

OCTOBER 2018

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...

Social Skills Group: For Preschool (3 to 5 years old)

Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders and other social delays have difficulty developing social skills, and may benefit from a therapy group focusing on teaching and practicing specific skills. This group is for children that are just developing the building blocks of social skills. We will do activities like identifying emotions and facial

expressions, making eye contact, responding to greetings, taking turns, and engaging in back and forth play. Since we will be using fun games, songs and stories we might even forget we're learning too! At each group parents receive a schedule of activities, a hand out discussing the skills that are targeted for that day and ideas on how to continue working on those skills at home. This group is co-led by a behavioral therapist and occupational therapist.



WHEN: THURSDAYS 5PM-6PM; OCTOBER 18TH -DECEMBER 13TH

This group will be 8 weeks long and meet once a week. The cost of the entire session is \$150, due at the first meeting. If interested please contact Laura Gardner LCSW 815-927-5466 or lgardner@joliet.easterseals.com

The next social skills group will be on Thursdays 5:00 – 6:00 starting January 10th through February 28th and will be for Middle Schoolers (6th to 8th grade). Call to sign up today!

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. Next month we will meet **on Wednesday, November 14th**. 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.

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 November 2nd.** 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 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 noon, no appointment required! **The next screening day will be Friday October 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.

Celebrate the Season: A Recreation of the Historical Walnut Room Hosted by Easterseals Joliet

Join us to celebrate the joy of good friends and family as you dine under a magnificent Christmas tree, listen to holiday music, make wishes with Christmas fairies, visit with Santa, and make memories that will last forever. This event is held at the beautiful and historic Jacob Henry Mansion Estate at 15 S. Richards Street, Joliet, IL 60433. There are three meal seatings: November 17, 2018 at 4pm, November 18, 2018 at 12pm and November 18, 2018 at 4pm. This annual fundraiser helps support all of the amazing programs Easterseals offers to children and adults with disabilities. The cost is \$40 per adult, \$20 for children 12 and under, and an optional \$10 for a printed photo with Santa.



Tickets on sale now at <http://www.easterseals.com/joliet/get-involved/events/holiday-fundraiser.html> or you can call 815-725-2194.

There are also sponsorship opportunities available, which help make a difference in the lives of children and adults with disabilities. We are looking for volunteers to be *Christmas Fairies* and grant wishes to the children attending. This is a great way to earn community service/volunteer hours. Contact Teresa Summers at tsummers@joliet.easterseals.com

What's Going On In Your Community...

Workshops & Resource Fairs

Free Workshops: Legal Information YOU need

Join us for a series of FREE workshops presented by attorney Consuelo Puente at Disability Resource Center in Joliet. These events are open to the public and will be available in both English and Spanish.

- Sat. Oct. 20 - 10 am to 12 pm - Financial Planning for Disabled Adults

- Thurs. Nov. 1 & Nov. 8 - 9:30 am to 11 am - Supportive Housing Options: Living in Your Community

- Sat. Nov. 10 - 10 am to 12 pm - Supportive Housing Options: Living in Your Community Also, free legal consults (donation suggested) with Ms. Puente are available BY APPOINTMENT ONLY between 1 pm and 4 pm on the following Mondays: September 24, October 29, November 26, and December 10. Call Katy or Sam at 815-729-0162 to set up an appointment.

STAR NET Trainings

STAR NET provides free workshops and webinars to families and professionals working with young children with special needs. In addition to the trainings being free, they also have grants that families can apply for to help cover other expenses, like traveling to the training.

Visit the STAR NET Region II website to see their full calendar of free trainings offered to parents of young children with disabilities. www.thecenterweb.org/starnet/ Region II covers DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry and the western portion of Cook County.

Visit the website of STAR NET Region VI to see their training calendar at <http://www.swcccse.org/StarNet/default.htm> They cover Will, Grundy, Kankakee, LaSalle, Kendall and the southern portion of Cook County.

Free Webinar: Hey, Wanna Be My Friend?

This Webinar is being offered by StarNet Region VI, and is free to families and professionals working with young children. On **December 4, 2018; 3:30pm-5:00pm** there will be an online presentation about social emotional skills in young children. Young children need key social emotional skills to be successful as they enter school (and all of life). Setting the stage is necessary to build skills for making friends, which doesn't come naturally to all kids. In this webinar we will discuss the opportunities to embed these skills using discrete, systematic teaching of friendship skills and participants will explore ways to embed practice in daily routines. We will also discuss how to provide supports to children with special needs and those with challenging behavior.

Register on-line: <https://conta.cc/2JJiHmS>

2018 Autism and Special Needs Seminar

The Autism and Special Needs Seminar Showcases Expert speakers and vendors with tables displaying their products and services regarding Autism and Special Needs. The seminar will be held from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. in Building M on the campus. This event's goal is to give parents insights and the answers that they have been searching for. Vendors can be visited from 9am-3pm. speakers will be giving presentations from 10am-5pm. Don't miss out keynote speaker, Dr. Valerie Nowinski, in room 2 and 3

from 10am -12pm. With a variety of speakers and exhibitors, attendees will be offered unique resources and beneficial information. Caroline O'Connell, Family Time Magazine's publisher, founded the seminar in 2009 after seeing a need to provide more resources to families with loved ones with autism and other developmental disabilities. There is a fee to attend.

DATE: Saturday, November 10th 2018

TIME: 9:00 am to 5:00 pm

LOCATION: Moraine Valley Community College

9000 W. College Pkwy., Building M

Palos Hills, IL 60465

Therapy Resources

Ready, Set, Go: "Fast Track" – DRS Curriculum

Students of all abilities have a new opportunity for honing independent living skills in their own schools this fall! The Fast Track program is designed to enhance the ability of students to transfer skills learned in the classroom to real-life situations, such as gainful employment or post-secondary education. The program is the result of an exciting new partnership between the Illinois Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) and area schools. Taught by Independent Living Advocates Jerrod Nichols (Will County) and Tabitha Boshears (Grundy County), the FREE workshops are held in small or large groups of 8 to 20 students, and can be taught in the classroom during the school day. Topics include: self-advocacy, money management, communication skills, engaged listening, negotiation, independent living skills, job exploration, goal setting, and much more. While some of these topics may already be included in a school's curriculum, this program is a great way for students to continue their education and put what they have learned into action within the lessons. The curriculum will include a combination of Job Exploration Counseling, Work-Based Learning Experiences, Counseling on PostSecondary Education, Workplace Readiness Training, and Instruction in Self-Advocacy. For more information on the Fast Track program, call (815) 729- 0162 or email Jerrod at jerrod@drcjoliet.org or Tabitha at tabitha@drcjoliet.org.

Recreational & Social Opportunities

Special Needs Weekend at Siegel's Pumpkin Farm

Would you like to take your child with special needs to a pumpkin farm, but aren't sure whether or not they will be accommodating? Worry no more! **On October 27th and 28th**, Siegel's Pumpkin Farm at 17250 Weber Road in Lockport is hosting a Families with Special Needs Weekend at their pumpkin farm! Only families of children with disabilities will be at the farm during this weekend, and registration is **completely free**, as long as you follow this link: <https://ourpumpkinfarm.com/special-needs-weekends/> and **sign up prior to going to the farm!**

Check Your Library!!

If you are looking for something to do with your kids this fall, don't forget to check your local library! Each library website has a link to events that they host and different activities daily. It's a great way of socializing and the activities range to all ages. Many libraries now host programs that are specifically designed to meet the needs of kids with different abilities, so if you feel your child isn't ready for "typical" library groups yet, call and find out what else they offer!

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

Here are some of their current and upcoming events:

3 Years and Running Art Show

To celebrate their three year anniversary, The Merchant Street Art Gallery of Artists with Autism is featuring art work reflecting what the Gallery has meant to the artist's, the number 3 or the word running. The gallery is open from noon-4 on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. Saturdays are 10am-1pm.

ART NIGHT WITH HEART

Merchant Street Art Gallery of Artists with Autism is hosting a night filled with games, art and fun for the community! WHEN: OCTOBER 15, 2018 at 5:30PM

Art Happenings

Merchant of Art Gallery of Artists with Autism is having a paint your own puzzle event. This event is free for those with a family member who has autism. WHEN: TUESDAY OCTOBER 23 2018 at 5:30PM to 7:00PM

THE CURSE OF THE BLACK PHONE – Solve the mystery event

The artists of the Merchant Street Art Gallery (originally the home of the telephone company) need your help to break the dreaded yearly curse that has played mayhem on the building for years. This year the curse has taken over the art work which has now become quite unsettling. There are clues within the artwork to solve the mystery.

Friday October 19th -Saturday October 20th

Friday October 26th -Saturday October 27th

6:00pm-8:00pm

Maximum of 10 people for each session all ages are welcome but youth must be accompanied by an adult. Guests will be given 40 minutes to solve the mystery. \$15 cash per person all proceeds go to the Merchant Street Art Gallery. Must make reservations to attend please call Dawn at 815-474-4265

Plainfield Township Abilities Halloween Dance

FREE Halloween Dance for members of the Plainfield community with a disability and their families - Costume Welcome - All ages and abilities welcome. Parent or guardian must stay in attendance with individuals needing assistance. On Friday, October 19 from 6:30 PM to 9:30 PM. The dance will be held at Plainfield Township Community Center 15014 South Des Plaines Street Plainfield, IL 60544. Please RSVP to rosmarytack@yahoo.com

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 October 7th** 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/>

Sensory Story Times

Fountaindale Public Library (in Bolingbrook on Briarcliff) offers a **FREE** drop-in Sensory Story time on the **second Saturday of every month from 10:30 to 11:15** for children from 2 to 6 years old with a caregiver. This story time is geared "especially for children with sensory integration issues". Visit their calendar at <http://host7.evanced.info/fountaindale/evanced/eventcalendar.asp> - the next one is on **Saturday, October 11th**.

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

Recognizing the Gifts and Talents of All

by [Angela F. Williams](#)



People with disabilities of all genders, races, socioeconomic statuses, and ethnicities have a history of making the world and our communities richer, better places. What potential do we then lose when we allow barriers to prevent our fellow humans from participating?

Some of the most groundbreaking inventions and innovations throughout human history have been inspired and conceived by people with disabilities. Some of these figures are household names: Thomas Edison, Temple Grandin, Albert Einstein, Leonardo Da Vinci and Stephen Hawking. But while many of the contributions of people with disabilities are in the mainstream, their names are often left out of the history textbooks and out of the conversation.

I recently came across a [New York Times article](#) that told the story of the OXO brand; A husband and wife teamed up to create a product that would be comfortable for Betsy, the wife, to hold (she had arthritis). As a result, they came up with a line of kitchen products based on the philosophy of universal design. While I had seen the company's products lining the shelves of many major department stores, the story behind it, and the fact that it was created for all hands, escaped me. According to the article, it has somehow escaped many people, too. This is just one of the many stories of inventions born of necessity for people with disabilities but ultimately adopted by people of all abilities. See also: The typewriter, text messaging, and the talking remote.

Even with all these accomplishments, the movement towards an accessible and inclusive society continues. Is our notion of what it means to contribute to society even inclusive of people with disabilities?

Right now, society is at a crossroads. People are paying closer attention to social issues that are important to them, looking for ways to be more involved. However, for society to continue to improve for all people living in it, we must face tough decisions about our institutions. Finding and removing the barriers within those institutions will be a challenging process.

At Easterseals, one barrier that is in the forefront of our minds is health care. Threats to Medicaid are looming, and additional cuts or caps to Medicaid will severely impact the services we provide. In fact after past cuts to Medicaid, 62% of our clients surveyed (including individuals with disabilities and seniors) were unable to access services like employment and training programs due to a lack of community provider options. We grapple with this reality while still working with people with disabilities to overcome barriers, some of which are societal in nature. As a result, we support some of society's most powerful change agents. What kind of society will *they* want to create?

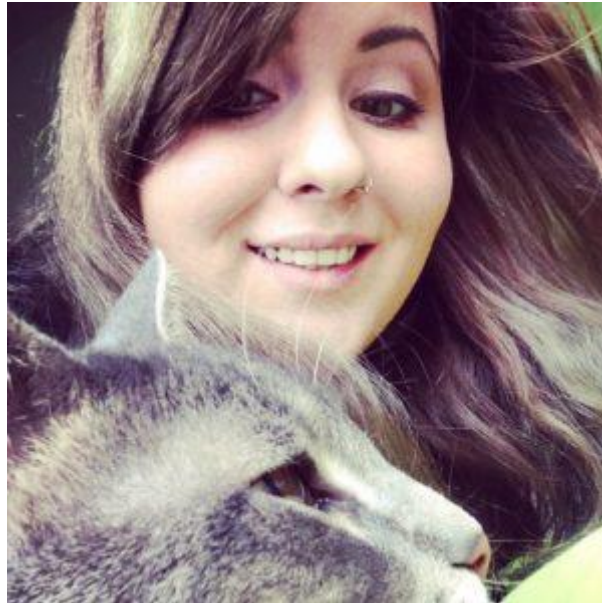
Michael, 34, an [Easterseals Thrive](#) supporter and freelance writer, said, "Traditionally, if you ask someone what they do, they'll talk about their job. A lot of avenues are closed to me due to my mental health and to a lesser extent my physical health. My depression has significantly hindered my ability to succeed in academics which has, in turn, closed a lot of doors for me to achieve gainful employment. This further exacerbates my depression.

"Individuals are capable of contributing in more ways than economically. Simply being a good friend or an emotional support for other people can be a means of adding to society. Being someone who other people can rely on when they're having a rough time is a remarkably useful ability. I think that this form of emotional labor has been undervalued traditionally, but that it is finally starting to come around as a viable source of worth for one's self and within a community."

- Tags: [Accessibility](#), [Adults](#), [Advocacy](#), [Jobs/Employment,disability and employment](#), [job training and disability](#), [National Disability Employment Awareness Month](#)

'If I knew then...' 5 Tips for Teens with Autism

by [Bridget](#)



Guest blogger Kelly Hutchins

Guest blogger Kelly Hutchins shares her five tips for young people with Autism in today's post... things that she wishes she'd known when she was a teenager. Now a pastry chef who recently completed her studies at the French Pastry School in Chicago, Kelly is eager to share her own experience living with autism and to inspire others to do the same. In addition to sharing her delectable confections with friends and family, Kelly is an avid cat lover, PAWS volunteer, and self-advocate.

Being a teenage girl is tough. Being a teenage girl on the autism spectrum can be brutal. Here are 5 things I wish I had known when I was in high school.

Everyone around you is just as insecure, especially the bullies.

The most insecure people are usually the biggest bullies. The only reason a person would do that is if they are insecure with themselves. I'm not excusing the actions of bullies, rather I want to reassure people who are bullied that you are stronger than the people who want to bring you down.

The two keys to success are to work hard, and be kind.

Yes, some people manage to bully their way to the top, but they are few and far between. Conan O'Brien once said "If you work hard and are kind, amazing things will happen". And I can tell you from personal experience that this is 100% true. The bullies usually don't make it to the top, and when they do they never stay

there. Everyone you meet on the way up, you will also meet on the way down. The people who end up with real success and happiness are the ones who work hard and are kind.

Don't be afraid to make your needs known.

Making your needs known can be very intimidating, but it gets easier with practice. You may be a minor, but it's your life, and your future, so you deserve to at least be heard. If you need help with taking notes in class, or if you need testing accommodations, you need to tell your parents and guidance counselor. Nothing comes of nothing, so speak up, because your needs are important.

Dressing like everybody else won't make you happy.

Use high school and college as a time to experiment with your own personal style. If there is a time to be wild, it's now. I spent the first two years of high school trying to look like everybody else and all it did was make me miserable. The only way to win the game is to stop playing, and start enjoying yourself.

You are stronger than you know.

The things you now see as your weaknesses may very well turn out to be some of your greatest strengths. So embrace who you are, and speak up for others and yourself. You are not a wallflower, you are a beautiful and unique human person. You will be surprised at just how strong you really are, if you give yourself a chance. Remember that all great people were once teenagers.