

The Sun

Newsletter

April-June 2011

Inside this issue

One voice and a greater vision . . . 2

Success with volunteers 3

Valuable on-the-job experience 4

Legislative corner 5

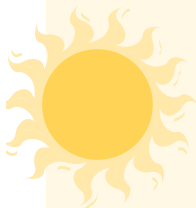
Parent2Parent 6

Inside Autism Delaware 7

Calendar of events 8

Southern Delaware office 10

Building connections & skills . . . 11



Our mission

Autism Delaware works to create better lives for people with autism and their families in Delaware.

Volunteers move us toward our mission

by **Melanie Matusheski**

As the volunteer coordinator for Autism Delaware, I'm often asked "What do your volunteers do?" My answer is "Everything! Our volunteers contribute in every way imaginable."



Thanks to volunteers—such as these Kohl's employees at last year's walk—the event was a success.

The most visible volunteers help with social and fundraising events. At social events like the Fall Festival and the beach picnic, these volunteers are always the first to arrive to hang banners, register participants, serve food, and organize crafts for the children. For big fundraisers, these volunteers help plan the events, solicit sponsors, organize auction items, sell raffle tickets, and provide entertainment. As the events get bigger every year, we rely more and more on the efforts and talents of these dedicated and talented volunteers.

Many volunteers also work at smaller events or behind the scenes. These volunteers do administrative tasks, write articles for *The Sun*, organize bowling night, make autism awareness pins, hand out informational materials at public awareness

events, and decorate the hall for the Autumn Auction for Autism. Volunteers were also a big help in moving us into our new Milton office this winter.

"So, who volunteers?" Everybody!

Parents, grandparents, siblings, friends, neighbors, Autism Delaware's founding members and new members, all volunteer their time and talents. Entire families donate their time—and many have no direct connection to autism. Teenagers volunteer at game night for 9 to 19 year olds with Asperger's syndrome. University of Delaware students contact us every fall and offer to help in any way they can. Kohl's employees help at the Walk-Race for Autism. Amateur photographers record our many events for us. And nurses and doctors come to our big fundraisers in case they're needed.

"What stands out for me?" People volunteer just to help. As a result, no job is more important than any other. Some jobs may require many hours while others take little time at

Continued on page 11, left column



The Sun

A publication of Autism Delaware

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Autism Delaware is interested in a variety of viewpoints about autism and emerging research, but reference to any treatment, therapy option, program, service, or treatment provider is not an endorsement. We publish information only for informational purposes and assume no responsibility for the use of any information. You should investigate alternatives that may be more appropriate for your specific needs.

One voice and a greater vision

During a recent church service, the minister was defining the difference between "transition" and "transformation"—when my thoughts took the definition one step further: We at Autism Delaware need to redefine ourselves since the merger with the Lower Delaware Autism Foundation (LDAF). Where we were once a predominantly New Castle County organization, we are now statewide with a scope of services that reaches further than it ever has before. Now that we've successfully made the passage from one type of organization to another, what does the statewide Autism Delaware look like?

In the past several months, the transition added a lot of talent and resources to the Autism Delaware team. Six new board members reside in Sussex County. Five sat previously on the LDAF board, and one was elected recently in a statewide election.

We also have new positions relative to the merger. Bringing her experience as LDAF's mainstay, Melissa Martin is transitioning into her job as Autism Delaware's southern Delaware POW&R coordinator. In this capacity, Melissa will help expand adult services statewide.

Dafne Carnright continues to evolve as the southern Delaware service coordinator. She and Melissa work out of our new office in Milton. The scope of their expanded work naturally

demanded help, so in February, Amanda Jackson was hired as the new administrative and event assistant.



Theda Ellis
Executive Director

So, we now have a physical presence in lower Delaware that supports involvement in the entire autism community. We look very different than we did one short year ago. But are we transformed?

I think we can be—with more involvement. I encourage all our members to help with our transformation into a statewide organization. Consider supporting the overall organization, not just a specific program or county. Opportunities within our various programs are also statewide.

Keep in mind, we all want the same thing: to support good lives for our children with autism and the contributing adults they will grow up to be.

To that end, we would like to see the Delaware Autism Program offer quality education at every site. Children educated in their home districts should receive an appropriate and quality

Continued on page 11, right column

A service of Autism Delaware



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Social events succeed with volunteers

by Jen Nardo

The thought of taking a child with an autism spectrum disorder (an ASD) out in public can be overwhelming. The fear is that, after all the effort put into planning an event, the child will have a meltdown.

You can relax at an Autism Delaware event. Offering a range of social activities throughout the year and state, Autism Delaware provides opportunities for a family to make new friends and get support while also allowing children with an ASD the freedom to be themselves in an accepting atmosphere. The social events include the Fall Festival, train rides on the Wilmington and Western Railroad, the spring egg hunt, and the much-loved beach picnic at Cape Henlopen. Through Autism Delaware, the autism community also enjoys sensory friendly movies, Lego® Club, Teen/Tween Asperger's Game Night, and bowling night.



These events succeed because of the volunteers on Autism Delaware's Social Committee. The committee chair, Robin Delaney, works with parent-volunteers Kim Herbert and Nicole Curran as well as Delaney's husband Rob and daughter Katie. Robin also credits the many volunteers from the University of Delaware with making our events so successful.

"Volunteering for Autism Delaware has given my family a great support system to rely on," says Robin, "and it is a great way to do something good for our children. A lot of times, families see only the bad things that autism can bring, but by being an active volunteer, you get to

experience the fun, fulfilling part.

"Autism is very hard [to live with] most days," adds Robin, "but by volunteering, I've learned from others and have become a stronger parent."

Each year, Autism Delaware's social events get bigger, so more help is always needed. Whether you are a new volunteer or an old hand who's been on hiatus, YOU decide how much time you can give us and which void to fill with your talents. In turn, you will make friends for a lifetime and learn new skills for living with your unique child.

Think green!

Save the environment and money.
Receive *The Sun* by email.



Call (302) 224-6020.
Or send an email
to delautism@delautism.org.

Get your news here!

Join the Autism Delaware Google group!
Send your email address to delautism@delautism.org, and get the latest information on autism and Autism Delaware delivered directly to you.

Volunteerism and POW&R participants

Gaining valuable on-the-job experience

Look at any employment ad today, and you can see that employers place a premium on workers with experience. Unfortunately, job seekers with autism are not always given the chance to gain valuable on-the-job experience.

To solve this problem, volunteerism is a major component of Autism Delaware's adult services program. Productive Opportunities for Work and Recreation (or POW&R, for short) provides adults with autism the opportunity to gain experience through a range of volunteer jobs and internships. POW&R also helps job seekers with autism build on their skill sets while learning the meaning of altruism and giving back to the community as well as how to socialize and network.

"Any business that works with us," notes Katina Demetriou, the program's director, "learns to respect our POW&R participants for their dedication, diligence, and commitment. They are viewed as hard-working individuals

who can contribute to each project and operation. Because of this positive experience, volunteerism has also provided a way for POW&R to develop and expand its network of community partners.

"We're proud to announce," adds Katina, "that several of our POW&R participants, after volunteering, have earned paid positions. And several of our participants have received recognition for their volunteer efforts at Sunday Breakfast Mission, the March of Dimes, Faithful Friends, and Children and Families First.

"Volunteers are instrumental in making Autism Delaware and POW&R run on a daily basis," sums up Katina. "And through volunteering in the community, POW&R participants have the opportunity to give back to the community that has given them so much.

"How's that for em-POW&R-ment!"



Brendan Flannery interned at Waggies by Maggie & Friends, learning how to make dog treats before being hired as a part-time baker.



Autism Delaware The benefits of membership

- Voice your needs through a statewide network of autism advocacy.
- Learn your options with access to up-to-date information.



- Get the support you need through groups and events.

New members

Welcome!

Melinda Albert
Mr. & Mrs. Albert Biondo
Carla Bloss
Elizabeth Bounds
Diane Davis
Dr. Robert Ferber
Corina & David Gilden
Frank A. Green
Mr. & Mrs. Phil Hartman
Priscilla Kleinstuber
William Swain Lee

Dr. & Mrs. Pierre L. LeRoy
Rebecca Lloyd
Mr. & Mrs. Debasis Mishra
Mr. & Mrs. Alvin Oberender
Mr. & Mrs. Louis A. Portland
Daniel Regelski
Mr. & Mrs. Charles Rowe
Bardley & Judy Schneider
Scott Swingle
Mr. & Mrs. Randle G. White
Mr & Mrs. Ryan Williamson

Legislative corner

Q Were you actively involved in advocacy before you started volunteering for Autism Delaware?

A Not at all. In fact, I'm naturally shy presenting to others. I guess shyness goes to the wayside after you become a mother. I learned very early on with my son, Devin, that being my child's advocate was necessary to parent a child with a special need.

Q What kinds of work have you done for Autism Delaware? And what have you done as an advocate for yourself and your family?

A I joined Autism Delaware and then joined the legislative committee. And as part of the insurance committee (which is working to require coverage of autism therapies, such as applied behavior analysis [ABA]), I have weighed in on draft bills, researched other state's autism insurance

Q & A

Shannon Liew knows that Autism Delaware needs help advocating for the issues that are important to the autism community. Here, she shares how she got involved in advocacy work.

reform laws, and organized other parents to write op-eds on the need for this legislation.

As an advocate, I marched in Washington with other mothers, representing Delaware's autism community, and I also invited my state legislators [into my] home to

see an ABA session and discuss the insurance bill. It is important to me that Devin be seen as part of the community.

Q Not everyone is comfortable contacting legislators or being politically active. Did you ever feel uncomfortable? If yes, how did you move past it?

A Definitely! Others who know me may think it's funny because I hate to "stir it up." But the deep love I have as a mother surpasses any fears I had of what others may think. While pursuing change for my child, I can make a change for the children, parents, and community in Delaware. When I approached legislators for the first time, I was intimidated. But then, I realized that they are there to hear us. They serve because they share a passion to make Delaware a better place. I always keep that in mind.

The state of the budget

Years of advocacy have paid off! The governor's budget for the Division of Developmental Disabilities Services includes funding to cover 75 emergency placements and new special-school graduates as well as annualization of last year's grads and placements. The budget also included \$300,000 for sheltered workshops that, we hope, will be broad enough to include community-based services. Unfortunately, this budget marks the ninth year that providers will not receive a rate increase. In real dollars, this is equivalent to a cut of 20 percent or more.

With the Delaware Joint Finance Committee reviewing the budget through June and many states looking to cut Medicaid, Autism Delaware continues to remind legislators of Medicaid's importance in funding adult services—and we encourage you to remind your legislators, too! Find information

Update

on how to advocate in the legislature—for yourself and your loved ones—in the Autism Advocate's Action Kit now available at www.delautism.org.

Time to call your state senator!

When *The Sun* went to press, an amended insurance bill had been drafted for introduction in the state senate when the Delaware General Assembly returns in March.

This bill

- requires coverage of diagnosis, screening, and standard therapies (including ABA, social skills, mental health care, and speech, occupational, and physical therapies) up to age 21.
- caps coverage of ABA at \$36,000 (adjustable for inflation).
- creates processes for certifying providers and adding treatments to the required coverage list.
- applies to all individual and group plans regulated by Delaware.

PARENT PARENT

Written by parents for parents

Why should you volunteer? There are two reasons:

One, do it for yourself.

When your child is first diagnosed with autism, you may feel (as I did) too fragile to do much of anything—and certainly not anything for anyone else—and think you have to be a “taker” and not a “giver.”

But soon after my son was diagnosed 17 years ago, I discovered that volunteering enhances a parent’s ability to take full advantage of all that is available to help your child. By some strange alchemy, “giving” is also “receiving” in the autism community. So by volunteering at your child’s school, you get to know the teachers and administrators better, and you meet your peers (who are also struggling) and the parents who are a little more experienced in the autism community.

You can read all the books you want and understand Delaware and federal disability law backwards and forwards, but NO better resource is available to you than another parent’s experience and hard-won wisdom, whether it concerns therapies, particularly good teachers, or once your child ages



Betsy Fisher Gray has been volunteering for 17 years, including serving as co-chair of the 2010 Autumn Auction for Autism.

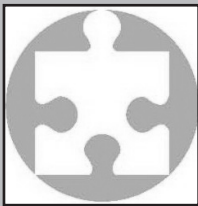
out, how to negotiate the tangle of adult services.

Two, do it for others.

The supports available for our children with autism exist because of parents. The Delaware Autism Program was available when my son was diagnosed because of the extraordinary effort of a group of parents who fought to bring the program into being 30 years ago. And seeing the need for supports beyond the program, a group of parents founded what is now Autism Delaware. Started 13 years ago, Autism Delaware today offers a range of services, from recreational activities and support groups to a community-based adult services program, the award-winning POW&R.

Parents have had to work very hard to build these supports and harder still to make the supports better. Every year, we fight to preserve funding for our children. It’s tempting, I know, to sit back and take

advantage of the work done by others, but without YOUR help, we will, sooner or later, run out of resources in the autism community. The future of your children lies beyond your own front door. Join us, and volunteer!



A few abbreviations and acronyms

Parents with children newly diagnosed with an ASD can be overwhelmed by abbreviations of terms and the use of acronyms (pronounceable words formed with the initial letters of a term). Here are a few spelled out for you:

- | | | | |
|-------------|---|---------------|--|
| ABA | applied behavior analysis | DVR | Division of Vocational Rehabilitation |
| APE | adapted physical education | FAPE | free and appropriate public education |
| ASA | Autism Society of America | IDEA | Individuals with Disabilities Education Act |
| ASD | autism spectrum disorder | IEP | individualized education plan |
| BMP | behavior management plan | LDAF | Lower Delaware Autism Foundation (merged with Autism Delaware) |
| CDC | Centers for Disease Control and Prevention | LD | learning disability |
| DAP | Delaware Autism Program (state program headquartered in Brennen School) | LRE | least restrictive environment |
| DDDS | Division of Developmental Disabilities Services | MR | mental retardation |
| | | NICHCY | National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities |

Rec4All

With the support of a \$22,000 Delaware Community Foundation grant, Autism Delaware can now expand Rec4All. A recreational resource for Delaware's entire disabilities community, Rec4All is a collaboration with the disability and recreation communities.

The grant funds a one-time-

only, one-year project whose goal is to expand the pool of recreational activities throughout the state. As the project's manager, Autism Delaware's Asperger's resource coordinator, Heidi Mizell, not only will promote the currently available opportunities statewide but also will train community program staff on inclusion of children with autism and other disabilities. Look also for an upgrade to the Rec4All website.

For more information, send an email of interest to heidi.mizell@delautism.org.



Fix them!

Although the Department of Education meeting on January 24 did not result in clear information about the next step for the state's group homes, closing them has not been decided,

assured DOE Secretary of Education Lillian Lowery, Ph.D.

Thirty years ago, the parent community worked too hard to get this important program in place NOT to work equally hard now to maintain it. Autism Delaware agrees wholeheartedly with Marie-Anne Aghazadian who says of the group homes, "Fix them! Don't get rid of them!"

Autism Delaware supported the DOE meeting by inviting southern Delaware families to participate via our new Milton office. And John Lynch of Brennen School helped set up the Skype technology so we could communicate face to face.

Autism Delaware thanks everyone who came out—parents and families, staff, and board members. And thank you to the parents who shared so openly. In all, 13 shared some very personal testimony about their experiences, their concerns, and their hopes for the future.

Make someone smile!

Volunteers are needed for Autism Delaware programs and office work as well as at fund-raising events.

Call (302) 224-6020.

Or send an email to volunteers@delautism.org.

INSIDE Autism Delaware

Oh, those wonderful interns!

Autism Delaware has been blessed recently with highly capable and talented interns. Jackie Waddell, a Goldey-Beacom College student, worked on Rec4All and began work on the new parent packet during her stint with us last fall. And Abby Stollar, interning through the University of Delaware, completed work on the new parent packet in January and continues to work about eight hours a week, supporting April's Walk-Race for Autism.

Internships always available

Autism Delaware offers an internship to any capable and talented college student who wants to support our activities and events. Each internship offers an opportunity to perform real work—anything from writing press releases, updating our website, and staffing our newsletter to supporting our major fundraisers and working on parent resources. Not only do interns provide an invaluable service, but they also expand our reach and capability.

Do you know a student who is looking for a nonprofit internship or work experience?

Tell him or her to send an email to theda.ellis@delautism.org.



Special Olympics

We are looking for unified partners, coaches, and volunteers to work with our Special Olympics team.

Call (302) 224-6020. Or send an email of interest to volunteers@delautism.org.



CALENDAR of EVENTS

April

2—Milford Skating Party. Milford Skating Center Roller Skating Rink. 1 Park Av. Milford. 5:30–7:30 P.M. \$2.50 for skate rental.

5 & 12—Lego® Club. Spring 2011 session. Autism Delaware main office. 6:00–8:00 P.M. *RSVP:* Heidi Mizell @ (302) 224-6020, ext. 205.

9—Walk-Race for Autism. Bellevue State Park. 800 Carr Rd. Wilmington. *Sign-in:* 9:00 A.M. *Event start:* 11:00 A.M. Advanced registration recommended at www.delautism.org.

9—Early pre-registration for April 10's Walk-Race in Lewes! All participants can pick up their packets at Irish Eyes Pub & Restaurant between 5:00 and 8:00 P.M.

10—Walk-Race for Autism. Irish Eyes Pub & Restaurant. 213 Anglers Rd. Lewes. *Sign-in:* 6:45 A.M. *Event start:* 8:00 A.M. Advanced registration recommended at www.delautism.org.

12—Parent Coffee Hour. Panera Bread. 3650 Kirkwood Hwy. Wilmington. 9:00 A.M.

15 & 29—Teen/Tween Asperger's Game Night. Autism Delaware main office. 6:30–8:30 P.M. *RSVP:* Heidi Mizell @ (302) 224-6020, ext. 205.

21—Parent Coffee Hour. Tout de Suite Patisserie. 16394 Samuel Paynter Blvd. Milton. 9:00 A.M.

May

7—Christiana Skating Party. Christiana Skating Center Rolling Skating Rink. 801 Christiana Rd. Newark. 5:15–7:15 P.M.

10—Parent Coffee Hour. Panera Bread. 3650 Kirkwood Hwy. Wilmington. 7:00 P.M.

13—Teen/Tween Asperger's Game Night. Autism Delaware main office. 6:30–8:30 P.M. *RSVP:* Heidi Mizell @ (302) 224-6020, ext. 205.

June

3 & 17—Teen/Tween Asperger's Game Night. Autism Delaware main office. 6:30–8:30 P.M. *RSVP:* Heidi Mizell @ (302) 224-6020, ext. 205.

14—Parent Coffee Hour. Panera Bread. 3650 Kirkwood Hwy. Wilmington. 9:00 A.M.

18—Beauty & Baseball. Wilmington Blue Rocks. Daniel S. Frawley Stadium. 801 South Madison St. Wilmington. 1:00 P.M. *RSVP:* (302) 224-6020.

Lego® Club

Summer 2011 session

July 5, 12, 19 & 26
August 2 & 9

Evaluations required!

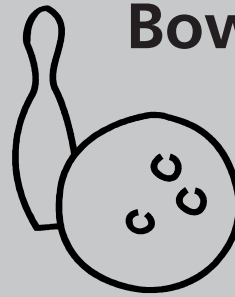
For 9–12-year-old children who can follow directions and who have good communication skills.

For more information: Call Heidi Mizell at (302) 224-6020, ext. 205. Or send an email to heidi.mizell@delautism.org. Or visit www.delautism.org.



Registration & evaluation fee
\$35

Per-session cost
\$15



Bowling night

Every Wednesday
5:30–7:30 P.M.

Bowlerama
3031 New Castle Av.
New Castle DE 19720-2297

To register, email Heidi Mizell at heidi.mizell@delautism.org. Or call (302) 224-6020, ext. 205.

Teen/Tween Asperger's Game Night



Place: Autism Delaware

Dates: April 15 & 29
May 13
June 3 & 17

Time: 6:30–8:30 P.M.

Reservations: Heidi Mizell
(302) 224-6020, ext. 205
heidi.mizell@delautism.org



Parent Coffee Hour

Coffee's on us!

Panera Bread
3650 Kirkwood Hwy.
Wilmington

April 12 @ 9:00 A.M.

May 10 @ 7:00 P.M.

June 14 @ 9:00 A.M.

Tout de Suite Patisserie
16394 Samuel Paynter Blvd.
Milton

April 21 @ 9:00 A.M.

For more, see the calendar at www.delautism.org.

Go roller skating!

Sensory friendly rink!! Free admission!!!

April 2, 2011

5:30–7:30 P.M.

Milford Skating Center Roller Skating Rink,
1 Park Av.,
Milford

May 7, 2011

5:15–7:15 P.M.

Christiana Skating Center Rolling Skating Rink,
801 Christiana Rd., Newark

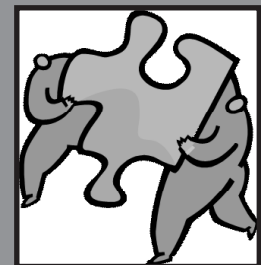


Skate rental: \$2.50

Autism Delaware fundraisers Volunteers make 'em happen!

Every year, Autism Delaware's volunteers help fundraising efforts at the Drive for Autism Celebrity-Am Golf Outing, Autumn Auction for Autism, and the now-statewide Walk-Race for Autism. All

rely on volunteers to make them happen. Please volunteer some of your time and talent.



volunteers@delautism.org

(302) 224-6020

Now open: southern Delaware office

With easy access off Route 1, the new southern office of Autism Delaware is now open for business. The address is 16394 Samuel Paynter Blvd., Unit 201, Milton DE 19968. And the phone number is (302) 644-3410.

With a lot of help and a little paint, the office is now available for meetings as well as business. Many thanks go to Sarah Young (POW&R DVR specialist) and her professional painter–friend, Dez; to long-time volunteers Pat and Tom Hamer; and to Dr. Robert “Barney” Vincelette for helping to spruce up the office. And for installing the phone system, thanks to Advanced Networking, Comcast, FutureTech, and main office volunteer Joanne Saulsbury.

The staff in the new office includes

- Melissa Martin, the southern Delaware POW&R coordinator, whose job is to expand adult services and recreation throughout the state;
- Dafne Carnright, the part-time southern Delaware service coordinator; and
- Amanda Jackson, the new part-time administrative and event assistant.

For more information, call (302) 644-3410. Or send an email to dafne.carnright@delautism.org.



Melissa Martin (left), Autism Delaware’s southern Delaware POW&R coordinator, gratefully accepts more than \$2,000 from Bernice Koval, coordinator of the Sussex County Ladies Luncheon with a Purpose. The fundraiser was held last December to benefit Autism Delaware.

Autism Delaware
So. Delaware office
(302) 644-3410



Amanda Jackson

The new administrative and event assistant in Autism Delaware’s Milton office is New Jersey-native Amanda Jackson. Her role is to provide administrative support and assist with events.

A 2009 graduate of Wesley College, Amanda earned a bachelor’s degree in psychology while also working

as the college’s administrative assistant for institutional advancement. In this capacity, she assisted the vice president and other staff, supervised student workers, assisted with Wesley College Homecoming & Reunion Weekend, and helped maintain the database and alumni website.

Amanda also worked part time as the college’s alumni affairs assistant, helping to plan alumni events: “This position excited me for a future in event planning and helping others as well. I chose

to join the Autism Delaware staff because it seemed like the perfect fit of where I see my future going. I

have always wanted to help others, and ever since I worked part time planning alumni events, I have been interested in event planning. So, this job is the best of both worlds. I am also excited to grow with the company and watch it expand.”

Currently working on a master’s degree in social work at Delaware State University, Amanda defines herself by her will to succeed: “I have always had a drive to succeed and not to give up. And when it comes to my passion for helping others, I do everything to succeed. I love seeing others smile and knowing that I am part of their happiness. I am also inspired by my family, to make my parents proud of me. My family has always supported me in every decision I have made.”

A Dover resident for the last three years, the Jersey girl and her fiancé are planning a 2012 wedding.

Volunteers move us (continued from page 1)

all, but all the jobs help Autism Delaware move toward its mission: creating better lives for people with autism and their families in Delaware.

Our volunteers are responsible for all this. And we are grateful to them.

Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could only do a little.

—Edmund Burke
18th-century statesman

One voice (continued from page 2)

education in their home districts, and students on the high end of the spectrum deserve an education equivalent to students in the DAP. Early-intervention programs also need to be appropriate and readily available. Plus, adult services need to continue to grow statewide.

These are our common goals, where we need to spend our energy and resources. I encourage all of you to maintain your Autism Delaware memberships and to speak out when you see a need. Help us make the transformation into an organization with one voice and a greater vision.

**For more info
(302) 224-6020**

The volunteer experience

Building connections and social skills

“Research studies show,” writes the chair of Princeton’s sociology department, Robert Wuthnow, Ph.D., “that most people do, in fact, hold the belief that helping others is a good way to gain fulfillment for yourself” (*Acts of Compassion: Caring for Others and Helping Ourselves*. Princeton University Press 1990: p. 87).

In other words, helping others by volunteering some of your valuable time and skills is a step toward self-fulfillment.

“At Autism Delaware,” notes the nonprofit’s Asperger’s resource coordinator, Heidi Mizell, “volunteers not only help make a success of events and social activities but also earn a place in the autism community, giving themselves access to much-needed connections and information.

“And Delawareans on the spectrum benefit even more,” adds Heidi, “because volunteering provides an opportunity for them to practice their communication and social skills and to meet their peers who care enough to donate their time as well.”

Recently, members of the Adults With Asperger’s: Recreation, Education, Social (AWARES) group have been offered volunteer experiences at the Food Bank of Delaware. According to the AWARES facilitator, Rachel Donaldson, the experience was so positive that the participants asked to return.

AWARES participants will also be volunteering at the Walk-Race for Autism in Wilmington.

Preparation is key

Preparation is key for anyone with an ASD who wants to succeed as a volunteer. A few steps can help guarantee success at the task and at socializing.

The task—If possible, let the new volunteer take a peek in advance at what he or she will be doing. Then, determine the best way to prepare to do the task. For example, if the volunteer learns by observing, let him or her arrive early and watch what others are doing. Or if the volunteer needs to hear the instructions more than once, give him or her a voice recorder to record the training. (Many cell phones have a recording feature.)

Socializing—Someone with an ASD often needs suggestions for talking to new people. Here are a few ideas from Michelle Garcia Winner’s Social Thinking curriculum:

- a memory shared with a specific person (an event they have both taken part in; a TV show or movie they have both seen; a person they both worked with)
- general seasonal topics (holidays or vacations)
- current events (news, elections, sporting events)
- lightly personal topics (books read, places visited, or something funny seen or heard)



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