



MARCH 2019

PARENT NEWSLETTER

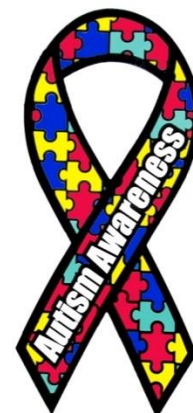
From the Autism Spectrum Disorder Department at Easterseals Joliet Region

Visit our [website](#) or find us on [Facebook](#)

What's Going On At Easterseals...

Annual Awareness Open House

This year's open house will be on **Wednesday April 17th from 1:00 to 6:00**. This event is a super fun, interactive day for kids and families. Every year this wonderful event offers a variety of drop-in therapy groups, free developmental and autism screenings, a community resource fair, child safety IDs and more! Plus refreshments, professional networking and fun giveaways to raise awareness for Autism Awareness Month and The Week of the Young Child. Call 815-927-5465 for more information. A flyer will be emailed soon with a detailed event schedule. We hope to see everyone there!



We are still seeking non-profit community organizations and programs that would like to have table space in our resource room to provide information to families regarding summer camps, recreational opportunities and resources. Contact Kimberly at 815-725-2194 x263 if you would like to reserve a table or drop off printed materials.

Celebration of Giving Telethon 2019

Easterseals' Regional Celebration of Giving Telethon will be held **Saturday, April 13, 2019** at the Jacob Henry Mansion. It is an exciting blend of the area's finest entertainment and enlightening segments showcasing Easterseals' important work in creating solutions and changing lives. The Telethon is streamed live and offered on local stations, but we also invite you to come join us in our live audience to enjoy the many talent acts and spread the word about the services at Easterseals!



Calling All Volunteers!

Easterseals is looking for volunteers who are interested in spending time with children, getting experience in a pediatric setting and making a difference in their community. We are currently in need for volunteer assistance with our childcare during parent support group, and volunteers to assist during summer therapy groups. Volunteers must be 18 years old to have direct contact with children, be able to pass a background check provided through Easterseals, and commit to a regular schedule which can range from a few hours per week to a few hours per month. We also have opportunities for light office work and assistance at events. If you are interested please contact Teresa Summers at tsummers@joliet.easterseals.com or call our development office at 815-927-5455.

Parents Raising Children with ASDs

Our parent support group continues to meet the **second Wednesday of every month from 6:00 – 7:30**. This program is a wonderful way to meet other parents, get information and get connected to resources in your community. The next meeting will be on **Wednesday, April 10th**. As always, childcare will be provided for those who sign up ahead of time by Easter Seals staff. Both the group and childcare are free of charge. Please call Laura with any questions or to register for childcare at 815-927-5466. You can be added to the reminder email for parent group by emailing Laura at lgardner@joliet.easterseals.com

Grupo de Apoyo Para Padres de Familias que Hablan Espanol (Support Group for Spanish Speaking Parents)

This is a very well attended parent support group for families that have children with Autism and would like to meet other parents, get information and stay connected to community resources. The group is led by a social worker from our Autism Department and a translator from our parent education program. Group meets **the first Friday of every month from 9:30 – 10:30 a.m.** **The next meeting will be on Friday April 5th**. This group is open to all parents, and children are welcome to attend with their parents. Please contact Blanca with questions at 815-927-5494.

Free Developmental & Autism Screenings

Easterseals offers multiple ways for parents to complete a developmental screening for their child. Parents and caregivers can complete a free online screening tool on the Easterseals website which you can find here: <http://www.easterseals.com/mtffc/> If you would prefer for your child to be screened in person by an Easterseals' staff member, drop by to our Barney location on the second Friday of every month from 9:00 to 11:00, no appointment required! **The next screening day will be April 12th**. We will have several staff on hand to complete developmental screenings for children age birth to 5 years old, and Autism screenings for children age 18 months to 18 years old. They will be able to recommend to you whether your child is in need of a full evaluation and explain how you can set up that process through either Easterseals or other community programs that are available. Contact Karrie if you have any questions about our screenings at 815-927-5471.

Summer Therapy Groups

Planning for summer is well under way! Our Summer Therapy Groups will be announced the second week of April and will be posted on our website, our facebook page and flyers will be available at our center. We will also send an email out with a summary of all of the groups available. There are groups for every age and ability – don't forget to sign your child up!

What's Going On In Your Community...

World Autism Awareness Day is Monday April 2, 2019 – and April is Autism Awareness Month



World Autism Awareness Day (WAAD) 2019 is on **Monday April 2nd**. It was designated under by the United Nations General Assembly resolution "62/139. World Autism Awareness Day," adopted on December 18, 2007, proposed by Representatives of the State Qatar, and supported by all member states. It is a day to bring recognition and awareness to individuals living with Autism Spectrum Disorders and their loved ones.

There are many ways to recognize World Autism Awareness and Autism Awareness Month in your community – do something that is meaningful to your family!

One option is the “Light It Up Blue” movement started by Autism Speaks. They have a website that shares ideas on how to “light up” on

April 2nd <https://www.autismspeaks.org/wam/how-to-liub>

You can also visit their website for pictures of famous buildings and landmarks around the world that light it up blue for Autism.



Therapy Resources

Autism Therapy Assistance Grant

The Chicago Autism Project is offering up to \$10,000 for an Autism Therapy Assistance Grant. The grant program provides support for life-changing services including speech, ABA, occupational, feeding, and physical therapy. The Chicago Autism Project is a certified 501© (3) nonprofit dedicated to helping families impacted by autism. You can learn more about the mission and programs at ChicagoAutismProject.org. Families can apply online in minutes at: <https://chicagoautismproject.org/Autism-Therapy-Grant/>

Recreational & Social Opportunities

Merchant Street Art Gallery of Artists with Autism

The Merchant Street Art Gallery features art shows, classes and events celebrating artists with Autism Spectrum Disorder. They are located at 356 Merchant Street Kankakee, IL and can be reached at 815-685-9057 or info@merchantstreetartgallery.org You can visit their website at www.merchantstreetartgallery.org to read about their mission and see their calendar of events.

Recurring Monthly Events

These events are going on every month out in your community. Please contact them directly for more information!

Sensory Sensitive Sundays at Chuck E Cheese

Chuck E Cheese recently announced it will now be **open two hours early on the first Sunday of every month**, specifically for children with autism and other special needs. During these hours there will be reduced lighting and noise, while still offering the food and games Chuck E Cheese is known for. **The next Sensory Sensitive Sunday will occur on March 3rd** from 9am-11am at the Joliet and Villa Park locations, and from 8am-10am at the Naperville and Tinley Park locations.

Sensory Friendly Films at AMC

AMC has EXPANDED their Sensory Friendly Film program to include some evening hours with films geared towards an older crowd! The auditoriums dedicated to the program have their lights up, the sound turned down and audience members are invited to get up and dance, walk, shout or sing! They will now be on the **Tuesday evenings AND every second and fourth Saturday every month**. To find specific showtimes, more information, and nearby theaters: <http://www.amctheatres.com/programs/sensory-friendly-films>



DuPage Children's Museum Special Needs Nights

Did you know that the DuPage Children's Museum has a dedicated night for families of children with special needs? They do! It is the **third Thursday of every month from 4:30pm-5:30pm**. It is a time designated for the families of children with special needs to enjoy the museum in an inclusive, typically quieter, less crowded atmosphere. They have a creativity drop-in studio that implements sensory-based activities with a different theme every week along with purposeful play with peers,

adaptive equipment, and guides to help parents use the exhibits for therapeutic benefit. There is also special needs story time going on at the same time! Admission is \$11 per person, ages 1-59, and \$10 for anyone over 60. For more information go to their website at <http://dupagechildrens.org/>

NAMI of Will-Grundy: Family Support Group

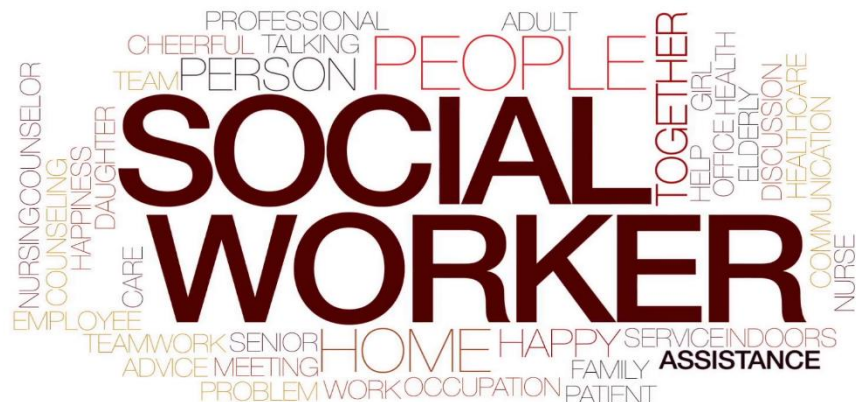
NAMI (National Alliance for Mental Illness) Family Support Group is a peer-led support group for family members, caregivers and loved ones of individuals living with mental illness. Families can gain insight from the challenges and successes of others facing similar circumstances. NAMI's Support Groups are unique because they follow a structured model, ensuring everyone has an opportunity to be heard and to get what they need. NAMI Will-Grundy offers a variety of locations and times for these free support groups. They are also working to put together additional support groups for parents and family members who speak Spanish! For more information visit <http://namiwillgrundy.org/familysupport/> or contact NAMI Will-Grundy at (815) 731-9103 (call returned within 48 hours) or email info@namiwillgrundy.org.

Do you have an event coming up that would be of interest to families that have children with special needs? We help to spread the word about events that are reasonably priced and promote awareness, inclusion, learning opportunities and fun for the special needs community! Please submit your events to lgardner@joliet.easterseal.com to be considered for our next newsletter

Articles of the Month

March is National Social Work Month, a time to bring awareness to all of the ways social workers contribute to our communities. At Easterseals social workers play a role in many of our programs and in the lives of our clients. Thank you for all that you do!

Kimberly Bosh
Lauren Fitzgerald
Laura Gardner
Pam Howard
Karen Jackson
Valerie Lentz
Regina Porter



This is the press release from the National Association of Social Workers (NASW)

Social Work Month in March highlights the ways Social Workers Empower Others. This year's theme is "Elevate Social Work!"

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is helping lead this year's Social Work Month celebration in March with a campaign centered around the theme "Elevate Social Work!" The campaign will inform the public and legislators about the crucial role social workers for more than century have played in improving our society and empowering others, so they live to their fullest potential. For instance, Social Worker of the Year Kimber Nicoletti-Martinez founded an organization to mobilize farm workers and low-wage immigrant communities in Indiana, California, Pennsylvania and Arizona to prevent child sex abuse. Social workers such as social reformer Jane Addams, former Labor Secretary Frances Perkins, and civil rights leaders Dorothy Height and Whitney Young have helped Americans secure voting rights, Social Security, unemployment insurance, and other programs. Today social workers play a tremendous role in supporting families that have loved ones with developmental and behavioral health conditions through direct service, supportive service, advocacy and empowerment. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics social work continues to be one of the fastest growing careers in the nation, with more than 100,000 people expected to enter the field in just seven years. You can find social workers literally everywhere in our society. For example, they are in schools helping students overcome life challenges, so students can get the best possible education. They're in clinics, hospitals and mental health centers helping people recover; and in federal, state and local government pushing for legislation and regulations to improve quality of life. Many people may not know social workers account for the largest group of mental health service providers in the United States or that the Veterans Administration is the largest employer of social workers with a master's degree. Despite the invaluable work that social workers do, their salaries tend

to lag that of other helping professions such as high school teachers, nurses and police. Part of the 2019 Social Work Month campaign will be to start a podcast series with social work and other experts aimed at getting ideas to address the salary disparity. The services of social workers are needed now more than ever before as the nation grapples with issues such as income equality, the opioid addiction crisis, the environment and continued struggle for equal rights for all. During Social Work Month we hope you will take time to learn more about the profession and support the work of social workers in improving the lives of individuals and families and our society.

My child is nonverbal. Anything new that might help him communicate better?

October 9, 2018

www.autismspeaks.org Got Questions?

The answer below comes from speech-language pathologists Cynthia Green, Kameron Beaulieu, and Jill Dolata of the Autism Speaks Autism Treatment Network (ATN). Their ATN work at the Oregon Health & Science University's Child Development and Rehabilitation Center involves individualized parent training using a 24-week program that improves children's social communication skills.

Today, parents and therapists have many new applications and devices that support a child's nonverbal communication. First and foremost, however, we strongly recommend an insightful look at how your nonverbal child communicates—in other words, how he sends messages to others.

As you and other parents of children with autism know well, non-verbal does not mean non-communicative. So we always want to start with a good understanding of children's current

communication level before attempting to help them move to the next level.

We regularly use the Communication Matrix, a skills assessment designed to evaluate children's communication abilities. This tool is unique in measuring all possible communicative behaviors, including: pre-intentional (involuntary actions, including crying when wet or hungry); intentional (actions such as fussing and turning away that are not primarily intended for communication); unconventional (tugging, crowding to get attention); conventional communication (head nodding, pointing, etc.); concrete symbols (pantomime, "buzzzzz" to mean "bee"); abstract symbols (single words, manual signs); and language (oral and written word combinations, American Sign Language).

To be successful communicators, children need to see that their actions influence those around them, and they must *want* to communicate. Sometimes, it's difficult to determine when nonverbal children are sending intentional messages—particularly when they prefer to play by themselves, engage in self-stimulating behaviors or have difficulty sustaining interactions.

There are several programs designed to initiate positive interactions and increase communication in children with autism, including First Things First, Indirect Language Stimulation, DIR/Floortime, the Hanen program, the Early Start Denver Model, and the Autism Parent Training Program. These programs have many similar components including putting yourself at your child's eye level, allowing your child to direct activities (following his lead), and imitating your child's behavior. These strategies help forge a connection of interests between you and your child and can support your child's desire to communicate.

Once children communicate using concrete or abstract symbols, they may benefit from having access to additional communication tools. It helps to remember that we all use a variety of communication methods, including eye contact, facial expressions, body language, tone of voice and gestures. So you might want to start with a system of gestures or sign.

Other low-tech tools include picture symbols and PECS. Some children seem to respond to tangible symbols such as an actual key for "let's go outside" or a cup for "I'd like a drink." From

the use of tangibles, families can move to photographs of familiar items and eventually to more abstract symbols. Children at this stage may benefit from [Tangible Symbol Systems](#).

Finally, parents and therapists now have access to a number of technological devices and options, from a tape player with simple buttons for playing prerecorded messages and keyboards for typing messages to sophisticated voice output devices and specialized iPhone/iPad applications.

We hope you'll have fun exploring these options with your child, ideally under the guidance of a therapist well versed in the best evidence-based practices. And please stay tuned for the fall release of the new Autism Speaks ATN brochure on Visual Supports and ASD. We'll be posting it for free download on the ATN's [Tools You Can Use webpage](#).

Readers are urged to use independent judgment and request references when considering any resource associated with diagnosis or treatment of autism or the provision of services related to autism. Autism Speaks does not endorse or claim to have personal knowledge of the abilities of references listed. The resources listed in these pages are not intended as a referral, or endorsement of any resource or as a tool for verifying the credentials, qualifications, or abilities of any organization, product or professional. The contents of this blog are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of Autism Speaks, the Autism Treatment Network and/or the Autism Intervention Research Network on Physical Health.

Got more questions? Send them to GotQuestions@autismspeaks.org. [Subscribe](#) to Autism Speaks Science Digest to get "Got Questions?" blogs and all our research news and perspective delivered to your inbox.

Happy Spring

