosis of Autism. Thinking back to all of those years ago I am continually amazed at his progress! He has gone from a little boy who would get upset, throw tantrums, “bolt” off and along with a host of other behaviors like breaking a mirror in his pre-school class during one of his un-controllable behaviors. We were at a loss with what to do or how to handle this as this was new territory for us and all of this was happening so quickly! (As I am sure other parents and families with differently abled children can attest to!) After many visits to the Principal and various Teacher meetings, we were able to come up with an Educational Plan (IEP) that would benefit Adam and his learning.

Flash forward to later years in Grade school...Adam received an in-class Aide (Who was spectacular with guiding Adam). He was much more successful with his focus and listening skills. He received many services that also assisted him with his success...(P/T and Speech Therapy). Over the years that he was in Grade School he made marked improvement with his behavior and focus. Adam was never a child that tolerated change in his daily routine. Closing in on his last year of Grade School, we were very nervous about the transition to Middle School. We opted for a one on one visit to the Middle School over the Summer as to get him acclimated without the added confusion of a typical school day where other children were around. This would prove to be a very smart decision.

Now Middle School...

The three years in Middle school were, for the most part, very smooth. He received assistance with the School Social Worker in a Group setting. This was very beneficial as it not only allowed him the services he needed but it also included him in a

Group with other children that were experiencing not only the same issues that Adam was going through but also helped him with turn-taking, waiting to respond when appropriate and learning how to work in a group.

These years were a wonderful transition from Grade School and Adam continued to grow and become more independent. His In Class Aide time was greatly reduced. He was still able to ask for help when needed but learned that he was not to rely on someone to always “hold his hand” but rather use the skills he was taught to try and work independently. This skill proved to be valuable as he moved on to High School.

High School:

Adam is now a Senior in High School. WOW! So long ago that we were initially navigating the in’s and out’s of the IEP, therapy, In class assessments and Aides... He finally made it!



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**Maine Autism Connections**  
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**President's Message**

**Help Through the Holidays!**

Research shows that helping others and giving improve the emotional well-being of the person who is performing the kindness! Since many individuals who are on the autism spectrum often don't perceive the needs of others it would be good this holiday season to help your friend or family member with autism to notice ways they can help or give to others. They will probably need your help at first to support them in giving but that is okay. Helping others with self-regulation, giving a gift, doing something for someone, are all examples of actions that research has demonstrated play a positive role in reducing stress, increasing happiness and even improving physical health. (To find the research go to Marianna Pogosyan, Ph.D *In Helping Others, You Help Yourself The benefits of social regulation of emotion*, Psychology Today.com and <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/doing-good-does-you-good>).



Beginners can start with simple tasks such as helping to set the table, making gifts or cards, thinking about what a family member might like. Be sure to point out how they are helping! Then pat yourself on the back and know that you are passing along the gift of giving.

Would you like to help ASM? Let us know by sending an email [asm@asmonline.org](mailto:asm@asmonline.org) Adult Social Group attendance has declined over the past two years; those who attend find it very welcoming and a nice way to socialize, so we are looking to spread the word to others who might enjoy getting together with peers for dinner and/or a variety of activities.

Reading and commenting on proposed legislation via email (often with only 24 hours to respond) to help our legislative committee

Become a [member of ASM](#)

The [WALK for Autism](#) on Sunday, April 26th, 2020.

Happy Holidays, Nancy

**Founders' Day Celebration: 44 years of Impact**

The Autism Society of Maine was founded in 1976 and will be celebrating our Founders' Day. In 2020 ASM will be celebrating 44 years of serving Maine families. From our very beginning we served families and were a place to find information and support families. Years later we still provide this core services with a few added bonuses.

During the holidays is when most people are generous and provide donations to many nonprofits. We are asking for you to consider your donation to come to ASM. What will your donation provide:

\$25 would buy a new book for the lending library

\$50 would provide a workshop on various topics to a group of families or professionals

\$75 would provide a scholarship to an individual with autism or family member looking to go to a conference

\$100 would provide a family with one on one support from a trained professional in the field of autism

\$500 would send a child to a summer camp for two weeks

Help us to continue to serve Maine families far into the future!

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.

# ASM Annual Meeting & Banquet

by Susan Vincent

ASM's Annual Awards & Membership Banquet was held on Friday, October 4th, at the Augusta Country Club in Manchester

Following a delicious buffet dinner, Nancy Ponzietti-Dyer, ASM President, led the meeting and recognized the efforts of our amazing board of directors, and welcomed new board members into our fold; their input and experience will help to further our mission to provide education and resources to support the valued lives of individuals on the autism spectrum and their families.

**New Board Members:** Joshua Nash, (Camden National Bank, Senior Vice President) and Bobbi-Jo Boisvert (TD Bank).

**Re-elected Board Member:** Sherry Pike, was re-elected for a second term and is also Board Director Secretary.

**Departing Board Member:** Katie Crowley has been a board member since 2013. We acknowledged her contributions that have made a positive impact for ASM throughout the years. Katie was also an Autism Information Specialist from 2006 to 2013.

**Cathy Dionne**, Executive Director brought us through the year of amazing accomplishments with autism programs and fundraising efforts by ASM and others. **Jon Youde**, Treasurer gave our financial report and **Betsy Mahoney**, Community Outreach Liaison presented a legislation report.

**Special Guest Presenter:** Connor Archer, Executive Director of "The Courageous Steps Project."

Connor talked with us about growing up with autism and why he created a non-profit organization that strives to help children and young adults with developmental challenges.

Awards given to special individuals nominated for their outstanding achievements and contributions to benefit the autism community:

**TD Bank: For outstanding commitment to communities and employees touched by autism.**

TD Bank and employees have gone above and beyond with being part of local communities through their volunteering, and continuing efforts to reach out to better understand autism.

**Senator Shenna Bellows for her outstanding professional contribution to the autism community.**

Senator Bellows has supported autism related legislation and collaborated with ASM to develop four videos as a resource to help the community contact their elected officials.

**Jessica Crane for her outstanding commitment to raising acceptance and awareness to benefit individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder.**

Jessica has started a non-profit "Outside of the Box" dedicated to educating Mid-Coast Maine and surrounding communities about autism.



*Connor Archer and Nancy Ponzietti-Dyer*



*Allen Morales, Jr., Product Specialist and fellow employees receives award on behalf of TD Bank*



*Nancy Ponzietti-Dyer, ASM President & Senator Shenna Bellows*



*Jessica Crane & Tiffany Rooney, ASM Vice President*

# Fall Autism Conference

On Saturday, November 2nd, 231 people registered for ASM's 3rd annual "Fall Autism Conference" in Orono at the Black Bear Inn and Conference Center. Caregivers, professionals, educators, as well as individuals came together for a full day of learning and information gathering.

This year we were fortunate to have **Dr. James Ball**, a Board Certified Behavior Analyst and private consultant, speak in detail on 7 evidence based strategies that have been proven most effective in teaching specific skills, reducing problematic behaviors and building effective programs. Participants left with a treasure chest full of practical online resources, app recommendations, evidence based curriculum models and strategies that all help facilitate program successes.

4 Breakout sessions followed, providing participants an opportunity to hear others speak on different topics:

**Dr. Ball** followed his keynote address with a breakout focused on video modeling. Step by step presentations using real life examples were explored.

**Sarah K. Howorth** engaged participants in conversation about sexuality and relationship education for people with autism. Participants were provided with strategies to use when advocating and participating in sexuality education decisions for their family members with autism.

**Cathy Dionne** facilitated a panel discussion with 3 Adults on the Autism Spectrum. They spoke about successes and challenges they have had throughout their lives.

**Maine Parent Federation** spoke on the least restrictive options to full guardianship with a concentration on "Supported Decision-Making" and what it means to be a "supporter" vs. a "decider".

We want to thank the speakers: **Jim, Sarah, MPF** and our Panel of Adults: **Jon, Brigid, Cindy**. After months of planning, it was a joy to see all the participants engaged and identifying supports amongst each other, and with local agencies, businesses and organizations.

Thank you, also, to **The Penobscot Foundation for Developmental Services** for the Grant they provided, our Silver level sponsor: **Developmental Disabilities Council** and Bronze level sponsors: **Creative Options, Spurwink, and Kids Peace** and the **14 Vendors**. Without all this support, the funding for our conference would have to come from participants and we would have to charge for attendance.

## Some quotes from attendees:

*"Excellent-Thank You again for this free conference! So beneficial!"*

*"Best conference you have hosted so far"*

*"I came away with many valuable resources that I can use right away"*

*"Please do this again next year. It was great!"*

ASM Epilogue: In keeping with our annual weather saga (the last three years have had us in the middle, or at the end of some kind of storm), we arrived at the Inn Friday afternoon to set up and discovered that they had lost power due to high winds and there was NO indication as to when it would be. Our Keynote speaker was there and we persevered, not knowing what to expect, but decided we were not cancelling. With flashlights, we checked into our rooms and continued to do as much as we could to unpack and prepare for the day ahead. Thankfully, after a meal, (had to go to Bangor to find restaurants that were open) we arrived back at the hotel and within 30 minutes lights flashed on. The young man behind the registration desk was more than happy and did a few "ya- hoos". We joined in with him and proceeded to finish unpacking and setting up. We all wonder if this will be our legacy at the Black Bear Inn and Conference Center! Always an adventure!



## Donations

### IN HONOR OF:

Jeanne Demarre

By Deb Reinemann

### IN MEMORY OF:

Elena Emery

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Lillian Naples

By: Ed and Dick Farris  
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Roki Associates, INC.

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### Donations/Sponsorships Employee Matches/Grants

Spurwink Services

Lee Residential Care, LLC

Creative Options

Mid-State Foundation

Jack Dyer

Front Street Shipyard

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### Membership Renewals

Deb Crump

Mary Chouinard

Sharon Crosby

Evelyn Lutz

Debra Pennesi

Sherry Pike

Nathan Poore

Lisa Vaillancourt

Thomas Whittingham

Jennifer Brooking

Jack Dyer

Kathleen Vanadia

### New Memberships

Brianne Metcalf

Bethany Jensen

## A Home for ME

You can be the life changing hero in a child's story.

### You can be a Foster Parent.

Foster parents are needed who can provide temporary care to babies and young children who are in the process of reunification with their birth families; who can care for children with special needs; who can accommodate larger sibling groups to allow these siblings to remain connected in the same home; and who can provide care for older youth with challenging behaviors resulting from their exposure to traumatic events. Families are also needed for older children for whom reunification with their birth families is no longer an available option and for whom an adoptive family is being sought.

### Contact us for more information!

1-844-893-6311

<http://afamilyformemaine.org>

### Not ready to be licensed?

Here are a few ways you can help support children in foster care:

1. Talk to friends and family about foster care — they may be inspired!
2. Invite a recruiter to speak to a community group
3. Invite a recruiter to set up a table at an event
3. Volunteer to hang fliers in your community
4. Volunteer to staff a table



## Autism Information Specialist Training

by Tena Hinds

We are planning a training for NEW Autism Information Specialists to be held on March 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> here in Winthrop. If you have an interest in working with families or agencies to support the lives of a child or adult on the spectrum, this might be for you!! Please contact ASM at:

1-800-273-5200 or email:

[infospec@asmonline.org](mailto:infospec@asmonline.org).

This is a contractual, per diem position.

For applications and/or more information, [visit our website](#).



## Holiday Ideas

Visit the [ASM online holiday page](#) for tips and strategies that can help to ease the stress of the holidays, traveling, crafts, fun activities, gift ideas and much more!

### Gluten-Free Reindeer Feed

#### Ingredients:

- 6 cups Rice Chex™ or Corn Chex™ cereal
- 1 bag (12 oz) white vanilla baking chips (2 cups)
- 1/3 cup coarsely crushed peppermint candy canes (14 miniature, unwrapped)



#### Steps:

1. Line cookie sheet with foil or waxed paper. Place cereal in large bowl.
2. In microwavable bowl, microwave white vanilla baking chips uncovered on High about 1 minute 30 seconds, stirring every 30 seconds, until chips can be stirred smooth. Stir in half the crushed peppermint candy.
3. Pour over cereal; toss to evenly coat. Spread mixture in single layer on cookie sheet. Immediately sprinkle with remaining candy. Let stand until set, about 20 minutes. Gently break up coated cereal. Store in airtight container.

[Source: Betty Crocker \(TM\)](#)

### Holiday Oreo Pops

Visit [Chelsea's Messy Apron page](#) for the easy instructions for these adorable Oreo cookie pops!

Here you see the ingredients you will need, ideas of how to decorate your pops and even an instructional video! [Source](#)



# 13th Annual Ride for Autism

by Tara Perry

Congratulations to everyone involved in this year's ride, it was definitely the best one to date, with everyone's help we were able to raise over \$27,000!! This is the most we have raised at this event! We could not have done it without the support of our sponsors and the donations raised by all of the riders! This year 93 riders joined the ride. We also had 11 teams which made for some heavy competition for the top spot, which went to Team Marston who raised \$3,350. Great job guys! Team Keegan came in close behind them raising \$2,790. What an amazing group they are!

Our individual fundraisers were equally impressive, Michael McDade earned the top spot with \$2,625, Conrad Sastre came in a close second with \$2,500, and one of ASM's very own Board Members, Kim Webber raised \$1,710, earning her the third place title. Thank you so much, you are all amazing! We added a prize for the top fundraiser for ages 16 and younger and this year that prize went to Garret Dupee, who was also the winner of the bike raffle which he gifted to his father, Eric.

Upon completion of the ride, the riders were welcomed back with a wonderful lunch that was cooked and served by some of our amazing volunteers! Riders and guests were entertained by the musical talents of Michael Corleto and also a beautiful rendition of God Bless America by Hope Poore. Hope also did a wonderful job as the MC for the afternoon, announcing all of the raffle winners.

Thank you Hope! ASM would again like to thank all of our sponsors, riders, and volunteers, none of this would be possible without all of you and it is greatly appreciated! We can't wait to see you all next year!



## Wings for Autism / Wings for All

Wings for Autism<sup>®</sup>/Wings for All<sup>®</sup>, one of The Arc's national initiatives, is an airport "rehearsal" specially designed for individuals with autism spectrum disorders/other intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families, and aviation professionals. Conceived, designed, and implemented by The Charles River Center (CRC) and the Massachusetts Port Authority (Massport), Wings for Autism/Wings for All is designed to alleviate some of the stress that families who have a child with autism or other intellectual/developmental disabilities experience when traveling by air. The program provides families with the opportunity to practice entering the airport, obtaining boarding passes, going through TSA security, and boarding a plane. Wings for Autism/Wings for All also gives airport, airline, and Transportation Security Administration professionals (TSA) the chance to observe, interact, and deliver services in a structured learning environment.

The Arc has teamed up with the Autism Society of Maine along with the Bangor International Airport and members of Maine Alliance of Families Originations (MAFO) and Courageous Steps to bring this program to Maine.

This event will take place on February 1, 2020 at the Bangor International Airport. The families will have to register for the event. More information on how to register will be available within the next few weeks.



The High School years were the chance to use all of the skills that he had learned over the last number of years. The School System and all involved made this a huge success!

Adam still has sessions with the Social worker to keep the skills fresh and also to learn some new ones as well. He no longer has an in class aide but knows that he can always go to the Resource room for additional help.

We are now in the Planning Stages of preparing for life after High School.

Adam has taken two years of CATC classes (Capital Area Technical College). His Junior year of High School he took a Graphic Design and Printing class. He truly loved and excelled at this! This is where his love of Computers really flourished.

His Senior year of High School, he took Computer Technology. He was able to reconstruct a computer and have it function properly. Again, really excited and excelled at this. His future plan is to go to College for Computers and possibly work with Software Development. We are planning a couple of College visits to see what might work best for him.

*Adam's response to what he wants to do when he graduates:* "Don't know yet, but I'll find out soon enough. I either want to work or go to college".

I cannot express the importance of early intervention and diagnosis...

As soon as we got the Autism diagnosis, we were in high alert mode! Adam was 4 years old and we needed to get the ball moving on this. We tried to get as much information as possible. I will say that for the first few months we were in denial. I would compare this to the same stages of grief...DABDA (Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance). It was a very tumultuous ride... We worked over the Summer with a FABULOUS Speech Therapist who sadly has passed along and I am sure many of you know. Linda Mazzola will forever be missed! She worked with Adam over the Summer and she was ultimately the one who introduced us to the Autism Society of Maine. She suggested that we look into the fairly new Day Camp that ASM was offering.

I went to the Office and picked up an Application. This was the first year that started the many many years that Adam would attend Camp Summit. He attended as a Camper for 10 years and then he was graciously offered the opportunity to be a Junior Counselor (as he had reached the cut-off age to remain a

Camper). He was a little nervous and apprehensive about this but he tried it and really enjoyed the experience. He has been a Junior Counselor for the past two Summers.

*Adam's response on how he felt about being a junior counselor:* "Strange, but fulfilling. To go from a tiny little kid to being a leader to other little kids".

*Adam's response to attending camp summit for the first time:* "I don't remember too much to be honest, apparently I had a great time – I was 4 years old".

Camp Summit has been such an important part of not only Adam's life but for our entire family as well. We have developed many friendships with some of the Counselors and Staff (Shout out to Miss Hattie and Miss Cathy and Mr. Joel!!) When speaking with Mr. Joel (King), he had made Adam aware of the classes at UMF which piqued Adam's interest. We are planning on a visit to give him a look around and see if he might like to attend.

*Adam's response to how did attending camp help you:* "I got more comfortable being me and adjusting to my autism".

In closing, I cannot recommend the Autism Society of Maine and Camp Summit highly enough! They are an excellent resource and everyone there that I have encountered is so friendly and helpful. Without the guidance and assistance from them, Adam would not have been afforded the many experiences he otherwise would not have had. Thank you to all of you.



# Upcoming Events

## 18th Annual Walk for Autism

April 26, 2020

11:00 am Registration starts

12:00 noon Walk for Autism starts

Registration is Open! [CLICK HERE](#)  
to Start Your Team!



## Training for NEW Autism Information Specialists

March 26th and 27th

9 AM- 3:30 PM

72 Main Street, Winthrop

Call ASM at 1-800-273-5200 for more information

4 locations: Bangor, Farmington, Fryeburg, and our BRAND NEW SITE, Cape Elizabeth



## SAVE THE DATE: Wings for Autism February 1, 2020 at the Bangor International Airport

The Arc “Wings for Autism” along with Allegiant Airlines is offering this program. It provides families an opportunity to practice entering the airport, obtaining boarding passes, going through security, and boarding a plane. This is a free program specifically designed to support families of children with autism, creating a travel test run to help ease the stress of airline travel

More information will be available on our website.

See ASM’s [online calendar](#) for upcoming events, workshops and fundraisers that are happening around Maine. If you know of an event that we could post, please fill out an [event information form](#). You can even synch your Google calendar with ASM’s!

[Event Submission Form](#)

## EMAIL - SOCIAL MEDIA - ONLINE GROUPS



ASM is has a vibrant 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!



We have a great collection of videos and will be adding more throughout the year!



Sign up to get interesting news and updates delivered to your email inbox from ASM!



Searching for autism information on the web can be overwhelming. The ASM website has relevant autism information and resources for Maine Residents.



Follow us on Twitter as we ‘tweet’ about autism!



My Autism Team: A reputable and friendly place to connect with other parents in Maine.

## Welcome to the Autism Society of Maine Library!

[Visit the ASM Library](#)

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 1-800-273-5200 or email: [library@asmonline.org](mailto:library@asmonline.org)

## Teen Group

Our Teen Social Group is back in full swing! It's so great to be back together after our summer break! Our September meeting was great, everyone was happy to see each other and catch up on what they had been doing since June. We shared some great summer stories about vacations and memories made with our families, we also shared some of the joys and struggles of being back in school. The teens had a great time creating their own T-shirt designs with sandpaper and crayons! They were surprised to see how their designs transferred to the shirts! I think this has been one of my favorite projects so far! October means Halloween so of course we had a party, complete with costumes, candy and tons of fun! We created some spooky Halloween blocks, played some Halloween Bingo and had a blast with the photo booth! November means Fall and Thanksgiving, the teens had a blast painting trees on canvas, playing Thanksgiving bingo and answering some great "would you rather" questions! A big THANK YOU to Kendra Campbell for helping out with the group during the last couple of months, we really appreciate the help! As the weather turns colder, we are looking forward to holiday crafts and activities. I am so happy to see how excited the group is to get together each month and talk about school, their families, their accomplishments and also their struggles. My favorite part is to hear them offer advice and encouragement to each other! I really love our Teen Social Group! If you are interested in learning more about the teen group, or our Adult Social Group you can find more info at [www.asmonline.org](http://www.asmonline.org) or by calling the office at 800-273-5200.

## Social Groups Needed

Have you ever thought of hosting or facilitating a social group? The Teen Social Group is such a great place for teens to meet new friends, practice and learn social skills all in a safe, nonjudgmental environment. There is such a great need for these groups for children of all ages, unfortunately, there are so few to fill the need. It doesn't take a whole lot of time and the benefits are incalculable. I wonder if more people would be willing to facilitate a group if they knew more about what it consists of and how easy it is to be successful at it.

Rules are a must! There needs to be clear, set boundaries so everyone knows what is expected of them and what is considered unacceptable behavior during the group. Our teens were included in making the list of rules- after all, it is their group.

Activities- Most kids like to be kept busy so be sure to have a schedule of things to do during group. Our group lasts from 1.5 – 2 hrs. (Depending on the teens) and consists of a craft, a snack and 1 or 2 games. Our group enjoys Bingo and Trivia these can take up a bit of time, we also break into groups and play other games sometimes. Jenga and Sorry are other group favorites. While the teens are engaged in their craft or while there is some "awkward silence" we sometimes answer "would you rather" questions to encourage conversation.

That's it. That's all there is to it! I get to hang out with some amazing teens, get to know them and help them create friendships with other teens! It's a wonderful thing! Parents are present during the group but usual hang out in another room or area and talk amongst themselves. The social group benefits everyone! Sounds easy doesn't it? It is! Do you think you might be interested in starting a group in your area? I know that there are many kids out there looking for groups like these, the need for these groups are great throughout the state. If you think you might like to start a group but still have questions, give us a call, we will be more than happy to help get you started! To see the criteria we require for our group, please [click here](#).

Autism parent / caregiver support groups and social groups for youth and adults are listed on the ASM website as they come to our attention. If you have a group that you would like to be added to the [support group page](#), please fill out a [group information form](#).





**Silicone Chew Necklaces**  
Animals & Shapes- **\$9.00**  
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**Autism Society of Maine**  
72 B Main St, Winthrop, ME 04364

Items can be seen and ordered from [ASM's online store](#) or by calling 1-800-273-5200.

\*Includes gift box

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Just in time for Christmas! They make great stocking stuffers!



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