

The Sun

Newsletter

October–December 2017

Inside this issue

Support for undocumented families 3

From support-ees to supporters. 4

Grandparents share stories of support 5

New support for siblings. 6

What does a family therapist do 8

How one group of Delaware therapists addresses autism. 8

Inside Autism Delaware 9–11



Our mission

To help people and families affected by autism spectrum disorder (ASD)



Family affair

Support for the whole family

Because of the spectrum of behaviors and issues that can accompany a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD), support is needed not only for the child affected by ASD but also for his or her family, notes stanfordchildrens.org, the website for Stanford Children’s Health (the pediatric teaching hospital of Stanford University School of Medicine). The child on the spectrum needs help coping with functional areas affected by his or her ASD, and the child’s family members need help managing their feelings and emotions around the child with ASD (<http://www.stanfordchildrens.org/en/topic/default?id=family-support-for-autism-spectrum-disorder-160-24>).

Where the child’s support comes from a team of healthcare and educational professionals assembled by the family, the family’s support, historically, has come from wherever it can be found. Many parents find support by socializing with other parents with children with ASD. Others find support from community organizations, such as Autism Delaware. Since 1998, Autism Delaware has been working to meet the many diverse needs of families affected by ASD and today offers a growing list of family support services:

- one-on-one family navigation
- parent education, such as the speaker series and Autism 101 series
- parent coffee hour
- support groups
- respite opportunities, such as summer day camp and Lego
- social recreation, such as junior golf, swim club, train rides, Blue Rocks games, the annual beach picnic,



ClipArt

“ . . . according to Cecelia McCarton, MD, founder of The McCarton School and the McCarton Center for Developmental Pediatrics in New York, ‘The ripple effect that happens when you have an autistic child . . . is astronomical in terms of family dynamics’” (<http://www.webmd.com/brain/autism/features/autism-and-family-relationships#1>).

holiday parties, and sensory friendly bowling, movies, and roller skating

Additionally, Autism Delaware’s family support program maintains a parent packet filled with the type of up-to-date information and resources needed by families with children who are newly diagnosed. To help explain all this information and provide help through the paper-laden process, the Autism Delaware family support staff includes northern Delaware resource coordinator Heidi Mizell and southern Delaware family service coordinator Dafne Carnright.

Two new family navigators have also joined the staff. These positions are possible with state funding through the Delaware Network for Excellence in Autism, which was established by the

Continued at the top of page 3

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Newark

924 Old Harmony Rd.
Suite 201, Newark DE 19713
(302) 224-6020

Dover

c/o Dover Downs
1131 North Dupont Hwy.
Dover DE 19901
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More family support

At Autism Delaware, helping people and families affected by autism is our mission. Last year, our family support team held more than 200 programs around the state—from weekly bowling to sensory friendly movies, from support groups to casual coffee hours, from summer day camp to rockin’ roller skating. The team also took more than 1,800 calls from families who needed to ask questions and get support. Whatever the question asked during a call, we did our best to connect the caller with available services. And the questions were rarely the same twice!

This year, to meet even more need in the community, our family support team has tripled in size. In addition to long-time Autism Delaware resource coordinator Heidi Mizell and family service coordinator Dafne Carnright, the team now includes Autism Delaware family support program manager Annalisa Ekbladh and family navigators Heidi Morales and Ivanka Carbajal, who will expand outreach to the Spanish-speaking community. Additionally, Autism Delaware program assistant Gail Hecky and volunteer and events assistant Kris Grant continue work on social events.

Family support was able to expand this year thanks to two important collaborative projects: a federal grant program called HRSA (Health Resources and Services Administration) and the newly created Delaware Network for Excellence in Autism. The collaborators on both of these projects include the University of Delaware’s Center for Disabilities Studies, Autism Delaware, Nemours/Alfred I. duPont Hospital for

Children, Family Voices, the Department of Education, and various other state agencies, all working together to create an improved support system for individuals and families with autism in our state.



Teresa Avery
Executive Director

Not only does Autism Delaware have more family support staff available to take calls, but we also expanded the educational opportunities available for families. We’ve held sessions called “Autism 101” in collaboration with the Delaware Autism Program and offered information from experts on addressing severe behaviors and delving into the effects of anxiety. These sessions take place in Autism Delaware offices, but for those unable to attend, the sessions are also available on Facebook Live, where families can still interact with the group as well as get valuable information.

What we call “family support” at Autism Delaware is really a wide collection of opportunities for families to find answers, learn strategies, share their stories, and support each other. If you haven’t checked out what’s going on lately, please visit the Groups & Events section of our website. Or call Autism Delaware, and ask to speak to the family support team today.

We’re here, and we want to help.

A service of Autism Delaware



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Family affair continued from p. 1

Delaware General Assembly in 2016. Both family navigators are bilingual, so their goal is to provide more outreach to the Spanish-speaking community as well as greater access to support for families affected by ASD.

Introducing the new Autism Delaware™ family navigators

A 1994 graduate of New Mexico State University, Ivanka Carbajal joined the Newark staff in May. Before this move, she was a contracted family support specialist for the Delaware Health and Social Services Division of Developmental Disabilities Services. Carbajal has also freelanced as an interpreter-translator, supporting families in the community by providing services for various state agencies, school districts, hospitals, family court, truancy court, and the Children’s Advocacy Center.



Ivanka Carbajal

“I’m looking forward to connecting, supporting, and advocating for families and also to expanding outreach into the Hispanic community in Delaware,” says Carbajal.



Heidi Morales

“I am excited to be part of such an amazing organization,” adds Heidi Morales, who joined Autism Delaware’s Lewes staff in June. A 2015 graduate of Delaware Technical Community College in Georgetown, Morales expects to complete a degree in social work from Delaware State University in 2018. Her recent work history includes referral coordinator at La Red Health Center, activity aide at Harrison Senior Living, and member of the “We Are One” Blueprint Committee of Georgetown. For these efforts, Morales has been honored with Delaware’s Jefferson Award and United States Congressional Recognition.

“More than anything,” continues Morales, “I want to put my best foot forward to help Autism Delaware expand resources not only in lower Delaware but also in the Hispanic population. I am optimistic about where this new journey will lead.”

Support for undocumented families

Sun contributor Heidi Morales is Autism Delaware’s new family navigator who will be working out of the Lewes office.

For parents with a child who has been newly diagnosed as having autism spectrum disorder (ASD), the effort to find the correct resources can be frustrating. Many times, you may feel like you have taken two steps forward and then, suddenly, one step back.

Now, just for a moment, imagine that you are a parent with a family that is also adapting to American culture. Everything is different

from the way it is back home: the environment, the rules, and maybe the language.

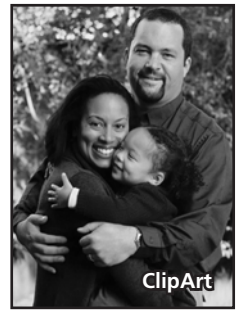
Now imagine that you are considered “an undocumented immigrant” by the U.S. government. The legal site NOLO.com defines undocumented immigrant as “[a] foreign-born person who lacks a right to be in the United States, having either entered without inspection . . . or stayed beyond the expiration date of a visa” (<http://www.nolo.com/dictionary/undocumented-immigrant-term.html>).

This label can make you feel like you do not have a voice or are being held in an invisible prison.

What is the biggest difference between undocumented families and documented families? Fear—the fear of not being able to find the help available to your family—the fear of possible separation from family members if someone reports your undocumented status—the fear of missing out on valuable opportunities because of your undocumented status.

Also, when you have no one to teach you what you don’t know, your ignorance leaves you and your family vulnerable, and the possibility of neglect threatens your family’s care.

Continuous family support is the bridge between undocumented families and available resources and care. As Autism Delaware’s new family navigator for Kent and Sussex Counties, I will work to reinforce this bridge by maintaining the family’s access to helpful resources.



Want more information about support for undocumented families living in Delaware?

Contact Autism Delaware family navigator Heidi Morales at (302) 644-3410. Or email her at Heidi.Morales@delautism.org.

¿Quiere más información sobre el apoyo a familias indocumentadas que viven en Delaware?

Contacte a la Navegador Familiar de Autism Delaware a (302) 644-3410. O envíele un correo electrónico a Heidi.Morales@delautism.org.

Achieving clarity with family support



Sixteen-year-old Jacob Mackie dreams about learning how to drive.

“We survived this time because of Autism Delaware™ family support,” states Dover parent Karen Mackie of the crisis involving her family. Back in 2008, her son Jacob’s behavior began backsliding because of a series of ill-prepared educational programs he was enrolled in. At one point, Jacob’s goals were removed from his individualized education program (IEP), and he was

classified as unteachable. Unable to get what he needed as a student on the autism spectrum, Jacob regressed even further. And the bigger and more frustrated he got, the more he lashed out. His behaviors terrorized his loved ones.

“We were in crisis,” continues Mackie, “so it was hard to keep everything in perspective. [Autism Delaware family service coordinator for Kent and Sussex Counties] Dafne Carnright would listen to me talk about everything that was going on. She took notes, made calls for me, met with me, helped me keep my thoughts in line. She’d ask the right questions and write down the answers for me. She’d remind me what I need to ask and what I need to do. Dafne was amazing.

“She even connected me with other people to help,” adds Mackie. “She called Marie-Anne Aghazadian [who was executive director at the Parent Information Center at the time and is now vice president of Autism Delaware’s board of directors]. When Marie-Anne heard my story, she immediately understood the situation, the fear response in living with a child whose behavior is escalating. Not only did Jacob hit me and bloody his sister, but he would get so frustrated that he’d bang his head on the wall.”

In October 2012, Jacob was placed in the Melmark School, a residential setting in Berwyn, Penn. Mackie stayed in contact with Carnright and began learning about residential facilities from Autism Delaware associate executive director Brian Hall. Mackie also became an advocate for her son by going back to school and becoming a registered behavior technician (RBT): “I learned what Jacob needs so I can provide it.”

Now home from Melmark, Jacob is doing better, says Mackie: “Things are starting to iron out now. We’re working on getting Jacob’s transitional assessment. There will be a tomorrow.”

The Mackies are also looking forward to once again participating in favorite family support programs that they enjoyed in the past, such as Autism Delaware train rides, sensory friendly movies, and the fall festival.

“You have no idea how much Autism Delaware helped keep my head straight,” emphasizes Mackie. “Clarity of mind: That’s what you guys do!”

From support-ees to supporters

When Josh Delaney was diagnosed with autism in 2000, the two year old started receiving services from Easterseals before attending the Brennen School’s Delaware Autism Program (or DAP, for short). In turn, Josh’s parents, Rob and Robin Delaney, started receiving support from DAP’s parent advisory council. The Delaneys asked a lot of questions and reached out to a number of resources until, finally, they met Artie and Marcy Kempner. Also parents of a son with autism, the Kempners had been working toward creating Autism Delaware since 1998. Understanding the need for family support in the community, they invited families affected by autism into their home so all could share their common experience.

“Eight or 10 of us met at Artie and Marcy’s house,” says Rob Delaney. “We got our needs met by socializing with

them. And I enjoyed ‘Dads night out.’ “The Kempners also mentored us,” adds Delaney. “Their kids were a few years older than ours; they knew what to do when we asked ‘What do we do now?’ Today, we can call Autism Delaware, ask a question, and get an answer. The person on the phone may not know the answer, but they know who to ask.”

Over the years, the Delaneys have been able to take advantage of Autism Delaware family support programs, such as the parent coffee hour, beach picnic, and bowling. And every year, Josh and Robin enjoy the spring bunny train ride—and Rob delights the riders by appearing as the bunny!

With time and experience now on their side, the Delaney family has evolved for the better. Josh is now a young



Katie, Robin, Josh, and Rob Delaney in the Magic Kingdom

adult participating in Autism Delaware’s employment program, Productive Opportunities for Work and Recreation (or POW&R, for short).

And Josh’s dad sees his family’s evolution “from support-ees to supporters. We did what was needed then. Now, we would rather be mentors, to give back. It’s, like, a full circle.

“This is how you help your family,” smiles Delaney.

Grandparents share stories of support

Sun contributor Gail Hecky, MEd, retired from a 35-year career in special education before joining the Autism Delaware™ staff in the Lewes office.

In Autism Delaware's early days, Fran McKenna got involved after talking to parent Marcy Kempner. McKenna appreciated the offered social outings, such as trips to the Philadelphia Zoo, holiday parties, and the beach picnic. All provided a safe space for parents to support one another as well as share recreational time with their children. Through these shared outings, McKenna believes that her family was able to overcome the fear of being in public with a child on the autism spectrum.

Now a grandparent, McKenna says the social skills that her grandson gained by participating in Autism Delaware resource coordinator Heidi Mizell's game nights helped him to succeed in college. Currently, he is graduating and pursuing an advanced degree—as well as gaining new social skills.

McKenna has also found Autism Delaware's speaker series and conferences invaluable for learning about best practices and informing her family about advocacy.

Today, McKenna finds much pleasure in giving back to the organization that has given her family so much. As an active Autism Delaware volunteer, she advocates during Autism Delaware Smart Cookie Day, participates on the Sussex County social/recreation committee and Blue Jean Ball committee, and expounds on the virtues of Autism Delaware services.

// We felt like we were in the dark and floundering," shares Jackie Hubbard, grandparent of a nine year old with autism. "The only thing I knew about autism was *Rainman*." Thanks to a neighbor in her community, Hubbard learned about the Sussex Consortium. In turn, she was referred to Autism Delaware.

For the past four years, Hubbard has been quite pleased with the help that she and her daughter received from Autism Delaware, which has included a fact-packed resource guide, parent coffee hour, and support groups.

When grandparent Sue Spires arrived for the first grandparent support group in Autism Delaware's Lewes office, her family was stressed. Talking with other grandparents helped to ease Spires's fears and provide perspective on how her grandson CJ's future might look. Thanks to program support and a new school for CJ, Spires has gained a focused approach to giving CJ the kind of support he needs to reach his full potential.

Spires adds that Autism Delaware family service coordinator Dafne Carnright is a "mine of information." She has provided Spires with tips and referrals on how to locate area resources, access government services, and make the most of Delaware's educational system.



CJ, Jackie Hubbard, and CJ's grandparent Sue Spires

Parent training at the Brennen School

As the statewide public school program for students on the autism spectrum, the Delaware Autism Program (DAP) provides the students' parents with training and support. This parent training covers everything a parent must know about his or her child's educational process, from the educational classification to the graduate's transition into adult services.

In the last few years at the Brennen School, DAP teachers, administrators, and specialists refined this program. The sessions now take place over a few months with an evening meeting every few weeks. Each family decides which session to attend.

The topics for families with younger children include toileting, what to expect from school, what's available in the community for exercise and socializing, and so on. For families with older children, the topics focus on employment goals and residential life for the adult child.

One session is also dedicated to filling out the paperwork for agencies, such as DART Paratransit and the Social Security Administration. Agency representa-

tives are on hand to answer questions.

The parent-training sessions assume a question-and-answer format with a staff member acting as the moderator. The panel is made up of parents, primarily those who have older children and can share what they have learned along the way.

Usually, the questions come from the attending parents who are looking ahead to the next phase of their children's education. They are asked to submit their questions to the panel ahead of the meeting and encouraged to ask more as the night goes on.

Look in your child's backpack for the flyer about upcoming parent-training sessions at the Brennen School. Or call the Brennen School at (302) 454-2202.

Sun contributor Jen Nardo is a parent mentor and long-time Autism Delaware volunteer as well as a dedicated member of Autism Delaware's newsletter committee.

New Autism Delaware™ service provides support for siblings

Sun contributor
Liz Carlisle is a professional writer-editor as well as administrative assistant to Autism Delaware's executive director.

Autism Delaware has launched a support workshop for the brothers and sisters of individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The workshop addresses the needs of this population, which is often overlooked in service planning for families affected by ASD.

For Autism Delaware resource coordinator (New Castle County) Heidi Mizell, who spearheaded the addition of sibling support, the new workshop is the realization of a vision based on her personal experience raising a son with ASD and a daughter who is neurotypical.

Neurotypical children are profoundly influenced by their siblings with ASD, not only during childhood and adolescence but also well into adulthood. Often, neurotypical children share many of their parents' concerns about their family members with ASD and are often called upon to participate in the caregiving. Their lives are forever intertwined with their brothers and sisters with ASD. In some cases, the neurotypical adult sibling ends up as the caregiver after parents, caretakers, and service providers are gone from their lives.

Explaining the SibshopSM model

There are support groups and programs for the parents of children with ASD, yet the same supports are hard to find for children and youth who are trying to understand their siblings' autistic behavior. Many also long for the comfort of knowing that they are not alone.

Explaining the SibshopSM model

One resource that has been gaining traction during the last 25 years is the Sibshop model, which focuses on sibling support, learning, and fun. Created by Don Meyer, a pioneer in the sibling movement, the model reinforces a strength-based approach and promotes relationship-building through a variety of games and activities.

According to the book *Sibshops: Workshops for Siblings of Children with Special Needs*, these workshops "are all about giving siblings some lifelong tools. . . . They are best described as opportunities for brothers and sisters of children

with special health, mental health, and developmental needs to obtain peer support and education within a recreational context" (Meyer, Don, MEd, and Patricia Vadasey, PhD. Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 2008: xiii).

Autism Delaware's Mizell, along with associate executive director Brian Hall, have both been trained in how to lead a Sibshop and have modeled Autism Delaware's new sibling support workshop after the program. (For details, see the box entitled "Play, laugh, share, learn" on page 7.)

Speaking as a parent

Mizell can testify to the importance of peer support for the siblings of kids on the spectrum. When her now-21-year-old daughter Missy was 8 years old, Mizell was concerned about how Missy was responding to all the attention being given to Mizell's son Shane, so she looked for a sibling support program for her daughter.

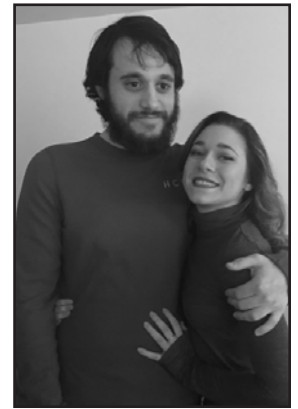
Speaking as a parent

Missy participated in a sibling workshop at the Delaware Autism Program (DAP). But she found the camaraderie she needed in an inclusion program at the Mary Campbell Center. Made up of children and youth with a range of special needs as well as their siblings and friends, Mary Campbell's inclusion population was encouraged to engage equally. As a result, Missy was able to see Shane's autism differently.

"It allowed the neurotypical kids to see that their siblings are not defined by their disability," says Mizell. "Missy's participation with other neurotypical siblings in an inclusive setting helped her reach that acceptance because she had a chance to connect with other kids. Everyone has a different take on what it's like to grow up with a sibling with a disability. Missy's exposure in this program allowed her to view kids with special needs as just kids—it normalized the situation."

In other words, a sibling support group helps kids move to

Continued at the top of page 7



**The Mizell siblings
Shane and Missy**

Resources

- Information on the Autism Research Institute—https://www.autism.com/advocacy_siblings
- PDFs from the Organization for Autism Research (OAR), such as *Autism, my sibling and me* and *Life as an autism sibling: a guide for teens*—<https://researchautism.org/how-we-help/families/sibling-support>
- *Sibshops: Workshops for Siblings of Children with Special Needs*, by Don Meyer, MEd, and Patricia Vadasey, PhD (Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 2008)
- *The Sibling Slam Book: What It's Really Like to Have a Brother or Sister with Special Needs*, by Don Meyer, MEd (Woodbine House, 2005)



New support for siblings continued from p. 6

acceptance in an environment where it's safe to feel and express frustration and anxiety.

Changing needs over time

How siblings understand and relate to their brother or sister with ASD depends on where they are developmentally. Mizell notes that, when Missy was a child, she saw Shane as her big brother. But as he grew, he required more and more of his parents' attention. And as Missy grew, she started to see her role and responsibilities and arrived at an acceptance of her place in the family. Now, even though Shane is six years older than Missy, Mizell notes, "[Missy] often feels six years older."

Missy understands that Shane may always have to depend on her to some extent, especially after their parents die. "We don't know what the future holds, but at least she has peer support," says Mizell. "Missy has made friends with other sibs. When you go along on that path—with all of these people—everyone understands that they will be involved in their sister's or brother's care at some point.

"You do it for the love of the child," adds Mizell.

Play, laugh, share, learn

A number of steps are required to become a certified SibshopSM provider. Autism Delaware is moving toward this certification, and the workshop will follow the Sibshop model's approach (explained in the article on page 6). Topics will include integration of information, discussion activities with special guests, and games designed to appeal to all ages.

Also, everybody gets to tell their stories about an experience that meant something to them, says Autism Delaware resource coordinator Heidi Mizell: "This activity acknowledges everyone's place in their families. The goal is to share the understanding that everyone has walked a path similar to theirs."

Autism Delaware will be hosting sibling support

workshops statewide. For details, visit Autism Delaware.org. Or contact Heidi Mizell at (302) 224-6020, ext. 205, or at Heidi.Mizell@delautism.org.

Volunteers welcome

Parents, adult siblings, and anyone who has experienced living with a person with a disability are welcome to become a Sibshop volunteer.

For details on the training, visit <https://www.siblingsupport.org/workshops-and-training-on-the-sibshop-model>.

Supporting her brother

For the past nine years, my family has had many questions about autism, and Autism Delaware has given us a multitude of resources in expertise, advocacy, and support for my older brother. Robert is hard-working, kindhearted, and a recent graduate of the Delaware Autism Program (DAP) at the Brennen School.

Through Autism Delaware's family support, my family has had the chance to enjoy various social activities, such as sensory friendly movies and bowling, Blue Rocks games, beach picnics, and the fall festival in Felton. We especially appreciate the sensory friendly

activities because the sound is not too loud. Also, if Robert makes noise during the movie, it's okay because everyone is part of the autism community and understands the challenges of someone with autism.

Recently, my family has had questions about Robert's future. Autism Delaware has become the answer by providing a community of families to network with. And Autism Delaware is now helping Robert get a job through its adult employment program called POW&R (Productive Opportunities for Work and Recreation).

The annual Walk for Autism has always been my favorite fundraising event. It is the ultimate experience to show support, acceptance, and autism awareness by raising money and walking—rain or shine. Two years ago, the Wilmington event saw a day of heavy April showers. Only my second time being a part of the Walk, I didn't think I would make it through the day. However, seeing the huge turnout—individuals, families, and groups with autism, all with smiling faces and ready to walk—I was inspired to do the same. I had so much fun walking in the rain with my family and visiting all the different booths sponsoring the cause.

More importantly, Robert always has a great time at the Walk for Autism—and the experience helps him be more responsive in social interactions. In this case, Autism Delaware's fundraising event is also social recreation and family support for the Matusheski family.

Sun contributor Laura Matusheski is the 17-year-old daughter of Autism Delaware™ volunteer coordinator Melanie Matusheski.



Siblings Amy, Robert, and Laura Matusheski at the 2015 Walk for Autism

What does a family therapist do?

This article is part of a treatment overview published by WebMD. For the complete article entitled *Family Therapy*, visit <http://www.webmd.com/balance/family-therapy-6301>.

Health professionals who use the family systems model in caring for people always consider the whole family. They view any problem in one member as a symptom of change or conflict in the group.

A family therapist

- teaches family members about how families function in general and, in particular, how their own functions.

- helps the family focus less on the member who has been identified as ill and focus more on the family as a whole.
- helps to identify conflicts and anxieties and helps the family develop strategies to resolve them.
- strengthens all family members so they can work on their problems together.
- teaches ways to handle conflicts and changes within the family differently. Sometimes the way family members handle problems makes them more likely to develop symptoms.



During therapy sessions, the family's strengths are used to help them handle their problems. All members take responsibility for problems. Some family members may need to change their behavior more than others.

Family therapy is a very active type of therapy, and family members are often given assignments. For example, parents may be asked to delegate more responsibilities to their children.

The number of sessions required varies, depending on the severity of the problems and the willingness of the members to participate in therapy. The family and the therapist set mutual goals and discuss the length of time expected to achieve the goals. Not all members of the family attend each session. . . .

Why it is done

Anyone who has a condition that interferes with his or her life and the lives of family members may benefit from family therapy. Usually, the better the family functions, the lower the stress level for the person with the health problem.

How one group of Delaware therapists addresses autism

Balancing a job and family with a neurotypical child can be exhausting and stressful, but when the child in the family has autism spectrum disorder (ASD), parents and caregivers assume new and unexpected roles as well. These roles include case manager, master scheduler, taxi driver, and IEP [individualized education program]

specialist. And they are often performed while the parents and caregivers are working full time and sleep deprived. The additional time and attention needed to care for a child with ASD can affect jobs, strain marriages, and cause the child's siblings to feel left out.

Outpatient therapy for the whole family can help. Look for a multi-specialty group that offers psychological services for the whole family. At Delaware Psychological Services (DPS), for example, the therapy focuses on the individual family member's needs through a treatment team approach. DPS's licensed providers specialize in treating addictions, trauma, behavioral disturbances, mood disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), anxiety, depression, and family and marital discord as well as autism. At DPS, individual family members can develop effective ways to manage stress, get organized, and come up with helpful strategies for handling challenging behaviors. When parents are able to decrease and manage stress as well as improve their mental health and ability to cope, all the children in the family will benefit.

DPS also offers parent-child interaction therapy (PCIT). As a research-supported parent-coaching intervention, PCIT has been found to be a highly effective treatment plan for children on the autism spectrum. The focus is to improve parent-child interactions while reducing the child's behavior problems.

Sun contributor Alisa Fletcher is a licensed clinical social worker at Child's Play by the Bay and Delaware Psychological Services in Lewes.

Would you like a complete list of psychiatrists and psychological and counseling-related services?

Visit AutismDelaware.org for an up-to-date parent packet.

To have a parent packet mailed directly to you, email a request to delautism@delautism.org.

For more about Delaware Psychological Services, call (302) 703-6332. Or send an email of interest to DPS.wellness@gmail.com.

October–December 2017

Calendar of programs & services

For the most up-to-date calendar, visit AutismDelaware.org.

October

3, 10, 17, 24—Lego. Autism Delaware Newark office. 6:00–6:45 PM and 7:00–8:00 PM. *Register:* Heidi Mizell at (302) 224-6020.

4—Parent coffee hour. Hampton Inn. Middletown. 9:30 AM. *R.S.V.P.:* Jennifer Sparks at sparkjm@aol.com.

4, 11, 18, 25—Bowling night. Bowlerama. 3031 New Castle Av. New Castle. 5:30–7:00 PM. *Register:* Karen.Tuohy@redclay.k12.de.us.

9—Parent coffee hour. Holiday Inn Express. Seaford. 9:00–10:00 AM. *R.S.V.P.:* Dafne Carnright at (302) 644-3410.

12

—Grandparents support group. Autism Delaware Lewes office. 9:00–10:00 AM. *R.S.V.P.:* Dafne.Carnright@delautism.org.

—Bounce night. Hopping Good Times. 23 Cochran Dr. Camden. 5:30–7:30 PM. *R.S.V.P.:* Heidi.Morales@delautism.org.

14—Fall festival. Killens Pond State Park. 11:30 AM–2:30 PM. *Register:* Heidi.Morales@delautism.org.

16—Grandparents support group. Panera Bread. 3650 Kirkwood Hwy. Wilmington. 6:30–7:30 PM. *R.S.V.P.:* Heidi.Mizell@delautism.org.

20—Haunted-but-not-scary train ride. Wilmington & Western Railroad. 6:00 PM. *Register:* lvanka.Carbajal@delautism.org.

21—Sensory friendly movie: TBD. Westtown Movies. 150 Commerce Dr. Middletown. 10:00 AM.

23—Workshop: Sexuality and sensory. Autism Delaware Newark office. 7:00–8:30 PM. *R.S.V.P.:* Heidi.Mizell@delautism.org.

30—Workshop: Financial planning with James Bergmaier. Autism Delaware Newark office. 7:00 PM. *Register:* Heidi.Mizell@delautism.org.

November

1, 8, 15, 22, 29—Bowling night. Bowlerama. 3031 New Castle Av. New Castle. 5:30–7:00 PM. *Register:* Karen.Tuohy@redclay.k12.de.us.

8

—Hora del Café de los Padres. Georgetown location TBD. 9:00 AM. *R.S.V.P.:* Heidi.Morales@delautism.org or (302) 644-3410.

—Parent coffee hour. Panera Bread. 3650 Kirkwood Hwy. Wilmington. 7:00 PM. *R.S.V.P.:* Heidi.Mizell@delautism.org.

November continued

9

—Grandparents support group. Autism Delaware Lewes office. 9:00–10:00 AM. *R.S.V.P.:* Dafne.Carnright@delautism.org.

—Bounce night. Hopping Good Times. 23 Cochran Dr. Camden. 5:30–7:30 PM. *R.S.V.P.:* Heidi.Morales@delautism.org.

14—Lego. Autism Delaware Newark office. 6:00–6:45 PM and 7:00–8:00 PM. *Register:* Heidi Mizell at (302) 224-6020.

16—Parent coffee hour. Starbucks. 1481 No. Dupont Hwy. Dover. 9:00–10:00 AM. *R.S.V.P.:* Dafne Carnright at (302) 644-3410.

18—Sensory friendly movie: TBD. Westtown Movies. 150 Commerce Dr. Middletown. 10:00 AM.

20—Workshop: Know the numbers. Autism Delaware Lewes office and Facebook Live. 7:00–8:30 PM. *R.S.V.P.:* Annalisa.Ekbladh@delautism.org.

30—Sensory friendly roller skating. Dover Skating Center. 2201 So. Dupont Hwy. 6:00–8:00 PM.

December

1—Parent coffee hour. Hampton Inn. Milford. 9:00–10:00 AM. *R.S.V.P.:* Dafne Carnright at (302) 644-3410.

6—Parent coffee hour. Hampton Inn. Middletown. 9:30 AM. *R.S.V.P.:* Jennifer Sparks at sparkjm@aol.com.

6, 13, 20, 27—Bowling night. Bowlerama. 3031 New Castle Av. New Castle. 5:30–7:00 PM. *Register:* Karen Tuohy at karen.tuohy@redclay.k12.de.us.

9—Sensory friendly roller skating. Christiana Skating Center. 5:15–7:15 PM.

11—Autism 101: Intro to autism and services. Autism Delaware Lewes office and Facebook Live. 7:00–8:30 PM. *Register:* Heidi.Morales@delautism.org.

14

—Grandparents support group. Autism Delaware Lewes office. 9:00–10:00 AM. *R.S.V.P.:* Dafne.Carnright@delautism.org.

—Bounce night. Hopping Good Times. 23 Cochran Dr. Camden. 5:30–7:30 PM. *R.S.V.P.:* Heidi.Morales@delautism.org.

16—Sensory friendly movie: TBD. Westtown Movies. 150 Commerce Dr. Middletown. 10:00 AM.

18—Grandparents support group. Panera Bread. 3650 Kirkwood Hwy. Wilmington. 6:30–7:30 PM.

R.S.V.P.: Heidi.Mizell@delautism.org.

Mrs. Claus is frantically busy with plans for this year's holiday parties—as well as cleaning up the mess made by Santa and the elves!

For dates and locations, visit AutismDelaware.org.



All information provided or published by Autism Delaware™ is for informational purposes only. Reference to any treatment or therapy option or to any program, service, or treatment provider is not an endorsement by Autism Delaware. You should investigate alternatives that may be more appropriate for a specific individual. Autism Delaware assumes no responsibility for the use made of any information published or provided by Autism Delaware.

INSIDE Autism™ Delaware

Enthusiastically engaged in Art Club with V

Thanks to Autism Delaware volunteer of the month (February 2017) Vernae Winchester, Art Club with V has grown into a popular pastime for a small group of participants in the Lewes office. Winchester develops individual art projects for everyone who participates. Students enthusiastically engage in the projects and express pride in their completed work. Parents are required to accompany their children, sometimes participating alongside. Classes run one hour a month for six months.

For more information, call Autism Delaware family navigator Heidi Morales at (302) 644-3410. Or email her at Heidi.Morales@delautism.org.



Will Crist and Vernae Winchester

Acknowledging the contribution



2017 PCIT graduate Skyler Starkey and dad Keith with Susan Peterson

For the past six years, Autism Delaware clinical director Susan Peterson, PhD, BCBA-D, has evaluated 169 people for autism. She provided psychological and diagnostic evaluations, functional behavior assessments, and school and home consultation services.

Peterson also provided families with the successful first-line treatment known as parent-child interaction therapy (or PCIT, for short). She helped 28 children build their language and conversational skills,

increase their attention spans, and manage their repetitive and self-stimulatory behavior as well as helped their families improve their overall relationships with their children on the autism spectrum.

Please join the Autism Delaware Board of Directors and staff in acknowledging Peterson's contribution to the autism community and wish her "Happy Retirement!"

For referrals, contact Autism Delaware's family support staff.

No-pressure exercise!

Growing out of a suggestion from the Lewes office's grandparent support group, Autism Delaware Walking Club offers a no-pressure, inexpensive opportunity for families to get some exercise, talk, and enjoy nature. No commitment is required, and participants are free to walk as much or as little as they desire.



Heather Newman, Mary Newman, and Judy Brown

The first gathering took place at Cape Henlopen State Park, where the walkers enjoyed the added amenities of picnic tables and the nature center. Some walkers brought sack lunches to enjoy after the walk.

Some of our active grandparents volunteered to coordinate this new activity in Sussex County. Autism Delaware would love to have a similar volunteer in Kent County so we can expand the club.

To be added to the club's email list, email Autism Delaware family navigator Heidi Morales at Heidi.Morales@delautism.org, or call (302) 644-3410.

The proof is in the "Biscookis"

Andrew Swanson and Alec Nicoli have a treat for you—"Biscookis." This delectable cookie-biscotti blend is the creation of Proof Bakers, a business that the two young men and their families founded. Baking is in both family histories. Andrew's grandparents ran a bakery for 40 years using recipes that go back generations to ancestral roots in Sweden, and Alec hails from professional bakers on both sides of his mother's family. And so Andrew's and Alec's mothers, Pat Swanson and Laurie Romanowich, came together in 2014 to bring to life Pat's dream of opening a bakery that employs people with autism and other intellectual disabilities. With the support of POW&R staff Larry Katz, who coaches Alec during shopping, baking, and packaging of the products, Proof Bakers carries on the baking tradition.

Look for Biscookis at boutique shops, such as Janssen's Market and Blue Streak Gallery in Wilmington. And check out the website at www.proofbakers.com.



Andrew Swanson and Alec Nicoli participate in the Autism Delaware adult employment program known

as Productive Opportunities for Work and Recreation (or POW&R, for short).

Awarding scholars in the autism community



in autism at Wilmington University.

Autism Delaware Daniel and Lois Gray Memorial Scholarship—Corina Gilden and Stephanie Green are matriculated

Autism Delaware scholarships are supporting the following teachers, students, and future professionals in Delaware’s autism community for the 2017–18 school year. For details, visit AutismDelaware.org.

Autism Delaware Autism Teacher Certification Scholarship—Trisha Emmett, Jack Frederick, and Shelley Hovanec are continuing their education

at the University of Delaware in programs that will support their chosen professional fields in the autism community.

Autism Delaware Adult with Autism Scholarship—Catherine Lin and Ian Snitch are matriculated in the University of Delaware’s Career & Life Studies Certificate (CLSC) program. CLSC offers specialized course work, a variety of integrated academic work, and access to on-campus social activities.

A look at the 2017–18 legislative session

Below is the list of legislation that Autism Delaware has been advocating and discussing with our elected officials during the 149th Delaware General Assembly. Also included is where this legislation currently stands. For details and updates, visit <https://legis.delaware.gov>, and go to the Find a Bill section.

Grants-in-Aid—Known as an appropriation, Grants-in-Aid is money given by the general assembly to support the activities of nonprofits that provide services to Delawareans. The joint finance committee (JFC) approved a 20-percent cut in the Grants-in-Aid budget for fiscal year 2018.

House Bill 12—HB12 provides state funding for basic special education to students in kindergarten through the third grade. (Currently, the basic special-education funding begins at fourth grade.) HB12 is sitting with the House’s appropriations committee.

House Bill 21—HB21 takes steps to ensure that individuals with disabilities are not denied access to organ transplant procedures based solely on their disabilities. HB21 is waiting for the governor’s signature.

House Bill 104—Called the DSP wage increase, HB104 refers to the rate increase needed to raise the hourly wage of direct support professionals (DSPs). HB104 mandates an increase in the rates paid to providers so that the state can fund providers at 100 percent of the benchmarked rate by fiscal year 2020. HB104 is sitting with the House’s health and human development committee.

House Bill 145—HB145 is known as the

ABLE (Achieving a Better Life Experience) bill. It clarifies how the funds in an ABLE account (a tax-advantaged savings account for an individual with disabilities and his or her family) are to be treated when a designated beneficiary dies. HB145 is waiting for the governor’s signature. For details, visit <http://treasurer.delaware.gov/able-program>.

House Bill 162—HB162 mandates that the financial exploitation of a vulnerable adult must be reported by a broker-dealer or investment adviser to the director of investor protection. HB162 is sitting with the House’s judiciary committee.

House Bill 210—Known as the medical marijuana bill, HB210 allows minors with debilitating medical conditions (not specifically listed in section §4906A[b] of the Delaware code) the same petition process for having their condition considered as that allowed for adults. Minors may only be approved for marijuana oil. HB210 is waiting for the governor’s signature.

Senate Bill 24—Also known as the medical marijuana bill, SB24 removes the requirement that a psychiatrist must be the physician who signs certification supporting an application for medical marijuana. SB24 also adds anxiety to the list of debilitating conditions that a person can have to be eligible for medical marijuana. SB24 is waiting for the governor’s signature.



Wesley & mom
Michelle Mathew

Join us!

As a grassroots advocate in Delaware, your story is important and needs to be told. That’s why individuals and families affected by autism spectrum disorder make the best advocates. So, let your voice be heard!

Want to know how?

Ask Autism Delaware public policy director Alex Eldreth at (302) 224-6020. Or send an email of interest to Alex. Eldreth@delautism.org.



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Helping People and Families Affected by Autism

eleven eleven on 11/11!



Wilmington cover band—eleven eleven
—will rock The Queen on November 11!

This year's theme:

Uncorked and Uncapped

Join us for an evening
of reds, whites, and brews.

Details coming soon.

Get tickets and sponsorship info at
AutismDelaware.org