

The Sun

Newsletter

Autumn 2018

Inside this issue

Shakespeare and showering: Skills for high school 4

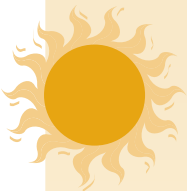
Executive function skills can be taught 5

Parent2Parent 6-7

Learning to get around on your own 8

Inside Autism Delaware 10-11

 Brian Hall named new executive director 10



Our mission

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



Life skills training fills critical needs for parents

When a child is diagnosed with a chronic condition, such as asthma, juvenile diabetes, epilepsy, or cerebral palsy, the doctor usually provides extensive resources and training to empower parents in managing the condition. But often, no such training has been offered to parents whose children are diagnosed with a developmental disability, such as autism spectrum disorder (or ASD, for short).

“No one tells you how to deal with the challenges that come along with autism,” says Annalisa Ekbladh, Autism Delaware’s policy and family services director as well as the parent of a son on the autism spectrum.

Autism Delaware is confronting this need head on with a variety of life skills training opportunities over the course of the next year. Each has been designed for easy and affordable access by families across the state. Below is an overview of these offerings.

Sun contributor Liz Carlisle is a professional writer-editor as well as the current executive assistant and much-appreciated right-hand to Autism Delaware’s executive director.

Speaker Series

Each two-hour presentation invites parents to participate in person or via teleconference or Facebook Live. The lineup of topics for the next year includes feeding issues, toileting, employment skills, life skills, benefits and adult services, behavior supports, sensory, and communication.

One of the most popular sessions in the Speaker Series is Autism 101. This presentation is designed for parents of newly diagnosed children and offered in English and Spanish several times during the year.

For scheduling and registration information, visit AutismDelaware.org.

PEERS®

The PEERS curriculum is a research-based program for school-based professionals that was developed at the University of California at Los Angeles. The program involves social skills training for higher-functioning adolescents who have ASD but do not have significant intellectual disabilities.

Autism Delaware’s program is designed for youth in grades 7-12. Autism Delaware resource coordinator Heidi Mizell has been trained as a PEERS facilitator and is running the sessions. PEERS requires parent participation and involves a fee.

Continued on p. 3

Autism Delaware™

Newark

924 Old Harmony Rd.
Suite 201, Newark DE 19713
Phone: 302.224.6020

Dover

c/o Dover Downs
1131 North Dupont Hwy., Dover DE 19901
Call for on-site appointment:
302.224.6020 or 302.644.3410

Lewes

17517 Nassau Commons Blvd.
Unit 1, Lewes DE 19958
Phone: 302.644.3410

Email

delautism@delautism.org

Website

AutismDelaware.org

Family services

Kent and Sussex Counties

(302) 644-3410

New Castle County

(302) 224-6020

Board officers

President

Pete Bradley
pbradley@doverdownslots.com

Vice president

Marie-Anne Aghazadian
elisa945@gmail.com

Secretary

John Fisher Gray
John.F.Gray@dupont.com

Treasurer

Jeff Flanders
jflanders@midcoastbankonline.com

The Sun

A publication of Autism Delaware

Editorial committee: Carla Koss

Liz Carlisle	Cory Gilden
Dafne Carnright	Heidi Mizell
Annalisa Ekblad	Jen Nardo

Autism Delaware™, POW&R™, Productive Opportunities for Work & Recreation™, and the Autism Delaware puzzle-piece logo are trademarks of Autism Delaware Inc.

On self-awareness and community resources

For those of you who have not yet heard the news, Teresa Avery stepped down as Autism Delaware's executive director as the summer issue of *The Sun* was being delivered. Having overseen this quarterly publication during her eight-year tenure, Teresa was proud of the in-depth issues we covered and how they could benefit individuals affected by autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and their families alike.

Personally, the summer issue resonated in me because it focused on times of uncertainty. If there's one thing I've learned in my 19 years as an administrator/supervisor of family programs and services, it's that all of us have struggled at one time or another. But we don't always learn from the experience and create new or better ways of providing support for future experiences.

A long-time advocate of self-awareness, I value knowing the function of a meltdown and its contribution to the helping process, and routinely share the need to improve our own understanding of its impact. We may believe that we have little time for simply observing our thoughts and actions, but being self-aware is

crucial, especially during times of high stress. Our own actions and behaviors are part of a web that functions formally and informally in our lives, and affects not only ourselves but also those in the environment around us. So I am asking you to explore and learn what it means to be self-aware. The better we are in tune with our emotions and reactions, the more efficient and effective we can be in providing the appropriate level of support in difficult times.

We may commit to taking better care of ourselves, but we often struggle to make it happen. So if you need help or a community resource, please reach out to a friend, mentor, spouse, service provider, or us at Autism Delaware. We don't always have the answer in-house, but we do have knowledgeable, dedicated individuals who have gathered resources that include contact information for all types of community resources and services.



Brian Hall
Executive Director

Continued at bottom of p. 3

A service of Autism Delaware



Katina Demetriou, director
katina.demetriou@delautism.org
Bus: 302.224.6020 Ext. 202 **Cell:** 302.824.2252

Melissa Martin, assistant director
melissa.martin@delautism.org
Bus: 302.644.3410 **Cell:** 302.824.9710

Kim Rosebaum, vocational administrative assistant
kim.rosebaum@delautism.org
Bus: 302.224.6020 Ext. 214

Life skills training fills critical needs for parents Continued from p. 1

Registration for the fall session (which runs for 14 weeks starting in September) is closed, but Autism Delaware™ plans to offer the PEERS



program throughout the year. We encourage interested parents to contact us so that we can begin the intake process for the winter session.



Life skills training workshops

This winter, Autism Delaware will launch a statewide parent-training incentive program. It will feature hands-on workshops involving life skills training. One set of workshops delves more deeply into the strategies touched on in the Autism 101 Speaker Series and is geared for parents of children to age 14. The

second set of workshops focuses on transition and is geared for the parents of youth aged 14 and older.

Both sets of workshops are designed to have as broad a reach as possible in the autism community. Available in English and Spanish, the workshops are free. And free child care will be available with a refundable deposit of \$20.

As an added incentive, workshop participants can earn points for each training that they participate in. These points can be redeemed for rewards, such as Autism Delaware merchandise, tickets to events, gift cards, and so on.

More information about the workshops will be posted on AutismDelaware.org.

Outside the Box Annual Conference

This annual event, which Autism Delaware is sponsoring with a number of other organizations, is a special opportunity for families of children with ASD to learn alongside parents of children who are hearing or visually impaired.

Scheduled for October 6–7 at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel in Wilmington, the two-day program focuses on the knowledge and skills that parents need to help their children in the areas of behavior, communication, vision, assistive technology, and more.

Autism Delaware will present a session on the SibshopSM model, a peer support group for the school-aged brothers and sisters of children with special needs. (For an explanation of the Sibshop model, see the article on page 6 in the October–December 2017 issue of *The Sun*.)

To register for the conference, visit eventbrite.com, and search for Outside the Box Annual Conference in Wilmington, Del.

**Outside the Box Annual Conference
Before you register!**

Anyone interested in an Autism Delaware conference stipend or child care scholarship should apply before registering.

Applications are available at AutismDelaware.org/About/Scholarships.

For questions, phone or email Autism Delaware's policy and family services director, **Annalisa Ekbladh:**

Phone
(302) 224-6020, ext. 218

Email
Annalisa.Ekbladh@delautism.org

On self-awareness and community resources Continued from p. 2

Sometimes, the help you need is closer than you think.

Meanwhile, in this issue of *The Sun*, the cover story offers some of Autism Delaware's life skills training needed by individuals with ASD so they can become independent, contributing members of our community.

I think we all take deep breaths when we start thinking about independence for our daughters and sons. Every day, someone is discussing, planning, or concerned about someone in his or her life having the skills needed

for some version of independence. At Autism Delaware, our mission is to help people and families affected by autism, and we will continue to support ways of helping individuals and families learn strategies for reaching their desired outcomes. As Autism Delaware's new executive director, I will ensure that we remain advocates for individuals, children, and families.

Shakespeare and showering: Skills for high school

This partial reprint is reproduced with permission of Kennedy Krieger Institute, Baltimore, Md.

The entire article is entitled *Daily Living Skills: A Key to Independence for People with Autism* (© 2007–2018 Kennedy Krieger Institute) and appeared originally at <https://iancommunity.org/ssc/autism-adaptive-skills>.

Tom Hays, PhD, educational director of a private high school, said parents are surprised when he says that adaptive skills are more important than some basic high school information, such as Shakespeare or the Krebs Cycle. Dr. Hays works at Franklin Academy, a day and boarding school for students with autism spectrum disorder [ASD] and nonverbal learning disability school in East Haddam, Conn. Franklin includes instruction in adaptive and social skills, along with the typical college preparatory courses.

“We teach the skills you have to have to get along with others, take care of yourself, and self-advocacy,” Dr. Hays said. Instruction may range from daily living skills, such as personal hygiene, to more complex dating and relationship skills, he said.

“I have kids with a 145 IQ who walk into my classroom, and they stink,” he said. They may think taking a shower means standing under a stream of water for a few seconds and nothing more, he said. Fortunately, Franklin has a curriculum that teaches how they should bathe by breaking it down into concrete steps, such as how to use soap and how long to stand under the water.

“For our population, you have to do really explicit teaching,” Dr. Hays said. One cannot assume that children on the spectrum “will pick up a skill by osmosis or will be able to imitate the skill after watching someone once. What we find is that with more nuanced and sophisticated skills, students have to be taught very explicitly and sequentially how to perform the skill.”

Franklin even includes instruction on the complexities of social and relationship skills. “Dat-

ing is a big issue for our kids. They are clueless when it comes to dating: What does it mean to be in a relationship? What are the norms or conventions in terms of social expectations? We have to explicitly teach those skills.” ...

What you may not learn in high school

There are certain skills that these kids are not given through the high school, and it’s difficult to transition from high school to independent living with this huge section of training missing.

Jennifer Cuff understands the need to teach and provide opportunities for practicing adaptive skills. She is both the mother of a daughter with Asperger’s syndrome [now known as autism spectrum disorder] and also an adult service coordinator for a disability-services agency in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho.

“There are certain skills that these kids are not given through the high school, and it’s difficult to transition from high school to independent living with this huge section of training missing,” said Mrs. Cuff, a member of the Simons Simplex Collection autism research project.

Like many parents, she taught her daughter, Elizabeth, 20, skills such as clipping coupons, shopping, preparing meals, taking the bus to work, and taking care of the family cat. She wanted to give her daughter a chance to practice those skills without constant supervision. So she left Liz home alone for a week while the rest of the family moved into a recreational vehicle parked just 15 minutes away. Liz’s grandmother lives around the corner, so a relative could reach [Liz] quickly if a problem arose. But none did. Mrs. Cuff checked on Liz during the week, and she was fine.

Ultimately, when one assesses the so-called “functioning level” of a person with autism, his or her adaptive skills may be far more important than his [or her] academic achievements. [Autism expert] Dr. Peter Gerhardt said he has had clients with above average IQs who “spend all day in their parents’ basements playing video games,” don’t bathe, and don’t interact with others. He also has had clients with intellectual disability who have jobs in the community. “In that scenario, the guy with the lower IQ is the higher functioning guy,” he said.

That is why he emphasizes the importance of teaching adaptive skills to everyone with ASD.



Clip Art

Executive function skills can be taught

The term “executive function” (or EF, for short) is used to describe a set of mental processes that help a person to plan, problem-solve, organize, pay attention, and remember details. Well-developed EF skills help us to be mentally flexible and to stay emotionally level, even when things don’t go exactly as planned.

I define the key EF skills with Carol Burmeister, MA, in our book *FLIPP the Switch* (Autism Asperger Publishing Company, 2015). An acronym, FLIPP stands for

- flexibility,
- leveled emotionality,
- impulse control,
- planning and organizing, and
- problem-solving.

Although these five skill areas can be challenging for many children, you can use specific strategies to help your child build strong EF skills. In turn, these skills will enable your child to experience more success in school, at home, in the community, and in adult life.

In the book, we give clear instructions and provide templates for 25 strategies that you can use to help your child build important EF skills. Sometimes, strategies involve changing the environment to provide more support for your child, whereas other strategies help your child think about his thinking.

One available strategy that will help your child be more mentally flexible is the SOARR strategy. Another acronym, SOARR stands for Specify, Observe, Analyze, Respond, and Reflect. Each word is associated with a set of questions for your child to answer to help him or her understand what will happen in a new situation:

Specify: What do we already know about [name the event, location, or context]?

Observe: What do people usually do at [name the event, location, or context]?

Analyze: What do I need to do to fit in?

Respond: What should I do? How will I know if I am doing

the right thing? What can I look for?

Reflect: What went well? What did I learn? What can I do differently next time?

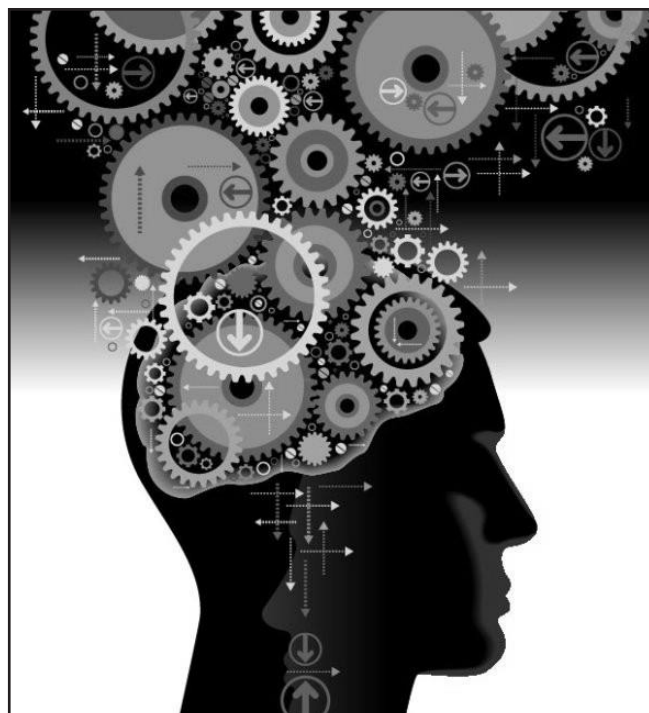
Here’s an example of how to use the SOARR strategy: If your family is going to a new restaurant, ask the SOARR set of questions to find out what your child expects to happen. Write down the answers so that they can be reviewed, if needed, before going to the restaurant.

Once you are at the restaurant, discuss what was expected and how it compares to what is actually happening. At the end of the visit, review the Observe, Analyze, and Respond parts of the strategy, and discuss the Reflect piece. Focus on your child’s learning of new skills to be applied in the future.

Although EF skills may not come naturally to your child, you can do a lot to strengthen his or

her skills by using specific strategies that provide EF support. The SOARR strategy may benefit your child because it provides opportunities to think about new situations in advance of experiencing them. The SOARR strategy also teaches your child to look for cues. With practice, the SOARR strategy can be a valuable skill to have when navigating life independently and can help adults in a variety of situations.

Sun contributor Sheri A. Wilkins, PhD, coauthored FLIPP the Switch: Powerful Strategies to Strengthen Executive Function Skills, a practical book written for parents and educators by parents and educators.



PARENT PARENT

Written by parents
for parents

Teaching life skills at home

Here, two Delaware parents share how they teach household chores to their children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Cory Gilden's son Casey earns extra money by helping with larger tasks. And on page 7, read how Karen Mackie's son Jacob relies on a revised portable schedule to plan his day's activities.



Ten-year-old Casey Gilden places his cereal bowl in the sink to be washed.

We are so busy carting our children with ASD to therapies, doctor appointments, school meetings, and more, that it's easy to forget that some of the most important learning happens in the home. There, our children can practice the life skills needed to build independence.

When teaching household duties to our son Casey, my husband

and I use the same strategies as when teaching any other skill:

- Start low, and go slow.
- Keep expectations reasonable.
- Make the activity rewarding.
- Be consistent in the implementation of procedures.

When Casey was five years old, we created a chore chart that was a simple grid decorated with his favorite characters. We started with two simple tasks we knew he could accomplish on his own: putting his dirty clothes in the laundry hamper at the end of the day and getting his own bath towel. The goal was to help Casey gain confidence while getting familiar with the chart.

At first, I had to remind him to use the chore chart, but pretty soon he took pride in remembering to check off the chores he'd done. We gave him tons

of praise for being so responsible, which was a big motivator.

When an activity became a habit that Casey did without checking his chore chart, we replaced that task with a new one.

Casey is 10 years old now and is responsible for both personal chores (such as clearing his dinner plate from the table and plugging in his iPad) as well as household chores (such as washing laundry and dusting shelves).

In exchange for helping the household run smoothly, he gets a weekly allowance. Occasionally, he does larger tasks to earn extra money, such as cleaning the baseboards and helping to clean the outside stairs. I look forward to having him take over more chores when he is developmentally ready. These tasks will probably include washing the dishes, taking out the trash, and cleaning the bathroom. I can't wait for that one!

To find a range of methods for teaching your child how to do household chores, I suggest going online or to a bookstore. Look for a method with suggested ages for developmentally appropriate tasks. For kids with autism, you may need to adjust your expectations and support, and some chores may not be possible or relevant.

You may also need to revise your reward system to one that rewards more frequently or whose rewards are more motivating. In the end, the extra effort is worth it because our kids will develop useful skills and gain confidence and pride in themselves as they become more capable and independent.

—Cory Gilden

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.

Written by parents
for parents

PARENT 2 PARENT

Two pieces of advice have been essential in my son Jacob's progress to become as independent as possible. The first came from Steven E. Lindauer, PhD, the director of the Pediatric Developmental Disabilities Clinic at the Kennedy Krieger Institute: "Expect the same thing from both of your children. [Mackie has another child who's neurotypical.] Even though Jacob has autism, children with autism do grow up and will become adults."

The second piece of advice came from Gary S. Allison, MEd, EdD, assistant professor of special education at the University of Delaware's School of Education: "Always be planning for five, ten years down the road. If you are teaching a skill when it's needed, you are late."

These pieces of advice have been directing Jacob's roadmap to independence. He may never be able to live by himself, but he can still be independent.

My husband and I started teaching Jacob how to do chores that had clear endings, such as feeding the pets, putting seed and peanuts out for the birds and squirrels, folding towels, taking out the trash, and plugging in his AAC (augmentative and alternative communication) device. Since then, we have learned that what we teach needs to motivate Jacob, be functional, and produce immediate results. Jacob also needs to be able to relate to it. Most importantly, what we teach has to be useful in his adult life and make him less dependent on other adults.

Our first step was to find motivators besides motion and sensory activities, electronic games, the computer, TV, and food, because these could not deliver the reinforcement needed to impact Jacob. This issue plus Jacob's lack of communication skills steered us to the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) and Pyramid's token economy system. These tools not only motivated Jacob but also gave him a sense of control during intense learning sessions.

At his ABA (applied behavior analysis) sessions, Jacob was taught how to use a wall schedule to organize his day. This tool gave him receptive language, which is the ability to understand information.

Over the years, Jacob's wall schedule has decreased in size to a portable three-inch binder. His revision of Pyramid's token economy system has also evolved

and is now used in combination with his portable binder to schedule every part of his life. We have relied on this system to teach basic skills (such as what a bathroom is and what we do in it). And it guides and reinforces Jacob as he completes his daily living skills and household responsibilities and enjoys leisure activities. We expect this tool to eventually become Jacob's daily planner in which he will independently create, manipulate, and plan his own activities.

When first tackling household chores, we took baby steps. First, we chose a task that everyone shared equally, such as clearing the table after dinner. Everyone also collaborates in cleaning the kitchen, so our family modeled this behavior for Jacob. Each step of the task was represented by an icon on his portable schedule; each completed task earned a token.

Teaching a new skill begins with creating specific icons for each step of the task and then guiding Jacob through each step. As Jacob learns the skill, we replace the specific task icons with a generalized icon.

We slowly expanded his workload by combining activities for one icon while adding other responsibilities to the schedule. This step created greater expectation for each icon. Initially, each schedule was used to complete one task, but as Jacob learned the new task, each step was strung together with the next. Eventually, the task was condensed into one icon on a schedule.

For example, Jacob's first morning schedule consisted of five tasks—brush teeth, shave, shower, brush hair, and get dressed—followed by a 10-minute break to reinforce the positive behavior. His morning routine also contained other responsibilities. At first, we had to create three separate schedules to complete all of Jacob's morning tasks. As a result, Jacob's morning routine took 1 1/2 hours. But over



Seventeen-year-old Jacob Mackie folds freshly laundered towels.

Continued at the bottom of p. 9

Learning to get around on your own

Sun contributor Reese Eskridge drives himself to and from work as a food science technician at United Cocoa Processor in Newark five days a week.

When I started thinking about how I was going to get around on my own in my life, I considered this interesting fact: Not driving inhibits the ability to go from place to place. People who don't drive miss developmental, educational, and recreational activities outside the home and school. Developmental gaps can result as well as the loss of self-confidence in the long term. Plus, it's inconvenient when I cannot get where I want to go and arrive when I want to arrive. And being able to do this is what it means to be independent, doesn't it?

The following seven-step method helped me tackle some of the most pressing issues facing drivers on the autism spectrum.

Step 1: Decide how you are going to get around.

For many people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), driving is a major challenge with many risks involving basic decision-making and interpreting nonverbal cues. Every moment behind the wheel can impact the quality of an autistic person's life and ability to reach a destination.

I began by asking this question: "Am I ready to tackle driving?" The best thing to do is to ask insightful questions like this. There are plenty of other questions to ask as well. Many have to do with life skills that can be learned.

If you decide you are not ready to drive, consider the other possible modes of transportation and experiment with them. Ask yourself if the mode of transportation does its job well. Or does your bus driver have a disrespectful attitude? Is the taxi driver notorious for tardiness and losing his way? If your driver is a friend or family member, does he or she tend to get distracted?

Try a different means of transportation until you find one that is right for you. Use this as your default mode of transportation.

If you have decided to learn how to drive, read on!

Step 2: Overcome your fear.

Did you realize that self-imposed restrictions limit your independence? And refusing to practice a life skill actually fosters anxiety because every time



you dwell on what's unfamiliar, you become more nervous. In turn, you'll avoid the driving practice necessary to expand your previously learned skills and current knowledge.

To face your fear, try this five-step approach:

Step 1—Acknowledge the fear.

Step 2—Use critical thinking by asking "Why?" five times to get down to the root dilemma.

Step 3—Break the dilemma down into simple parts, and devote time to addressing the possibilities related to each part.

Step 4—Visualize what you want to accomplish, and use it to break the barriers caused by your fear.

Step 5—Make a habit of breaking these barriers—and the fear will disappear.

Step 3: Assess and build your skills.

Know that driving is a privilege that you must earn. Determine all of the skills you need, from tackling a wide variety of driving situations to taking the road test. Then, assess your ability to handle these situations by looking at your skills in challenging activities that do not require driving.

Note your strengths and weaknesses. Acknowledge your strong points, and establish the relationships you need to turn your weaknesses into strong points. Plan, implement, evaluate, and modify your strategies for strengthening your skills.

Maintain your skills through consistent and diverse driving sessions.

Continued at the top of p. 9

Learning to get around on your own Continued from p. 8

Step 4: Learn by observing.

Watch driving videos that tackle a driving situation from multiple viewpoints. Be sure to account for the emotional experiences of the driver and what is most likely to occur as a result.

Ride with another driver, and observe as many facets of the driver's experience as possible. Focus on one facet at a time. Repeat sessions when necessary.

Then, ask a driver to let you drive to test your abilities. Strengthen what were once weak points in your driving through repetition. Gradually look for more of your

weak points and address each of them.

Step 5: Know the rules of the road.

Understand the rules that apply to driving, and follow them. Constantly ask yourself "What is the best thing to do in this instance to keep myself and others safe?"

Step 6: Learn the language of the road.

Learn the common nonverbal cues. For example, what does it mean when a driver flashes the vehicle's lights? Or when someone waves at you, are you

being given the right of way? If you understand what these cues may mean, you will know how to respond responsibly.

Step 7: Celebrate the milestones.

The act of driving means independence to me: I go to the gym by myself, visit friends on game night, work to earn that sweet paycheck every month, and drive to the beach for a day of relaxation.

When you get your driver's license, acknowledge that you made a life-changing decision and that this deserves celebrating.

Is your teen ready to get behind the wheel?

"A third of teens who have autism without intellectual disability earn a driver's license," notes a study provided by the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development at the National Institutes of Health.

For more information on this study as well as some insights into concerns around safety and independence, visit <https://www.autismspeaks.org/blog/2017/04/12/one-three-teens-autism-earns-drivers-license>.



PARENT  PARENT

Written by parents for parents

Teaching life skills at home Continued from p. 7

time, my son's morning routine condensed into only 45 minutes. Jacob now completes 15 tasks, which are represented on his one schedule as "bathroom, bedroom, medicine, animal, and breakfast."

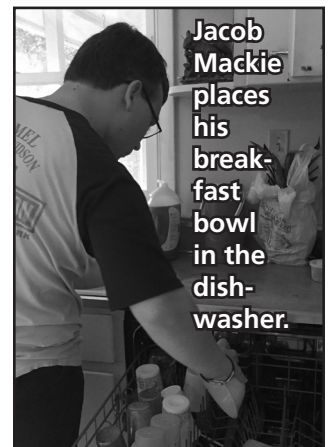
In the future, my husband and I want Jacob to learn abstract concepts, such as time management and self-determination, but first, he needs to learn how he can impact his world and what his capabilities are as well as discover his choices for himself.

My husband and I believe that these goals are achievable through household chores because they help Jacob take care of his belongings and his environment.

Today, Jacob is learning to plan his own day by operating his portable schedule himself. To this end, we place two icons on his portable schedule. Each icon represents

a task he must complete and may include current goals, new skills, or tasks that must be accomplished in a timely manner, such as getting to a doctor's appointment on time.

We also give Jacob a choice of what else he would like to add to his schedule. He chooses from his lists of chores and leisure activities. This process allows him more control over his day and begins to teach him time management. Both pieces are necessary for developing self-determination.



—Karen Mackie

INSIDE Autism[™] Delaware

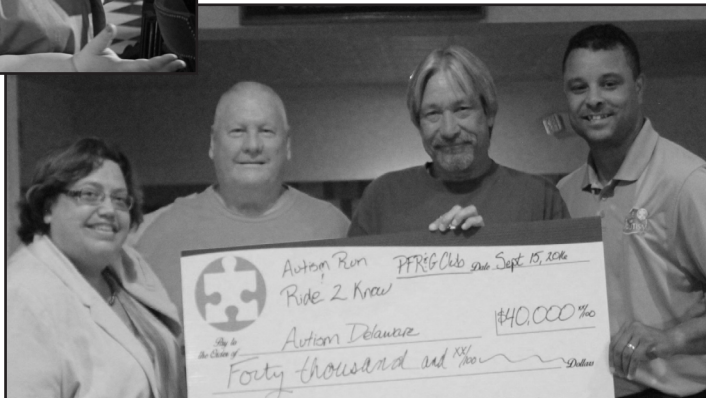
With a legacy of continued growth and innovation



On July 12, 2018, Teresa Avery departed Autism Delaware, having served as the agency's second executive director (ED) over its 20-year history. When Avery joined the agency in 2010, there were 26 staff members; today, Autism Delaware has nearly 100 staff members in three statewide offices. Avery oversaw a period of continuing growth for the agency, both in terms of size and impact. Her eight years at the helm included the addition of more family

support opportunities; the passage of important Delaware legislation related to autism; the creation of critical, multi-agency collaborations to help further supports for individuals and families; and significant growth in Autism Delaware's vocational services (called Productive Opportunities for Work and Recreation, or POW&R, for short). Teresa leaves the organization in a strong

position for growth with a solid strategic plan, a talented and dedicated leadership team, and a future of continued innovation in services for individuals and families affected by autism.



Hall primed for ED role

Brian Hall knows that he has big shoes to fill as he follows Teresa Avery in the role of executive director (ED). "I also know," says Hall, "that the passion and commitment of the Autism Delaware staff, coupled with the dedication of our families and the professionals who serve them, will provide the support and energy I need to lead the agency into the future."

"Teamwork" is the watchword for Hall's approach to leadership: "All of us who work in the autism community are in this work together. We are driven by the same mission—helping people and families affected by autism spectrum disorder. To this end, we at Autism Delaware create and promote opportunities for individuals and families to live more inclusive lives," explains Hall.

When Hall joined Autism Delaware in 2012 as associate executive director, he came with many years of experience directing residential and day treatment programs for children with moderate to severe behavioral problems. He brought

this experience to bear as he assumed oversight of Autism Delaware's programs and services during a critical period of expansion. As executive director, he will continue this oversight along with executive-level management of Autism Delaware.

Please join us in welcoming Brian Hall to his new position.

Autism Delaware executive director Brian Hall is available for your comments and questions.

Contact info:
(302) 224-6020, ext. 222

Brian.Hall@delautism.org

Young rejoins staff

Sarah Young has accepted the newly created position of policy and program coordinator for Autism Delaware. Young was formerly employed as a direct support professional in the agency’s POW&R program. (An acronym for Productive Opportunities for Work and Recreation, POW&R offers adult employment and community resources for adults on the autism spectrum.) Now working with Autism Delaware policy and family services director Annalisa Ekbladh, Young divides her time between the agency’s public policy and community outreach effort and its ever-expanding programs and services.

On the public policy and community outreach side of her work, Young continues to expand the agency’s statewide advocacy effort on behalf of Delawareans affected by autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and their families. Her goal is to expand and maintain our grassroots effort by involving more autism advocates statewide. “This group provides a voice for families advocating on behalf of their loved ones with autism,” notes Young.

If you are interested in becoming an autism advocate, Young will supply you

with information, training, and support.

On the programs and services side, Young coordinates the agency’s family services program, which includes support groups, respite opportunities, and social recreation. This winter, she will be reaching out to program participants statewide to find out which programs and services currently work for them, what new program or service they would like to see, and what new program and service they would like to take part in. She will also be looking for volunteers to support this expansion effort.



Contact info:
(302) 224-6020
ext. 204
Sarah.Young
@delautism.org

What is Autism Delaware?

Autism Delaware is a not-for-profit agency that’s made up of individuals with autism spectrum disorder (or ASD, for short) and their family members, friends, and the professionals who serve them. Because we are a nonprofit organization, we rely on volunteers to support staff and on donations and fundraisers to help us meet our mission: Helping people and families affected by ASD.

Did you know?

A tax-deductible donation can be made to Autism Delaware through the United Way of Delaware. Simply enter the code on the United Way form!

For the United Way in	the code is
Delaware	9234
SE Pennsylvania	12598

This year, Autism Delaware celebrates 20 years since its founding. Our employees and volunteers continue their year-round work maintaining and expanding the range of programs and services needed statewide. These programs and services include advocacy and awareness as well as a family services program that offers one-on-one family navigation for the English- and Spanish-speaking communities, parent education, support groups, respite opportunities, and social recreation.

Autism Delaware also works to maintain and expand a nationally recognized effective program for adult employment. Celebrating its tenth year, Productive Opportunities for Work and Recreation (POW&R) offers community-based vocational services and competitive, supported, and self-employment plus social and wellness activities.

For more information, please visit AutismDelaware.org.





924 Old Harmony Rd.
Suite 201
Newark DE 19713

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #317
Newark DE

Return service requested



Helping People and Families Affected by Autism

Todd Muñoz combined his love of dance and his love for his brother with autism to create DelAWAREness. The dance showcase raised \$40,000 in its third year of support for Autism Delaware's programs and services.

Do you have an idea for creating your own fun fundraiser?

Would you like help coming up with an idea as well as help making it work?

We can help!

Call Autism Delaware's development team:
(302) 224-6020



Left to right are Autism Delaware development director David Woods and Beat Addikts co-owner Todd Muñoz.

AutismDelaware.org