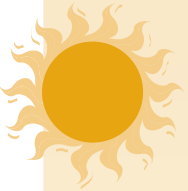


Upcoming family programs

- Fall fest
- Halloween train
- Holiday party
 - Milford
 - Newark
- Caring Santa
 - Milford
 - Newark

For other fun activities, such as roller skating, movies, and bounce nights, visit AutismDelaware.org/Events.



Our mission

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

The Sun

Newsletter

Autumn 2019

Introducing Parent to Parent

A new autism training series by parents for parents

Sun contributor
Liz Carlisle is a professional writer-editor as well as the current executive assistant to Autism Delaware's executive director and the agency's PR liaison.

They say experience is the best teacher. So who better to coach parents raising children on the autism spectrum than parents who have "been there" and can share their direct experience?

This is the premise behind Autism Delaware's Parent-to-Parent training program. The five-week series calls upon parent-coaches with on-the-ground experience to share their knowledge and wisdom with other families.

During each two-hour session, participants will learn about strategies, supports, and resources available to them and their children. The goal is to empower parents with a deeper understanding of

autism and create an environment that fosters success for their children.

Starting below is an overview of the program.

Week 1: Understanding ASD

Parents will gain an understanding of three core areas affected by autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and how these areas impact a child's ability to communicate, self-regulate, and learn. The session includes materials from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that explain the signs of ASD along with the uniqueness of each child's symptoms and how ASD impacts their abilities.

Parents will also learn to gauge their children's developmental milestones by comparing them with the milestones of a neurotypical child.

Week 2: Communication

Communication challenges individuals with ASD in ways as unique as their autism. This session includes a discussion of the various forms of communication (verbal and nonverbal) and how best to support a child as his or her ability to communicate develops.

On page 4 in this newsletter, parent-mentor Karen Mackie addresses the most common communication challenges facing children with ASD. Mackie is also an Autism Delaware family support provider in Kent

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Full circle

When a small group of parents first gathered around a kitchen table in a Delaware home in 1998, they shared their stories of frustration and spoke of hope for their children affected by autism. Since that evening, this group has grown with the ever-expanding prevalence rate of autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

These parents set the foundation for a grassroots organization focused on advocacy and support. Today, Autism Delaware reaches an average of 300 families a month. Some of their frustrations and hopes are addressed by Autism Delaware's programs and services, but some family issues are beyond the scope of our services. In these cases, we rely heavily on our relationships in the community to develop an extensive directory of community-based service providers.

This directory was developed by our families through trial and error. When a family has benefited from working with a group and shared it with us, we look for more success stories before we add the provider to our resource directory.

Why? Because we know everyone does not have the same experience with a provider. Also, we know families and individuals are working successfully with other providers. Ultimately, we feel comfortable enough to share our list of resources

with our families.

Like that first gathering more than 20 years ago, we are still meeting over coffee and cookies, wine and cheese, on a golf course, or in a local restaurant or park. These gatherings have led to

- an advocacy program that finds the ears of elected officials in the Delaware General Assembly,
- a unique adult service model that focuses on individual needs, interests, and outcomes through day-habilitation, social and wellness activities, and personalized supportive living services as well as community-based vocational services,
- an awareness program that provides a range of resources, social media, and a website and newsletter filled with crucial information for families, and
- a new innovative and sustainable way of improving care coordination within our family support program.

Continued in column 1 on p. 8



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A service of Autism Delaware



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Introducing Parent to Parent Continued from p. 1

County and a dedicated volunteer and contributor to *The Sun* as well as the parent of a child with ASD.

Week 3: Visual supports

Visual supports promote communication and independence among people with autism who tend to be visual learners. Families will learn how to use these tools at home and in the community, and will leave this session with a personalized communication plan to try at home.

On page 5 in this newsletter is an overview of visual supports by Kellene Copeland. A coach with the Delaware Network for Excellence in Autism (DNEA), Copeland is part of the statewide effort to provide training and technical assistance to the Delaware professionals who serve people on the autism spectrum.

Week 4: Visual supports in practice

Continuing to learn and experience the importance of visual supports, participants in week 4 will be taught how to use visual supports to teach difficult concepts to grasp, such as “wait” and “help,” as well as how to ask for a break. Parents will also learn about autism consultant Carol Gray’s strategy for using social stories to explain a given situation and how a child can benefit. Gray’s evidence-based practices are used worldwide with people on the spectrum of all ages. For more information, visit <https://carolgraysocialstories.com>.

Completing the sessions on visual supports will be a lesson on how to use a countdown timer. This visual support not only structures the passing of time but also promotes a successful transition.

On page 6, Karen Mackie describes how her family used visual supports to help her son with ASD to communicate more appropriately and enjoy his life more.

Week 5: Positive advocacy

Having a child with special needs often means parents need to learn a whole new language. This session will teach how to be an effective communicator and form a positive team of professionals around you and your child. The topic will cover special-education law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), an individualized education program (IEP) versus a 504 plan, and how they all benefit children with ASD.

On page 7 in this newsletter, Virginia Sticinski explores the language of the pros. Sticinski is an instructor at Delaware Technical Community College in Stanton as well as a parent-mentor.

Registration fee: \$25

Parent to Parent training is offered twice a year at the Autism Delaware™ offices and within several school districts.

The registration fee covers materials and refreshments for all five sessions.

Visit our events calendar for dates plus a link to register.

For more information

Contact Autism Delaware’s family services director, Annalisa Ekbladh:

- Annalisa.Ekbladh@delautism.org
- (302) 224-6020, ext. 218

What is the difference between PECS and visual supports?

PECS (pronounced “pex”) is an acronym for Picture Exchange Communication System. An alternative or augmentative communication system used widely by individuals who are nonverbal with developing verbal skills, PECS uses pictures in a very specific manner and requires extensive training to put into practical effect. The primary goal of PECS is to teach functional communication, so an individual uses PECS to communicate with other people. PECS becomes the individual’s voice.

In contrast, a visual support is us communicating with an individual. A visual support can be a photograph, drawing, object, written word, or list. It works as a way to communicate information to an individual. Visual schedules, timers, and reminders are common examples of a visual support used by an individual to structure an activity or situation.

At right is an example of a visual schedule.



Clip Art

Introducing Parent to Parent Communication

Communication is one of the developmental domains affected by autism spectrum disorder (ASD). In week 2 of the new training series by parents for parents, the discussion focuses on the various forms of communication, both verbal and nonverbal, and how best to support our children as their abilities to communicate develop.

Sun contributor Karen Mackie is a family support provider (FSP) in the Autism Delaware™ Kent County office and a longtime volunteer and contributor to this newsletter as well as the parent of a 17 year old on the autism spectrum.

Communication is the most complicated form of human behavior. It causes people to get what they want or need, to share, to forgive, to hope, and to love, which in turn creates partnerships, friendships, teams, crews and, best of all, family memories and moments.

On the other hand, communication also causes misunderstandings, arguments,

mistakes, frustration, noncompliance, meltdowns, and rejection of something or someone.

In other words, communication is more than just two people exchanging information. Communication is behavior. Because my son is nonverbal, his behavior tells me everything. It tells me when he is satisfied, sick, afraid, stressed, overwhelmed, happy, silly, sad, and—the worst of all—ready to have a meltdown and go into crisis. In a world where behavior controls everything, effective communication is the behavior I want most for my son.

This simple example shows how communication is behavior and how all behaviors are communication: Every day for 17 years, I have encountered a situation with my son where I have wondered what my son is thinking. Every day, I find myself saying to him “I wish I knew what was going on in your upstairs.”

His response is to cock his head, shake it while sticking out his tongue, and then saying “Eee.”

What is this communication between us? I believe it’s love.

How did I come to this conclusion? To begin, my statement is figurative and not literal; my son probably does not understand its meaning. His interpretation of my statement relies on 17 years of reading my body language, facial expression, my eyes, tone of voice, and my breathing. Over the years, he has come to understand that my statement is something his mom says while showing intense emotion toward him. Believe me, I have said this in every emotional state a mother with a child with autism can feel.

Unfortunately, intense emotion overwhelms and sometimes confuses him. He knows I need something because I am not happy which, besides sad, is the easiest emotion for him to understand. Over the years, I have come to understand that his confusion concerning intense emotion can be interpreted through his communication: his behaviors, body language, and sounds. When he sticks out his tongue and shakes his head, he’s trying to be silly. And when he says “Eee,” my son is expressing the need to tell me to “Be happy.” He knows the combination of his silly face and “Eee” will create my response, which is to laugh. And to my son, seeing someone smile and,

best of all, laugh is what “happy” means. And he knows this is a good thing.

By making me laugh, he has overcome his confusion. He changed mom’s behavior from one that confused him to one that gives him pleasure. He now is able to understand and connect with me. Our communication is meaningful. Communication is the meaningful exchange of behaviors between two people.



Karen Mackie and her son Jacob communicating love

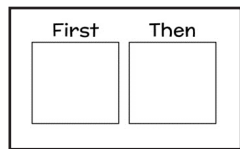
Introducing Parent to Parent Visual supports

In weeks 3 and 4 of the new training series by parents for parents, the discussion focuses on using visual supports at home and in the community and how these tools can promote independence for a family's loved one with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The following article provides a brief introduction to visual supports.

An evidence-based practice (EBP), visual supports use pictures, objects, and symbols in place of or paired with verbal communication to support the understanding of language. (An EBP combines research evidence, clinical expertise, and patient values to provide the most effective care available.)

The National Professional Development Center on ASD breaks visual supports into three categories:

Visual schedules provide information about events happening throughout the day. A visual schedule may use only two pictures, like a first-then board (for example, "First, wash hands. Then, eat"). Or the visual schedule may use pictures representing many activities (for example, a full day or more of activities). The length of each schedule and its format are based on the individual's needs and may include objects, pictures, or simple text.



Example of first-then board courtesy of <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com>

Using a visual schedule increases the individual's understanding of expectations and prepares him or her for an upcoming transition.

Visual cues may include choice boards (graphic organizers with squares representing each activity). A choice board can be personalized with options an individual may select from, written directions paired



Example of choice board courtesy of <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com>

with pictures or symbols, or labels used within the environment to show where items are stored.

Visual cues provide directions and information that increase the individual's understanding of expectations within the environment.

Visual boundaries use furniture and other materials in the environment to help an individual learn where the boundaries are and what is expected within these boundaries.

For example, a sheet can be used to cover a computer when it is not available, a carpet can teach where to play with toys, or colored tape on a table can show the individual where food can be eaten.



Example of sheet-covered computer courtesy of <https://www.iidc.indiana.edu>

In summary, visual supports are important tools for helping children and adults with ASD to navigate their daily lives and build independence.

For more information about visual supports and the Delaware Network for Excellence in Autism (DNEA), send an email of interest to dnea-info@udel.edu.

Sun contributor Kellene Copeland is a DNEA (Delaware Network for Excellence in Autism) coach at the University of Delaware's Center for Disabilities Studies.

For some parental advice

For some parental advice on visual supports, visit <https://autismawarenesscentre.com/visual-supports-best-way-use>. This blog is written by the mother of two adult children with ASD; Maureen Bennie is also the creator of the Autism Awareness Centre in Calgary, Alberta. Her goal is to address the gaps in information, resources, advocacy, and support for people with ASD.

Source

Sam, A, & AFIRM Team. *Visual supports*. Chapel Hill, NC: National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorder, FPG Child Development Center, University of North Carolina (2015). Retrieved from <http://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/visual-supports>.

PARENT PARENT

Written by parents
for parents

Understanding through visual supports

When my son Jacob started school, he could not understand what was expected of him. He was also unable to express his frustration and confusion, so he would swipe the materials off his desk, knock over chairs, hit, grab, throw things, bang his head, and elope (run away). These behaviors were his “communication system.”

To address these behaviors and help Jacob feel successful, our family turned to visual supports. The goal was to help Jacob understand how he fit into a new situation, predict what is going to happen, and how he should respond.

A great example of an effective visual support is the social story. Based on the work of autism consultant Carol Gray, the visual support helped Jacob with his anxiety and fear of new people, places, and events. I create a social story not only to explain a new situation to Jacob but also to help him see all the steps and support he will have, from what he needs to do to how the situation will end. We read the story before we leave home, and Jacob takes the story with him. We have made social stories for a trip to the YMCA and an amusement park as well as for bloodwork and dental appointments, xrays, and for wisdom teeth extraction.

To teach Jacob basic life skills, we use behavior cards. This visual support tells Jacob how to function in a classroom, at home, and in the community. Cards that depict waiting, taking turns, requesting a break, and getting help allowed us to teach these life skills to Jacob. Once Jacob learned these skills, his frustrated and confused behaviors were replaced with appropriate behavior.

When Jacob was younger, simple visual supports helped him to maintain focus and work through hours of therapy or a whole school day, to do simple tasks and to run routine errands (like grocery shopping).

As Jacob has gotten older and is spending more time in the community, safety has become a priority. But how do you teach expectations to someone going into an uncontrolled environment?

Some visual supports in the environment are designed to keep us safe, such as flashing red lights at an intersection. So, we have focused on identifying these visual supports before teaching a skill to Jacob. For example, look for the lines in a parking lot; they will show you where to walk so you’re not walking down the middle of a vehicle lane.

Visual schedules have been an essential piece for developing Jacob’s receptive language (in other words, the ability to understand language). A visual schedule pairs a picture and word to an activity, object, person, or event. A visual schedule can be made of objects, pictures, symbols, or words. It makes the spoken language real and visible, which is important to a visual learner like Jacob.

Because a visual schedule modifies the environment and guides Jacob through daily routine tasks, it allows for independence and creates motivation to get a job done. For completing an unpreferred activity, one of Jacob’s favorite activities is placed at the end of the schedule as a reward.

A variety of visual supports are combined with spoken, written, or symbolic language to make up a functional communication system. While the spoken, written, or symbolic language helps people express themselves, visual supports help an individual understand what is being said or expected.

Like a day planner to remind neurotypical people of each day’s tasks, Jacob’s calendar is a large part of his receptive language half of his functional communication system. It tells him the story of his day, week, month, year, and it can be manipulated and changed. It tells him who will be working with him, what appointments he needs to attend, what chores he must do, and what fun things are available. It turns abstract concepts (like “before,” “after,” “earlier,” and “later”) and makes them concrete by breaking down Jacob’s day into half-hour increments. Each half hour is designated with a task, appointment, errand, event, person, or chore.

Jacob’s stress about the unknown is relieved, and he’s happier and can focus on learning new tasks. His communication system has changed his environment from an incomprehensible mess into a logically structured system that Jacob can live in successfully.

Functional communication

is the way we relay our basic needs to others. Beginning with gestures in the first year of life, functional communication can expand to include abstract ideas—with adequate support.

For more information, contact Autism Delaware™ intake coordinator **Melanie Matusheski** at **(302) 224-6020, ext. 219.**

—Karen Mackie

Introducing Parent to Parent Positive advocacy

The parents of a recently diagnosed child quickly realize they must learn a whole new language filled with unfamiliar abbreviations. In week 5 of the Parent to Parent training series, this language is explained as well as the laws in place to help you and your child navigate the public school system successfully. The goal is to give parents the tools they need to become positive advocates for their children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Below is an introduction to this language according to two laws that forbid disability discrimination by any program or activity that receives federal funds, such as a public school.



The first and perhaps most widely known abbreviation is IDEA. Standing for the Individuals with Disabilities

Education Act, IDEA is a federal law that provides children with access to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). This piece of IDEA applies to children aged three and older.

First among IDEA's directives: Public schools must provide an individualized education program (IEP) to children with disabilities who are determined as eligible. With input from the student's parents, the educational professionals tailor the student's IEP to meet his or her needs. The IEP outlines a student's strengths and growth areas as well as attainable goals and objectives, usually within a specified time frame.

The IEP must be carried out in the traditional classroom environment if appropriate for the student. If it's not appropriate, then the school must provide the student's education in the least restrictive environment (LRE).

"When you negotiate with the school on your child's behalf, you increase the odds that your child will get an appropriate education," notes Wrightslaw.com, a website featuring accurate, up-to-date information about special-education law and advocacy. "But many parents describe the process of negotiating with the school as a frustrating, exhausting ordeal. Others describe IEP meetings as intimidating and overwhelming. If you feel this way, don't hesitate to take support to the IEP meeting" (<https://www.wrightslaw.com/nltr/15/nl.0505.htm>).

Autism Delaware™ offers IEP support. To make an appointment, call (302) 224-6020, and ask to speak to the intake coordinator.

once a child is determined as eligible. The parents join the child's specialists to define the child's specific needs and develop a written plan called an individualized family service plan (IFSP). The aim is to determine appropriate goals for the child and the best services suited to the family's needs. The IFSP also helps the family navigate the child's transition into preschool by assigning a family service coordinator. As a component of IDEA, the same rules apply for positive parental advocacy for an IFSP as for an IEP.

Another law that forbids disability discrimination is Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Like IDEA, Section 504 requires a school district to provide a FAPE to each student living in the school district who has an eligible disability. This federal law provides "regular or special education and related aids and services designed to meet the student's individual educational needs as adequately as the needs of nondisabled students are met" (<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html>).

Like an IEP, the written set of instructions details "specific strategies and practices that will be used to communicate to teachers what strategies and practices will be used to ensure that a student's learning needs are met." Called an individual accommodation plan (IAP), this plan details all the materials needed and explains all the modifications that are essential for the student's appropriate education (<https://www.verywellfamily.com/how-accommodation-plans-help-2161839>).

Unlike an IEP, "the federal regulations for Section 504 do not require or even mention that parents are to be a part of the decision-making committee,"

Sun contributor Virginia Sticinski is a social sciences instructor at Delaware Technical Community College, Stanton, as well as the parent of two young adults on the autism spectrum.

For newborns to three-year-old children diagnosed with a disability, IDEA provides for early intervention services

Continued in column 2 on p. 8

Full circle Continued from p. 2

Regarding the family support program’s work, I am pleased to introduce a newly revamped educational series, which is explained in the pages of this newsletter. The series connects the parents of children in transition with parents who have successfully navigated the disabilities systems in Delaware.

Why? Because the parent who has met the challenges of ASD is well versed in the various systems involving the care and support of children on the spectrum. Also, when this parent is able and willing to share his or her experience, a positive interaction is created with other parents. To enhance the skills of each parent-coach, Autism Delaware™ provides extensive training that can lead to national recognition as a certified parent support provider (CPSP).

The new family support program is called Parent to Parent. In this series, parent-coaches use their experience, heightened awareness, and in-depth knowledge to supply insight and the direction that many parents need. Parents who register for the series will gain emotional support as well as a deeper understanding of ASD. The program also teaches how to create a supportive environment that can lead to success for children on the autism spectrum.

Parent to Parent is possible because our parent-coaches share their time and hard-earned knowledge. And this effort to meet our mission has brought us full circle from our kitchen table beginning: We are answering the same questions that were asked 20-some years ago, soothing similar fears and frustrations, and supporting the same effort on behalf of a loved one with ASD; however, today we are able to partner with many more.

To me, our parent-coaches define our community.

Positive advocacy Continued from p. 7

notes GreatSchools.org, an Oakland, Calif.-based nonprofit that empowers parents by helping them to access educational opportunities for their children. “The decision to include parents in the decision-making committee is a determination that is made by each school district and should be spelled out in the district’s procedures for implementing Section 504. Parents should at least be asked and encouraged to contribute any information that they may have... that would be helpful to the Section 504 committee in making [its] determination of what the child may need. Schools are expected to make sound educational decisions as to what the child needs in order to receive an appropriate education” (<https://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/section-504-2>).

If the parents are frustrated by the school’s educational decisions and want to resolve the issue, Wrightslaw.com suggests that parents educate themselves about the Section 504 law. To this end, information and strategies can be found in the Wrightslaw.com article entitled *My Child with a 504 Plan is Failing, School Won’t Help: Your Eligibility Game Plan* at <https://www.wrightslaw.com/info/sec504.idea.eligibility.htm>.

Help us meet our mission

Autism Delaware relies on its volunteers. These individuals carve time out of their busy lives to help make a success of the agency’s community programs and events.

Why? Because their time and effort as volunteers help people and families affected by autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

Some volunteers support an Autism Delaware program up front, such as manning an information table during autism awareness month or working at the annual Walk for Autism.

And some volunteers prefer to work behind the scenes. These volunteers have an opportunity to lend a hand with a variety of projects. Examples



include tying ribbons and notes to the Smart Cookie Day goodies and assembling packets for the new Parent to Parent training.

For more information, contact Autism Delaware’s community engagement specialist, Louise Doe, at (302) 224-6020, ext. 215, or send an email to Louise.Doe@delautism.org.

Expanded family services

Autism Delaware’s family services team has expanded its range of support to now provide the autism care team (or ACT, for short) in addition to the agency’s long-standing family navigation service.

Family navigation is a one-on-one service offered to families affected by autism. It provides phone and in-person support to each family looking for information, referrals, and help with challenges.

Each family is assigned a staff member who possesses a deep understanding of the issues faced by families across Delaware. The staff helps the family learn about the critical resources and supports offered in the state. This individualized effort helps families gain understanding and assurance that they are not alone in their journey.

The autism care team is the most recent expansion of Autism Delaware’s family services. More comprehensive than family navigation, ACT provides a follow-along service in which a trained family support provider (FSP), who is also a parent, meets with the family for up to nine months.

The FSP helps families identify and coordinate the many services that are available to people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and their families. To this end, the FSP and the family work together to

- meet regularly in person or through video chat.
- help develop a plan, which includes needed services and supports, such as early intervention, therapies, specialty care, and respite care.
- help make informed decisions about services.
- make connections to parent education programs.
- offer follow-up according to need.
- coordinate care among providers and agencies.

Want more information about family navigation and ACT?

Call the Autism Delaware intake coordinator, Melanie Matusheski, at (302) 224-6020, ext. 219.



Grant supports outreach into Spanish-speaking community

Awarded a financial grant from the Arsht-Cannon Fund, Autism Delaware’s autism care team (known as ACT, for short) is expanding its outreach into the state’s northern and central Spanish-speaking communities. The ACT effort will work to close the gap in supports currently experienced by Spanish-speaking families affected by autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

According to Autism Delaware family services director Annalisa Ekbladh, “Spanish-speaking families tend to experience delays in accessing services because of significant barriers in language, immigration status, and other issues. Research has proven, the sooner support is given, the better the long-term outcome.”

Over the past two years, Autism Delaware has experienced a notable increase in the need for services in the Spanish-speaking community overall. The Arsht-Cannon grant will help Autism Delaware address this need through additional staff who are certified bilingual family support providers (FSPs). This

staff will provide a wide array of services through individual and group contact in a variety of settings.

“Our vision,” notes Autism Delaware executive director Brian Hall, “is about helping families acknowledge opportunities within their daily routines and living the life they desire. With the support of the Arsht-Cannon Foundation, more families will be supported in finding their voices and helping others create change in the community.”

The Arsht-Cannon Fund is an endowed fund at the Delaware Community Foundation since 2004. According to its website, “the fund was created to ‘preserve, support, protect, and defend the best interests of a civil society’” (<https://arshtcannonfund.org/about>).

Do you know a Spanish-speaking family affected by ASD that needs help?

Call Autism Delaware family navigator Ivanka Carbajal at (302) 224-6020, ext. 223.

INSIDE Autism[™] Delaware

Scholarships announced

In June, Autism Delaware’s scholarship committee announced the 2019 winners of the autism agency’s three scholarships:

The Autism Delaware Daniel and Lois Gray Memorial Scholarship, named for long-time autism advocates Daniel and Lois Gray, provides financial support for students who are enrolled or accepted for matriculation at the University of Delaware and who intend to become professionals in the field of autism in Delaware (such as teachers, psychologists, or speech pathologists).

The winners are Cory Gilden and Erica Tebbutt.

The Autism Delaware Adult with Autism Scholarship provides financial support for eligible adults on the spectrum who want to attend college or other post-secondary educational program.

The winners are Austin Archer and Quinn Boyd.

The Autism Delaware Autism Teacher Certification Scholarship provides financial support to teachers in Delaware’s public and charter schools who are working to get their autism certification.

The winner is Gangadeep Kaur.

All applications are competitive, and the number of available scholarships depends upon the amount of available funding as well as assessment by Autism Delaware’s scholarship review committee. The amount of awards given this year totals \$6,000.

For more information, visit AutismDelaware.org, and from the About menu, choose Scholarships.

SWAM across the state

In a new partnership with the YMCA of Delaware, Autism Delaware’s family support team has helped create a statewide swim program for children and adults with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

Called Swimming with Autism (or SWAM, for short), the program is currently available at the Brandywine, Walnut Street, Dover, and Sussex YMCAs.



Staff at the Brandywine YMCA noted a great response

to the program and were excited about expanding opportunities to all the Ys in Delaware.

SWAM’s goal is to make sure that all children can swim in the pool. Because some children with ASD tend to wander and are drawn to water, they need to learn water safety. Swim lessons are available for children with ASD, from 3 to 18 years of age.

For more information, call your local Delaware YMCA.

Congrats!

This summer, two members of Autism Delaware’s family support team met the national competencies and standards of practice in the field of family support to become certified parent support providers (CSPs).

Congratulations go out to Dafne Carnright (pictured at top), family service coordinator for Kent and Sussex Counties, and Heidi Mizell, resource coordinator for New Castle County.

“This is the highest national certification in the field,” notes Autism Delaware policy and family services director Annelisa Ekbladh, who is also a CSP.

“In recent years, these standards have been put in place to provide a higher quality of support for our families,” adds Ekbladh.



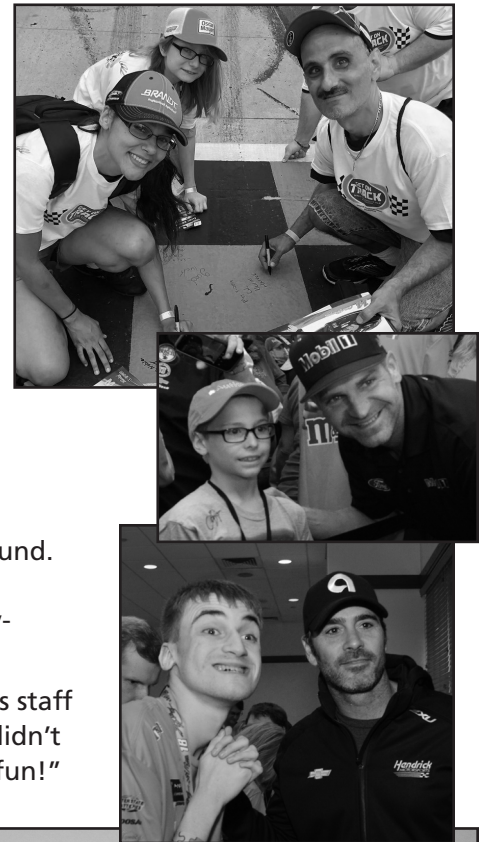
Community comes together at Dover fundraiser

A lot of hard work and long hours led to success at this year's Drive for Autism, Autism Delaware at the Races, and annual Track Walk at the Monster Mile in Dover. "With everything in," notes Autism Delaware's fund development and engagement manager, Deanna Principe, "we made \$295,000. I would like to thank each and every person for helping to support Autism Delaware this fundraising season."

"Fundraising events like these," adds Autism Delaware associate executive director Janet Berry, "are really community events that happen to raise money. At the event, I interacted with volunteers and participants in our adult employment program [Productive Opportunities for Work & Recreation, or POW&R, for short] and met our sponsors and potential sponsors. For this reason, I thanked everyone who came."

"The money we raised came through sponsorships," continues Berry. "It was possible only because we offer quality services that companies want to help fund. The highlight of the event was when two POW&R participants gave speeches about the services they have received that resulted in competitive community-based employment."

"In all of the weekend's events, I discovered just what an inspiring and selfless staff we have. Our staff canceled personal plans to work this fundraiser, but they didn't make it seem like work. They made it fun!"



Where does the money go?

If you donate to or fund-raise for Autism Delaware, the money supports the range of programs and services needed by individuals with autism across their lifespans.

Autism Delaware also offers family support services as well as vocational services, advocacy, and awareness, which includes the online resource guide, quarterly newsletter, group updates, and social media.

For details, visit AutismDelaware.org.



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Helping People and Families Affected by Autism

You spoke. We listened. We're going back to Bellevue!

The Wilmington leg of the 2020 Walk for Autism is moving back to Bellevue State Park.



New this year: It's on a Sunday—April 5!

The Lewes leg of the walk takes place in Cape Henlopen State Park—April 4!

Both legs
are on
the same
weekend!

**Now's the time to start putting
your team together.**

**To get started, visit AutismDelaware.org.
Click on Change the World, Fundraising
Events, and then Walk for Autism.**



AutismDelaware.org