

The Autism Connection

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AUTISM SOCIETY
Improving the Lives of All Affected by Autism
Greater Wisconsin

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Message from the President

Fall is one of my favorite times of the year, and it is definitely a season of change here in Wisconsin. We are also making some changes at the Autism Society of Greater Wisconsin at this time of year, but I hope these changes last much longer than a season. The most exciting new project for our organization is the Autism Friendly Communities project launching soon. The project gives businesses, libraries, theaters, and other community members the opportunity to learn more about the autism community and how to make small changes that could make a huge difference for those with autism accessing their services. Like all movements, we are starting with small steps, but we hope this is the kind of change that will eventually make all our communities more welcoming.

Earlier this fall we announced a process for support groups to become registered with the Autism Society of Greater Wisconsin. Registered support groups will join our network of support and will be listed on our website. For more information on the process, please visit our website: www.autismgreaterwi.org/individual-family-support/supportgroupregistration/

With all of these changes, some things still haven't changed. We continue to host workshops throughout our service area on topics identified by our members. We continue to help individuals and families connect to community resources and supports. And we continue our work towards more accepting and welcoming communities.

I look forward to all the great changes from fall coming to our community!

Robert Peyton
President
Autism Society of Greater Wisconsin



Personal Perspective

On the Spectrum

Noah Walter will be 21 in December and lives in Oshkosh, WI. He is believed to be the only non-verbal student in the history of the Oshkosh Area School District to receive his full diploma (and did so with honors). Noah has a loving mom (Shannon), an amazing dad (Aran), a younger sister (Molly), an older brother (John), an identical twin brother (Mark), and two dogs, Bubba and Pepper. He is happy and energetic, loves music and magazines, and has a serious addiction to Candy Crush.

This fall, the Autism Society of Greater Wisconsin interviewed Noah and his mom, Shannon to learn more about him and his job at 4Imprint:

What is your role at 4Imprint?

Part Time Facilities Support Associate

Describe a typical day at work.

Noah: Dusting, cleaning windows, kitchens, and vacuum.

What is your favorite part of your job?

Noah: Work

What do you find challenging about your job?

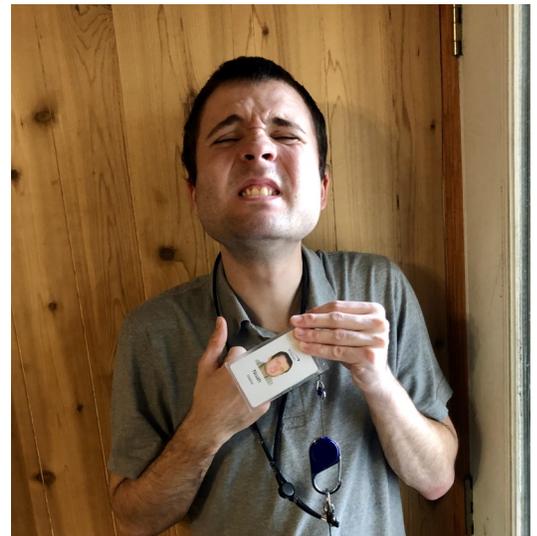
Noah: Gloves

What do you wish co-workers knew about you?

Shannon: Noah is non-verbal, but that doesn't mean he can't talk. He communicates very well and easily using his iPad or iPhone. He can also understand everything people say to him so, even though conversation with Noah might feel a little "different", don't be afraid to strike up a conversation about Candy Crush or favorite kinds of food.

How do you get to and from work?

Noah: Mom, Dad and Molly (sister)



What do you like to do outside of work?

Shannon: Noah enjoys movies, books, music and playing Candy Crush.

Did DVR or school play a role in your employment and work study program?

Shannon: Noah attended a year of Project SEARCH after he graduated (with honors) from Oshkosh North High School. The Oshkosh Area School District, DVR, Goodwill, and Project SEARCH were (and are) instrumental in shaping Noah into who he is today and this has led to his current employed status.



Can you share more about Noah's experience with Project Search and Goodwill and tell more about how they are still involved?

Shannon: Noah attended Project Search at Mercy Medical Center in Oshkosh for 9 months and did 2 different internships. He spent one in Environmental Services and the second on a Patient Unit. Both internships involved Noah cleaning, which is something he loves to do. It quickly became evident that he was thorough and efficient in his job and we chose to pursue a similar job after he graduated. Goodwill was part of his team at Project Search and continues to be part of his team as job coaches now. Goodwill has been wonderful for us as we navigate through this next phase of Noah's life.

How has 4Imprint helped you be successful in your role?

Shannon: Accommodating, helpful, de-stressors, etc... these are words that describe how the staff and employees at 4Imprint have treated Noah and his family. We are so thankful to all.

Would you be willing to expand on any specific accommodations that 4Imprint has made that have been especially helpful?

Shannon: 4imprint started with a small list of things Noah could work on. When it became evident that Noah's abilities exceeded that list they immediately expanded his responsibilities.

Local Affiliate UPCOMING EVENTS

-
- November 3**
1:00–2:30 pm **Autism Society of the Lakeshore Parent Support Group | ASL Office**
702 State Street, Manitowoc, WI, 3rd Floor Learning Center (1–2:30 PM). Childcare is provided. The Friendship Group is also meeting at the same time, on the 3rd Floor, Dome Room.
-
- November 13**
7:00–9:00 pm **Autism Society of the Fox Valley | UWO–Fox Theatre, Menasha**
UWO – Fox Theatre in Menasha is offering an autism–friendly performance of the play “The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night–Time”. The autism–friendly performance offers families a chance to see the show and if you need to talk, stand, move around or stay for just 10 minutes, this is a show for you. And it is FREE! Registration is required! First come, first served. Registration is required at <https://tinyurl.com/y38pj6y7>. Limited to 4 people per family. ** PLEASE NOTE that there are some mature themes and language and this play is recommended for teens and older. **
-
- November 19**
6–7:30 pm **Autism Society of Central Wisconsin | Adult Support Group**
This is a new support group meeting for adults with ASD, providing a safe place for people to come together to share their struggles and successes as they navigate life. Coffee and donuts provided. This meeting will be held the third Tuesday of every month in the Ascension at Home– Ministry Home Care conference room. This building is located next to the 2510 Restaurant.
-
- November 23**
10:15 **Autism Society of Northeast WI | Reel Movie Frozen 2 Marcus Bay Park Cinema, Green Bay**
Please join us for a sensory friendly movie experience! Sound is down and lights are up. ASNEW will cover up to four tickets per family for members. Please try to be there by 10:15 to check in at the front desk. Contact administrator@asnew.org
-
- December 14**
11:00–3:00 **Autism Society of the Lakeshore | Annual Holiday Party**
Come join us at the Wisconsin Maritime Museum for the annual Holiday Party. We have reserved a fun day for you and your family to play and explore the museum, meet other families and celebrate this holiday season together.
-
- December 15**
11:00 am–
1:00 pm **Sensory Superstars Program | Building for Kids, 100 W College Ave., Appleton**
All family members of children with autism can spend time exploring the museum at NO COST. Join us for a lower sensory experience and special programming created especially for children on the autism spectrum. The theme for December is “Winter Senses”.
-

CHANGE FOR AUTISM



Change for Autism is a campaign through the Autism Society of Greater Wisconsin designed to encourage community members to create meaningful change for people with autism in our schools and communities. Whether you're part of a group, business, school, or a passionate individual hoping to ignite change, there is a place for you within the Change for Autism campaign!

April will be here before you know it! Will you commit to joining us to making meaningful change?

Together we can help our communities understand autism and create inclusive opportunities to make everyone feel welcome.

HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?



Ask your school to join the Change for Autism campaign. Schools will be receive an autism awareness toolkit and will be expected to host a coin drive to benefit the Autism Society of Greater Wisconsin.



Share your thoughts to raise awareness and support others! What do you wish others knew? Share your experiences through our Change for Autism survey to be included in our social media awareness campaign.



Host a sensory friendly event at your local library, movie theater, children's museum, etc. Check out our tip sheet for making sensory accommodations at our Change for Autism web page.



Make a donation to the Autism Society of Greater Wisconsin to support our programs or services. Or find a creative way to host a fundraiser—collecting change, host a jean day, or host a Facebook fundraiser.

autismgreaterwi.org/change-for-autism



WISCONSIN *Autism* CONFERENCE



APRIL 30-MAY 2, 2020 | WISCONSIN DELLS

Pre-Conference Workshops

- 1 Interoception, The Eighth Sense: Practical Solutions for Promoting Self-Regulation, Positive Behavior, Language Development and Social Participation**
FULL DAY WORKSHOP | Presented by Kelly Mahler
- 2 Regulation and Disability Related-Needs: Developing College and Career Ready IEPs**
HALF DAY WORKSHOP | Presented by DPI and Discretionary Grant Staff
- 3 Comprehensive Evaluation for Special Education Eligibility**
HALF DAY WORKSHOP | Presented by DPI and Discretionary Grant Staff
- 4 Using Video Modeling and High Tech Supports**
HALF DAY WORKSHOP | Presented by Sharon Hammer and Lisa Ladson
- 5 Navigating the IEP Process**
HALF DAY WORKSHOP | Presented by WSPEI's Caroline Rossing

Keynote Speakers



Friday,
May 1st

JUDY ENDOW

Autistically Thriving

Judy's newest work, *Autistically Thriving: Reading Comprehension, Conversational Engagement and Living a Self-Determined Life Based on Autistic Neurology*, represents a shift in how autistic support is thought about and implemented. Judy's keynote includes who autistic people are and how they comfortably function, going over key elements of taking in, processing, storing and retrieving information along with autistic thinking style. Numerous examples are included so autistic individuals, parents, educators and therapy providers will come to understand that when autistics are honored for who they are and supported for who they want to be in this world they can truly thrive!



Saturday,
May 2nd

HALEY MOSS

Assembly Required

Autism does not come with an instruction manual, but it does come with lots of magical parts and important tools to utilize to build the best life possible. *Assembly Required* is the story of Haley Moss: an autistic attorney who has gone from a nonverbal child diagnosed with autism at age 3, to an author, artist, attorney, and autism advocate. This keynote explores Haley's journey, the assembly of her village, finding her written and spoken voice, looking to the future full of hope, inspiration, and excitement as she writes the next, ongoing chapter in her life as a practicing lawyer. This keynote also explores neurodiversity, acceptance, and perspectives of how society views autism and related disabilities.

Call for Proposals

The deadline for proposals to present a breakout session at the Autism Society of Greater Wisconsin's 31st Annual Conference is November 12, 2019!

The purpose of the Wisconsin Autism Conference is to provide a wide range of information to those affected by autism. Our goal is to provide relevant information for attendees at all levels, including those who are new to autism and those who have years of experience.

We're looking for high quality proposals that include practical strategies and evidence based research addressing a range of issues facing individuals with autism and their families. Breakout sessions take place on Friday and Saturday, lasting one hour and fifteen minutes each. We are not able to offer an honorarium or cover expenses for any presenters.

Topic ideas include:

- Girls/women on the spectrum
- Adult focused sessions
- Employment
- Adolescence/puberty
- Mental health; depression, anxiety, and PTSD
- Twice exceptional
- LGBTQIA and ASD
- Supports for non-verbal individuals with ASD
- Sensory topics

**SUBMISSION
DEADLINE:**

November 12, 2019

Submit a proposal here: www.surveymonkey.com/r/6CMCWPY

Advertise | Sponsor | Exhibit

We offer opportunities for businesses and organizations to participate in conference through exhibiting, advertising, or sponsoring. Organizations may sign up to have an exhibit table from Thursday, April 30th—Saturday, May 2nd to showcase their services and resources. Guests will have many opportunities throughout the conference to visit the exhibit hall to learn more about your organization. Sponsorship and advertising opportunities are also offered for extra recognition during the conference.. If interested in any of these opportunities, please look for more information at our website for more information: www.autismgreaterwi.org

Early Bird Registration Opens Soon!

www.autismgreaterwi.org

Community Conversation



Chippewa Valley

On the evening of October 2, 2019, the Autism Society Affiliates of Greater Wisconsin and Chippewa Valley hosted a community conversation and resource fair in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. The goal of the event was to bring community members, individuals affected by autism, family members and other stakeholders together to discuss what is going well area and what could be going better for families in the Chippewa Valley .

The event began with a resource fair and time for networking. With 14 resource tables, attendees were able to learn about community agencies like the Western Regional Center for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs, Shepherd's College, Nature's Edge Therapy Center, and more.

After networking, the event featured small group discussions focusing on what questions about what resources are helpful for those in the Chippewa Valley area and what would need to change in the future for individuals and families to be able to maximize their quality of life to the fullest extent.

The Autism Society of Greater Wisconsin and its Chippewa Valley affiliate are excited to move forward with planning for future programming in the Chippewa Valley area based on the discussions from this event. A autism-related Chippewa Valley resource guide will also be available soon as an outcome of this event.



For more information about this event or to get more involved in the Chippewa Valley area, please contact Kirsten Cooper at kcooper@autismgreaterwi.org or 920-215-3303.

Ask the Experts



My child is five years old and we're worried about his diet. He doesn't like any meat (with the exception of chicken nuggets) and eats very few vegetables. He enjoys crackers, chips, cookies, french fries and most crunchy foods. We worry about this affecting his overall health and would like to expand his diet to include healthier foods. How can we expand his diet while still honoring his hyper sensitivity to smells and taste/texture of foods?

Rachelle Enemuoh, CCC-SLP

Mealtimes involve social interaction, sensory experiences, engagement expectations, fine motor coordination, physical strength, and the actual act of oral consumption. This is a lot for a child with autism to process during a mealtime! Crackers, cookies, french fries, and the like are all beige in color and consistent in their taste and appearance. There's a reason for these similarities! The predictability and consistency make these foods easier to process than homemade dishes, fruits, or vegetables. They've become his "safe" foods.

In order to work towards expanding his diet, promote small changes to his preferred foods. This will slowly

encourage variety in his diet. To do this, begin by making small changes to his preferred foods by changing the shape, color, texture, or taste of the food. For example, rather than giving him the same brand or shape of chicken nugget for dinner two nights in a row, change the shape of nugget at each meal. Cookie cutters are a fun way to change the shape of foods! By slowly continuing to make changes, you will increase his comfort with other types of related, yet different foods, which will translate to his tolerance for trying other new foods too!

For family meals, I often recommend use of a "learning plate." This is a

separate plate at the table for foods that he will learn about during the meal. Have your child decide if he would like each of the foods on his plate or on his "learning plate." This allows him to have a sense of control on where the food is placed while you as the parent increase his exposure to each food. While this does not mask the smell of your foods, it will give him a sense of control. During the meal, explore each of the "learning plate" foods with your child. The focus is to explore using his senses. How does it look? What does it feel like? This encourages conversation and allows for his brain to process these individual components of the food in a safe and positive way.

Brittany St. John, OTR/L & Karla Ausderau, PhD, OTR/L

Great question! Overall, I would encourage you to do the best you can to keep eating fun and light when you implement any mealtime strategies. Children are more likely to explore new foods if they can be playful or opportunities are provided to explore in very small steps. This can be incredibly hard when you are concerned about the quality of your

child's diet and your child is hypersensitive to many food properties.

Here are some beginning strategies: Adding new foods can take time and lots of repeat exposures-maybe even 40, 80, 100 or more! Continue to offer new foods even if your child has never eaten them. You can provide exposure

by even just having the non-preferred food on the table near your child. Start with introducing small changes to foods that your child already eats to increase flexibility. For example, try a different brand of chicken nuggets or potatoes that are fried in a different shape (steak french fries compared to crinkle french fries).

Offer foods that have similar sensory properties that your child prefers. For example, if your child prefers crunchy foods, but you are hoping to add fruits and vegetables, consider trying crunchy vegetable sticks, dried 100% fruit leathers, or one of many other freeze-dried fruits/vegetables that are now available.

Explore new foods playfully – touch and smell the food without the pressure of eating it, talking about the food properties. For example, what does it look like, smell like, sound like

when someone else eats it, or does anyone else in your family eat it?

Let your child give feedback on the food – is it a food that they might eat sometimes? Do they like it more or less than the last time they tried it? What if the food was prepared in a different way? What do they like or not like about it?

Also, allow your child to provide feedback using non-verbal methods such as a thumbs up, down, or in the middle.

Include your child in mealtime preparation as often as possible for increased food exposure. This may include setting the table or preparing a part of the meal such as helping dish up food for another family member, getting something out of the refrigerator, stirring, pouring, etc.

Jacqueline Braemer, Parent

I have been in a similar situation. First of all, you are doing great if he will eat chicken nuggets and some vegetables! It took my son until age 6 to eat carrots (which is his only vegetable).

We went through a sensory feeding group with our speech therapist. The ultimate goal was to explore different foods without forcing the child to eat it. They talked about the color, shape, texture, and smell. My son had to pick it up and at least smell the item. This works on bringing different foods to their face and tolerating it.

The next step was to bring the item and touch it to the lips. Then touch it with their tongue. Then hold it in

their teeth. And eventually taking a bite. He was allowed to spit the food out if he couldn't tolerate chewing the item yet. All of this takes time and needs to be done at the pace of the child. It's a lot of repetition and eventually you will know if the child just truly doesn't like the taste.

I also created a game for my kids. I took a paper plate and divided it into 6-8 pie pieces and cut up numbers to equal the pie pieces on the plate. We made a plate for each person that was here (including our therapists). I then put a small amount of food on each pie place and everyone had the same thing. So for example, spot 1 had cheese and spot 2 had carrots. There was always something fun and familiar in some of the spots

but a few had new things. We would take turns drawing the numbers. If the #4 was drawn, then everyone had to eat what was in spot #4.

If you're giving supplements, I have one last suggestion. There are powdered supplements that say they are odorless and tasteless but this didn't always work for us because my child was able to sniff it out. I found that Doritos can hide a lot. The oils let the powders stick and the seasoning is so strong that it overcomes the slight taste. If they are going to have the "junk" food, at least we can make it more nutritious!

Take a deep breath. Take it slow. Celebrate the little accomplishments. Good Luck!

Ask the Experts is a new column in the Autism Society of Greater Wisconsin newsletter. Questions can be submitted to info@autismgreaterwi.org with "Ask the Experts" in the subject line.

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