

The Sun

Newsletter

Winter 2024

A new sun is rising!

The newsletter crew begins to illustrate Autism Delaware's new brand in this issue. Created during the agency's 25th anniversary in 2023, our new brand reflects a new horizon and new hope for those of us on the autism journey.

As a visual identity, our new brand no longer includes the puzzle piece because, for a segment of our community, it has become a distressing symbol of [ableism](#).

Also, our colors are now medium blue, dark blue, light green, and yellow, and our logo

resembles the rising sun of a new day.

Plus, our new typeface is Montserrat, which was chosen for its high readability and suitability

for both online and printed publications. You are reading Montserrat in this issue of *The Sun*. (If we were still using Frutiger, the text would look like this.)

Finally, the newsletter crew is creating a new format with the new color scheme and logo as well as the new typeface. The hoped-for distribution date is spring 2024.



Our mission

To help people and families affected by autism

The difference between a medical diagnosis and an educational classification and how a child could benefit from both

by Dafne Carrnight, LPCMH, BCBA

With both a medical diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and an educational classification of autism, the parents and caregivers of children with autism can access a range of much-needed support and services. Both evaluate a child's strengths and weaknesses, and both require an evaluation by trained professionals who know about ASD. The difference lies in who the trained professionals are and in what setting the evaluation is conducted. Where healthcare professionals use the criteria in the DSM-V to make a medical diagnosis, school professionals look at how a child's education is affected to determine an educational classification.

Because each child on the spectrum is unique, each medical diagnosis and each educational classification should lead to a personalized picture of the supports and services the child needs to learn, grow, and live a full life as an included and valued member of the community.



What is a medical diagnosis of ASD?

Since 2013, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) has referred to autism as "autism spectrum disorder." The APA's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5)*

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What is an educational classification of autism?

An educational classification of autism is the identification of autism through the public school system's process, and the educational classification is necessary in order for a student

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Advocacy 101

The benefits of the elevator speech

Also known as an elevator pitch, an "elevator speech" is a condensed description of an important topic. Instead of a long drawn-out explanation, you get to the point in only one to two minutes.

For example: You are passionate about increasing funding for direct support professionals (DSPs) because they need to earn a living wage. So, you take a trip to Leg Hall in Dover to explain the need to your state representative. The trouble is, your state rep has an unexpected meeting to attend and can give you only two minutes to make your case.

This situation can be frustrating, but this is life in the fast-paced world we live in. So, you've got to be prepared to give your elevator speech when needed.

Another example: Because I'm connected to Autism Delaware, a lot of people with an autistic loved one ask me *What does Autism Delaware do?*

Wow! How do I answer in a clear, concise, and engaging manner? I want to empty my heart to them since the agency means so much to me, but I may lose them after one or two minutes. So, I consider the points I want to make:

I get awestruck when I hear what our great staff does. Whether I'm hearing a report about first-time callers or the hundreds of questions answered by our family navigators, I think "Geez, that's

amazing, what you guys are doing" or "Holy cow! That's fantastic!"

All the families affected by autism are directed to our family support team that helps families navigate autism's complex systems.

Or the caller may be a grandparent. Our family support team also designed a support group especially for the grandparents of kids on the spectrum.

Or an autistic caller may be looking for supported employment and fun activities in the community, in which case the caller would be directed to our adult services program.

Maybe the caller doesn't have a loved one on the spectrum but wants to help with a much-needed donation. In this case, the caller gets to talk with our development team.

The list of Autism Delaware-provided programs and services goes on and on. So, you see my dilemma. *How do I give an elevator speech about all that?*

My answer: "Autism Delaware is a nonprofit that understands

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Rodger Pearce
President
Board of Directors

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What is a medical diagnosis of ASD? Continued from p. 1

describes specific criteria that are required for a medical diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. The main clusters of symptoms include social communication and social interaction challenges, and restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities. The DSM identifies that symptoms must also be present in early development. As a spectrum disorder, ASD is categorized by severity on a scale of one to three. Level 1 means the child requires support; level 2, the child requires substantial support; and level three, very substantial support. Although sometimes the levels are not discussed as much, typically a level of support is identified during the diagnostic process.



According to the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, “early diagnosis of and interventions for autism are more likely to have major long-term positive effects on symptoms and later skills.” With a medical diagnosis in hand, a child who’s three or younger can benefit from an early intervention program that will help strengthen physical, thinking, communication, social, and emotional skills (<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/autism/conditioninfo/treatments/early-intervention>). An early-intervention program may offer family training, speech language therapy, and/or behavioral support to help the child learn new skills. In turn, your child’s and your family’s quality of life will improve.

What would a child gain from a medical diagnosis of ASD?

The earlier a medical diagnosis is made, the better. “Research has found that ASD can sometimes be detected at 18 months or younger. By age 2, a diagnosis by an experienced professional can be considered very reliable.... The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that all children be screened for developmental delays and disabilities during regular well-child doctor visits at 9 months, 18 months, and 30 months.... It is important for doctors to screen all children for developmental delays, but especially to monitor those who are at a higher risk for developmental problems due to preterm birth, low birth weight, or having a sibling or parent with ASD” (<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/hcp-screening.html>).

Delaware’s early intervention program is called Birth to Three, or Child Development Watch (CDW). CDW provides evaluations, an individualized family service plan, and referrals to community services. All will help parents assist in their child’s development and help the child learn new skills.

What if the child is over 3 years old?

For babies and children of all ages, there are a myriad of clinical providers in the community that can help the child and family. From speech language therapy to behavioral therapy, parents can identify services and providers that meet their child’s needs and will help their child learn valuable new skills on this journey.

Autism Delaware can help

Our family support staff helps families not only understand autism, best practice, and evidence-based intervention, but also to learn about parental rights and how to navigate the state’s service systems. Our staff also helps parents grow their skills as advocates for their children.

For more info, call (302) 224-6020, ext. 219. Or send an email to referrals@autismdelaware.org.

What is an educational classification of autism? Continued from p. 1

to qualify for special educational services at school. Federal and state law requires schools to offer students a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) if they are eligible for special education. Since 1975, the federal Education for All Handicapped Children Act required FAPE for all students with disabilities from the age of 3 until they earn a high school diploma or by August 31 of the school year they turn 22. This act was enhanced over the years, and in 1990, its name was changed to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (or IDEA, for short).



An educational classification of autism can be assigned to a Delaware student who meets the criteria set out in our state’s educational code. And the student is eligible for this classification under the birth mandate (in other words, from birth until the student receives a high school diploma or reaches the age of 22).

In addition, IDEA mandates an individualized education program (or IEP) be created for each eligible student. The IEP creates a personalized description of the supports and services the child will receive in school. The program is designed to meet the child’s “unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living” (FAPE definition, DE Administrative code: <https://regulations.delaware.gov/AdminCode/title14/900/922.shtml#TopOfPage>).

How does a public school student become eligible for an educational classification?

The student must first be evaluated by the school

district. To begin the evaluation process, the child’s parent or caregiver must ask for an educational autism evaluation or the school may request to evaluate the child. If the family is requesting a school evaluation, Autism Delaware recommends that families put that request in writing. Written consent via the school’s official form, a “permission to evaluate” form, must also be signed by the parent or caregiver.

The evaluation process will include several school professionals, trained in completing

autism evaluations, meeting with the child and also sending surveys and questionnaires to the family to complete. Parents are an important, equal part of the evaluation process and IEP team, and family input is invaluable. All of the results and information from the evaluation process will be put together in a report, and an official meeting will be held to review and discuss the results and, as a team, determine if the child is eligible for special education. If the child is found eligible, then the IEP team, including the parents, creates the IEP plan.

What would a child gain from an educational classification?

With an educational classification in hand, the child is then eligible for special services and an IEP at school. Because each IEP is specifically designed to meet each student’s needs, it addresses all areas of the student’s education and identifies appropriate goals for the student. IEP meetings have a list of required participants, identified in our state’s educational administrative code. The team includes

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The parent of a young adult on the autism spectrum, Dafne Carrnight, LPCMH, BCBA, began her commitment to Autism Delaware’s mission as a volunteer in 2005. Then, in 2009, the nationally certified counselor with a master’s degree in clinical psychology accepted the position of Autism Delaware’s downstate coordinator. Today, Dafne is Autism Delaware’s director of family support services.

What is an educational classification of autism? Continued from p. 4

teachers, school psychologists, related services therapists like the school speech language pathologist or any others working with the child, and the parent and student. Parents can invite anyone else they want to invite to the IEP meetings.

“An IEP for a child with ASD,” notes WebMD.com, “might contain goals like the following:

- “Academic—The child will learn new skills, such as adding or subtracting.
- “Social—The child will develop appropriate play skills, such as interacting with classmates during group activities.
- “Behavioral—The child will acquire new coping mechanisms, such as asking for help, and replace inappropriate behaviors, such as yelling or hitting, with socially acceptable ones.
- “Motor—The child will work on ADL [activities of daily living] skills or handwriting to assist their academic progression” (<https://www.webmd.com/brain/autism/individualized-education-programs-ieps-for-autism>).

Autism Delaware family support services

Autism Care TeamSM (ACTSM) Program

Nothing replaces the connection between a parent with a recently diagnosed child (or new parent) and a parent with the experience, resources, help to offer, and the time to listen and be reassuring.

Our family support providers (FSPs) are the parents of children on the spectrum as well as trained and highly specialized professionals. This combination enables them to work one on one to support other parents. Our FSPs meet with families in person or through video chat at least monthly to

- provide an array of services and supports.
- coach families on identifying steps to make informed decisions about services.
- help families develop a personalized plan with goals.
- coach families on advocacy and how service systems work in our state.
- share resources and connect families to parent-education programs.
- coordinate care among providers and agencies.
- offer follow-up according to need.

Family navigation

In addition to the ACT Program, Autism Delaware offers family navigation services to families that have a specific question or challenge navigating a service system. Family navigators answer your questions and provide information and support as needed.

Could you or someone you know use Autism Delaware's family support services?

Our family support services team can help a family affected by autism through the processes for both a medical diagnosis and an educational classification. Not only can we help you understand the processes, but we can also help you prepare for meetings, learn more about your rights, and attend the meetings with you to offer support.

Call (302) 224-6020, ext. 219, or send an email to referrals@autismdelaware.org. Both will reach an Autism Delaware intake coordinator who will listen to your issue and help direct you to the appropriate person for help.

INSIDE AutismSM Delaware

2023 Walk for Autism

The forecasts were ominous: cold, rain, and wind for both Saturday, October 7, and Saturday, October 14—but the cold, rain, and wind stepped aside for both legs of Autism Delaware’s annual Walk for Autism.



Thank you!

To each and every individual who walked, formed a team, fundraised, volunteered, or sponsored this year’s Walk for Autism: Thank you so very much. Your generosity of time and effort on behalf of Autism Delaware’s programs and services is greatly appreciated.

More than 1,000 people registered to walk—the most in the past three years—and more than 150 teams registered.

Plus, more than 50 volunteers donated their time and expertise so that more of the funds raised could be allocated to much-needed programs and services.

Special thanks to the folks at Home Depot who not only came back as Walk volunteers but also brought Homer, the mascot, and workshop kits for kids.

Eminent speakers added to the occasion with notes of appreciation to all who participated:

- at Ft. DuPont in Delaware City—New Castle County Executive Matt Meyer, Delaware State Senator Nicole Poore, and Del. St. Representatives Valerie Longhurst, Melissa Minor-Brown, and Cyndie Romer
- at Hudson Fields in Milton—Del. St. Treasurer Colleen C. Davis and Del. St. Sen. Russell Huxtable

Then, this year’s grand marshals led the walkers past the starting line. Leading the Walk in Delaware City, Ben Bashkow holds the distinction of being one of the first participants in Autism Delaware’s vocational programming, which is referred to as Productive Opportunities for Work and Recreation (or POW&R, for short). Read Ben’s story [here](#).

And six-year-old Daniel Montanye led the Walk in Milton. Read Daniel’s story [here](#).

Did we reach our goal?

We set our sights on \$175,00 to provide community-based supports and services across the state and across each autistic individual’s lifespan. And our walkers raised more than \$121,00.

It’s not too late to support our Walk. Donations continue to be gratefully accepted [here](#).

Did you get a chance to thank our sponsors?

Each sponsor’s generosity supports the Walk for Autism’s fundraising goal, starting with the presenting sponsor, Delaware City Refining Company®.

To see the entire list of Walk sponsors, [click here](#).

Mark your calendar!

The Walk for Autism returns to April in 2024:

**Saturday, April 13
Ft. DuPont
Delaware City**

**Saturday, April 20
Hudson Fields
Milton**

[Click here for more info!](#)



She learned what needed to be done—and was the first to do it

Melanie Matusheski would much rather talk about what needs to be done and how she can help. This trait led her to join a parent coffee hour that was organized by the volunteer-run Autism Society of Delaware (which, in 2010, was renamed Autism Delaware). Her son Robert had been diagnosed with autism in 1999.

Over coffee, Melanie heard people complain: “I call to volunteer, but no one calls me back.”

“I said ‘It sounds like the organization needs a volunteer coordinator.’ So I talked to them about it, and Theda Ellis [who was executive director at the time] said ‘You’re right. We need a volunteer coordinator.’ And she offered me the task. In the fall of 2009, I started volunteering as the agency’s first volunteer coordinator.

“This work was only part time, but it was an opportunity to get me out of the house,” continues Melanie. “I had twin girls at home, and Robert was young. But putting events together and organizing the volunteers: These are a lot of work. When you just go to an event, you don’t realize how many pieces there are!”

For five years, Melanie volunteered her time and expertise on a part-time basis. And as Autism Delaware grew, she was handed more and more work.

“Over time,” explains Melanie, “the events got bigger and more time was needed to coordinate everything. In 2014, I was assigned to the development team as a paid employee. I was still working part time when we added tabling events and school visits to the schedule. I did a

lot of tabling events because they needed to be done, to get Autism Delaware’s name out there—I got burnt out,” admits Melanie.

“So, I talked to Annalisa about a job working directly with families. [Annalisa Ekbladh was the family support program manager at the time.] She said ‘We need one person to answer the phone and direct people to our new program.’ The ACTSM [Autism Care TeamSM] Program sounded really exciting, and I liked working with Annalisa, so I joined her and Dafne in starting the program. [Dafne Carnright was the agency’s family service coordinator for Kent and Sussex Counties at the time; today, she’s the director of family support services.] It was a lot of work, but also fun and satisfying.

“When Robert was little, there was no such thing as the ACT Program,” adds Melanie, wishing the program’s benefits had been available back in 1999.

Once the new program’s parameters were completed in the spring of 2019,

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Photos

Top: Melanie Matusheski when she became Autism Delaware’s first intake coordinator in 2019

Center: Melanie joined Autism Delaware volunteer Sam Johnson and then-executive director Teresa Avery at the 2014 awards banquet.

Bottom: Melanie’s twin daughters Amy and Laura with her son Robert at the Walk for Autism in 2015

INSIDE AutismSM Delaware

When Autism Delaware asked, she always answered “Yes!”

by Lisa Walenceus and Liz Carlisle (Ed.)

Liz Carlisle had no idea that she would become part of Autism Delaware’s work for the next 10 years. In 2013, she had applied for a part-time position that was supposed to run for only three months. Her friend Theda Ellis, who had just retired as the agency’s executive director, had asked Liz to cover for an office assistant on maternity leave from the Milton office. Since Liz and her husband Sam were preparing to move from Newark to Lincoln (located north of Milton), the job offer seemed like a good opportunity to meet people and get to know the community.

“I didn’t know much about autism at the time,” admits Liz, “but I thought ‘This will be fun and fulfilling.’”

And it was so rich and varied! Liz got to know the participants in Autism Delaware’s adult services program, which is known as Productive Opportunities for Work and Recreation (or POW&R, for short) as well as their parents. She also got to watch POW&R’s direct support professionals (DSPs) at work.

“I thought the passion and concern they brought to what they did was just magical. And I got to help with organizing social recreation events. I really enjoyed being a part of that.”

When the office assistant on maternity leave decided to stay home with her new baby, Liz remained at the Milton office desk until a replacement could be found.

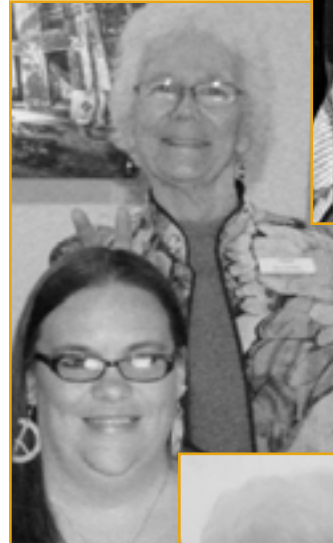
“I thought my time with Autism Delaware was done. In fact, it was my first of five attempts to retire from Autism Delaware,” laughs Liz.

When a newly hired office assistant left after only two months, then-executive director Teresa Avery asked Liz if she would fill in. The office’s recent move to Lewes had myriad details to address.

Of course, Liz said yes. And once again, a search began for her replacement.

The search lasted about a year. During that time, Liz decided to move back to her home in Newark while Sam stayed in Lincoln to continue his job at Cape Henlopen High School. Learning about Liz’s relocation plan, Teresa invited her to

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Lisa Walenceus is a communications specialist at the University of Delaware. Her prior work history includes marketing and communications manager for Autism Delaware, content writer for LifeSavvy Media (Va.), web search evaluator for Appen Ltd., writer–editor for *The Journal Sentinel* (Ga.), and marketing communications specialist for the University of Notre Dame.



When Autism Delaware asked, she always answered “Yes!”

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work the front desk in the Newark office, covering phones and helping with administrative work.

Naturally, Liz said yes.

“This really started my career with Autism Delaware,” notes Liz. “Over the years, I’ve done all kinds of things to help out, from data entry to writing social rec flyers, helping with family support’s PEERS program, and handling publicity—a bit of everything.



“When Teresa left and [current executive director] Brian Hall took over, board support and internal communications were added to my work,” continues Liz. “But the main part of my work—and what I will always remember—is speaking with the parents and participants who called us. It was gratifying to be able to offer support, to listen when they needed a caring ear, and to connect them with resources. My part in the autism community was small, but I like to think I touched people’s lives.

“Now that I’m officially retired from Autism Delaware,” adds Liz, “I’m aware of how blessed I am to have been part of the loving, passionate, and dedicated family that is Autism Delaware’s staff. They care as deeply for one another as they do for the families they serve. I am so proud to have been able to support their tireless work in any way I could.

“Keep calm and POW&R on,” smiles Liz. “You are all heroes.”

She learned what needed to be done—and was the first to do it Cont’d from p. 7

Melanie became the agency’s first intake coordinator: “I enjoyed working directly with the family support team. Plus, parents really like the program, especially the parents with children newly diagnosed with autism.”

At about the same time, Robert began having seizures. “The last seizure he had was this past July,” notes his mom. “He’s 27 now, his brain is working more slowly, and he needs a lot of prompts. We’re trying different meds. That’s a process in itself.

“Robert is still a participant in Autism Delaware’s adult services program,” adds Melanie. “He works in the laundry room at Nemours Children’s Hospital, but he is not high-functioning. He’s a full-time job for me at home.

“Plus,” notes Melanie, “my daughters are still at home. They work: One is a media coordinator for the Department of Health and Human Services; the other, a landscape architect.

“But this is a lot on my plate. I’ve been thinking about retiring for a long time. I need more time to myself—just to garden and take walks. I’d like to do some creative writing, too. I’ve been away from it for so long! I need to start thinking that way again. So, I started reading *The Artist’s Way* [by Julia Cameron]....”

Melanie knows what needs to be done for herself now. After 14 years of learning what needed to be done and being the first to do it for Autism Delaware, she retired in November.

I want the autism community to know: This is the number-one place in Delaware to get help. We’re not perfect, but everybody at Autism Delaware really does work toward helping people and families affected by autism. We talk to families who need help, help individuals with autism, and make the community better.

—Melanie Matusheski
Parent and longtime
Autism Delaware
volunteer

INSIDE AutismSM Delaware

The legacy of Tracy Horn

Ashley Barker didn't understand initially: *Why was Tracy suddenly absent from her life?*

Tracy Horn had been working with Ashley since she was 17 going on 18. As the job coach for the now-25-year-old, Tracy knew in advance if a job was a good fit for Ashley. She made sure that Ashley not only had the skills an employer wanted but also that Ashley wanted to do the job.

"I'm going to take care of our girl," Tracy assured Ashley's parents, Dayna and Edwin Barker. And Tracy's promise led to a part-time job at Delaware Park.

"Ashley would have a tough time comprehending some of the basics," admits Dayna, "but Tracy

had all the confidence in the world in my daughter. Tracy knew Ashley, knew her disability, and knew how to communicate with her. They texted daily. Whatever Tracy said, Ashley trusted and was always happy to see Tracy.

"Tracy had a unique relationship with Ashley," continues Dayna, "so Tracy pushed Ashley and literally became an extended part of our lives. She convinced us that Ashley was highly capable of full-time work. She'd be a valued, contributing member of society."

And in March 2023, Ashley was hired by Nemours Children's Hospital (formerly Nemours/A.I. duPont Hospital for Children)—to work in her first full-time position.



Proud mom Dayna Barker and her daughter Ashley on her graduation day

About Tracy Horn

Hired in 2016 as an employment support professional for Autism Delaware's [adult services program](#), Tracy had been promoted to employment services manager. In this capacity, Tracy advocated on behalf of adults with autism who wanted to work in the community, and secured their employment with community partners that needed qualified, capable, and trustworthy employees. She also supported the program participants as they strove to learn, grow, and live full lives as included and valued members of their communities. Plus, she recognized the community partners who hired one or more autistic individuals.

Tracy furthered her advocacy on behalf of program participants any way she could. For example, she discussed the program's benefits with WJBR's Lora Lewis on her [Focus on Delaware Valley](#) radio show. And Tracy served as liaison between *The Sun's* writer-



Tracy Horn (center) presented Autism Delaware's Noelle Perry Smith Employer of the Year Award for 2023 to the Kenny Family's ShopRites of Delaware for hiring six Autism Delaware POW&R participants since 2021. Accepting the award for the Kenny Family are Jennifer Selvaggi, director of human resources, and Scott Gibson, HR specialist.

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Meet Kenzie Walsh

McKenzie “Kenzie” Walsh joined the fund development and community engagement team this fall. As the new marketing and communications manager, she creates copy and images to post on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter. Her goal is to drive awareness of the agency’s new brand as well as to engage the autism community through social media.

Kenzie joins Autism Delaware following a recent stint as social media manager for Heather Cox Codes in Newark. In this capacity, she managed 36 social media accounts by researching trending hashtags, creating images and story feeds, and scheduling clients on Meta Business Suite, Hootsuite, Loomly, and Tweetdeck.

Programs

This list comprises the programs for January through March, which had been scheduled by *The Sun’s* publication date.

For the more up-to-date list, visit <https://www.autismdelaware.org/events/>.

Family support services

Grandparent coffee hour. (For non-caregivers.)

Jan. 17 at 6:00 P.M. Virtual Zoom event. **Contact:** [Heidi Mizell](#).

Parent coffee hour. (Support group for caregivers.)

Jan. 17, Feb. 21, Mar. 20 at 7:00 P.M. Virtual Zoom event. **Contact:** [Heidi Mizell](#).



Work with us!

Autism Delaware is accepting applications for a full-time family support program manager and a part-time advocacy coordinator as well as direct support professionals.

For details, [click here](#).

The benefits of the elevator speech Continued from p. 2

that each individual with autism is wonderfully unique. Each has a unique set of strengths and needs. Our job is to do everything we can to help each individual—and their families—to be the best they can be. To help achieve the ultimate goal of independence in the community, whatever that might look like for that precious individual.

“We have many ways to help meet each goal. If you have a few more minutes, I can share how we might be able to help your loved one. If not, just know this: If you reach out to Autism Delaware, you’ll find someone who will know how to help.”

April is Autism Acceptance and Inclusion Month!

Every April, autism advocates visit their state legislators in Dover to share their personal stories and to explain how their elected officials can support specific issues faced by the autism community.

You, too, can be an autism advocate. For more info:

info@autismdelaware.org

(302) 224-6020

[Click here for the webpage.](#)

And start practicing your elevator speech!



Smart Cookie Day 2019: Proud papa Rodger Pearce takes a photo of his daughter Hope after she advocates for herself and the autism community and then gifts Gov. John Carney with chocolate-covered strawberries that she made on the job at Kilwins Chocolates.

The legacy of Tracy Horn Continued from p. 10

editor and several program participants who wanted to share their employment experiences with readers of the summer 2022 issue on adulting.

So why was Tracy suddenly absent from Ashley’s life?

Four months after Ashley Barker started her full-time job at Nemours Children’s Hospital, Tracy died suddenly in a tragic home accident.

Ashley was told about Tracy’s death, but she didn’t understand initially: “Ashley still texted Tracy,” says Dayna.

At this point, the team, which Tracy had assembled for Ashley’s support, reached out to her parents: “May we talk to Ashley about Tracy?”

“Sure,” they replied.

“About a week later,” notes mom Dayna, “Ashley came home and announced ‘Miss Tracy went to Heaven.’”

“We checked Ashley’s phone and found only one text to Tracy: ‘Miss Tracy, I’m sorry you died and went

to Heaven.’ After that, we found no more texts to Tracy. We knew, in some way, she had figured it out.

“News of Tracy’s death was so shocking,” adds Dayna, “but she put a team together we approve of. Through our tears and sadness, Tracy is still taking care of us. She made it a point that Ashley was paired with someone as capable as she

was. And Ashley is in capable hands. Miss Cheryl is absolutely awesome as supervisor and job coach.

“Tracy left us in good care,” adds Ashley’s mom with deep respect. “I can only say ‘Well done. Well done.’”

Why should you become a community partner?

Because we teach our program participants to do the job the way you want it done. And we provide ongoing support for quality assurance.

For details, [click here.](#)