Greetings to all the members of the Autism Society of Wisconsin! We’ve had a great start to 2016 and are on our way to having another fantastic year.

We again worked directly with Chili’s Restaurants in the month of March for “March into Chili’s for Autism”. I would like to thank each of you for helping us with your participation in this fund raising campaign. It takes a lot of financial resources to provide support to our community and every fund raising activity you participate in helps us meet our mission.

As always, April is going to be a very busy month. We’re holding our second annual Change for Autism campaign. A program to help educate students in our schools across the state on autism while raising money for ASW. If your school is still interested in signing up, it’s not too late. And don’t forget that we will be hosting our annual Autism Night with the Green Bay Gamblers’ on Saturday, April 2nd.

You are invited to attend our annual Conference at the Kalahari Resort in Wisconsin Dells April 7th – 9th. We’re very excited to have Barry Prizant as our keynote speaker. His book Uniquely Human: A Different Way of Seeing Autism, has been called groundbreaking and a must read for anyone touched by autism. Instead of classifying “autistic” behaviors as signs of pathology, Dr. Prizant sees them as part of a range of strategies to cope with a world that feels chaotic and overwhelming. While pre-registration has closed, we will have onsite registration for those of you who still want to enjoy the host of activities that we pack into these three days! Make your plans to attend today!

Additionally, LIDS stores nationwide are supporting the Autism Society during Autism Awareness Month. All customers will be asked if they’d like to round up their purchase to a whole number, or if they’d like to make a flat donation. Customers can also get a puzzle piece embroidered on their hats for an extra cost, which will benefit the Autism Society. If you or someone you know is looking for a new hat, please visit LIDS stores this April.

I encourage you to browse through the rest of the newsletter and check out what is happening within your local affiliate. You’ll find great events listed from each of the affiliates. Mark your calendars and plan on getting involved! Our community includes you and we’d love to see you!

Until next time, thank you again for giving me the honor of representing such a wonderful organization and community of people that bring their best every day!

Respectfully,

Michael Riemer
APRIL is Autism Awareness Month!

The Autism Society highlights "Building Autism Friendly Communities – Step by Step" in April 2016

National Autism Awareness Month celebrated worldwide in April by those living with autism; the families, caregivers, and those who care and love someone with autism

The Autism Society, the nation’s leading grassroots autism organization since 1965, celebrates National Autism Awareness Month in April 2016. Launched as Autism Awareness Week in 1972, the Autism Society adopted the official observance of National Autism Awareness Month in 1984 as a critical step forward to increasing understanding about autism spectrum disorder. This month we will be highlighting individuals on the autism spectrum and Autism-Friendly businesses that provide a welcoming environment for adults and children living with autism as well as their families, enabling them to enjoy services and amenities in their local communities.

The goal of the Autism Society and our over 100 nationwide affiliate network organizations for this year’s April Autism Awareness Month is to draw attention to the needs of all those impacted by autism, advocating for effective options that meet the needs of one of the fastest-growing developmental disabilities. Individuals with autism are faced with the following issues, among others, at an increased rate compared to their neurotypical peers:

- Homelessness or lack of suitable housing options
- Lack of employment or underemployment
- Inability to gain access to higher education or training for a trade
- Bullying or harassment in the workforce
- Ineffective and dangerous interactions with first responders and other government officials

Each day the Autism Society works to help each person living with autism maximize their quality of life and we will continue to work to build a world where each individual is respected, valued and held to the highest level of dignity.

“For over 50 years we have worked in communities to ensure our actions, through our services and programs, support all individuals living with autism. In April, those not impacted by autism hopefully can gain a better understanding and be more responsive to the growing needs of all impacted by autism, from early childhood to adulthood. We also need a more responsive national effort towards ensuring that all living with autism have equality of opportunity and options within our society. To do anything less, just can’t be an option” said Scott Badesch, President and CEO of the Autism Society.

Join us in celebration for 2016 National Autism Awareness Month! National Autism Awareness Month represents an excellent opportunity to promote autism awareness, autism acceptance and to draw attention to the tens of thousands facing an autism diagnosis each year.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Hosted by</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 2</td>
<td>Autism Night with the Green Bay Gamblers, Resch Center, Green Bay</td>
<td>Hosted by the Autism Society of Wisconsin &amp; the Green Bay Gamblers</td>
<td>Email <a href="mailto:mvandevelden@asw4autism.org">mvandevelden@asw4autism.org</a> or call 920.973.6636 for more information.</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 4</td>
<td>New to Autism Presentation, Wauwatosa</td>
<td>Hosted by the Autism Society of Southeastern Wisconsin</td>
<td>Call 414.988.1260 or email <a href="mailto:info@assew.org">info@assew.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>April 7-9</td>
<td>2016 Annual Conference, Kalahari Convention Center, Wisconsin Dells</td>
<td>Hosted by the Autism Society of Wisconsin</td>
<td>Email <a href="mailto:mvandevelden@asw4autism.org">mvandevelden@asw4autism.org</a> or call 920.973.6636 for more information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 16</td>
<td>2016 Autism Gala—Pfister Hotel, Milwaukee</td>
<td>Hosted by the Autism Society of Southeastern Wisconsin</td>
<td>An evening of fun, food and festivities. More details at <a href="http://www.assew.org">www.assew.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>April 17</td>
<td>Bowl-a-thon at Ashwaubenon Lanes in Green Bay</td>
<td>Hosted by the Autism Society of the Northeast WI</td>
<td>The cost is $12 per person, including bowling, shoes, pizza, and soda. Contact</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:administrator@asnew.org">administrator@asnew.org</a></td>
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<td>April 17</td>
<td>One Walk – Big Strides for Autism, 5K Walk—Vilas Park, Madison</td>
<td>Hosted by the Autism Society of South Central WI</td>
<td>For walk details visit <a href="http://www.autismsouthcentral.org">www.autismsouthcentral.org</a> or call 608.630.9147</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 17</td>
<td>Bowl for Autism—Dales Weston Lanes, Wausau</td>
<td>Hosted by the Autism Society of Central Wisconsin</td>
<td>For more information email <a href="mailto:autismsocietycw@gmail.com">autismsocietycw@gmail.com</a> or call 715.370.0987</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 18</td>
<td>Fundraiser at Pizza Ranch, Manitowoc</td>
<td>Hosted by the Autism Society of the Lakeshore</td>
<td>Leave the cooking to Pizza Ranch! Come for fun and support ASL!. For more information</td>
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<td>email <a href="mailto:autismlakeshore@gmail.com">autismlakeshore@gmail.com</a> or call 920.652.0964</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 21</td>
<td>A Panel Discussion from Individuals on the Spectrum – ASL office, Manitowoc</td>
<td>Hosted by the Autism Society of the Lakeshore</td>
<td>For more information email <a href="mailto:autismlakeshore@gmail.com">autismlakeshore@gmail.com</a> or call 920.652.0964</td>
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<td>April 25,</td>
<td>Parent-Educator Workshop: Assistive Technology— Miron Construction, Neenah</td>
<td>Hosted by the Autism Society of the Fox Valley</td>
<td>Claire Habeck, Assistive Technology Coordinator, will talk about low to high AT</td>
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<td>6:00–8:00</td>
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<td>supports, apps, IEP accommodations, accessibility issues and more. Please have them</td>
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<td>RSVP or questions to: <a href="mailto:asfvevents@autismfoxvalley.org">asfvevents@autismfoxvalley.org</a></td>
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Positivity + Inclusion = Good Things for Folks with Autism  
By: Adityarup “Rup” Charkravorty, Ph.D

Recently, the CDC estimated that more than 2.2% of children in the US have autism spectrum disorders (ASD).

As these children with ASD transition to adulthood many of them show improvement of their symptoms. But how much symptoms improve over time often differs widely between individuals.

Could these differences be tied to experiences that individuals with ASD have while growing up?

If so, could well-designed interventions provide a lifetime of meaningful and steady progress for these individuals?

These are questions that Marsha Mailick, Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Education, and her fellow researchers at the Waisman Center Lifespan Family Research Program set out to answer.

Ashley Woodman, now at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, and previously a postdoctoral researcher at the Lifespan Family Research Program—led by Mailick and Jan Greenberg—studied 364 families who had been followed for more than a decade. Each family included a child with ASD who was at least ten years old.

In the past, when researchers studied individuals with ASD, they often “looked at the progression of a single functional domain, or behavior, such as the ability to perform daily tasks,” says Woodman.

But Mailick, Woodman and the other researchers wanted to assemble a more complete picture of each of the individuals they were following.

And taking this ‘person-centered’ approach is important “because that’s how we all travel through life; we all have many strengths...and some areas of challenge,” says Waisman Center researcher Leann Smith, who also contributed to the study.

So, instead of looking at only one behavior Waisman researchers combined three different variables for their analyses.

They looked at: 1) challenging behaviors, such as being uncooperative or disruptive, 2) the severity of autism symptoms and 3) independence in activities of daily living, from making a sandwich to handling finances.

“To our knowledge, this is the first study to combine variable-centered and person-centered approaches,” says Woodman.

After following hundreds of individuals with ASD for years, Mailick and her colleagues explored whether there were subgroups whose symptoms might be changing differently from one another.

They found two such groups.

One group showed consistent improvement—reduction in ASD symptoms, fewer challenging behaviors, and an increased ability to perform daily activities. The second group consisted of individuals whose behaviors didn't change much over time.
Importantly, "there wasn't a group whose functioning became worse with time, at least during the years of our study" says Woodman.

Once they found these two groups, the researchers wondered if there were ways to predict which group an individual with ASD would end up in.

"You know, we are never just a person in a void; we are always a person in a context, some sort of setting or situation," says Smith. "We can’t pull ourselves apart and be entirely separate from the places we go, the people we interact with and the things we see or experience."

So the researchers focused on two environments that youth are most often immersed in: their families and their schools.

"We measured the positivity of the family environment and the extent to which the child was included in 'regular' educational settings rather than segregated in special education," says Mailick.

Maternal positivity—or how optimistic and encouraging a mother is in relation to her child—increased the chance that an individual with ASD would belong to the group that showed consistent improvement of behaviors and symptoms.

And those who had experienced any form of inclusion in school were between three and five times more likely to be a member of the group that showed behavioral improvements over time, compared to individuals who had not spent any interval in an inclusive school environment. The study thus provides good evidence that investing in inclusive education has decades-long pay-off for society.

Crucially, "these powerful positive effects, both within the family and in schools, were important regardless of level of intellectual disability," says Woodman.

"This research is a message of hope that says that families can truly make a difference in the lives of individuals with autism," says Mailick. "It also highlights the importance of providing support to families that can help maintain this positive home environment."

This research was published earlier this year in the Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders. For more information contact Teresa Palumbo at palumbo@waisman.wisc.edu

You can volunteer for a research study or learn more about Waisman Center research at http://www.waisman.wisc.edu/participate.htm
In recognition of Autism Awareness Month, which is every April, the Autism Society of Wisconsin sponsors an Annual Autism Awareness Essay Contest. We are spotlighting one of the winning essays from Britta Hesselberg, Grade 11 from Columbus High School, Columbus.

Autism, to many people, is a quality that some might say is the difference that makes a human "normal" and "different". But who says being "different" is a bad thing? Rather than looking down upon those who are different, we should embrace our differences and learn from each other's experiences.

For me, personally, I grew up attending a very small school with little to no diversity. We didn't have any kids with disabilities attending our school, therefore, I had no experience with any peers with autism. As I entered high school, it was a whole different story. My school offers a club called Project Unify - where kids with and without disabilities come together and display inclusion and respect among our peers and school atmosphere. I felt intimidated to join at first, but I had always been interested in helping my peers with special needs. I began to doubt myself, wondering, "Will these kids like me?" or, "Am I suitable for this?". Little did I know, meeting my peers, Jena and Alex, would change my life in the most positive way imaginable.

Each day when I walk into Project Unify, as I am immediately greeted with contagious smiles and big bear hugs from both Jena and Alex, my day instantly becomes better. For about thirty minutes a day, five days a week, I get to spend my time with my peers in our school's Project Unify. Although thirty minutes a day doesn't seem like a large amount of time, it only took that short amount for me to realize that spending time with kids like Jena and Alex is what I want to do for the rest of my life. Many people ask me why I wish to pursue this career. I often get told, "You won't make any money!", or "That's nice of you, but you'll burn out in a couple years." When I first announced my passion and I received this feedback, I felt flustered and almost embarrassed. At first, I felt as if I owed them an explanation; why it makes me happy or why money is no concern to me. In spite of this, I realized that however I chose to explain myself, my words are only words to them; they will never fully grasp the happiness that kids like Jena and Alex bring me unless they become lucky enough to know someone with autism. It is the pride all over Alex's face when he gets a strike when bowling, the laughs I share with Jena when she makes a silly face at me, and it's the smiles that both of them carry all day long that inspire me to become a special education teacher. They don't have a judgmental bone in their body and look to see the good in everyone; I strive to be like them. It is the kind of happiness I hope everyone may experience one day, because knowing someone with autism is a special kind of happiness and is hard to find.

Jena and Alex have autism; to many people, this means they have some sort of disadvantage. That their disability must consume their lives and they know nothing beyond their intellectual impairment. But, in all reality, it is the exact opposite. Jena and Alex have inspired not only myself, but the rest of our community as well. They are role models; they display their perseverance, love, courage, and strength every day and never seize to impress our student body. Each day in Project Unify, it is easy to see these traits when we play a new game or activity. If Alex just can't kick the ball in the right direction or if Jena can't make it to the base in time, they keep trying until they succeed. And while they do, they have a smile on their face the entire time. This kind of behavior is displayed in whatever they do in life, and I find that to be extremely inspiring. We all feel this way sometimes; we feel as
though we can’t go on when life continues to get tougher. Jena, Alex, or anyone else with autism, tackle the same obstacle every day. The difference, however, is how they handle it. I have seen both Jena and Alex on their bad days; they feel as though they can’t keep going, they are tired, and they feel like giving up. But, without a second thought, they continue to make the best out of the day and to keep smiling while doing it. Isn’t that an act we all should mimic in our everyday lives? It is their perseverance that shines through and is evident to everyone; taking it day by day with a smile on their face like there isn’t anything they can’t do.

My greatest and most sincere gratitude go to Jena and Alex. The engaging compassion and innocence in their eyes is what inspires me and makes me the person I am today. They have taught me the ability of compassion, how to love unconditionally and to accept everyone for who they are. Alex and Jena, the ones who are “different”, have taught me more about myself and life more than anyone ever has and will ever teach me.

### Autism Sibling Support Project
Grant Announcement

The Autism Society of Wisconsin is pleased to announce it has received a $4,850 grant from Autism Speaks. The grant will fund a one-year Autism Sibling Support project in Wisconsin, designed to provide support to brothers and sisters of children on the autism spectrum.

Siblings of children with autism are in the position to have a significant impact on the life of their brother or sister with autism for many reasons. The sibling relationship is likely to be the longest lasting relationship in the family over the course of the lifetime. Siblings, with the exception of the child’s parents, will generally spend more time with a child with autism than almost any other person. For these reasons, it is extremely important that siblings of children with autism have access to information and support programs that will help them in their role as a sibling.

Through the Autism Sibling Support project, the Autism Society of Wisconsin plans to hold at least 6 Sibshops throughout Wisconsin, in partnership with WisconSibs. A Sibshop is a workshop model developed by Don Meyer that offers peer support and education to brothers and sisters of children with special health and developmental needs, within a recreational context. The Autism Sibling Support project will also provide information to parents about supporting siblings through a newsletter article, webinar, and distribution of resources.

The Autism Society of Wisconsin’s mission is to improve the lives of all affected by autism. We’re excited to extend our support services to siblings through this new project. We’ll have more details about upcoming Sibshops later this year.
Change for Autism!

It’s not too late to sign up for the Change for Autism campaign. Join our efforts to educate students about autism while raising money for the Autism Society of Wisconsin!

How can you get involved?

- Contact the Autism Society of Wisconsin to let us know your school plans to participate.
- Share facts about autism throughout the month of April (provided by the Autism Society of Wisconsin).
- Collect containers (like empty milk jugs) for each classroom to hold change.
- Spread the word and start collecting spare change throughout the month of April.
- At the end of April, count your change and report your totals back to the Autism Society of Wisconsin.

The school that raises the most money will win a pizza party for the top 3 classrooms! All participating schools will be entered in a drawing to win two free registrations to an Autism Society of Wisconsin conference.

Name of School ____________________________________________________________
Address of School ___________________________________________________________
Number of Students _______________________________________________________
Number of Classrooms _______________________________________________________
Contact Person _____________________________________________________________
Phone _________________________   Email _____________________________________

Please send completed forms to:
Autism Society of Wisconsin
1477 Kenwood Dr.
Menasha, WI 54952
Fax: 920-558-4611
Email: kcooper@asw4autism.org
Supporting Mental Health and Anxiety Needs of Students with Autism

This event is being held in collaboration with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Autism Program Support Teachers (PSTs) and the University of Wisconsin—Superior

May 4, 2016—Superior
OR
May 6, 2016—Oshkosh

Keynote: Megan Farley (UW Madison / Waisman Center), Speaking on topic of Autism, Anxiety and Mental Health

Panel: Former Students Sharing "Real Life Stories of Coping with Stress and Anxiety in School"

Sectionals: Participants choose 2 of 4 options provided twice during the day.

**Oshkosh AND Superior Sectionals**
Supports for Anxiety in Classroom, Connie Persike, MS, SLP-CCC/Jessica Nichols, BA
Social and Behavioral Differences for Females and Males with ASD, Megan Farley

**Oshkosh Sectionals Only**
Universal Mental Health Frameworks and Supports, Christie Gause-Bemis, WDPI
Sectional TBD

**Superior Sectionals Only**
Supporting Mental Health / Anxiety in Home and Transitioning to School, Liz Wabindato, WSPEI / DTAN
Supports for Students with ASD during the Transition to Adulthood, Leann Smith, UW Madison / Waisman

CoP and DPI Updates: During Lunch
Breakfast and Lunch Provided
Start / End Times to be determined but plan on an 8:00 start in Oshkosh and 9:00 start in Superior (North Woods time). End Times for both will be between 3:00 to 4:30.

Registration is now open at [http://goo.gl/forms/hybdxqzdVp](http://goo.gl/forms/hybdxqzdVp)
For more information, visit [http://www.waisman.wisc.edu/connections/future_meetings.php](http://www.waisman.wisc.edu/connections/future_meetings.php)

**Meeting Information for May 4, 2016, 9:00 am**
University of Wisconsin—Superior, Yellow jacket Union
1605 Catlin Avenue
Superior, WI 54880
(715) 394-8244
https://www.uwsuper.edu/yu/index.cfm

**Meeting Information for May 6, 2016, 8:00 am**
Best Western Premier Waterfront Hotel and Convention Center
1 North Main Street
Oshkosh, WI 54901
(920) 230-1900
http://oshkoshwaterfronthotel.com/
Giving Opportunities

Invest in the future of the Autism Society of Wisconsin!

Explore all the ways to give:

- **Employee/Matching Gifts** – Many employers encourage employees to give by matching employee gifts dollar-for-dollar. Check with your human resource department to find out more.

- **Honorary** – Celebrate a birthday, anniversary or other special occasion with a gift honoring a spouse, friend, family member or other loved one.

- **Memorial** – Memorial gifts made to the Autism Society of Wisconsin are to celebrate and honor the life of a loved one.

- **Planned Giving** – Receive tax and other financial benefits while giving to the Autism Society. Plan a gift for the future by working with a financial advisor to set up an IRA Charitable Rollover, trust or bequest, or beneficiary designation on a life insurance policy.

- **Unrestricted Giving** – Give a cash donation that allows us to fund programs which need it most. Donations can be mailed to the ASW office or can be made online through our Network for Good site, accessed from our home page: www.asw4autism.org.

Autism Society of Wisconsin
1477 Kenwood Dr.
Menasha, WI 54952

Please call our office for more information on any of these giving opportunities.
Preconference Workshop, April 7
Robert Pennington, Ph.D BCBA-D
Creating a Climate for Competency: An Instructional Approach to Challenging Behavior

Keynote Address, April 8
Barry Prizant, Ph.D., CCC-SLP
Uniquely Human- A Different Way of Seeing Autism

Keynote Address, April 9
Amy Vaughan Van Hecke, Ph.D
Examining Neuroplasticity in ASD: Response to Evidence-Based Intervention and Indicators of Mental Health


Webinar Series
Don’t forget that all webinars in our Webinar Series are archived and are free to view at anytime.

Archived Webinars include:

- ASD Unplugged: Managing internet, gaming, and social networking use in children and young adults with autism spectrum disorders
- Autism 101
- Autism and the IEP: Matching Services and Supports with the Needs of Students with Autism
- Bullying and Autism in School
- Crisis Safety for the ASD Population
- “Did You Know? Now You Know!”
- Looking Outside: Community Supported Living
- Partnering with your Doctor
- While You Wait...What To Do While You Wait for Autism Services

Visit: www.asw4autism.org/webinars.html
Help us fulfill our mission!

Support the Autism Society of Wisconsin by making a tax deductible gift! All donations are appreciated.

$25  $50  $75  $100  $200  $ Other

Donations may be sent to:
Autism Society of Wisconsin
1477 Kenwood Drive
Menasha, WI  54952

We also accept donations online. Click the Donate Now button on our homepage: www.asw4autism.org

Thank you for your support!