Autism MATTERS

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SUMMER FUN!

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Info Autisme

Local Chapters

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OUR VISION: Best Life, Better World, Making Autism Matter!
OUR MISSION: Creating a supportive and inclusive Ontario for Autism

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Autism Ontario's Values: CARE

Collaboration – We believe in the power of working side by side with individuals, families and communities to make informed choices about autism.

Accountability – We hold ourselves and others responsible to achieve successful outcomes through high standards of integrity and fiscal responsibility.

Respect – We value equity, diversity and inclusion, and we listen to understand.

Evidence informed – We use and create knowledge to guide our decisions and work.

Editor's Note: Inside the pages of *Autism Matters* we try to include a range of views about autism and its impact on people. These views may or may not reflect our own, but we trust that diversity of views adds to the reader's insight about complex issues.

Diversity and Inclusion

THE HORRIFIC EVENTS of the past month—the deadly attack by a white young man on a London, Ontario Muslim family out on a neighbourhood stroll that left four dead and a single, badly injured survivor, and the continued discoveries of hundreds of graves of missing Indigenous children buried on the grounds of Canada's residential schools—have left us stunned, angry, deeply sorrowful and sharply aware of the depths of racism at its most lethal levels within Canadian society. We needn't look south of the border any longer for examples of how badly humans can treat one another.

As a community-based autism organization, we have struggled to find a collective response that even begins to understand or meaningfully reflect on the stories and experiences of those whose lives have been directly impacted, many at the highest personal cost. As we watch and listen from the comfort of our homes and screens to the stories in the news and on our media feeds, the reactions all seem uncomfortably inadequate. Adding still more words feels like jumping on a platitude bandwagon of "saying the right thing." What can a group like Autism Ontario add, if anything, to these moments of reckoning?

If we are truly shocked by the recent events, we haven't been paying close enough attention; or it simply didn't occur to us that we needed to. Systemic racism takes a long time to become entrenched in the lifeblood of communities and it will take significant systemic righting over a long time to make any lasting change—not only the kind that removes barriers for the freedom to participate, but enables the flourishing of all community members.

We know something about what it means for autistic people and their families to be excluded, judged, ignored or intentionally harmed. If we add this lived experience to other layers of lived experiences of being Black, Indigenous or being Muslim or Sikh in a largely white-powered society, we know that we need to expand our commitment to changes that are required for a more just society. How do we press against our human nature of repeatedly surrounding ourselves with what is comfortable and familiar? If we are not willing to feel some comfort with our own discomfort, we will not be able to make genuine changes.

When we hold up the mirror to our organization, we are only beginning to see more than middle class, white, ableist at times, and often privileged faces at the Board, volunteer leadership and staff level. But we are starting to resemble more of the people we aim to support or who we are invited to partner with. Our Vision of "Best Life, Better World, Making Autism Matter," was conceived out of a more diverse set of voices and experiences than we've ever had before. But it's not enough. So instead of just words in response to the challenge of our vision, we are continuing in our attempts to expand our reach for diversity and inclusion.

Our Board and staff are being more intentional about cultural diversity and inclusion in every aspect of what we do. We are engaged in training that incorporates policies into the life of the organization. We will continue to listen and learn about what has been helpful, ineffective or even harmful. We know that we've made and will continue to make mistakes. We'll need your help to point out when we get it right and when we get it wrong. We also know that the pain we're experiencing across Turtle Island has the potential to open doors for understanding, for healing and new ways of being community not yet fully grasped or explored. We hope you'll join us on the way.

Marg Spoelstra, Executive Director

Trajectories and Turning Points

A NEW CANADIAN RESEARCH STUDY SHEDS LIGHT ON TRANSITIONS IN YOUNG CHILDREN ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM

by Michael Cnudde, Managing Editor, *Autism Matters*

AS THEY PREPARE FOR SCHOOL, young children with autism face many transitions. They face the transition from the familiar home environment to the classroom. They also face the transition from a world built around their parents to one centered on their teacher and fellow students. A new study, led by Dr. Stelios Georgiades, Associate Professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences at McMaster University and the inaugural McMaster Children's Hospital Chair in Autism and Neurodevelopment, shows there is a key turning point that occurs in many autistic children as young as the age of six. Specifically, while symptom severity shows an improvement during the first years after diagnosis, it then appears to plateau as they transition to school.

The study, "Trajectories of Symptom Severity in Children with Autism: Variability and Turning Points Through the Transition to School," was published in the March 2021 issue of the *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*. It looked at a group of 187 Canadian children on the autism spectrum and followed them from their diagnosis to age 10. The children included were at different points along the autism spectrum in terms of symptom severity, language and cognitive and adaptive functioning skills.

Evidence informed

Dr. Georgiades and his colleagues identified a key turning point in children following two distinct trajectories. In the first trajectory children improve continuously (27 percent of children); in the second trajectory children start off by improving, then plateau as they transition to school (73 percent of children).

Dr. Georgiades says the question of a turning point at this age was based on direct experience of working with families and parents of children on the autism spectrum. "This is an example of a research question almost directly linked to common sense," he says. "We know that for children, transitions can be challenging, especially the transition into the school system. I myself have two children. I remember that transition. And as parents, you always wonder, you know, will the transition be a smooth one?"

Within the criteria of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)-V, there exists the concept "social demands exceed capacity." Dr. Georgiades notes that in most cases, a child spends their early years in the family environment. As the child grows and develops, they move out into the school and community and connect with peer groups. "Sometimes," he says, "the social demands of those contexts can be overwhelming... and that makes a lot of sense to me."

Not all development is linear, says Dr. Georgiades. Our own development doesn't always occur on a straight line, and our societal systems, for example, are organized in pieces. "We have the preschool years," he says. "Then we have the school years, when you enter an entire new system… and then on to vocational systems. So, we know in advance that there will be those transition points... that's how our society is organized."

Rather than trying to fit children into a series of defined boxes, Dr. Georgiades says society needs to acknowledge every individual's style of development. Once we understand those different development styles and trajectories, he says, then we can build on them. The study acknowledges that we are all born differently, and we all grow and develop differently. "We're valuable and unique. And that's how we can build on this and improve our lives and improve our services, instead of just thinking everyone is the same..."

The significance of this study, says Dr. Georgiades, is that it bears out some very practical implications for services that children on the spectrum and their families use, and for development of government policy. "We have an idea that it's probably more challenging for some kids and some families over others," he says. "That's where governments and community organizations can step in, and increase their support..."

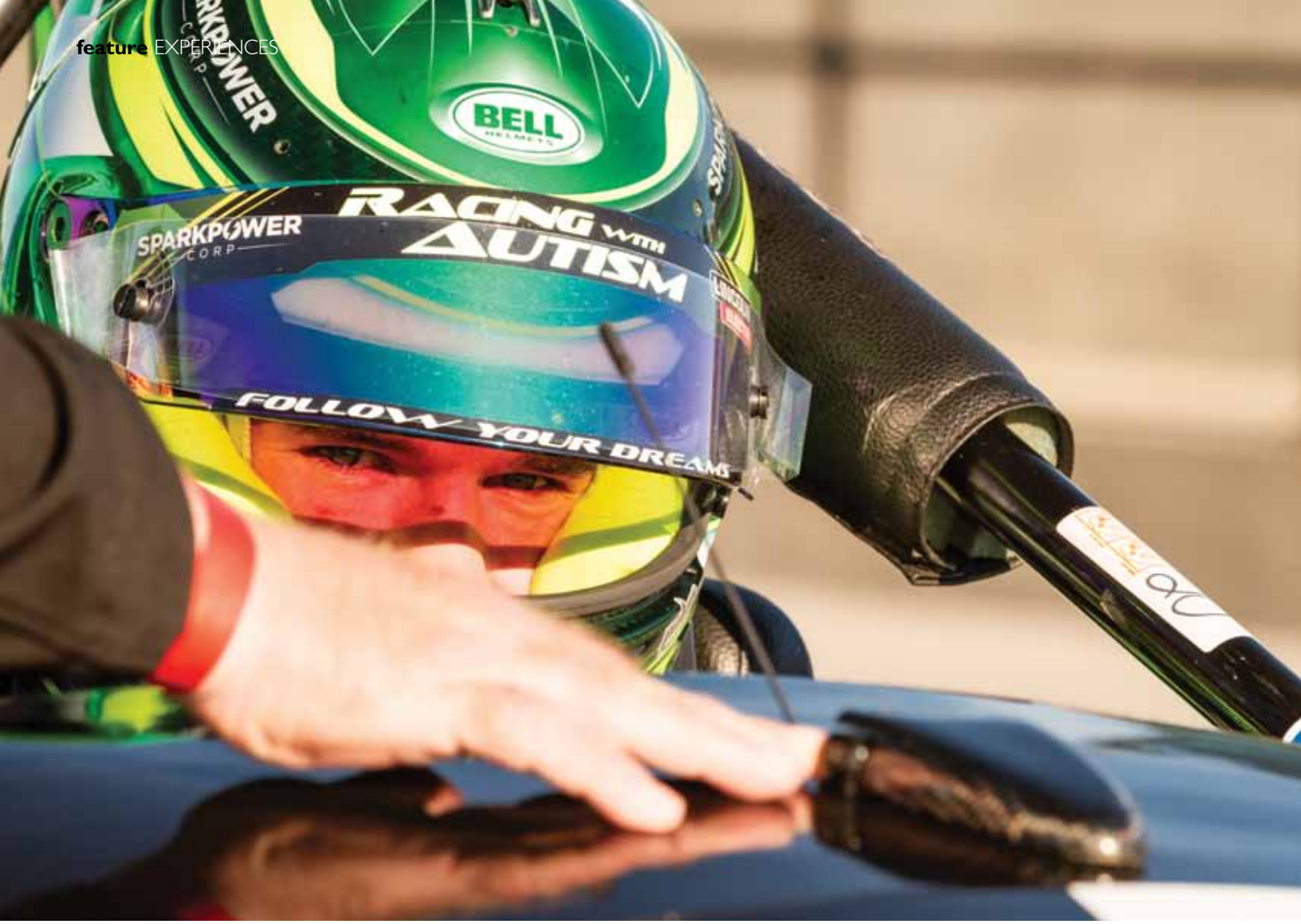
Dr. Georgiades and his colleagues at McMaster are using knowledge from the study to pilot a successor study, the Pediatric Autism Research Cohort (PARC), which they are gradually rolling out in a wider catchment area, that includes six autism clinics in Ontario, Alberta and Israel. This study seeks to understand a child's growth over time, from the point of an autism diagnosis. The projected recruitment goal of 1,000 participants will make the PARC study one the largest of its kind in the world. Response so far from parents and caregivers has been "overwhelmingly positive," says Dr. Georgiades; some families have been involved in the design of this study from the beginning.

PARC will also allow feedback between researchers and parents and caregivers. "We've created a mechanism where we synthesize the [research] data and give it back to the family on a six-month basis for them to use in conversations with clinicians, educators and anyone else involved in their child's care," he says. "In contrast to the traditional autism studies, where the emphasis is on measuring deficits and symptoms, the emphasis here is on measuring strength and functioning in what we call potentially modifiable factors, not just at the child level, but also [in] the child's environment."

For more information about the Pediatric Autism Research Cohort (PARC) study: http://www.macautism.ca/parc-study

"We're valuable and unique. And that's how we can build on this and improve our lives and improve our services, instead of just thinking everyone is the same..."

Dr. Stelios Georgiades



Racing with Austin

DRIVEN TO FOLLOW HIS DREAMS

Screaming down a straightaway at over 200 kilometres per hour, Austin Riley finds himself perfectly at home. He smiles shyly. "I like to go fast." The 21-year-old autistic self-advocate and professional race car driver from Lindsay, Ontario, has been interested in racing from an early age. "I've always loved racing, and I've always loved cars," says Austin. "That's been my thing forever."

HIS RACING CAREER BEGAN when a flyer advertising a local go-kart program arrived in the mail. Austin's parents shared it with their eight-year-old son. "They thought it would be something I'd want to try," he says. Austin raced go-karts until he was 17, winning three championships in the process.

The next step in Austin's racing career was the transition from go-karts to something much larger. In 2017, he entered the Nissan Micra Cup, a grueling program that consisted of 12 races over six weekends. He found it challenging. "The guys who were racing in that series had been there for five or six years and I was the youngest by far," he said. "I had a lot to learn." But Metod Topolonik, the Micra race team owner, spotted his talent and offered him a spot on his team in 2017. "He offered me a ride in a Micra to see if I could drive it, says Austin. "...He ended up paying for my season."

With support from his family, especially his dad Jason, Austin learned hard and raced even harder. By the end of his first year, he went from finishing mid-pack to finishing in the top 20. By his second year, he was regularly placing in the top-10

Opposite page: Austin in the cockpit (photo by Richard Hornsby)
Above: Austin driving his Radical SRc (photo by Richard Hornsby)
Left: Austin Riley: Champion (photo by Jordan Lenssen)

> "Anyone with autism can do anything they want if they work hard enough to achieve it."

finishers. "In the third year," he says, "I got some podiums and some top-five finishes and ended up finishing seventh overall in the championship."

In 2020, Austin made another leap, moving from the smaller, slower Micras into what he terms a "a proper race car," the Radical SR3. These are open-topped, high-performance machines, capable of speeds well in excess of 200 kilometres per hour on a closed track. (For the record, the fastest Austin has driven on a track is 240 km/h.) In Austin's first year racing the Radicals, in 14 races, he won 10, placed second three times, and third once. This made him the only driver in the world with autism to win a major racing championship.

Currently, with the COVID lockdown, Austin is waiting for news of the 2021 season and hoping to complete another season driving the Radicals. But beyond that, he has his eyes set on even larger goals, such as IMSA (International Motorsports Association) races and 24 Hours of Daytona. After that—perhaps the ultimate goal for every professional race driver—he has his eyes on the famed 24 Hours of LeMans.

Of all the racing Austin has done over the years, probably the most danger he's felt has been behind the wheel of a go-kart. "I've had a couple scary moments," he says, "but not really, really in a car because you're so protected and safe in a car. In a go-kart, you're …just kind of out there."

From his own lived experience, Austin notes that when he began racing, he faced down a lot of negativity, so he understands what other people on the spectrum face when they are trying to accomplish their goals, whatever they may be. "I faced a lot of that; like people telling me I'll never be a race-car driver." He has one piece of advice. "Anyone with autism can do anything they want if they work hard enough to achieve it."

Towards a National Autism Strategy

WHAT WILL IT MEAN FOR FAMILIES AND CAREGIVERS?

by Michael Cnudde, Managing Editor, *Autism Matters*

THE 2021 FEDERAL BUDGET demonstrated a commitment by the federal government towards a National Autism Strategy. Budget 2020 allotted $15.4 million over two years, a mixture of old and new funding, to the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) and its partners, to work on the creation of a Strategy. This effort is being led by the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences (CAHS), a not-for-profit agency that will conduct research and engagement with the autistic and autism communities and draw evidence-based conclusions from that basis.

The Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorders Alliance (CASDA) with its federal orientation, has long since advocated, with the support of Autism Ontario, for the creation of such an initiative. CASDA is a not-for-profit coalition of autistic self-advocates, caregivers, community members, researchers and representatives from leading organizations across Canada.

What would a National Autism Strategy mean for people on the spectrum and their families and caregivers? To begin with, a fully realized National Autism Strategy would contain concrete actions that will directly affect the lives of people with autism, their families and caregivers. The Strategy will also reach across other government activities and strategies to ensure that autistic Canadians and their families are taken into consideration even when they are not the primary population being served by a program or policy. It also asks the federal government to take the lead in the process, by facilitating pan-Canadian cooperation and coordination, and to create a platform to share best practices.

A National Autism Strategy would lead to a better measurement of autism and the needs of autistic people, their families, caregivers and communities. Just as importantly, it would enable better surveillance and measurement of autism in marginalized and racialized communities, including Indigenous, Black, rural/remote and LGBTQIA2S+ groups. Finally, it would also provide guidance for federal funding into autism research, leading to possible interventions for those who choose to use them.

A National Autism Strategy will mean a much more coordinated, pan-Canadian approach to autism. Leaders across the nation would work together so that all Canadians can access the support they need, regardless of where they live. This means ensuring that autistic Canadians and their families do not have to move across the country to access necessary services. This also includes increasing the number

of supports that address needs across the lifespan, especially in the transition to adulthood.

At this stage, the broad strokes of the National Autism Strategy have been defined. In 2019 and 2020, CASDA created a Blueprint for a national Autism Strategy (https://www.casda.ca/resources/blueprint/) and a Roadmap Towards a National Autism Strategy (https://www.casda.ca/roadmap/) Then, this past year, CASDA and Kids' Brain Health Network connected with the autistic and autism communities to develop a series of policy briefs (https://www.casda.ca/policy-compendium/) that are organized into four key areas. These policy recommendations can be adapted by anyone who wishes to use them to shape their own advocacy or in discussions surrounding a National Autism Strategy.

CAHS is currently engaging with autistic Canadians, their families and caregivers, as well as other stakeholders with the goal of producing a Report on Autism that will help inform the development of a National Autism Strategy. "While we are hopeful that this report will include meaningful input from the community, it is critical that these consultations lead to tangible action," says Jonathan Lai, Executive Director at CASDA. "What we need now more than ever is strong federal leadership to bring provinces and territories together so that autistic Canadians can receive full and equal access to the resources they need, across the spectrum, across varying levels of support needs, no matter their postal code.

Jonathan Lai, Executive Director of CASDA

New Voices in Autism

CANADIAN JOURNAL OF AUTISM EQUITY LAUNCHES

THIS YEAR ON WORLD AUTISM ACCEPTANCE DAY, *Canadian Journal of Autism Equity* (CJAE) launched its inaugural edition. It is an open-access electronic journal, published twice yearly (April and October) with the mission of critically engaging with a variety of equity discussions within the autism and public-policy communities.

The publication seeks first-voice contributions from autistic people or those with lived experience with autism and intersectionality.

CAJE is guided by an editorial board composed of eight autistic individuals from across Canada. On the occasion of the publication's launch, we spoke with two of its Ontario-based members, Terri Robson from London and Dr. Mackenzie Salt, an autism researcher from McMaster University in Hamilton.

Terri, a self advocate, public speaker, poet and novelist originally from Red Deer, Alberta, became a member of CJAE's editorial board through a recommendation from a former co-worker who knew of her interest in autism advocacy and her eagerness to get involved in Ontario. Terri is already an established public speaker on autism, in Alberta and the U.S. "I've presented at teachers' conventions, to different levels of government and to caregivers, other professionals and parents." She has five poems in the publication's first issue, under the title, "We are Equal."

As an adult with Asperger's who was diagnosed in her 30s, Terri's focus has been what happens to autistic teens once they age out of the support system and become adults. She tells the story of a young autistic man whose tragic story was written up in the *Edmonton Journal*. "Somewhere around the age of 19, I believe, he committed suicide, because there was nothing there for adults. There aren't programs to help them transition." That incident prompted her to create an Asperger's support group in Red Deer, but she was puzzled by the lack of response. She acknowledges that reaching out is difficult for many, and believes the journal will help, serving as a medium for people on the autism spectrum to talk about their feelings and what life is like for them. "I know that the first step out the door is the hardest," she says. "The journal is an opportunity..."

Dr. Mackenzie Salt, who is autistic, joined the CJAE editorial team out of a sense that the journal would help "build bridges" between researchers and the autism community. He's written an opinion piece that appears in the first issue, "Expanding Diversity of Voices in Autism Research Engagement." It discusses how researchers tend to focus on the parents' perspective when looking at the autism community.

"There's very little engagement [in research] with the autism community in general, but especially with children," he says. While parents are generally more available, says Dr. Salt, there's a history with autism and other disorders of talking over the heads of children. That habit has continued even though it has been 25 years since the

Dr. Mackenzie Sale

Terri Robson

> While parents are generally more available, says Dr. Salt, there's a history with autism and other disorders of talking over the heads of children.

DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) first explicitly mentioned adult autism. In the clinical literature before that, there was some awareness that autism was a chronic condition and would persist, but the perspective was more that autistic adults would look like big autistic children, not autistic versions of adults.

"I think part of it, too, is that a lot of the research funding focuses on children," Dr. Salt adds. "It's only been recently that some major funders have shifted focus to autism across the lifespan."

Dr. Salt argues that autism researchers need to be open-minded. Many researchers, he says, believed that people with autism were assumed not to be verbal enough to give very long answers. "If you give [people on the spectrum]… an open or a complex question to work with, I think you'll definitely get more complicated answers."

Currently, Dr. Salt is working on the research engagement strategy for a longitudinal study of children with autism across Canada. He wants to use this work to help inform a potential adult phase of the project, where autistic youth and adults are consulted. "We want to get their opinions on looking at the transition from childhood to adulthood," he says. For example, "What sort of things were important to you, or do you think will be important to you?" ■

INFO Autisme

Un rêve prend forme!

par Martine Gauthier, parent

MON FILS SHAN, âgé de 12 ans, rêvait d'avoir sa propre entreprise de tonte de gazon. Avec cela en tête, nous lui avons acheté une tondeuse pour ses 12 ans. En voyant son cadeau, Shan s'est exclamé « C'est le plus beau cadeau de ma vie! ».

En guise de publicité, j'ai créé une page Facebook. Le tout est devenu viral. En plus d'avoir trouvé ses premiers clients, Shan a été interviewé par TVA (https://tvagatineau.ca/blogue/article/un-jeune-autiste-lance-son-entreprise-de-coupe-de-gazon) et Radio-Canada (https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1717393/shan-gauthier-autiste-12-ans-tonte-gazon-est-ontarien), des entrevues qui ont été visionnées plus de 900 000 fois.

Par la suite, Shan a reçu de nombreux dons; parmi ceux-ci, une tondeuse, un coupe-bordure, une remorque et une souffleuse.

En plus d'un esprit d'entrepreneur, Shan possède un grand sens de l'altruisme. En plus de ses services de gazon, Shan vend des chandails Terra Shan et remet 100 % des profits à l'organisme Regroupement Autisme Prescott-Russell. L'importance de donner au suivant est bien ancrée!

Une très belle histoire d'un rêve qui est devenu une réalité et encore plus!

Pour en apprendre davantage ou pour communiquer avec Shan, visitez sa page Facebook, Terra Shan.

Le trajet de Nathan

par Pierre-Alexandre Nadeau, Enseignant-ressource de la classe de transition TSA, École secondaire catholique La Citadelle

LE TRAJET DE NATHAN, qui a passé par l'École élémentaire catholique St-Gabriel et l'École élémentaire catholique Notre-Dame et ensuite l'École secondaire catholique La Citadelle, a été semé de plusieurs embûches. En effet, pour Nathan, tout allait trop vite et l'école a été un défi pendant plusieurs années. Nathan a travaillé avec plusieurs professionnels de l'enseignement qui ont considéré son trouble du spectre de l'autisme (TSA) et lui ont donné l'appui nécessaire. Lorsqu'on lui demande ce qui a fait la différence, il nous explique que ce sont ceux et celles qui ont pris le temps de le connaître, qui ont misé sur ses forces et qui ont appuyé ses besoins dont il se souviendra le plus.

Plusieurs stratégies apprises et encouragées tout au long de son parcours scolaire, telles que des façons d'interagir avec les autres, de s'organiser, de communiquer ses besoins, de gérer ses émotions, de se préparer pour une évaluation, lui seront grandement utiles lorsqu'il entamera ses études postsecondaires au collège La Cité dans le programme d'animation 3D. Mme Turcotte, mère de Nathan, ajoute que son expérience au secondaire lui a servi de tremplin vers l'autonomie et l'autodétermination. Il a commencé à vivre du succès lorsque les gens autour de lui insistaient davantage sur ses habiletés sociales plutôt que sur ses résultats scolaires. Sa classe de transition TSA, ses expériences COOP, ses cours d'art et son club de trampoline lui ont tous permis de s'épanouir et de réaliser qu'il était bon dans plusieurs choses. Résultat : Nathan a développé une confiance en soi qui lui permet de s'identifier et de se projeter dans le futur.

Plusieurs traits de caractère ont contribué aux réussites de Nathan. Tout d'abord, ses aptitudes à relever des défis et à sortir de sa zone de confort sont tous deux les éléments clés de son cheminement personnel. En effet, son enthousiasme, son attention aux détails et sa façon de demander des éclaircissements lorsqu'il ne comprend pas ont contribué à ses nombreux succès et au bon développement de son réseau social. De plus, Nathan est persévérant et il nous confirme que c'est à cause de sa détermination qu'il réussit et qu'il continuera à réussir malgré les défis qu'il rencontrera dans la vie.

Le trajet personnel de Nathan a pris plusieurs tournants. Cependant, avec l'appui continu de sa famille et les

habiletés développées à l'école et sur le marché du travail, il peut plus facilement revendiquer ses besoins et atteindre ses objectifs. Le trajet de Nathan illustre bien l'impact à long terme du soutien social lorsque celui-ci reconnaît les forces et les besoins particuliers d'une personne. Selon moi, le plus important c'est de les aimer, de prendre le temps de bien les écouter, de croire en eux et de les pousser à essayer des choses nouvelles. Sa famille, ses enseignants et ses éducatrices qui ont travaillé avec ses forces au lieu de s'attarder à ses comportements hors du commun l'ont aidé à grandir et à devenir qui il est aujourd'hui. ■

La pensée éloignée

par Nathan Séguin

Le personnage a une écharpe qui représente qu'il est un voyageur et une ampoule sur sa canne qui signifie qu'il doit fournir sa propre luminosité afin d'éclaircir ses façons de penser qui sont différentes des autres : la terre en casse-tête (symbole original de l'autisme) signifie qu'il est dans sa tête et préoccupé par ses pensées. J'ai ajouté des papillons pour représenter la fragilité des enfants autistes. L'arbre est un signe de vie, il grandit, il a besoin d'eau tout comme l'être humain, les feuilles ont quatre symboles : un d'infini parce que je voulais symboliser le mouvement pour les droits des autistes, le morceau de casse-tête pour dire qu'être autiste est un défi qu'il faut constamment relever, le cœur parce qu'on en a tous un comme tout le monde et le ruban qui peut symboliser plus qu'une couleur et qui représente que quand on le porte on devient conscient. Les symboles sont éparpillés un peu partout pour former un arc-en-ciel. Finalement, on voit à l'envers une ville avec des téléphones intelligents qui ont la forme des bâtiments pour symboliser ce que tout le monde utilise dans sa vie de tous les jours, ce qui est la caractéristique parfaite pour démontrer la normalité : le voyageur qui est éloigné des autres lumières veut dire qu'il ne voit ou ne pense pas comme les autres.

La francophonie chez Autisme Ontario

par Mélanie Laurin, spécialiste des services francophones
Autisme Ontario

PERMETTEZ-MOI de me présenter : je me nomme Mélanie Laurin, nouvelle spécialiste francophone pour Autisme Ontario. Comme personne francophone du nord de l'Ontario, je souhaite tout d'abord ouvrir la porte à toutes sortes d'activités (évènements, webinaires, etc.) pour nos familles francophones de toutes les régions de l'Ontario.

J'aimerais faciliter la tâche de nos familles, organiser des évènements et offrir du soutien d'une façon adéquate et avec qualité pour toutes les personnes qui nous entourent. Veuillez consulter notre site web à https:/ /www.autismontario.com/fr, où vous pourrez vous inscrire à nos diverses activités, séances et formations gratuites. Chaque mois, nous diffuserons par courriel un bulletin qui vous informera de ce qui se passe durant le mois.

Dernièrement, j'aimerais ouvrir la discussion sur ce que vous, nos familles, souhaitez de nous comme agence, ou sur vos suggestions pour l'avenir. Vous pouvez me joindre à melanie@autismontario.com pour en discuter davantage.

J'aimerais vous remercier de votre constant soutien, et vous souligner ma détermination à élargir nos horizons comme organisme francophone.

Mise à jour sur l'AGA

La prochaine assemblée générale annuelle d'Autisme Ontario se tiendra les samedi 25 septembre et dimanche 26 septembre. Nous vous communiquerons plus de détails dès que possible.

Liste des fournisseurs du POSA

La Liste des fournisseurs du Programme ontarien des services en matière d'autisme (POSA) énumère les superviseurs cliniques qui offrent des services comportementaux financés par l'entremise du POSA (y compris les services comportementaux achetés à l'aide des budgets pour les services aux enfants ou d'un financement provisoire ponctuel). Cette liste consiste en une base de données accessible au public qui comprend actuellement plus de 200 cliniciens offrant des services d'ACA dans les diverses régions de l'Ontario.

Trouvez un fournisseur!

www.oapproviderlist.ca/fr

Emma Grenier

RÉCIPIENDAIRE DU PRIX LA FORCE PAR LA DIVERSITÉ

EN 2020, EMMA GRENIER a reçu le *Prix Inspiration jeunesse de la capitale* dans la catégorie *La force par la diversité*. Emma est étudiante, militante sociale, plasticienne et technicienne de théâtre et de spectacle. Étant autiste et faisant partie de la communauté 2SLGBTQ +, elle se bat constamment pour défendre les droits des personnes 2SLGBTQ + et promouvoir leur acceptation sociale par la communauté, en plus de soutenir des causes qui lui tiennent à cœur comme l'éducation, la francophonie et l'éco-durabilité. Emma a également collaboré à la création d'un compte Instagram, avec plus de 20 000 abonnés, qui a fourni un espace sécurisé où les jeunes de la communauté 2SLGBTQ + se sentent moins isolés. Emma est un symbole de force, tant à l'école que dans la communauté.

En tant que modèle pour les communautés de l'autisme et des personnes 2SLGBTQ +, Emma continue de persévérer et de s'affirmer selon ses convictions personnelles.

Félicitations Emma pour ton engagement et tes efforts!

Emma et sa mère

Crédit photo : Julie Normandin-Grenier

Respect

L'entente Canada-Ontario appuie le travail d'Autisme Ontario

par Suzanne Murphy, consultante pour les services en français
Autisme Ontario

En 2020, Autisme Ontario apprenait que deux nouvelles bourses lui étaient décernées dans le cadre de l'Entente Canada-Ontario pour les services en français.

DE CONCERT AVEC PATRIMOINE CANADIEN, l'entente Canada-Ontario vise le développement et l'amélioration des services de qualité en français, ainsi que leur accessibilité pour la communauté francophone de l'Ontario, conformément aux obligations prescrites par la Loi de 1986 sur les services en français.

Un total de trois bourses en 2020-2021 ont permis à Autisme Ontario de réaliser des projets importants pour la communauté de l'autisme francophone.

Un projet a permis de mettre de nouveaux éléments à la disposition des francophones :

Deux webinaires en français :

- L'anxiété et le maintien de l'équilibre familial à l'ère de la COVID-19
- La sexualité et le TSA

Quatre articles :

- La socialisation au travail
- L'élargissement des intérêts aide les personnes qui vivent avec un trouble du spectre de l'autisme – Le principe de Lila
- Vivre Aspie
- L'inclusion, la créativité et l'autisme

Un poème : J'étais qu'un simple garçon

Le rapport des résultats du sondage auprès des parents sur l'apprentissage à la maison lors de la fermeture des écoles qui a eu lieu au printemps 2020.

Le deuxième projet visait à recueillir des ressources externes en français. Par la suite, ces ressources ont été répertoriées par catégorie :

- Mieux comprendre l'autisme
- Ressources pour soutenir la fratrie
- Aider la personne autiste à mieux se comprendre
- Témoignages et opinions personnelles
- L'autisme et la sphère sociale
- L'autisme et la sphère socio-affective
- La transition vers la vie adulte
- Ressources pour appuyer différentes activités

Le troisième projet nous a permis de publier notre troisième magazine entièrement en français. Les quarante-huit pages de *L'autisme, les arts et la créativité : une exposition* célèbre les talents, les intérêts et l'imagination de plus de trente contributeurs et contributrices autistes francophones des quatre coins de la province. Les textes d'accompagnement donnent un aperçu de leur initiation aux activités artistiques et du rôle important que jouent les arts, la créativité et l'artisanat dans la vie des personnes autistes.

Autisme Ontario apprécie l'appui offert par l'Entente Canada-Ontario et en est reconnaissant. La communauté francophone de l'autisme bénéficiera de ces nouvelles ressources pour des années à venir.

Renseignements en français

Désirez-vous recevoir des renseignements en français? Pour vous inscrire sur notre liste d'envois électroniques, rendez-vous sur le site d'Autisme Ontario, à l'adresse www.autismontario.com, et cliquez sur « Nouvelles ».

Libérez votre créativité avec Autisme Ontario!

Nous faisons appel à vous, aux contributions de la communauté de l'autisme de l'Ontario, pour notre blogue et pour *Autism Matters* et *Info Autisme!*

Soumettez-nous vos créations de tout type : textes écrits, vlogues, œuvres visuelles, photos, etc.!

Nous encourageons tout particulièrement les personnes autistes de tout âge à nous soumettre leur contribution.

Pour obtenir plus d'information, proposer des idées et soumettre vos créations : info@autismontario.com

L'autisme, c'est important

Parents, assurez-vous que l'école de votre enfant favorise l'inclusion des enfants qui ont un trouble du spectre de l'autisme.

Autism Matters contient des articles fort intéressants pour les membres du personnel enseignant et pour les parents. Ces articles sont rédigés par des cliniciens ou cliniciennes, des éducateurs ou éducatrices ainsi que des chercheurs ou chercheuses, ou encore par des élèves et des adultes autistes qui acceptent de nous livrer leurs histoires personnelles.

Les membres d'Autisme Ontario reçoivent automatiquement cette revue trimestrielle. Nous invitons les écoles à s'inscrire comme membres professionnels d'Autisme Ontario. Cette inscription leur permettra de recevoir tous les numéros ***d'Autism Matters*** et leur procurera aussi de nombreux autres avantages.

Si l'un de vos enfants fréquente une école publique ou une école catholique de l'Ontario, demandez à la direction ou aux enseignantes et enseignants à l'enfance en difficulté de devenir membre professionnel d'Autisme Ontario et continuer ainsi de travailler à faire de votre école et de votre collectivité un milieu de vie inclusif pour les élèves qui vivent avec un trouble du spectre de l'autisme.

Pour de plus amples renseignements, visitez le site **autismontario.com.**

AutismMATTERS est une publication d'Autisme Ontario.

AutismONTARIO
1179, rue King Ouest, bureau 004
Toronto, ON M6K 3C5

Les membres d'Autisme Ontario reçoivent automatiquement cette revue.

Préparation à la rentrée scolaire

DES CONSEILS DE TRANSITION POUR LES ÉLÈVES AUTISTES

Adapté de : P. Kluth (2010). *You're Going to Love This Kid! : Teaching Students with Autism in the Inclusive Classroom* (éd. rév.) Baltimore: Brookes

Cet article est tiré du site Web de Paula Kluth. On peut trouver cet article, ainsi que de nombreux autres sur la scolarisation inclusive, l'enseignement différencié et la littératie, sur www.PaulaKluth.com. Consultez dès maintenant le site pour lire l'astuce du jour, pour accéder à des dizaines d'articles gratuits et pour en apprendre davantage sur le soutien aux apprenants du milieu de la diversité de la maternelle à la 12e année.

POUR DE NOMBREUX APPRENANTS AUTISTES, les transitions sont le volet le plus ardu de la scolarisation. Il est déjà assez stressant de passer d'une salle de classe à une autre ou d'un enseignant à l'autre, mais se déplacer d'un bâtiment à l'autre est presque toujours une grande source d'anxiété et d'appréhension. Les quatre stratégies suivantes, qui ont pour but de préparer l'apprenant autiste à la fréquentation d'une nouvelle école ou à une nouvelle expérience de scolarisation, peuvent être appliquées dans les jours ou les mois qui précèdent son arrivée, et tout au long de l'année scolaire.

Avant-goût de l'école

Pour de nombreux élèves autistes, il sera profitable de voir l'école, d'en faire l'expérience et de se renseigner à son sujet avant de s'y présenter au jour de la rentrée. C'est une stratégie efficace pour les élèves qui changent d'école ou pour ceux qui se présenteront pour la première fois dans une certaine salle de classe. Différents outils permettent à l'élève de prévisualiser son école. Certains élèves apprécieront une vidéo de l'école et de ses salles, accompagnée de courtes entrevues avec ses nouveaux enseignants. D'autres élèves préfèrent visiter eux-mêmes l'école et rencontrer les enseignants en personne avant la rentrée officielle. D'autres encore aimeront en parler avec leurs frères et sœurs, leurs parents ou des amis sur l'école. Les élèves pourraient

également examiner les brochures de l'école, les bulletins d'information de l'année précédente et/ou le site Web de l'école (s'il y en a un).

Questionnaires

Avant la rentrée ou durant les premiers jours d'école, de nombreux enseignants demandent aux élèves et à leur famille de remplir un questionnaire. Cet outil aidera l'enseignant à se familiariser avec les élèves et à nouer un lien immédiat avec les familles. Certains enseignants remettront des questionnaires différents aux élèves et aux parents, alors que d'autres concevront un questionnaire que la famille et l'élève rempliront. Même si un questionnaire aiderait sans aucun doute l'enseignant à mieux connaître son élève autiste, de nombreux enseignants choisissent de remettre des questionnaires à chaque élève de la classe.

Un enseignant qui envisage d'utiliser un questionnaire devra s'intéresser principalement aux styles d'apprentissage de l'élève, à ses intérêts, à ses besoins, à ses points forts ou même à ses idées pour la classe. Les questions devront varier selon le groupe d'âge, mais en voici quelques exemples :

- De quelle façon apprends-tu le mieux?
- Quels sont tes passe-temps?
- Qu'est-ce qui te fait peur ou te dérange?
- As-tu des talents spéciaux (planche à roulettes, karaté, collection d'insectes, dessin)?
- De quoi as-tu besoin pour être à l'aise dans ma classe?
- Qu'est-ce que tu souhaites apprendre cette année?
- Quel est le moment que tu aimes le moins dans la journée scolaire?
- Quel est le moment que tu préfères dans la journée scolaire?

Si un ou plusieurs élèves ne peuvent pas écrire, l'enseignant, le parent ou la personne de soutien peut leur permettre de répondre de façon visuelle, par exemple par des dessins, en créant un collage ou en soumettant des photographies ou une vidéo.

Routines et horaires

Certains élèves bénéficieront de la création et de l'utilisation d'horaires écrits, de calendriers illustrés ou d'un agenda quotidien. Comme me l'a expliqué un de mes anciens élèves : « L'école est pour moi un lieu où il y a beaucoup de stimulations, de bruit et de désorganisation. Je dois m'habituer aux nouveaux endroits et avoir un horaire ». Les enseignants devraient souvent parler aux élèves de l'emploi du temps en classe. Ils devraient également s'efforcer d'avertir le plus possible les élèves autistes lorsqu'ils prévoient modifier l'horaire de classe ou qu'un remplaçant viendra enseigner.

Tous les élèves de la classe pourront trouver avantage à mieux connaître l'horaire de la journée. Un élève qui sait quelle matière sera enseignée et quelles activités auront lieu lors d'une journée ou d'une semaine donnée sera mieux à même de planifier et de gérer son temps. Les enseignants peuvent intégrer à la routine quotidienne de toute classe une revue de l'horaire de la journée; pour certains élèves, les quelques secondes consacrées à l'examen de cette information peuvent faciliter le processus d'apprentissage.

Portfolio personnel

Les élèves qui ont des capacités et des besoins particuliers pourraient vouloir utiliser un portfolio pour se présenter à un enseignant. Le portfolio peut inclure des photographies, des œuvres d'art, des échantillons d'écrits ou de travaux scolaires, des listes de choses préférées, ou même une présentation vidéo ou audio.

Un portfolio peut s'avérer particulièrement utile pour les élèves qui ne parlent pas ou qui n'utilisent pas un système de communication fiable. J'ai aidé un jeune homme, J.D., à assembler un portfolio qui lui servirait à faire la transition entre l'école secondaire et le milieu de travail. Ce jeune homme était non verbal, et les personnes qui le rencontraient pour la première fois avaient souvent du mal à entrer en contact avec lui. Quand les enseignants de J.D. l'ont accompagné pour la première fois dans sa nouvelle école, ses futurs camarades de classe ont posé diverses questions à son sujet : Est-ce qu'il les comprend? Est-ce qu'il a des intérêts en particulier?

Les enseignants ont jugé que J.D. avait besoin de pouvoir se présenter d'une façon qui ne les obligerait pas à lui servir de porte-parole et d'intermédiaires. À cette fin, les enseignants ont aidé J.D. à constituer un portfolio qu'il pourrait employer pour se présenter à de nouvelles personnes et pour interagir avec celles qu'il connaît déjà. Voici quel était le contenu de son portfolio :

- Quatre pages de photographies (J.D. avec sa famille et ses amis; J.D. jouant au football dans un parc communautaire; J.D. travaillant avec d'autres élèves à une expérience de biologie; photos de vacances au musée du rock'n'roll en Ohio).
- Un bref « curriculum vitae » décrivant certains des cours suivis au cycle intermédiaire
- Une liste de ses films et CD préférés
- Un dépliant d'introduction à l'autisme obtenu par J.D. lors d'une conférence
- Une photo sur papier glacé des Packers de Green Bay, son équipe de football préférée

Le portfolio peut être sur support papier, audio ou vidéo; il peut être formel ou informel, comprendre quelques pages ou des dizaines de pages, contenir uniquement des informations et des artefacts d'actualité, ou offrir un regard cumulatif sur la vie de l'élève.

En ligne

DIX CONSEILS DE CYBERSÉCURITÉ POUR LES ADOLESCENTS AUTISTES

par Nicole Lisi, Katie Sedej et Sarah Southey

L'INTERNET EST OMNIPRÉSENT dans nos vies. Les plateformes interactives permettent aux utilisateurs d'interagir davantage avec leurs pairs et contribuent de bien des façons à favoriser le développement social, la représentation de soi, l'échange d'informations et l'établissement de relations et de valeurs (Pendergast et coll., 2013). Dans un contexte d'éducation formelle comme informelle, ces espaces de communication ont le potentiel d'influencer et d'enrichir le développement intellectuel (Pendergast et coll., 2013). Cela dit, il demeure toujours nécessaire de trouver des moyens d'inciter et d'encourager les jeunes à naviguer sur Internet de manière sûre et productive.

Pour de nombreuses personnes autistes, les médias en ligne représentent un lieu de communication confortable (Benford et Standon, 2009). Considérant que l'autisme peut créer des obstacles à la communication sociale (APA, 2013), nous souhaitons encourager les individus à communiquer dans les espaces où ils se sentent à l'aise. Les adolescents autistes peuvent être à risque de développer des comportements en ligne problématiques, puisqu'ils prêtent davantage le flanc à la cyberdépendance (Romaro, et al., 2014). De plus, la difficulté qu'ont les jeunes autistes à s'autoréguler (Macklem, 2008) accroît le risque de réactions et de publications impulsives en ligne. Pour assurer la sécurité en ligne des adolescents tout en maximisant leurs privilèges d'accès, nous leur proposons les mesures suivantes :

1. Assoyez-vous avec votre parent/aidant et négociez un contrat de cybersécurité.

Établissez les privilèges et revoyez-les régulièrement. Fixez vos limites et vos attentes sur ce qu'est un comportement sécuritaire en ligne et en quoi consistent vos propres besoins particuliers.

2. Convenez et discutez de l'opportunité et de la façon d'utiliser des logiciels de suivi ou de surveillance.

Ces applications peuvent par exemple surveiller le temps passé en ligne, ou détecter des mots clés ou des contacts. Cette solution peut être utile si vous avez de la difficulté à respecter certaines limites (p. ex. temps passé sur Internet) et avez besoin d'un soutien supplémentaire pour garder la maîtrise de votre activité en ligne.

3. Prenez le pouls de votre humeur avant de vous lancer sur Internet.

Pour sonder vos états d'âme, prenez quelques bonnes respirations et concentrez-vous sur les points de tension de votre corps. Vous trouverez ici quelques exemples d'exercices de recentrage : https://www.therapistaid.com/interactive-therapy-tool/grounding-exercise-audio (en anglais).

4. Ne partagez jamais de photos de nus!

Même si nous appuyons la positivité corporelle et l'exploration sexuelle, nous vous déconseillons fortement de partager électroniquement avec autrui des photos nues de vous-mêmes. Le partage de photos privées, même avec une personne en qui vous avez confiance, peut avoir des conséquences durables. Vos photos pourraient être réacheminées sans votre consentement à une autre personne ou sur les réseaux sociaux, et il pourrait y avoir intervention de la police, ou encore de votre école ou de votre lieu de travail.

5. Si vous êtes en colère, faites une pause avant de publier quelque chose et demandez-vous s'il existe un meilleur exutoire pour vos émotions.

Souvent, face à un trop-plein d'émotions, on cherche un moyen de les évacuer immédiatement sans penser aux conséquences possibles de nos gestes ou de nos paroles. Si vous êtes en ligne, vous pourriez avoir envie de publier une réponse chargée d'émotion qui pourrait finir par rendre la situation encore plus tendue. Si vous sentez vos émotions commencer à bouillonner pendant que vous êtes en ligne, respirez profondément, laissez là vos appareils électroniques et faites une courte activité relaxante avant de réagir à la situation.

6. Enrichissez vos connaissances sur la cybersécurité en consultant des ressources du genre :

- Be Internet Awesome with Google (liste de trucs et de jeux sur la sécurité en ligne-en anglais) https://beinternetawesome.withgoogle.com/en_us (Jeu Interland en français : https://beinternetawesome.withgoogle.com/fr_all/interland)
- Social Networking Dos and Don'ts (en anglais) https://cyberbullying.org/smart-social-networking.pdf
- Cyberintimidation – En quoi elle consiste et comment y mettre fin https://www.unicef.org/fr/mettre-fin-violence/mettre-fin-intimidation-en-ligne
- Online Safety Guide for Teens with ASD (en anglais) https://thetouchpointsolution.com/blogs/touchpoints-blog/a-helpful-online-safety-guide-for-people-with-autism-spectrum-disorders

7. Sachez où obtenir de l'aide. Il peut être nécessaire de signaler les comportements dangereux en ligne.

Vous pouvez le faire via la plateforme que vous utilisez (p. ex. signaler un compte ou une publication sur Instagram) ou sur des sites Web conçus à cette fin comme https://www.cybertip.ca/app/fr/ (signalement des cas d'exploitation sexuelle en ligne). Après une interaction négative, vous pourriez également avoir besoin d'aide, par exemple de la part d'un adulte de confiance, d'un ami ou d'une plateforme de soutien en cas de crise (p. ex. Jeunesse, J'écoute).

8. Familiarisez-vous avec les fonctions de confidentialité.

Toutes les plateformes en ligne offrent des options de confidentialité qui vous aident à protéger vos informations personnelles. Quand vous commencez à utiliser une nouvelle plateforme en ligne, n'oubliez pas de vérifier les paramètres de confidentialité ou de sécurité qu'elle vous offre, pour savoir quels éléments d'information vous concernant sont publics et lesquels sont privés. C'est également une bonne idée de revoir régulièrement vos paramètres de sécurité, s'il y a des changements.

9. Ne partagez jamais de renseignements personnels.

Cette consigne vise aussi bien vos publications générales que vos conversations avec des personnes que vous connaissez ou non personnellement. En veillant à la confidentialité de vos renseignements personnels, vous vous protégez contre les préjudices personnels, le vol d'identité, l'hameçonnage ou l'escroquerie en ligne et le piratage de vos comptes (réseaux sociaux, services bancaires, etc.).

10. N'oubliez pas que les médias sociaux ne sont pas la réalité.

Il peut être tentant de comparer votre vie à celle de vos interlocuteurs en ligne, mais rappelez-vous que ceux-ci ne choisissent de partager sur Internet qu'un seul aspect de leur vie (souvent les moments forts). Si vous constatez que vous commencez à vous déprécier ou à dévaloriser votre vie en vous basant sur des comparaisons avec les autres usagers des réseaux sociaux, il est peut-être temps de délaisser temporairement les réseaux sociaux et de travailler à améliorer votre santé mentale et votre estime de soi.

Références :

American Psychiatric Association [APA] (2013). DSM-V diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders. Arlington: VA: American Psychiatric Association

Benford, P. & Standen, P. (2009), "The internet: a comfortable communication medium for people with Asperger syndrome (AS) and high functioning autism (HFA)?", *Journal of Assistive Technologies*, 3 (2) 44-53.

Macklem, G. L. (2008). *Practitioner's Guide to Emotion Regulation in School-Aged Children*. Springer, UK.

Pendergast, D., Beavis, C., Muspratt, S., & Thompson, R. (2013). Being safe online: Exploring the perceived importance and ease of undertaking tasks associated with managing online safety. *Australian Journal of Middle Schooling,* 13(2), 20-33.

Romano, M., Truzoli, R., Osborne, L. A. & Reed, P. (2014). The relationship between autism quotient, anxiety, and internet addiction, *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders*, 8(11), p.1521-1526.

Back to School Season
Saison de la rentrée

Getting ready for school is an important process for both the caregivers and the students. We have curated a list of webinars and resources that can be found in CommunityConnect.

La préparation de la rentrée scolaire est un processus important aussi bien pour les aidants que pour les élèves. Nous avons organisé une liste de webinaires et de ressources d'intérêt, que vous pouvez trouver dans CommunityConnect.

Articles

Preparing for a Successful School Meeting
Go to https://www.autismontario.com/node/478

Conseils pour préparer une réunion fructueuse à l'école
Visitez https://www.autismontario.com/fr/node/478

Preparing for Kindergarten: Ideas for Families
Go to https://www.autismontario.com/node/444

Préparation des enfants pour la maternelle : Des idées pour les familles
Visitez https://www.autismontario.com/fr/node/444

The Individual Education Plan (IEP)
Go to https://www.autismontario.com/node/560

Plan d'enseignement individualisé (PEI)
Visitez https://www.autismontario.com/fr/node/560

Understanding the Role of the Educational Assistant (EA)
Go to https://www.autismontario.com/node/474

Comprendre le rôle de l'aide-enseignant
Visitez https://www.autismontario.com/fr/node/474

Webinars / Webinaires

ABA in an Educational Setting
Go to https://www.autismontario.com/node/460

L'ACA en milieu scolaire*
Visitez https://www.autismontario.com/fr/node/460

Webinar Series - How Can I Help My Child to Print?: A Printing Readiness Workshop for Parents
Go to https://www.autismontario.com/node/656

Série de webinaires - Comment puis-je aider mon enfant à écrire? Un atelier de préparation à l'enseignement de l'écriture pour les parents*
Visitez https://www.autismontario.com/fr/node/656

Positive Advocacy Strategies for School: The IPRC Process
Go to https://www.autismontario.com/node/535

Stratégies d'action revendicatrice positives : Le mode de fonctionnement du CIPR*
Visitez https://www.autismontario.com/fr/node/535

*Le webinaire est enregistré en anglais mais le matériel de cours est disponible en français.

Play Ball!

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND APPLIED BEHAVIOUR ANALYSIS

by Patrick Jachyra, PhD

PARTICIPATING IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY for people on the autism spectrum can have many benefits. Individuals who are physically active are more likely to experience improvements in their physical health (e.g., better heart, lung and brain health) and also experience improvements in their mental health (e.g., decreases in stress and anxiety). In addition to the health benefits, being physically active can also provide social opportunities to form peer relationships, and provide a sense of structure and routine which can be beneficial for people on the spectrum. Finally, being physically active can help release pent up energy which at times can make us feel overwhelmed, anxious or stressed out. When we put all of the benefits of activity together, physical activity can help with better sleep, improve social and communication skills, enhance attention, improve learning and memory, and improve motor skills and body awareness. Body awareness is not only important for physical activity, but also helps with everyday life, as being active can help with good posture, balance, breathing and overall coordination of the body.

While the benefits of physical activity have been consistently identified, individuals on the autism spectrum are less likely to be active than their age-related peers. Research suggests that individuals on the autism spectrum are less likely to participate in school-based and community programs, and less likely to meet daily-recommended physical activity guidelines. Lower levels of activity can be problematic as individuals on the autism spectrum are less likely to benefit from the many pleasures of movement described above, and inactivity can potentially increase risks for physical and mental health challenges over the lifespan.

Despite the benefits of being active, a number of barriers that limit physical activity participation for individuals on the autism spectrum have been identified. Research my team and I have conducted in Ontario highlights that there is often a lack of opportunities for activity in the community, and a lack of knowledge among physical activity leaders (school teachers, instructors, coaches) on how to deliver physical activity for individuals on the spectrum. Individuals on the spectrum may also experience sensory challenges (over-stimulation), and or

challenges with movement skills (challenges with running, jumping, throwing) which can limit their participation. While these barriers limit participation, one way to engage individuals in physical activity is to use principles and techniques from Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) into the physical activity context. Many people are familiar with the use of ABA to help with feeding, behaviour, dressing and learning, but ABA techniques can also be applied when individuals on the spectrum engage in physical activity. Below are three examples on how to apply ABA to physical activity, and I encourage parents, teachers, and healthcare professionals to try them out as a way to support the physical activity of individuals on the spectrum. Being physically active is especially important with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic for both health and non-health purposes. Try to include physical activity on a daily basis to maximize the beneits of being active.

1. Providing a schedule

Before engaging in physical activity, it may be helpful to provide individuals on the spectrum with a schedule of events and activities that will take place. Visual schedules that are written out, and verbal schedules of the activities that are provided ahead of the activity can help with anticipating the activities that take place that day. For example, it may be helpful to say: "The activities today will include running, jumping, ball throwing and kicking." After introducing those three activities and asking individuals to complete them, then introduce the next set of activities. For example, we might say: "Now we will practice kicking a ball, balancing and rolling the ball." By providing a schedule, we are setting up individuals for success to help predict the nature of activities.

2. Positive reinforcement

Throughout activity, it is important to provide positive reinforcement to engage and keep individuals on the spectrum motivated. For example, every time they complete one of the skills, a high-five or a first jump can be given to reinforce that they completed the skill. Positive reinforcement in turn can be used as a tool to foster physical activity, especially when trying out a new activity.

3. Prompting

Prompting may be another tool to help engage individuals on the spectrum to be physically active. Prompts such as verbal and visual cues could be helpful to encourage a behaviour. Verbal cues are gentle reminders such as "kick the ball with the inside part of your foot." Visual cues include a demonstration of the kicking motion as a way to remind the individual of the physical activity or skill they need to perform. It would be especially helpful to combine providing a schedule, positive reinforcement and prompting to help initiate and foster physical activity participation among individuals on the spectrum.

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What's Happening in Ontario, Summer, 2021

SUMMER IS FINALLY HERE and with it a list of fun outdoor activities that you and your family can safely do in Ontario's Great Outdoors. This comes from a list submitted from Autism Ontario's tireless Service Navigators and staff of their favourite outdoor gems. Discover hiking trails, hidden outdoor spots to breathe in the fresh air and be one with nature. You might want to watch the sunset from a favourite scenic lookout or feed the birds along a lakeshore. Perhaps it's a craft kit your family can share from a local store. This is only part of what we could fit in on this small map... but there's much more out there for your family to seek out and enjoy this summer. (It's always a good idea to check ahead for availability.)

✱ Family activities
✱ Teens/Adults

SAULT STE. MARIE

SUDBURY & DISTRICT

Sudbury

- ✱ Kivi Parc (wonderful walking trails and kayak renta
- ✱ Bell Parc – great walking
- ✱ The Rotary trail
- ✱ Why not sit by the waterfront at Science North?
- ✱ Get crafty at DIY Craftery with its take home cra

Simcoe/Muskoka/Parry Sound

- ✱ Take home craft kits for the family from Crock a Harbour, Midland or from Creative Cafe in Barrie
- ✱ Outdoor fitness fun with WildLife Fitness
- ✱ Watch a drive-in movie at Premier Theatres o drive-in

Sault Ste. Marie/Algoma

- ✱ Lake Superior Provincial Park: Agawa Rock Pictographs (Wawa)
- ✱ John Roswell Hub Trail (Sault Ste. Marie)
- ✱ Fort Creek (Sault Ste. Marie)
- ✱ Creative Nest Studio-DIY Crafts

Grey/Bruce

- ✱ Point Clark Lighthouse
- ✱ Geddes Environmental Park/Kincardine Labyrinthe (Kincardine)
- ✱ The Bruce Trail
- ✱ Saugeen Valley Conservation Area
- ✱ Canoe on the Saugeen River
- ✱ Heritage Park in Owen Sound

GREY / BRUCE

York

- ✱ Wa
- ✱ Fair
- ✱ Yor
- ✱ Rich

Thunder Bay & District

- ✱ Thunder Bay scenic lookout
- ✱ Terry Fox monument
- ✱ Centennial Park – hiking
- ✱ Hillcrest Park – flower gardens, views, and a Second World War memorial

THUNDER BAY & DISTRICT

HURON PERTH

(FOR HAL WEL

Huron/Perth

- ✱ Watch a movie under the stars (Stratford)
- ✱ Stratford Audio Walking Tours
- ✱ Maitland Trail (51km from Goderich to Auburn)

Sarnia/Lambton

- ✱ Point Edward Waterfront Trail (Sarnia)
- ✱ Sarnia Bayshore Loop
- ✱ Howard Watson Trail (Sarnia)
- ✱ Spicebush Trail (Chatham)
- ✱ O'Neil Nature Preserve (Chatham)
- ✱ St. Clair National Wildlife Trail (Chatham)

SARNIA LAMBTON

CHATHAM/ KENT

LONDON & DISTRICT

London & District

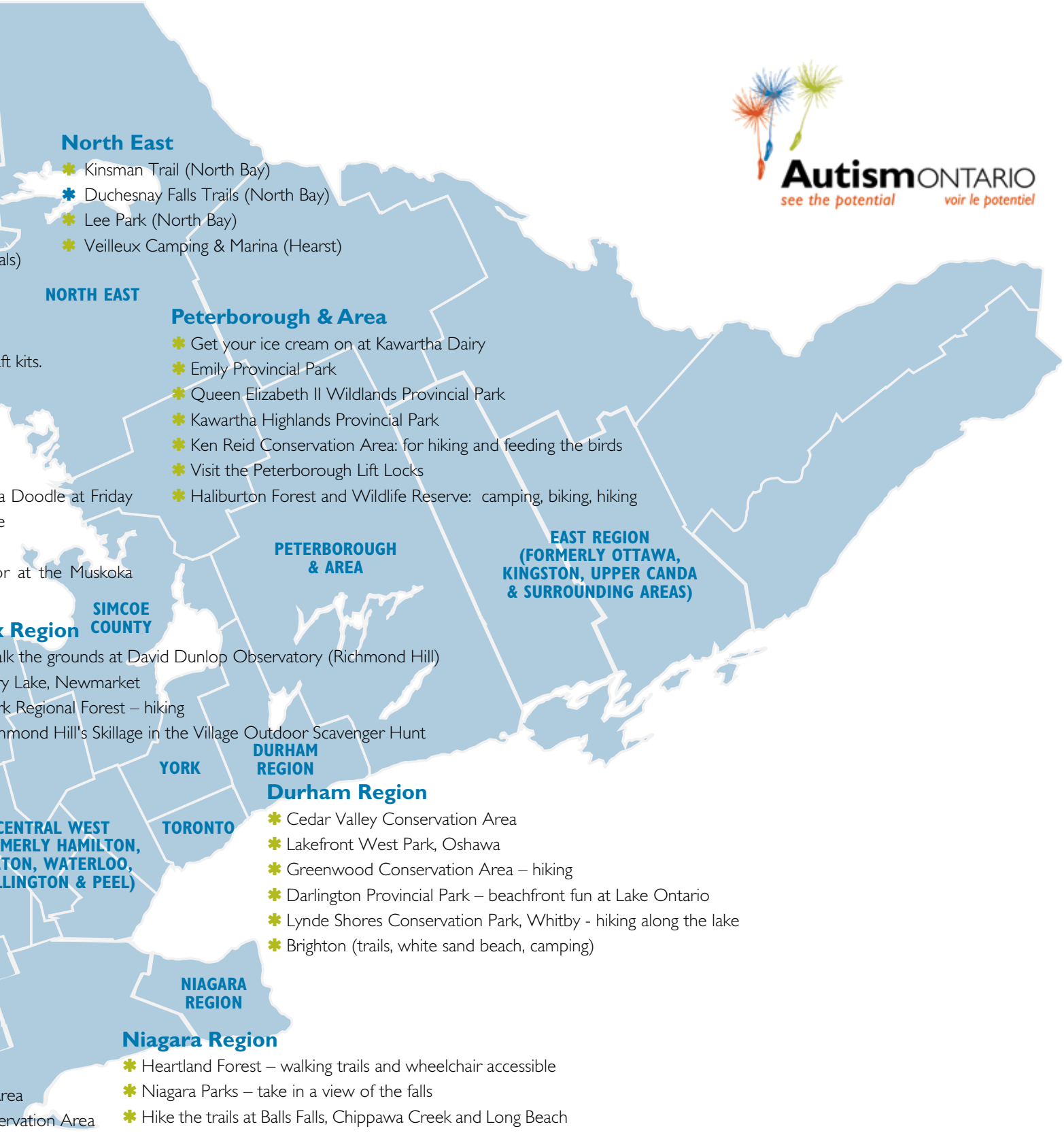
- ✱ Fanshawe Conservation A
- ✱ Westminster Ponds Conse – Nature Preserve

A good general resource to find a trail in Ontario is: https://www.alltrails.com/

Windsor/Essex

- ✱ Point Pelee National Park - bird watcher's paradise
- ✱ Peace Fountain and Coventry Garden – walk among the flower gardens along the Detroit River

WINDSOR ESSEX



Autism ONTARIO
see the potential voir le potentiel

North East

- Kinsman Trail (North Bay)
- Duchesnay Falls Trails (North Bay)
- Lee Park (North Bay)
- Veilleux Camping & Marina (Hearst)

als)

ft kits.

a Doodle at Friday
e

or at the Muskoka

Peterborough & Area

- Get your ice cream on at Kawartha Dairy
- Emily Provincial Park
- Queen Elizabeth II Wildlands Provincial Park
- Kawartha Highlands Provincial Park
- Ken Reid Conservation Area: for hiking and feeding the birds
- Visit the Peterborough Lift Locks
- Haliburton Forest and Wildlife Reserve: camping, biking, hiking

k Region

lk the grounds at David Dunlop Observatory (Richmond Hill)
y Lake, Newmarket
k Regional Forest – hiking
hmond Hill's Skillage in the Village Outdoor Scavenger Hunt

Durham Region

- Cedar Valley Conservation Area
- Lakefront West Park, Oshawa
- Greenwood Conservation Area – hiking
- Darlington Provincial Park – beachfront fun at Lake Ontario
- Lynde Shores Conservation Park, Whitby - hiking along the lake
- Brighton (trails, white sand beach, camping)

Niagara Region

- Heartland Forest – walking trails and wheelchair accessible
- Niagara Parks – take in a view of the falls
- Hike the trails at Balls Falls, Chippawa Creek and Long Beach Conservation Areas
- Music in the Park (Paris)
- Community splash pads (Paris, Burford and Sunny Hill)

rea
ervation Area

See page 30 for activities available in Central West, East and Toronto Regions ▶

- Family activities
- Teens/Adults

Central West

- Van Wagner's Beach and Confederation Park (Hamilton)
- Royal Botanical Gardens (Hamilton)
- 50 Point Conservation Area – bird watching (Hamilton)
- Bruce Trail and Rail Trail (Hamilton)
- HMCS Haida-National Historic site (Hamilton)
- Christie Lake Conservation Area (Dundas)
- Crock A Doodle Dundas and Stoney Creek - take home craft kits for the family
- Milton Farmer's Market
- Elora Gorge Conservation Area – boating, swimming, fishing, beach and playground
- Brant Conservation Area
- St Jacob's Market (all sorts of goodies)
- West Montrose Covered Bridge
- Tree Top Trekking, Heart Lake Conservation Area (Brampton)
- Drive to Dundas Driving Park

Toronto

- High Park Trails
- Scarborough Bluffs
- Rouge National Urban Park
- Discover the Don Valley Trail
- Martin Goodman trail - ride bike, jog, stroll along the lakeshore from the west end to the east
- Watch the ships from Sugar Beach
- Sunset at Riverdale Park
- Picnic at Cherry beach
- Bird Watching at Gibraltar Point Beach
- Visit the Evergreen Brick Works
- Ride the Beltline Trail
- Explore Mount Pleasant Cemetery
- Take the ferry and explore the Toronto Islands (bike or walk)

East Region

Kingston

- Have a picnic at Lake Ontario Park
- Take a hike through Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area
- Walk the Kingston Waterfront Trail
- Visit Kingston Mills (the most southern lock of the Rideau Canal)

Ottawa

- Go on a haunted walk of the Nation's Capital
- Visit the Experimental Farm
- Do the Great Canadian Bungee
- Feed the birds at Mer Bleue Bog or at Jack Pine Trail
- Picnic and play by the water at Andrew Haydon Park
- Visit the Governor General's grounds
- Browse Ottawa's farmers' markets.
- Hike forest trails at Gatineau Park
- Swim and picnic at Mooney's Bay
- Tour the outdoor art installations at the National Art Gallery

Stormont, Dundas & Glengarry and Cornwall

- Iroquois Locks Gauging Station
- Larose Forest Trails
- Upper Canada Migratory Bird Sanctuary
- Petrie Island Park
- St. Raphael's Ruins
- Cornwall Park

Brockville

- Book the gazebo at St. Lawrence park for a family picnic
- Parkway Bike Ride
- Canoe and Skidoo Rentals
- Catch frogs at the Mac Johnson Wildlife area
- Beach volleyball at Hardy or at Lawrence
- Prescott beach and playground
- Gananoque waterfront - playground and splash pads
- Jones Creek: a beautiful bridge for photos

Belleville/Bay of Quinte

- Sandbanks (sand dunes, camping, white sand beaches (Prince Edward County)
- Lake on the Mountain (Prince Edward County)
- Prince Edward County Lavender Farm - Hillier
- Winery tours - Prince Edward County (check ahead)
- Cruising Canoes (Belleville)
- HR Fink Conservation Area and outdoor trails and Outdoor Education Centre
- Vanderwater Conservation Area
- Zwick Centennial Park
- Riverside Park
- Kiwanis Bayshore Trail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Logged In

TEN TIPS FOR AUTISTIC ADOLESCENTS FOR NAVIGATING ONLINE SAFETY

Evidence informed

by Nicole Lisi, Katie Sedej and Sarah Southey

THE INTERNET is a constant presence in our lives. Interactive platforms have the capacity to increase engagement with peers and provide many benefits for social development, the representation of self, the exchange of information and the establishment of relationships and values (Pendergast, et al., 2013). Within both formal and informal education contexts, these communicative spaces have the potential to influence and enrich intellectual development (Pendergast, et al., 2013). However, an ongoing challenge exists in finding ways to support and encourage young people to engage in safe and productive ways within the context of the internet.

Many autistic individuals find online mediums to be a comfortable place to communicate (Benford and Standon, 2009). In understanding that autism may create social communication obstacles (APA, 2013), we want to encourage communication in spaces where individuals feel comfortable. Autistic adolescents may be at risk of developing challenging online behaviours as there is a stronger likelihood of internet addiction (Romaro, et al., 2014). Furthermore, in understanding that autistic youth often struggle with self-regulation (Macklem, 2008) there is possibility of increased impulsive reactions and posts online. To ensure online safety while maximizing online privileges, the following steps are suggested for adolescents:

1. Sit down with your parent/caregiver and negotiate an online safety contract.

Determine privileges and revisit them regularly. Shape your boundaries and expectations around safe internet behaviour

and your own unique needs.

2. Agree on and discuss if/how any tracking or monitoring software will be used.

Some examples of app features include monitoring the amount of time spent online, key words or contacts. This may be useful if you find yourself struggling with certain boundaries (i.e., time spent online), and need additional support to remain accountable.

3. Check in on your mood prior to engaging online.

Taking a few deep breaths and concentrating on where you may hold tension in your body may be a good way to get in touch with how you may be feeling. Some sample grounding exercises may be found at: https://www.therapistaid.com/interactive-therapy-tool/grounding-exercise-audio

4. Never share nudes!

While we are supportive of body positivity and sexual exploration, we discourage sharing nude images of oneself with others electronically. Sharing private photos, even if it's with someone you trust, can have lasting consequences. Your photos could be non-consensually shared with another individual or on social media, there could be possible police involvement, or your school or place of employment could get involved.

5. Before posting something while upset, take a break and think about if there is a better outlet for your emotions.

Often, when emotions feel big, we want to find a way to release them immediately without thinking about the possible consequences of what we say or do. If this happens while online, you may want to post an emotionally charged response that could end up making the situation more stressful. When you start to feel big emotions bubbling up when online, take a deep breath, put down your electronics, and go complete a short relaxing activity before responding to the situation.

6. Build your online safety knowledge by exploring resources like:

- Be Internet Awesome with Google (List of Tips and Online Safety Games) https://beinternetawesome.withgoogle.com/en_us
- Social Networking Dos and Don'ts https://cyberbullying.org/smart-social-networking.pdf
- Cyberbullying – What it is and how to stop it https://www.unicef.org/end-violence/how-to-stop-cyberbullying#1
- Online Safety Guide for Teens with ASD https://thetouchpointsolution.com/blogs/touchpoints-blog/a-helpful-online-safety-guide-for-people-with-autism-spectrum-disorders

7. Know where to get help.

Reporting unsafe behaviour may be necessary when online. You can do this through the platform that you're using (i.e., reporting an account or post on Instagram), or through internet safety reporting websites like www.cybertip.ca (reports online sexual exploitation). You may also need help after a negative interaction. This help could come from a trusted adult, friend or crisis support platform (i.e., Kids Help Phone).

8. Familiarize yourself with privacy features.

All online platforms have privacy options available that help you keep your personal information safe. When you start to use a new online platform, be sure to check out what privacy or security features are available to you so you know which pieces of your information are public versus private. It also may be a good idea to review your security settings regularly in case of change.

9. Never share your personal information.

This includes general online posts and in conversations with people who you may or may not know in person. Ensuring that your private information stays private helps to keep you safe from being at risk for personal harm, identity theft, phishing schemes or online scams, and hacking of different accounts (i.e., social media, banking, etc.).

10. Remember that social media is not reality.

It can be easy to compare your life to the lives of others you see online, but it's important to remember that this is just one side of someone's life (often the highlights) that they are choosing to share with the rest of the internet. If you find that you're starting to create a negative dialogue about yourself or your own life based on comparisons with others through social media, it may be time to take a social media break and focus on boosting your mental health and self-esteem.

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Multiskilled, Everywhere

THE BEAT OF A DIFFERENT DRUMMER

YOU MIGHT HAVE MET DAVID BERESFORD on YouTube, belting out the drum solo in Rush's "Tom Sawyer." Or perhaps you've seen some of his paintings or had him as an art instructor. Perhaps, at an autism event, he's done a caricature of you; or just as likely, you've had a quiet discussion with this autism self advocate.

Perhaps it's best that the Hamilton, Ontario, native sums it up for himself. "I do work in many different ways, illustration, painting and music. I would say just overall, I consider myself just a visual artist and inventor or freelancer... I'm an advocate and a presenter and a mentor, as well."

David, who was diagnosed at the age of three with autism, said he was an artist from an early age, getting the musical talent from his father and the visual talent from his mother. David not only drums; he also plays bass guitar. "The art and the music run in my family. When I was growing up, she [his mother] was always really great with decorative painting and doing gardening and all the visual stuff, but it's different from what I do. And my dad, of course, you know, he was a drummer pretty much all of his life. By the time I was about 12 or 13, that's when I started getting into drumming more consistently."

David's sister and brother, whom he credits with supporting him, are also artists: David's sister April, who is a videographer and photographer, helped him growing up, and his brother Adam has served as his musical inspiration and support. "April is one of my big helpers. My younger brother Adam, who plays bass guitar and multiple instruments, is also a big supporter as he is my roommate."

As a visual artist, David draws his inspiration from a variety of sources, including his own imagination. He says sometimes he'll take something he sees in a photograph and use that as his basis. "I get my visual influences from sometimes just looking stuff up on Google... But sometimes it just pops up in my head or sometimes I've watched a few episodes of a show or something like that. So it really varies."

David describes himself as a "very visual processing-learning person." When it comes to his art and his music, what he produces depends on his mood and his state of mind or the research he may have done. "What comes out in my art, *per se*, or how I play my music, really depends on how I visually process."

One of David's artistic influences was the late Bob Ross, who hosted a painting show on PBS for many years. David works mainly in acrylic on canvas but has painted on other objects, including records and musical instruments. In 2015, he placed third nationally in the ANCA Foundation International Naturally Autistic Art Awards, in the Performing Arts Category.

As well as being an artist and a musician, David has also served as an art instructor and mentor both in the autism community and in the wider world. "I've always been involved with the autism community, having gone to summer camp," he says. He volunteers in the Autism Job Club in nearby Burlington, Ontario, where, as well as carrying out several commissions for the organization, he has also served as a mentor, job coach and role-model presenter for younger adults on the spectrum. "I taught them independent living skills, social skills, and how to apply for a job..."

David recalls a recent stint with the Toronto Catholic District School Board, where he worked as an art instructor. Starting with a simple theme, he would draw the subject on the board, and take the class through step by step, but leave each student with enough space to add their own details and interpretations. "I would walk around and give everyone one-on-one highlights, or tips on how they could finish their painting."

David also regularly participates in a podcast, "All Access Pass," which recently highlighted how people on the autism spectrum are portrayed in the media. While acknowledging the controversy of autistic representation, David notes that there is not a lot of research being done on the subject; for example, "How the directors and the actors are going about it [the work]. I think more people on the spectrum need to be hired."

Reflecting on his own time as an artist, self advocate and educator, David knows the importance of early intervention for children on the spectrum. "Autism, while considered a neurological disorder, can also give a person great strength," he says. "It's part of who we are."

Top: Sunset Mountain
Below: Rainbow Mountain
Opposite page: David on the drums
(all photos courtesy of David Beresford)

A Shot in the Arm

OUR TRIP TO THE VACCINE CLINIC

by Fiona Westner-Ramsay, Parent and Guest Writer

▼ *Fiona and Makobe at the vaccine clinic*

Photo courtesy of Fiona Westner-Ramsay

I AM THE MOM OF MAKOBE, an 18-year-old with severe autism who lives at home with us in Muskoka.

My husband, Mike, works for Swift Canoe and Kayak, and we are the owners/operators of a local canoe paddle-making business, Badger Paddles.

I wish to share our vaccine story as a parent of a child with exceptionalities. We were invited to get our vaccines this past week, and our family is beyond grateful for the experience.

Makobe is essentially nonverbal and is unable to express himself as a neurotypical teen would. We did all we could to prepare him for the small needle, but when it was his turn and the nurse came too close to his arm with the pointy end, he was unable to contain his fear and began to panic. He did not even want to remove his coat, in order to protect his arm.

After some coaxing, he finally exposed his arm for the nurse. But once again the panic set in, and he tried pushing the needle away and began to let out a rather high-pitched wail that I can only liken to a siren. His alarming vocalization was echoing off the walls of the arena, and just before I was about to give up hope, another nurse asked if she could do anything to help. While I held his hands, Makobe and our nurse both picked up on my spontaneous cue for a three-two-one countdown, and before he could protest any further, the deed was done. (I think Makobe was quite surprised at how little he felt when the needle actually went into his arm) Success!

Except for that one loud and tense minute, Makobe did great. However, the real greatness was found in the team who walked us through the process that day and especially the kind and understanding nurse who never once showed judgment toward Makobe for his unusual behaviour, but did show true concern, compassion and real acceptance.

Warmest thanks to all our fellow community members who happened to be there during Makobe's panicked moment but did not stare or do anything to make me or my son uncomfortable because of his odd behaviours. Every single one of you showed us kindness and acceptance.

While I do not know what any of your faces look like behind the masks, you are all beautiful to me. Thank you to the staff, the volunteers, and all those who were there to receive their vaccine. Sometimes people can make your whole day, but yesterday, the wonderful people who were present at the Huntsville Summit Centre Vaccine Clinic made our whole world. ■

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Getting Ready for School

TRANSITION TIPS FOR STUDENTS WITH AUTISM

by Dr. Paula Kluth

FOR MANY LEARNERS WITH AUTISM, transitions are the toughest part of schooling. Moving from classroom to classroom or teacher to teacher can be stressful enough, but moving from building to building is almost always a process filled with anxiety and trepidation. These four strategies are designed to prepare the learner with autism for a new school or a new schooling experience and can be used days or months before the student arrives as well as throughout the school year.

School preview

Many students with autism will profit from seeing, experiencing and learning about the school before they show up on the first day. This is an effective strategy for students who are changing schools or for those who will be going to a certain classroom for the first time. A student can pre-view the school using many different tools. Some learners might appreciate a videotape of the school and its rooms, complete with short interviews with his new teachers. Other students like to tour the school themselves and meet teachers face to face before school officially starts. Still others may want to hear siblings, parents or friends tell them about the school. Students may also

Evidence informed

be interested in reviewing brochures of the school, newsletters from the previous year, and/or the school's website (if one exists).

Surveys

Before the year begins or during the first few days of school, many teachers ask students and their families to complete a survey. The purpose of this tool is to help the teacher become more personally acquainted with students and to make an immediate connection with families. Some teachers may choose to administer different surveys to students and parents while other teachers may design a survey that families and students complete together. While a survey would undoubtedly help a teacher learn more about his student with autism, many teachers choose to use surveys with every student in the class.

When considering using a survey, teachers will want to focus on learning styles, interests, needs, strengths or even on student ideas for the classroom. Although questions will vary by age group, possible questions include:

- How do you learn best?
- What hobbies do you have?
- What scares or upsets you?
- What kind of expertise do you have (e.g., skateboarding, karate, collecting bugs, drawing)?
- What do you need to be comfortable in my classroom?
- What do you want to learn this year?
- What is your least favorite part of the school day?
- What is your favourite part of the school day?

If one or more students cannot write, the teacher, parent or support person can allow learners to submit visual surveys. Students might draw pictures, create a collage or submit photographs or a video in response to the survey questions.

Routines and schedules

Some students will profit from the development and implementation of written schedules, picture calendars or the use of a daily planner. As one of my former students explained to me: "School is very stimulating and a lot of noises and disorganization for me. So I need to get used to new places and have a schedule." Teachers should talk often to students about how time will be used in the classroom. They should also try to give students with autism as much warning as possible when they are going to alter the class schedule or when a substitute will be teaching the class.

All students in a given classroom may benefit from knowing more about the schedule. Having information about what content will be taught and what activities will take place in any given day or week can help any student become a better planner and time manager. Teachers can make going over the daily schedule a regular part of the daily routine in any classroom; even taking a few seconds to review this information can make a difference in the learning of some students.

Personal portfolio

Students who have unique needs and abilities may want to introduce themselves to a teacher through the use of a portfolio. Portfolios may include photographs, artwork, writing or schoolwork samples, lists of favourite things, or even video or audiotapes.

A portfolio can be an especially helpful tool for students who do not speak or use a reliable communication system. I worked with one young man, J.D., to assemble a portfolio he would use as he transitioned from high school to the work place. This young man did not speak and those who met him for the first time often struggled to connect with him. When his teachers first accompanied him to his new school, J.D.'s peers began asking them questions about him: Did he understand them? Did he have any interests?

The teachers decided that J.D. needed a way to represent himself so that they didn't need to serve as his voice and liaison. In order to facilitate this process the teachers worked with J.D. to create a portfolio that he could use to introduce himself to new people and to interact with those he already knew. J.D.'s portfolio included:

- Four pages of photographs (J.D. with family and friends; snapshots of him playing soccer at a community park; J.D. working with peers on a biology experiment; vacation photos from the Rock 'n Roll Museum in Ohio)
- A short "résumé" outlining some of the classes he took in middle school
- A list of his favourite movies and compact discs
- A "Learning About Autism" pamphlet J.D. got at a conference
- A glossy picture of the Green Bay Packers, J.D.'s favourite football team

Portfolios can be in paper, audio or video form, formal or informal, a few pages or dozens of pages, include only current information and artifacts or serve as a cumulative record of the student's life.

Adapted from: P. Kluth (2010). You're Going to Love This Kid!: Teaching Students with Autism in the Inclusive Classroom *(Rev. ed.). Baltimore: Brookes.*

This article is from the website of Dr. Paula Kluth. It, along with many others on inclusive schooling, differentiated instruction and literacy can be found at www.PaulaKluth.com. Visit now to read her Tip of the Day, read dozens of free articles, and learn more about supporting diverse learners in K-12 classrooms.

Unsplash.com/ThomasPark

Continuation of ABA Services During COVID-19 Restrictions

ONE YEAR LATER . . .

by Jessica Bethel, Director OAP Provider List, Autism Ontario

THEN: MARCH 2020 — Schools were closed; ABA programs were no longer allowed in person; parents and caregivers were forced to work from home where possible and everyone had to adapt to change that occurred suddenly and without any warning. Change is never easy and for many—if not all of us—this kind of unprecedented change to our daily routines was completely unimaginable.

A preference for routines is one of the defining characteristics of autism. For families and caregivers of children and youth on the spectrum, keeping these routines or providing warning early in advance of changes is imperative to maintaining the optimal environment in home, clinical settings and at school. We were all forced to adapt in so many ways!

Evidence informed

In June 2020, The Ontario Association for Behaviour Analysis (ONTABA) partnered with Autism Ontario to present an ONTABA Professional Series which included Putting Clients and Families First: Compassionate Care and High-Quality Supervision During COVID-19 and Employment and Human Resources Issues During COVID.[1] Dr. Kendra Thomson and Dr. Nancy Marchese discussed the quick shift to telehealth services and what had been learned so far. At the time, it was

unlikely that they had any idea we would still need to be having these conversations one year later!

NOW: On May 20, 2021 Autism Ontario and ONTABA collaborated again, and this time welcomed seven panelists back to the "stage" (translation: the comfort of their own homes) to discuss the main takeaways from the past year.

The panel was moderated by Matt Ley, a familiar face in Autism Ontario webinars, and included self-advocates, parents, front-line therapists, university/college students, professors and clinic directors. This group couldn't be more diverse, but the message was refreshingly unified.

Panelists were honest, open and real about how hard some things have been, but the overwhelming message included lessons learned so far, silver linings and ultimately the importance of empathy, community and teamwork.

It is important to acknowledge that the ABA landscape has changed a lot since the pandemic began. Some ABA programs remain online only (by family or provider choice); some are in-person at home or a clinic; others are a hybrid. In many families, the shift to telehealth ABA services has required varying levels of parental support.

Self advocate Alec Pemberton said that telehealth has required increased parental involvement in most children's therapy programs. Many parents are now simultaneously trying to juggle the needs of other children and online school support/supervision along with their own concerns, which includes employment.

Andrea, a panelist and parent, urged clinicians "to ask families how they would like to receive services depending on their own situation and tailor programming to meet their specific needs to make it successful and to work with their home life." She stressed the importance of "letting go of the expectations you had of yourself before the pandemic."

Shiri Bartman, Director of Shining Through Centre added, "We should all give ourselves permission to not have it perfect right away."

Remote-everything experience has been positive for some. Philip Lerner, a self advocate and college student, found that "It has been nice to do less masking[2] over the past year since I have been in the safety of my own home."

So where do we go from here?

When asked about her thoughts on an eventual full return to in-person ABA services, Dr. Rosemary Condillac said, "Just because we have always done it that way doesn't mean we have to return to exactly the way we were doing things before the pandemic." One of the silver linings of this past year, she said, is that there are lots of people doing research now to identify what is and isn't working, what we should keep the same and what we should change.

"Many clinicians had never done sessions online or remotely prior to the pandemic," she said. "Now we are seeing the ability to reach clients outside of the areas we have served in the past. While a clinician should always decide on the treatment modality that will result in the optimal outcomes for their client, there is a strong likelihood that telehealth services will allow clinicians to reach clients in communities that previously had little to no access to professionals."

As we navigate the return to a new "normal," panelists discussed tricky situations around vaccine disclosure. Many families want to know if the therapists working with their child(ren) have been vaccinated, and therapists want to know if the families have been as well. Dr. Condillac noted that these disclosures are complicated and although policies may differ depending on the workplace, in general vaccination status is considered "personal health information" and should be treated no differently from any other personal health information.[3]

Although this year has brought with it many challenges, the message was clear: working together as a team with families, caregivers, teachers and clinicians, and listening to each other and having empathy have made all the difference.

This webinar was jam-packed with helpful hints, real emotions, questions to ask, things to consider and some important takeaways. If you are a clinician, parent or self-advocate, why not have a watch? The webinar can be found on Autism Ontario's Community Connect at https://www.autismontario.com/node/716

1 ONTABA Members can still obtain a free 1.0 BACB Supervision CEU from accessing the webinar on demand here: https://onlinexperiences.com/Launch/QReg/ShowUUID=7C18C7CF-15E4-490A-AC8E-E119A020C519 Non-members can access it here (no CEU's available) https://www.autismontario.com/node/597

2 Masking or camouflaging is an autistic trying to hide their autism from the general public by mimicking or artificially performing behaviours considered more socially acceptable (neurotypical).

3 At the time of writing.

The Black Parent Support Group (BPSG)

A RESPONSE TO THE ISOLATION OF A PANDEMIC

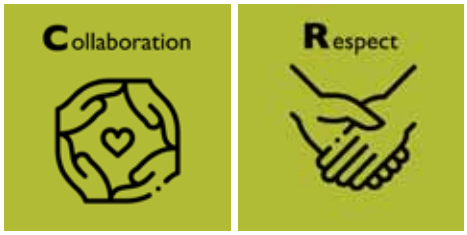
by Sherron Grant, Parent and Advocate

Support, isolation, funding, resources, friends—these are the things that many families who care for someone with special needs think and worry about. For many of these families, their circle of support is quite small. This is often the case for racialized communities who have a child with special needs. The Black Parents of Children and Adults with a Disability Support Group (BPSG) was created by my husband and me to provide a safe space for families of African descent to come together to meet and connect, share resources, expertise and needs, and to inspire and support one another through our unique, challenging and isolating journey of raising Black children or supporting a sibling, of any age, with a disability.

MY YOUNGEST SON IS NOW 24. He was diagnosed with Pervasive Developmental Disorder – Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS) and later, autism when he was four years old—a little late by today's standards, but autism discussion and accurate diagnosis was still in its infancy stages back then. Many attributed our son's delays to "He's a boy; boys walk late," and "perhaps you are overreacting, give him time." Even then I had to put on my "advocate hat" just to get an appointment to be seen by a developmental pediatrician because, though I lack a medical degree, my mommy senses were tingling and told me that something was not right here.

In December, 2000 we walked out of the doctor's office with a diagnosis and contact information for a couple of agencies. After that we were on our own. What a shock! Our entire world had been turned upside down. I eventually found my way to a parent support group hosted by Community Living Toronto. There I found comfort and relationships with other moms who, although their children may have had different diagnoses and challenges to contend with, were on a similar path. They got me. Well, at least most of me. While I enjoyed the support groups and often walked away learning something new and practical, there was always something missing. I tended to be the only face of colour in the room. Often, when there was a person of another race in the space, we would make eye contact and give each other that familiar comforting smile and nod.

During these events, parents would discuss navigating the medical system, the school system, gaining resources; but it was not from a lens that I could relate to. You see, as a Black parent, my experiences are very different from what I was hearing.



▶ *Sherron Grant and her extended family, L-R: Brandy Grant (daughter-in-law), Genieve McLean (Brandy's mother), Isaiah Grant (Sherron and Clovis' son), Clovis Grant (hubby), Sherron Grant, David Grant (Isaiah's older brother and Brandy's husband)*

Photo courtesy Sherron Grant

The other parents and the facilitators of these groups did not look like me. The lens from which these discussions took place was often so different from my own lived experience. If I did feel comfortable enough to raise my concerns about possible racism or exclusion or excessive discipline, I was often brushed off or the topic would quickly change. I could tell that the facilitator and attendees did not feel comfortable to "go there" and I am not the type to hijack the conversation. After a while, I stopped attending these meetings as they just weren't meeting my needs anymore. Truthfully, I sometimes felt lower leaving than when I first arrived.

> Families have shared what a "breath of fresh air" it is to have a group like this, to connect with on a regular basis.

A few years later, I decided to begin attending again. Our son was now older and his and our needs and goals were changing. Again, I noticed that I was the only non-white caregiver in the space—or one of only a handful. And I thought to myself, *where are the Black parents*? I see their children at Variety Village, I see their children in my son's class at school or at respite programs. Why are they not at these meetings?

Over time I came across emails advertising parent groups with a different cultural or linguistic focus, but never anything for Black caregivers specifically. I decided that enough was enough. I couldn't be the only one who felt this need for a group where people looked like me. And so, the BPSG came to be. After our family and group were the subjects of an article that appeared on Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital's Bloom Blog, the emails began pouring in. Families from across Canada, the US and internationally began reaching out, wanting to know more and to be a part of what we were trying to create.

We had initially envisioned between five and 10 families hanging out with us on Zoom, sharing ideas and resources. Instead, we quickly grew to 40 families attending our first online meeting in November, 2020. Currently we have a membership of over 130 families, with almost 100 sharing and connecting via Facebook. After only a few months of meeting, we were asked by families to move our monthly meetings to twice per month as families sought more time for fellowship and just to be together. This served to affirm that this group was needed. Families have shared what a "breath of fresh air" it is to have a group like this, to connect with on a regular basis.

The gratitude of the participants so far is overwhelming and affirms that such a group was long overdue. As for my husband and me, we also feel filled up to be able to connect with other Black families and to be able to share similar stories and feelings as well as hopes and dreams for the future. Families are reaching out for support and connection. Perhaps we will find our son's future housemate through this group!

We don't know what lies ahead but we do know that we have created something that is meeting a need for so many. BPSG will continue to grow and evolve. The future possibilities are endless and so is our belief in what can be.

Sherron Grant is an elementary school principal with the Toronto District School Board and her husband Clovis is the Chief Executive Officer for 360kids. They are proud parents and grandparents and hope that their story can inspire and provide strength to others.

The Black Parent Support Group (BPSG) is a volunteer-run group that meets the second and fourth Tuesday of each month via Zoom. To register or for more details, email: bpsgroup2020@gmail.com. You can also find them on Facebook @ BPSG: Black Parents of Children and Adults with a Disability Support Group.

INSAR

THE 20TH INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR AUTISM RESEARCH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

by Ola Kusnierz, Webinar and Service Navigation Support Specialist, Autism Ontario

The International Society for Autism Research (INSAR: www.insar.com) is a scientific and professional organization devoted to advancing knowledge about autism. INSAR was established in 2001 and for the past 20 years has been offering the only international autism research-based annual conference every May. This year's conference was truly unique for highlighting high-quality research that is affecting the lives of many within the global autism community.

ONE OF THE MOST TALKED-ABOUT research studies is the Pathways to Autism Spectrum Disorder ("Pathways") longitudinal study, which began in 2017. A report on the study was presented by Dr. Peter Szatmari, who is a professor and the vice-chair of research at McMaster University's Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences, as well as an autism and Asperger's researcher and Chief of the Child and Youth Mental Health Collaborative between CAMH, SickKids, and the University of Toronto. Pathways is one of the world's largest and longest-running studies within the field of autism. The focus of the Pathways study is to follow Canadian families with autisitc young children and youth, collecting and analyzing data during important developmental life stages (diagnosis, starting school, etc.) and transitional periods (pre-school to elementary, elementary to high school, etc.). This type of study is important because it gives society a stronger understanding of how certain things affect families and their children, to which policies and procedures can then be put into place and for which change can be advocated to better support families that have loved ones on the spectrum. (www.asdpathways.ca) Currently, the Pathways study is in phase three of its research, evaluating data collected during phase two and the earlier part of phase three. The collected data from phase one has been analyzed and the findings have already generated multiple publications.

The Pathways study was compromised of 13 research projects across five provinces, examining different facets of life. One of the projects, led by Ottawa-based Dr. Tracy Vaillancourt, focused on depression, anxiety and problem behaviours in young children with ASD. Analyzing and understanding this kind of data provides crucial information for professionals working with autistic young children and caregivers of autistic children. (It should be noted that this is only one of many sets of research findings generated by the Pathways study team.)

What is the research about?

Most research about disobedient, aggressive or hostile behaviour or depression and anxiety in children with ASD has been conducted with school-aged children. Little is known about when these behaviours and conditions begin or how they develop over time. In typically developing children, the risk factors for both of these types of mood and behaviour problems are difficult temperament, poor family environment with parental depression, poor relationship within families and poor parenting practices, as well as cognitive difficulties, gender and low income. It is not known what role these risk factors play in young children with ASD.

What did the researchers do?

Just after this group of 392 children, aged two to four years, had been diagnosed with ASD, the researchers examined their behaviour. The "parent most knowledgeable," usually the mother, was interviewed about her child's behaviour and mood and the child was observed by clinicians for signs and symptoms of mood and behaviour problems. The researcher then interviewed the mothers and tracked the children's behaviour on four occasions: just after diagnosis; about seven months after the first visit, about six-and-a-half months after that, and then 25 months after the previous visit.

What did the researchers find?

Researchers found that both mood and behaviour problems tend to start early in life, persist as the child grows and develops, and are related to poorer social development. As well, compared to typically developing children with mood and behaviour problems, the children with ASD had more severe symptoms. The children in this study tended to have both mood and behaviour problems, together. Most of the children showed low-symptom levels that declined over time, although girls were more likely to have depression and/or anxiety that required treatment. Another segment had stable, high levels of both mood and behaviour problems, and a third had high levels of mood problems, with a moderate degree of behaviour problems that declined over time.

This type of study is important because it gives society a stronger understanding of how certain things affect families and their children, to which policies and procedures can then be put into place and for which change can be advocated to better support families that have loved ones on the spectrum.

Take-home message

In this study, about 25 percent of the children had mood or behaviour problems that were severe enough and persistent enough to require treatment, and were likely to occur together. The risk for these conditions was not related to intelligence or to the severity of their ASD symptoms, but was related to family low income and the child's gender. Girls were more likely to experience depression and/or anxiety.[1]

Dr. Szatmari concluded his INSAR presentation by emphasizing the importance "of looking past diagnostic labels, test scores and behavioural challenges to focus on individual strengths, toward the goal of supporting people with ASD to live the lives that they define as both meaningful and fulfilling." The Pathways research team will continue to evaluate study findings, and hopes to continue to follow the majority of the families into adulthood, to further gather and analyze data across the lifespan. For more information, additional summaries and journal publications on the Pathways study, go to www.asdpathways.ca

Every year, Autism Ontario staff leave the INSAR conference feeling inspired and grateful for the work that is being done within the autism research community. This year was no exception. One staffer noted that it was inspiring to see a global collective working together to put into action the INSAR mission: To improve the lives of people affected by autism by promoting the highest quality research. For more information on the International Society of Autism Research go to www.insar.com.

Dr. Peter Szatmari

Footnote

1. The research report on which this summary is based was written by T. Vaillancourt and colleagues, and appeared in *Development and Psychopathology*, 2017. http://www.asdpathways.ca/lay-summaries

Dreammarks

SOMETIMES DREAMS COME TRUE

WHEN TOVA RALPH, AND HER DAUGHTER SARA, of Oakville, ON, were looking for a business for Sara, age 10, to start, Tova combined her desire to support the autism community with a desire to give her daughter, who is also autistic, a business education.

"Sara has always wanted to have a business," said Tova. She talked to Sara about starting a bookmark business with the idea of giving the proceeds back to charities every month. "We thought what a great way to start off by kicking off in April with World Autism Month and we decided we wanted to give to Autism Ontario."

Sara explains why they call their bookmarks, *Dreammarks*: "When I read, l tune out the rest of the world, so I can just focus on the book. That's what I do when I find a really good book."

Sara and her mom worked for two months to settle on a design for the bookmarks and then a logo, which Sara created by herself—an experience Sara describes as "pretty hard." A big part of the project was for Sara to learn to use the design software as well as spreadsheets that enabled her to track cashflow, sales and inventory. "She's learned how to be an entrepreneur," said Tova, proudly.

Sara's father, Ryan, created the spreadsheets for the budding business, which made him technically an employee. After some management debate, Sara decided to cover the matter by paying him $5. "It's a cute story," smiles Tova.

In the end, the project was a big success, with orders coming not only from Ontario, but from Newfoundland and the U.S. During April, Dreammarks raised $700 for Autism Ontario.

Sara smiles when she thinks about all the effort she put into her business and all the people on the autism spectrum like herself whom she's been able to help with her donation. "I feel pretty good about it," she says.

◀ *Tova Ralph and Sara Ralph*

Photo courtesy Tova Ralph

Hybrid Celebrations

WORLD AUTISM DAY AND MONTH 2021

by Tatum Shiff, Content and Marketing Coordinator, Autism Ontario

WE CELEBRATE WORLD AUTISM DAY on April 2 every year when we rally together to increase understanding, acceptance and celebration of autistic people, foster support and inspire a more inclusive world.

Once again, COVID-19 changed the way we celebrated World Autism Day, but we did still celebrate! From Sault Ste. Marie to Goderich, in homes, schools, businesses and community centres across Ontario, people had their own Raise the Flag for Autism ceremonies (virtually, with masks and/or socially distanced). Some used official flags from Autism Ontario, while many others printed and decorated their own flags. Every ceremony was special, and every ceremony brought us closer to a supportive and inclusive Ontario for autism. You can view photos from many of the ceremonies at www.raisetheflagforautism.com/world-autism-day-2021-photo-gallery.

For the second year in a row, we held a World Autism Day Flag Colouring Contest! We had over 80 official entries this year, while many more people coloured beautiful flags without submitting them to the contest. We were blown away by the creativity and talent on display through everyone's unique flags. We also congratulate the winners of the contest draw, Logan, Arianna and Omer. You can view all the submitted flags at www.raisetheflagforautism.com/world-autism-day-colouring-contest-2021.

New this year was the production of our video, *What Autism Means to Us*. We asked the autism community: What does autism mean to you? The answers we received from autistic adults, advocates, artists, children and students, as well as family

Collaboration

members and loved ones of people on the spectrum, are insightful and inspiring. An important message conveyed by the range of answers is that autism means something different to everyone. You can watch the video at https://youtu.be/2yQG4cTb5Yg.

April is known as World Autism Month, and we are grateful to the many businesses, small and large, who raised money for Autism Ontario this month and to every individual person who donated. You are all making a difference.

While World Autism Month is over, our commitment to helping all autistic people and their families have access to meaningful supports, information and connections so that they may be equitably and seamless supported throughout the life course continues. In an ideal world, there wouldn't be a need for one month or day to focus on this work because the systemic and societal barriers that autistic people face wouldn't exist. To get to that world, we need to continue to advocate for autistic people and their families to have the respect and supports they deserve to live their best lives.

The autism community often centres on the voices of family members and professionals, and while these views are important and their alliance is key, listening to and promoting the thoughts of autistic people themselves is essential. We hold ourselves accountable and are taking steps to improve through direct communication with autistic people, raising more money for adult supports and programming, and through boosting autistic voices in this magazine and on our blog, among other things.

We have come a long way in creating a supportive and inclusive Ontario for autistic people, but there is much more to do. We are encouraged by your continued support and what we know is possible when we work together.

Opposite page, top: A neighbourhood ceremony - Adriana Galloro-D'alicandro and friends
This page, left: Flag raising ceremony in the Town of Milton
Top: Home and school ceremony - Danielle Guzie and family
Bottom: École Catholique Sainte-Thérese

Strength through Diversity Award Recipient

EMMA GRENIER is the recipient of the 2020 RBC *Spirit of the Youth Award*, *Strength and Diversity* category. Emma is a student, social activist, visual artist and theatre and performance technician. As someone on the autism spectrum, and a member of the 2SLGBTQ+ community, she constantly fights to defend the rights of 2SLGBTQ+ people and promote their social acceptance by the community, in addition to supporting causes that are dear to her such as education, French-speaking communities and eco-sustainability. Emma has also helped set up an Instagram account, with over 20,000 followers, which has provided a safe space where youth in the 2SLGBTQ+ community feel less isolated. Emma is a beacon of strength at school as well as in the community.

A role-model to the autism and 2SLGBTQ+ communities, Emma continues to persevere and stand up for her personal beliefs.

Congratulations Emma, for your commitment and efforts!

Emma and her mother

Photo credit: Julie Normandin-Grenier

Meet Our Regional Staff

by Brittany Sherwood, Chapter and Volunteer Supervisor, Autism Ontario

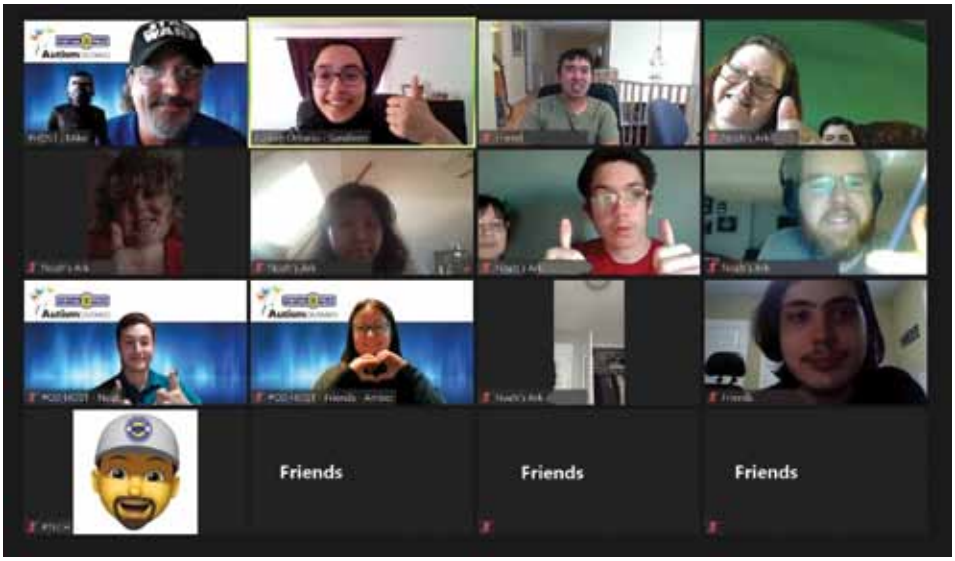
OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS Autism Ontario has been working on various ways to support our volunteers and communities across the province. One of our main focuses has been shifting to a regional model. This model has allowed us to expand boundaries and reach more families than ever before in our regions. We are focused on creating opportunities for diverse volunteers and autistic adults. Each of our regions has an Oversight Committee with local representation from across the region, along with other local interest-specific committees for volunteers to sit on. If you're interested in getting involved, please reach out to your local regional staff.

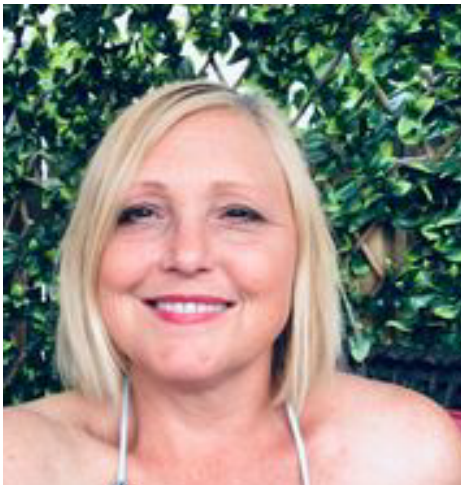
Central West (Peel, Halton, Waterloo, Wellington, Hamilton and surrounding areas):

Julie Densham, Finance and Fundraising Coordinator
julie@autismontario.com
Julie Densham joined Autism Ontario three years ago and is tasked with the fundraising and finance initiatives for the Central West region. She is a long-time event professional and fundraiser who works to provide the necessary funding to support the many programs and services in the Central West.

Sandleen Azam, Program and Volunteer Coordinator
sandleen@autismontario.com
Sandleen graduated from the University of Toronto with an Honours Bachelor of Arts and

▼ *Adult Central West Team Builders Exercise*





▲ *Julie Densham*

▲ *Sandleen Azam*

has completed a post-grad program in Non-Profit and Social Sector Management from Seneca College. Before Autism Ontario, she worked and volunteered with numerous non-profits and charities across the Central West area. Sandleen joined our Central West regional team in August, 2020 and has since brought our families a wide variety of virtual events and programs including cooking, fine arts, yoga, martial arts, dance, coding, caregiver's activities, virtual field trips with craft kits and more!

A Central West parent recently wrote her thanks for our team's hard work: "We were so proud that our children were gaining social experience over the many years with Autism Ontario. Then came COVID and all that instruction was slowly going out the window. Thankfully Autism Ontario sweeps in and creates virtual opportunities especially for the 18+ age group. My "young adults" enjoyed this activity and were so animated and are looking forward to another event. It was very encouraging as a parent to see how much interacting with others improved my children's moods, even after the event was over. Thank you!"

▲ *Kimberley Lauzon*

East Region (Ottawa, Kingston, Upper Canada and surrounding areas):

Kimberley Lauzon, Program and Volunteer Coordinator

kimberley@autismontario.com

Kimberley has lived in South Glengarry her whole life. A graduate from St. Lawrence College, she was able to begin her career with the Upper Canada District School Board. Not long after that, she transitioned into the not-for-profit world where she has been part of a few amazing organizations over the years. Having two young children herself and coming from a small community, her core values are children and giving back to the community. She is extremely excited to be a part of the Autism Ontario team where she can bring some fun, exciting programming to the East region.

Lynda Franc, Fund Development and Volunteer Coordinator

lynda@autismontario.com

Lynda lives in Kingston, ON and is the Regional Fund Development and Volunteer Coordinator for the East Region. While new to Kingston, she is not new to the non-profit sector. She comes from a background of non-profit experience having worked in Ottawa for nine years to support the homeless youth population through program development and fundraising. "One thing that I've found really incredible about this job so far is how involved people want to be, even in this hard-to-manage-virtual world that we're living in, it's really inspirational," she says.

One happy East Region parent wrote her thanks to our East Region team: "Thank you to #AutismOntario for creating the Alight at Night virtual tour, and to #TheHappyPopcornCo for providing our family some delicious popcorn while we watched the virtual tour. What a great night for our family, and a great way to allow us to see the Alight at Night from the safety of our home!"

▲ *Lynda Franc*

▲ *Simone Bedryk*

North Region (Sudbury, Algoma, Temiskaming, Cochrane, Thunder Bay, Rainy River, Kenora, Sault Ste. Marie, Parry Sound, Nipissing and surrounding areas):

Simone Bedryk, Program and Volunteer Coordinator
simone@autismontario.com
Simone is currently based in Sault Ste. Marie. Her background is in program development and facilitation, creating connections and advocating for youth in Northern communities. She loves to travel, spend time with family and enjoy a good cup of coffee.

Willow Lem, Program and Volunteer Coordinator
willow@autismontario.com
Willow is a Registered Early Childhood Educator and Recreation Therapist. She has provided support to individuals and families in the community for more than 15 years, through inclusive programming with people of different ages—children to seniors. She is glad to continue this important work through her role with Autism Ontario as Program and Volunteer Coordinator for the North Region. Willow is a proud hockey parent, loves animals, enjoys camping and spending time with friends and family. ■

▲ *Willow Lem*

Get Creative with Autism Ontario

We're looking for submisison from you, the Ontario autism community, for *Autism Matters* and our blog!

Written pieces, vlogs, music, visual art, photography, and more, are welcome!

Autistic people of all ages are especially encouraged to submit

Please email questions, ideas, and submissions to info@autismontario.com

In Your Corner

HIGHLIGHTING CHAPTER SUCCESSES, ACTIVITIES AND IDEAS. A SPACE DEDICATED TO SHARING, LEARNING AND FINDING WAYS TO SERVE OUR FAMILIES LOCALLY.

by Brittany Sherwood, Chapter and Volunteer Supervisor, Autism Ontario

OVER THE SPRING our chapters were busy planning fun virtual events/take home kits and celebrating World Autism Day and Raise the Flag. If you are interested in volunteering, please connect with your local chapter/region!

Autism Ontario's **London Chapter** recognised April as World April Autism Awareness Month. London Chapter shared information with both the London District Catholic School Board and the Thames Valley District School Board regarding an awareness and acceptance campaign, asking teachers and students to open conversation around "What does autism mean to you? What is autism? and What do you know about autism?" Students shared their thoughts, drawings and photographs. The campaign's goal was to respectfully open conversations around awareness, acceptance and building friendships.

Several schools in the London area raised their "Autism Awareness Flags" and held awareness events during the month of April. An example of this was Springfield Public School who provided a PowerPoint presentation to their community. They also sold Autism Awareness Cookies and donated the proceeds to the London Chapter.

Jenilee Tombrowicz, of My Time Design, designed Autism Awareness T-shirts and donated proceeds to the London Chapter.

Winks Eatery hosted a Rock 'n Roll Trivia Night for Autism and all Domino's Pizza locations in London also promoted autism awareness and donated to the London Chapter.

▶ *Asher and Lydia (East Region) get ready for some Raise the Flag colouring fun.*

AGM Update

Autism Ontario's next Annual General Meeting will be held Saturday, September 25 and Sunday, September 26. We will provide you with more details as they become available.

A notice to our Chapters: The Chapter Corner is your space to highlight your successes and share stories of how you're making a difference in your communities.

By contributing, you are:

- *Accessing thousands of families, professionals and agencies*
- *Providing ideas and insight to other Chapters for activities, programs and events*
- *Building a stronger community across Ontario*
- *Demonstrating what you've accomplished locally*
- *Creating opportunities for dialogue and increased information sharing*

To share your stories, please submit ideas and content to christa@autismontario.com.

Our families and community also shared pictures on social media acknowledging autism awareness and acceptance.

The London Chapter would like to thank all those involved who participated in Autism Awareness and Acceptance. We look forward to next year and continuing with community awareness.

The **Windsor Essex Chapter** has been busy over the last few months, sending out many at-home learning and crafts kits for all ages. A huge hit in Windsor has been our online music program. We received a lot of community support with raise the flag; flags were raised at 70 percent of the schools in Windsor Essex County.

Many families across **York Chapter** were able to Raise a Flag for autism on April 2. We loved seeing the pictures and wonderful celebrations that took place across the region.

The April break from school was full of new and fun activities. Our York Chapter families tested their knowledge at family trivia, had some friendly feathered visitors from the Bird Kingdom, made some slimy science experiments with Mad Science, saw the millions of fish that live at Ripley's Aquarium of Canada, and ended the week with a dance party. They had a blast!

Autism Ontario **Niagara Chapter** partnered with Niagara Public Health and Niagara Health Team to offer families a drive up to the COVID-19 vaccine clinic. A special thank you to Michelle Johnston from Niagara Public Health for helping organize this great opportunity. A huge shout-out to Natalie Ferraro of Niagara Health and her amazing team for their outstanding commitment and compassion in delivering vaccines to our families.

The **East Region** was showered with all kinds of love this past April when individuals and businesses alike approached us to run fundraisers for Autism Awareness Month. What was even more inspirational was the number of people who participated and shared those fundraisers. But who can blame them? They were just plain great ideas! Like Happy Popcorn's fundraiser where supporters could purchase a box of goodies that included three bags of popcorn and a series of delicious candies. These guys were also able to coordinate deliveries across Ontario so that everyone could celebrate province-wide.

▲ *Top: The Autism Ontario flag in front of Port Colborne City Hall, Niagara Chapter*
Below: Flag raising at Welland City Hall, Niagara Chapter

Then we had a Kingston business owner selling fabulous bath bombs with proceeds donated to both Autism Ontario and KidsInclusive in Kingston. Old Country Bath and Body developed a rainbow coloured bath bomb exclusively for Autism Awareness Month and many families seized the opportunity to enjoy some colourful, bubbly bath time as a result.

Of course, we also often have individuals who come up with impromptu ways to raise funds—such as Nicole Taylor. She and her husband restore and resell antique cars ,which is exciting enough in itself. But during a recent sale, Nicole asked if the buyer would include a donation to Autism Ontario as part of the agreement. And he did!

We are so grateful to everyone who took the time to plan and execute fundraisers on behalf of Autism Ontario and we are equally grateful to those who were able to participate.

Our **Huron Perth Chapter** was excited to report that Community Living - Central Huron participated in Raise the Flag in acknowledgment of World Autism Day. ■

▲ *The Town of Pelham's flag raising ceremeony, Niagara Chapter. (All photos supplied by the contributors who kindly provided their consent for publication.)*

The Halman family (Bill and Kristin with son, Jack and daughter, Delilah) participated in the Happy Popcorn fundraiser in the East Region.

Yes! I want to make a difference helping people on the autism spectrum.

Direct my donation to:
- ❑ Provincial Office
- ❑ My Chapter _____
- ❑ Wherever most needed

I would like to donate:
❑ $25 ❑ $50 ❑ $100 ❑ $_____

❑ Enclosed is my cheque made payable to Autism Ontario
OR
I'd prefer to pay with my credit card. Please charge to:
❑ VISA ❑ MasterCard

Card Number: _____/_____/_____/_____

CVV Number: _____ Expiration: _____/_____

Signature: _____

From all the families, volunteers and staff at Autism Ontario, thank you!

AutismONTARIO
see the potential voir le potentiel

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

City: _____

Prov: _____ Postal code: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Please send this completed form with your donation to
Autism Ontario
1179 King St. W., Suite 004
Toronto, ON M6K 3C5

Incorporated as Autism Ontario
Charitable Registration #11924 8789R R0001

Community Connect

autismontario.com/communityconnect

autismontario.com/fr/communityconnect

Autism Ontario CommunityConnect is a centralized community portal that is home to:

Service Listings

Search for autism-related services such as mental health professionals, occupational therapists, speech language pathologists, social workers, ABA providers, and more!

Learning Resources

Webinars, fact sheets, helpful articles, personal stories, and more to assist you on your journey from diagnosis onward.

Autism Ontario Events

Virtual and local programs to support autistic people and their families, including support groups, information sessions, recreational activities, and more!

CommunityConnect d'Autisme Ontario est un portail communautaire centralisé qui héberge :

Répertoire de services

Chercher des services reliés a l'autisme (professionnels de la santé mentale, ergothérapeutes, orthophonistes, travailleurs sociaux, fournisseurs d'ACA, et plus!)

Activités d'Autisme Ontario

Des programmes virtuels et locaux pour venir en aide aux personnes autistes et à leur famille, y compris des groupes de soutien, des séances d'information, des activités récréatives et bien d'autres choses encore!

Ressources d'apprentissage

Webinaires, articles utiles, fiches d'information, récits personnels et plus encore pouvant vous accompagner dans votre cheminement à partir du diagnostic.

HAS YOUR ADDRESS CHANGED?
Send your old mailing label and your new address to: Autism Ontario, at the address below.
PUBLICATIONS MAIL AGREEMENT # 40910519
CUSTOMER # 1012283
RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO:

AutismONTARIO
1179 King Street West, Suite 004
Toronto, ON M6K 3C5

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