



Autism^{ONTARIO} DONOR WELCOME PACKAGE



AutismONTARIO

Thank you for your support!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 03 [A Message From Our Executive Director](#)
- 04 [Welcome to Autism Ontario](#)
- 05 [Ten Facts About Autism](#)
- 06 [The Impact of Your Donation](#)
- 08 [Our Programs](#)
- 09 [Our Impact in 2021](#)
- 10 [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- 11 [Get Involved](#)
- 12 [Share Your Story](#)
- 13 [For More Information](#)



A MESSAGE FROM OUR **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Greetings,

Thank you for joining us as we continue, each day, to celebrate the spectrum and support our autistic friends, family members, and neighbours. I am so pleased to count you as one of our supporters.

Thank you and welcome. I hope that you find this package helpful and informative.

Autism Ontario began as a grassroots organization, and we've been working hard to make life better for autistic people in Ontario for almost 50 years! We are so proud of what we've accomplished, and we have a loyal team of dedicated volunteers, staff, and donors to thank for this important work.

We need your help to continue to advance and push for greater supports, programs, and opportunities for autistic people across the province. We need talented, committed supporters from diverse backgrounds who share in our governance, who make us their charity of choice, and who volunteer at Autism Ontario's regional events.

We will require deep partnerships with companies and foundations who share our vision of a supportive and inclusive Ontario – and world – that not only accepts autism, but also sees the amazing skills and gifts that autism represents. We hope that you will learn more and continue to stay engaged with us.

We're in a time of transition at Autism Ontario, and we recently moved from a chapter model to a regional model. As the needs of autistic Ontarians and their families, caregivers, teachers, and service workers evolve, so must we. Our core values of collaboration, accountability, respect, and evidence-informed decision making are helping guide us through these changes. You'll learn more in the pages that follow.

Now more than ever, leadership in autism advocacy and the rights of autistic people is critical for Ontarians and for the world. Aligned under a common vision and committed to a shared strategic direction, Autism Ontario is well-positioned to deliver a more inclusive world for autistic people.

Thank you for believing in Autism Ontario. You have our deepest thanks. Please know that your gift will be used wisely and in the best interests of our wonderful program participants. We won't let them down.

Sincerely,



Marg Spoelstra
Executive Director



WELCOME TO AUTISM ONTARIO

We are continuously inspired and encouraged by the individuals and families we are privileged to serve. Thank you for being an important part of Autism Ontario's journey towards creating a supportive and inclusive Ontario for autism. Because of donors like you, we are providing life-changing services and programs across the province to fulfill our vision of Best Life, Better World, Making Autism Matter.

WHO WE ARE

A charitable organization founded in 1973. We have a history of over 49 years supporting, representing, and advocating for all autistic individuals across the province regardless of race, ethnicity, income, religion, gender identity, or sexual orientation.



We are guided by a Board of Directors with 12 diverse members - people on the autism spectrum, parents, caregivers, siblings of autistic people, and professionals.



We are Ontario's #1 source of information and referral on autism and one of the largest collective voices representing the autism community.

WHAT WE DO

We provide information on autism, support autism research, and implement programs and services for the autism community to address the issues that affect Ontarians with autism, their families, and their caregivers.



7 regions supporting people on the autism spectrum and their families across the province

SERVICES WE OFFER

- Community events
- CommunityConnect Portal
- Provincial newsletter
- Regional newsletters
- Adult programs
- Caregiver support groups
- French language services
- Regional supports
- Learning and positive advocacy resources
- Webinars & workshops
- Child & family supports
- March Break funding
- Summer support funding

OUR MISSION

Creating a supportive and inclusive Ontario for autism

OUR VISION

Best Life, Better World, Making Autism Matter!

OUR CARE VALUES

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 for achieving 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.

TEN FACTS ABOUT AUTISM

Autism exists on a spectrum, which means that, while all people on the spectrum will experience some of the differences mentioned below, the degree to which each autistic person experiences them and the amount of support they need will vary. This is sometimes influenced by whether the person on the autism spectrum has any co-occurring health conditions. It is also influenced by the accessibility and relative safety of the environment and society autistic people inhabit; a society that we all contribute to and live in.

AUTISM IS NEURODEVELOPMENTAL

Autism is a lifelong neurodevelopmental condition affecting the way a person communicates and relates to people and the world around them.



AUTISM HAS NO CULTURAL BOUNDARIES

Autism exists in all cultures, ethnicities, races, and gender identities.



AUTISM IS A TYPE OF NEURODIVERSITY

Being autistic means that a person's brain may process information differently than non-autistic, or neurotypical, people.



AUTISM MEANS SOMETHING DIFFERENT FOR EVERYONE

A person on the spectrum might talk about autism one way, while an autistic person's family or a medical professional may refer to it another way.

NEURODIVERSITY DOES NOT MEAN DISORDER

Many autistic people prefer the terms neurological "difference" or "condition", which remove the negative associations with the word "disorder."



NOT EVERY AUTISTIC PERSON IS THE SAME

Autism exists on a spectrum, meaning each person on the autism spectrum experiences autism in a different way and the support they need varies.



AUTISM DIAGNOSES ARE PREVALENT IN CHILDHOOD

1 in 66 Canadian children and youth (ages 5-17) are diagnosed with autism.



1-2% OF CANADIANS ARE AUTISTIC

Approximately 1-2% of the Canadian population is on the autism spectrum, which means there are approximately 135,000 autistic people in Ontario.

USE PERSON-FIRST OR IDENTITY-FIRST LANGUAGE

People talk about autism using identity-first language (autistic person) or person-first language (person with autism). Most autistic people prefer identity-first language. When in doubt, just ask.



EVERY AUTISTIC PERSON CAN THRIVE WITH THE RIGHT SUPPORT

Many autistic people prefer the terms "high or low support needs" rather than "high or low functioning".



THE IMPACT OF **YOUR DONATION**



KELLY & QUINN'S STORY

Program and Volunteer Coordinator for Autism Ontario's Central East Region, Steph Maguire, recently spoke to Kelly Mahar about her family's journey with autism after her son, Quinn, was diagnosed one year ago. We wanted to learn more about how our donors help autistic people and their families navigate the world and thrive. Our donors are an integral part of the engine that powers Autism Ontario and Kelly wants you to know how grateful she is for your help!

A dedicated runner and key Account Manager for Saucony, Kelly and her husband Geoff live in Newmarket with their two wonderful, energetic children. They are an active, nature-loving family, Geoff is a golfer, and the entire crew loves to be outside spending as much time as possible in the park, cottaging, or camping throughout the summer.

After their son Quinn was diagnosed with autism one year ago, the family was motivated to learn everything they could. Kelly reached out to an Autism Ontario Service Navigator and has since established a cherished connection with an Ausome Moms group. Thanks to you, Kelly's family is growing stronger, more resilient, and having fun while learning how to handle the tougher times. Here's what she had to say:

THE IMPACT OF YOUR DONATION

“When Quinn turned one, we had a few concerns with how he was developing. He wasn't hitting any of his regular milestones, he had zero words, he rarely sought out affection if he was hurting or sad, and he had little to no eye contact. We went to our family doctor who referred us to a developmental pediatrician to address the concerns we were having.

It took about eight months before we managed to get an appointment. Because of COVID-19, we met virtually with the doctor as well as a speech-language pathologist, and after two meetings and an assessment, we received Quinn's diagnosis. Although we were prepared to hear it, this was not easy news to take in.

We struggled, we were sad, we were angry; so many emotions came over us.

There were so many questions and so many things we had to figure out – where to start and who to ask. Thankfully, I was able to connect with the team at Autism Ontario who got me off on the right foot in this lifelong journey with Quinn.

They helped me right from the beginning with what I needed to do, who I needed to contact, what forms I needed to fill out, and where I could find all different types of information.

It's been almost a year since Quinn was diagnosed and, although I am no expert, I have learned so much about autism and have been able to connect with other parents in the same situation.

The endless number of resources, support groups, virtual seminars, and coffee chats, to name a few, have truly benefitted me so much over the past year.

I am truly grateful to all the donors who make this kind of support possible. Thank you.”

- Kelly Mahar



OUR PROGRAMS

Autism Ontario provides information on autism, engages in advocacy, informs public policy, supports autism research, and implements programs and services for the autism community to address the issues that affect autistic Ontarians, their families, and their caregivers.

Autism Ontario is the province's leading source of information and referral on autism, and one of the largest collective voices representing the autism community. We offer online programs and services in addition to local in-person programs throughout our seven regions across the province of Ontario. Our work helps all autistic individuals and families in their communities have access to meaningful supports, information, and connections so they are equitably and seamlessly supported across their life course.



Children, Youth & Family Programs

- Social Learning, Recreation, and Community Events
- Support Groups
- Workshops and Training



Adult Programs

- Autism Career Connections
- Life Skills
- Adult Resources and Referral Support
- Volunteering
- Social Learning, Recreation, and Community Events



Awards & Personal Grants

- Awards
- Building Brighter Futures Fund
- Personal Grants (One-to-One Summer Support Worker Reimbursement and March Break Reimbursement Funds)



Education

- Advocacy
- Research
- Public and Professional Education



Scholarships

- Autistic students entering first year of post-secondary school
- Siblings of autistic people enrolled in post-secondary school
- Students with an autistic parent enrolled in post-secondary school



Caregiver Programs

- Support Groups
- Caregiver Recreation



Camp

- Central East Camp
- South Camp

OUR IMPACT IN 2021

OUR COMMUNITY



Autism Ontario had **51 full-time staff** supporting the autism community (now almost 100!).



We received **donations from 2,245 individuals, 203 organizations, and 53 foundations.**

SUPPORTING FAMILIES



We served **8,452 new families** (an increase of 86%).



We served **258 Francophone families** (an increase of 30%).



We received **419 calls** and **177 online webform messages** from caregivers, autistic adults, and professionals **for services and supports.**



We saw a **50% increase** in the number of families served with **non-English/non-French languages** spoken at home.

WORKSHOPS, WEBINARS & EVENTS



We hosted **1,478 virtual and take-home events.**



We hosted **48 webinars.**



94 autistic adults and 166 caregivers attended a ***Living Life to the Full*** course.

AWARDS, FUNDING & SCHOLARSHIPS



We **granted funding to 21 autistic adults** through the **Building Brighter Futures Fund**, to pursue a variety of recreational, vocational, or leisure activities.



We **awarded 15 educational scholarships** to individuals in the autism community entering the **first year of a post-secondary program.**



We **reimbursed 4,236 families** for March Break funding supports and **500 families** for summer funding supports.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How does Autism Ontario ensure my privacy is protected?

We take your privacy seriously and treat your personal information with the utmost respect. Autism Ontario does not rent or sell donor lists. You have the option of making any contribution anonymously if you would like to retain your privacy as a donor. [Read our Privacy Policy.](#)

I can't find my tax receipt. Can I request a duplicate copy?

We will be happy to produce a duplicate for you. To request a copy of your tax receipt, please contact us at taxreceipts@autismontario.com.

How can I unsubscribe from your emails about donations or have myself removed from your mailing list?

Should you decide to pause or end communications from Autism Ontario, click the unsubscribe link on all digital correspondence or contact fundraising@autismontario.com.

How can I stay up to date with news from Autism Ontario?

We offer a variety of newsletters that speak to your personal experience as an autistic person, caregiver, donor, or the region that you live in. [Sign up for newsletters.](#)



GET INVOLVED

VOLUNTEER

There are many opportunities to volunteer with Autism Ontario. Whether you are looking for something casual or something more committed, there is a volunteer role suited to you. If you want to lend a hand with administrative work, assist with an event, or sit on a committee, we encourage you to become a volunteer and help us create a supportive and inclusive Ontario for autism!

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact our Regional Supervisor, Lisa Nightingale, at lisa.nightingale@autismontario.com.



CONNECT

We offer a variety of opportunities to connect with the autism community, both online and locally in your region. Our lifelong programming is available to autistic adults, youth, and children, and we also offer support and referrals for families and caregivers. No matter your age or your connection to autism, join us for support groups, recreational programming, career counselling, workshops, webinars, or camp. We can help you find the information you need, support from peers, and a little fun too. [Check here for our local and provincial events.](#)

LEARN MORE

Learn more by signing up for one of our Provincial or Regional newsletters. Whether you are a parent, caregiver, or an adult on the spectrum, we publish a variety of communications that offer a look into the issues that matter most to you. We'll send you information, stories, and updates so you can see and experience the difference supporters like you are making in the lives of autistic people throughout Ontario. [Sign up here.](#)

GET INVOLVED

SHARE YOUR STORY

If you've been impacted by Autism Ontario, we want to hear from you! Whether you are a donor, volunteer, or a program participant, we want to know why you believe in Autism Ontario.

[Share your story](#) with us! Personal stories inspire us and your fellow donors each day.

CONNECT WITH US ON SOCIAL MEDIA



@autismONT



@autismontario



@autismontarioprovincial



linkedin.com/company/autism-ontario



@autismeontarioprovincial
(French)



youtube.com/user/autismontario

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about fundraising at Autism Ontario, the impact of your gift, programming, or volunteering:

Autism Ontario's regional Fund Development and Volunteer Coordinators have the closest relationships with many of our donors and work directly with our Program and Volunteer Coordinators. They are an excellent resource if you would like to update your contact information, inquire about other giving options or volunteering, or learn more about the impact of your gift.

If you have a question about programming or fundraising in your region, please contact the Fund and Volunteer Coordinator in your region. Your regional representatives are:

NORTH REGION

Lisa Nightingale
lisa.nightingale@autismontario.com
416-708-9364

EAST REGION

Lynda Franc
lynda.franc@autismontario.com
1-800-472-7789 x 313

CENTRAL WEST REGION

Lisa Nightingale
lisa.nightingale@autismontario.com
416-708-9364

TORONTO REGION

Lisa Nightingale
lisa.nightingale@autismontario.com
416-708-9364

WEST REGION

Brianne Curry
brianne.curry@autismontario.com
1-800-472-7789 x 258

CENTRAL EAST REGION

Lisa Nightingale
lisa.nightingale@autismontario.com
416-708-9364

SOUTH REGION

Chrissy Sadowski
chrissy.sadowski@autismontario.com
1-800-472-7789 x 257

FOR MORE INFORMATION

You are a valued member of the Autism Ontario community, and we commit to living our values in how we communicate and work with you. We know that trust is the foundation of a relationship between a donor and their charity of choice. To ensure this foundation of trust continues, we invite you to ask questions, present concerns, or request more information at any time.

Our team is here to help. Contact us any time at [1-800-472-7789](tel:1-800-472-7789) or use one of the following options for more specific inquiries.



MAJOR GIFTS, LEGACY GIVING & COMPLAINTS

Sarah Morison

Director of Fund Development &
Community Engagement

sarah.morison@autismontario.com

1-800-472-7789 ext. 263

FOUNDATIONS, CORPORATIONS & CHARITIES

Dawn Tuckwell

Grants and Stakeholder Engagement
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dawn.tuckwell@autismontario.com

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