Happy New Year!

2017 has been a great year for us at Autism Support of Kent County! We have a great group of dedicated Board Members and volunteers, new families joining us every day, and we did some very important things. Check out the highlights from the year below. Thank you for being part of what we do and for being part of this amazing community of autism in West Michigan.

If you’ve attended an event of ours lately, you know that things are exploding! We are thrilled to have attendance that has broken records at every event! It’s awesome to see so many new and familiar faces each month.

We are making a change to our events. This is being done so that we can continue to provide the services we are providing, grow the programs we offer, and help minimize the number of no-shows at our events.

Beginning February 1st, there will be a small cost to attend some of our events. The costs for our family events will be: $3 per person for the Bowling Party and Klackle Orchard Event, and $5 per family for the Holiday Party, Easter Egg Hunt, and Roller Skating Party.

Connor’s Night at the Grand Rapids Children’s Museum, the Pool Parties, and the Family Day at Indian Trails Camp will remain FREE to attend.

Thank you so much for being part of the ASK family. We are grateful for you and for the support you give us. If, at any time, you need anything or have questions or concerns, please feel free to email me or call me.

We can’t wait to see you at an event soon!

Pam Liggett
Executive Director

2017 Highlights

- In 2017, we provided over $55,000 worth of programs and resources for families affected by autism and put 74% of our revenues back into services for the special people we serve!
- We answer the phone, respond to emails and messages, and are here for families. In fact, over 280 people contacted us for help in 2017.
- We gave $10,000 so that low-income students could go out into the community and practice social skills and work to gain independence.
- We are here for schools and teachers through Music Therapy, resources, financial support for ASD classrooms, and by providing use of a membership to the Public Museum.
- In total, over 250 students were directly affected by our support.
- We offered TEN workshops for parents, caregivers, and professionals and offered family events to over 1,100 people (total) this year.
- We funded $15,000 for scholarships for camp at Indian Trails Camp, and our families had preferential registration to camp.
- We pledged $10,000 to increase staffing at the Helen DeVos Children’s Hospital Autism Clinic to help decrease wait times to TWO weeks, from over six months, and increase the number of children served to 500 each year.
SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS

Our Support Group Meetings are open to everyone ... please join us! No reservation necessary. All meetings are held on Tuesdays at 7:00 pm in the upstairs library at Trinity United Methodist Church, 1100 Lake Drive SE, in Grand Rapids.

**Tuesday, January 16:**
**Speaker:** Tim Hileman, Executive Director IKUS Life Enrichment Services and Indian Trails Camp
**Topic:** Summer Camp at Indian Trails and IKUS Life Services

**Tuesday, February 6:**
**Speaker:** Hillary Kanady, Area Work Incentive Coordinator Social Security Administration

**Tuesday, March 13:**
**Speaker:** Bonnie Miller, Project Manager Family Support Services, Disability Advocates of Kent County

Contact Pam at (616) 752-8577 for more information.

When you shop at AmazonSmile and designate Autism Support of Kent County as your charity, Amazon will donate 0.5% of your purchase to ASK. For more information, and to add ASK as your charity of choice, visit: http://smile.amazon.com

Thank you and happy shopping!

Remember ASK in Your Estate Plan

We often receive gifts in memory of an individual who has been touched by autism. Thank you to these special families who think of ASK at such a sad time.

Please remember ASK in your estate plans, too. These gifts are treated with the utmost care and respect. Contact us for more information on how you can include ASK in your charitable giving plans at 616-752-8577.

Visit our website to view and/or download the ASK Community Resource Directory:
www.autismsupportofkentcounty.org

Heart of West Michigan United Way investors can choose to designate all or part of their annual contributions to Autism Support of Kent County.

To designate your gift to ASK, use the United Way Designation Form and write: Autism Support of Kent County, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Thank you!
ASK Roller Skating Party

Saturday,
January 13, 2018
11 a.m. — 1 p.m.

3330 Fairlanes Avenue SW
Grandville, MI 49418

Skating, skate rental, and lunch included. We will have Tarry Hall all to ourselves!

RSVP To ASK at (616) 752-8577
All ages and siblings welcome!
One parent or guardian must be in attendance.
Conferences, Workshops & Events

Social Security Basics
January 11, 2018 7:00 – 9:00 pm
Trinity Lutheran Church—Centennial Room
2700 E. Fulton SE, Grand Rapids
Hillary Kanady, Area Work Incentive Coordinator for the Social Security Administration, will present on the basics of the SSI/SSDI programs: eligibility requirements, how to file, associated benefits such as Medicaid, Medicare, food assistance, other benefits, income limits, and special provisions for DACs (Disabled Adult Children). RSVP by 1/9 by calling (616) 340-9627 or email: Lynn@surdock.com

ARC Kent County Lunch Time Workshops
Our workshops are for people with disabilities and their families. We are limited to 9 participants. Workshops are on a first come-first served basis. Sign up by emailing Patt at patt@arckent.org.
• Assurance Plan — 1/16/18
• Self Directed Services — 1/17/18 and 1/24/18
• Basics of Social Security & Medicaid/Medicare — 1/31/18
• Person Centered Planning — 2/21/18
• Basics of Social Security & Medicaid/Medicare — 3/28/18

Michigan Council for Exceptional Children
78th Annual Special Education Conference
February 28 – March 2, 2018
Grand Plaza Hotel, Grand Rapids, MI
Keynote Speaker: Holly Robinson Peete. Michigan CEC is celebrating its 78th annual conference by presenting national speakers, over 120 breakout sessions, 40+ exhibitors and unique networking opportunities. www.michigancec.org

4th Annual Navigating Autism Today Conference
Friday, March 9, 2018 8:00 AM – 3:00 PM
Wayne County Community College—Western Campus
9555 Haggerty Road, Belleville, MI 48111
Autism heroes from around Michigan will gather to discuss, connect and learn through participation in breakout sessions, panel discussions and interaction with a diverse mix of autism-focused exhibitors. The conference is FREE for all families. Professionals are asked to pay $50 per person attending. https://aaomconference.org/

LEAP Conference
March 17, 2018 8:30 AM - 3:00 PM
Kent ISD Educational Services Center
2930 Knapp St. NE, Grand Rapids MI 49525
This day-long workshop is for parents and providers of children with special needs. Keynote: Janice Fialka is an author and national speaker. She reflects with humor and compassion on the challenges facing parents and professionals as they seek to build successful working relationships on behalf of children with disabilities. Breakout sessions include: Building Communication Through Play, Calming, Energizing and Body Awareness Strategies, Sibling Support Workshop, Strategies for Decreasing Challenging Behaviors, Investing in your Child's future, and Understanding Transition. http://www.kentisd.org/

11th Inclusion Conference—ARC Community Advocates
March 28, 2018 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM
Fetzer Center
2350 Business Ct., Kalamazoo, MI 49008
Keynote Speaker: Tim Vogt, Executive Director of Starfire Council. Contact LaTaynia Conant at 269-342-9801 or iconant@communityadvocates.org with any questions.

17th Annual START Conference
April 30, 2018 8:30 am to 3:30 pm
Kellogg Hotel and Conference Center
219 S. Harrison Road, East Lansing, MI 48824
Additional information and registration coming January 2018. www.gvsu.edu/autismcenter/start-conference-167.htm

The 2017 Spartan YMCA Family Hope Program
The YMCA Family Hope program is designed to provide parents and young adults diagnosed with ASD an opportunity to gather at the YMCA to participate in engaging, social and physical activity and find emotional support and fellowship with similar families.

Program participants meet for two hours once a month (6:30 to 8:30 p.m.) at the Spartan Stores YMCA in Wyoming by Metro Hospital. Each monthly event serves 12—24 young adults, plus their parents/caregivers. There is no cost to participate. 2018 Dates:
• January 19 — Water aerobics from 6:30–8:30 pm at our Visser location in Grandville at 3540 Fairlakes SW, Grandville, 49418
• February 4 — Sledding at Cannonsburg from 1:30 – 3:30 pm
• February 16 — The indoor rock wall at Mary Free Bed YMCA in Cascade, 5500 Burton Street SE

The physical activities have instructors, are low impact, and designed for all motor skill levels. Board Games and the YMCA Activity Room are available at all times for families who want less physical activity.

We hope to gain your support and advocacy for YMCA Family Hope. Interested families that have more specific questions can contact the Spartan YMCA at (616) 855-9622.

Emily VanDuren, Family Hope Event Coordinator
YMCA OF GREATER GR — SPARTAN STORES YMCA
5722 Metro Way, Wyoming, MI 49519
(P) 616-885-5523 (E) evanduren@grymca.org
(W) www.grymca.org
Autism Support of Kent County presents

Summer Camp at Indian Trails and IKUS Life Services

Tuesday, January 16, 2018

7:00 p.m.
Trinity United Methodist Church (Upstairs Library)
1100 Lake Drive SE
Grand Rapids, 49506

Presenter:
Tim Hileman
Executive Director
IKUS Life Enrichment Services
Indian Trails Camp

For more information, call
ASK at (616) 752-8577

Since 2006, ASK has partnered with Indian Trails Camp (ITC) by providing scholarship funds for campers with autism!

ITC offers a traditional, overnight summer camp for campers ages 7 and up on the autism spectrum. ITC also offers a day camp and weekend respite. Activities may include indoor swimming, paddleboating, ropes course, swings, arts and crafts, fishing, campfires, and more!

In addition, Tim will be discussing the services that IKUS offers — Skill Building, Supported Employment, Community Living Support, as well as their Recreational Program for individuals ages 18 and up.

Join us on January 16 for this informative presentation!
Sensory Friendly Films Presents:

AMC Star Grand Rapids—3000 Alpine Ave. NW, Grand Rapids, 49544
Tickets: $5.50

Feel Free to Be You at AMC Sensory Friendly Films!

AMC is proud to partner with the Autism Society to offer unique movie showings where we turn the lights up, and turn the sound down, so you can get up, dance, walk, shout or sing! Our Sensory Friendly Film program is available on the second and fourth Saturday (family-friendly) and Tuesday evenings (mature audiences) of every month. Please check your local theatre listings for specific showtimes, and don't forget to share your family fun with #AMCSensoryFriendly.
AUTISM SUPPORT OF KENT COUNTY PRESENTS

Bowling

Fairlanes Bowling Center
3335 Fairlanes Avenue, Grandville

Sunday, February 25
6:00 to 8:00 PM
$3 Per Person

Open to all ages. Includes 2 hours of bowling, shoe rental, pizza and pop!

Sign up on Eventbrite.com - "Autism Support of Kent County's Bowling Party"
Looking for activities for an individual with autism who is 18 and older? The R.E.C. Connect program provides opportunities in recreational and social experiences to enhance participants' health and well-being.

This is a year-round program offered by IKUS Life Enrichment Services in partnership with Community Mental Health of Ottawa County.

Members can participate in a variety of recreational and social activities. If assistance is needed (depending on the member profile), members must bring support.

There is a $1 annual membership fee to join the R.E.C. Connect program. Most classes and activities are offered at no cost and any expenses will be noted in activity description.

For activities and events that are located off-site, participants meet at IKUS/Indian Trails Camp and we provide transportation to the activity or event. Go to “ikuslife.org” and click on the “REC Connect” tab for more info and a schedule of fun events.

RECREATION • EXPERIENCE • COMMUNITY

Our 3rd Annual Walk for Autism will take place on Sunday, May 6, at John Ball Zoo!

The event will include a walk in John Ball Park, fun activities, food, a Silent Auction with great items to bid on, and a Resource Fair with businesses and organizations that work with those with autism.

Immediately following the Walk festivities, families can enjoy the rest of the day at the Zoo! The Walk will raise funds for additional and expanded programs. As the needs of the autism community increase, we want to be able to respond. We want to increase programming, provide more family events, offer more workshops and speakers, help more families, give more in scholarships, see more kids enjoy soccer, hockey and art programs, offer Music Therapy to more classrooms, and DO MORE for individuals with autism and their families.

Save the date for a fun-filled day at the John Ball Zoo! Bring your friends and family and celebrate the autism star in your life! Help us raise funds for our important programs. To attend the event, please bring $25 per person in pledges! Watch Facebook, the newsletter, and emails for more information on this year’s Walk!

Chuck E. Cheese's now offers a sensory-friendly experience on the first Sunday of every month. Our trained and caring staff is there to make sure families who have children with autism and special needs have a fun filled visit. Join us from 9 to 11 AM! The Sensory Sensitive Sunday Experience Includes:

1. Less crowding and noise.
2. Dimmed lighting.
3. Show and music turned off or down
4. Limited appearances by Chuck E.
5. Food and games are offered, however parents are permitted to bring snacks for their children if needed due to dietary restrictions during Sensory Sensitive Sundays.

At this location: 3671 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49512 | (616) 942-7993
ASK wishes to thank the following businesses and individuals for their financial contributions in the past year. Without your generosity, we couldn’t continue to provide our many programs and services. Thank you for making a difference!

Andrea Walmbach
Ann Huizen
Anonymous
Bank of America Employees
Behavior Health Partners
Blackbaud Everyday Hero Program
Cascade Engineering
Developmental Enhancement Behavioral Health
Diane Hennesey on behalf of Kim Hennesey
Dr. Brian and Geraldine Hotchkiss
Dr. Lisa Andersson Zetye
Edith Rashefsky
Frederick and Kathleen Burkhart
J&H Family Stores
Joe and Deb Russo
Juli Ellison
Kelly Grieve
Kristen Loch
Kristie Schrotenboer
Lisa’s Quality Rags and the Witte Family
Lon and Laura Morrison
Lynn Lowe
Magna Mirrors
Mark Hoskins and Mark Blanchard, Berkshire Hathaway
Pam and Jeff Liggett
Philip Alt
Scott Horton of Hope Discovery ABA Services
Sharon Depew
The Powless Family
Total Spectrum Care ABA Services

IN MEMORY OF CLAIR HOLTZLANDER
Jaculin and Morgan Cole

IN MEMORY OF FRANCES MENDEZ
Brian and Cheryl Doyle
Carolyn Blough
E. Marjorie Rehl, Lisa and Mark Rehl
James and Margaret VanStee
Jeanne and Robert Youngs
Joella and Donald Muller
Judith Mendez
Kate and Melody Dermoceur
Lois and Ron Heffron
Martin and Sheree Alexander
Melissa Lin Mendez
Patricia Thomas
Stanley and Marie Sicksteel
William Sterzick

IN MEMORY OF MARY RABINEAU
Floyd and Kathleen Rabineau
Kevin and Karen Rabineau
Ruth and Roy Hein

IN MEMORY OF SHANE KRUTEL
Adrik-Dominique Thomas
Colleen Austin
Homer and Cheryl Roark
Jaime and Brandy Villarreal
Polish Falcons Club
Shawn Harding

IN MEMORY OF VERGIE SCHUITEMA
Robert and Geraldine Hurt
Roger and Terri Vanderhelm and Tammi Schafer

IN HONOR OF MARY SIEGEL
Krista Reuchleya and Tom Simmons
Sylvia and Jim Akers
Buddy and Helen Adams
Patricia Hawkins
Nathaniel and Lisa Wolf

IN HONOR OF CONNOR FOLKERTSMA
Dan and Sandi Folkertsma

IN HONOR OF JOSEPH ANDRUS
George Kerr

IN HONOR OF PAUL SOMBATI
James Balder and Pfeiffer Lincoln

IN HONOR OF PUZZLE PARTNERS
Robert and Robin Easley

Thanks, too, to the corporations that support the work that we do. In addition to our many generous sponsors, the following corporations give to us annually:

• J&H Oil
• The Mitten Brewing Company
• Magna Mirrors
• Cascade Engineering
• Total Spectrum Care ABA Services.

**NEW**

FAMILY EVENT
FEES SCHEDULE

Just a reminder of our new event fees — Effective 2/1/18:

• $3 per person for the Bowling Party and Klackle Orchard Event
• $5 per family for the Holiday Party, Skating Party and Easter Egg Hunt
• FREE to attend — Connor’s Night at the Children’s Museum, Pool Parties, and the Family Day at Indian Trails Camp

We will use Eventbrite to register for most events, so check the newsletter and website for more information. Call Pam with any questions or concerns.
Our Holiday Party was so fun! Almost 150 people enjoyed food from Yesterdog, crafts, music, and a visit from Santa! This event would not have been possible without the many hours from volunteers from our Board.

Special Thanks to:
An anonymous donor who donated in Honor of Michael Cannon, Bill Born, Sarah Hammer, The East Grand Rapids Middle School for use of the cafeteria, Forest Hills Foods for the donation of the cakes, and to Total Spectrum Care ABA Services who underwrote the party for us.
Do you [Facebook]?

To find our Facebook page, simply type *Autism Support of Kent County* in the “Search” bar located in the upper left corner. Click on “like” to join our page and receive updates. *Be sure to tell your friends and family!*

**Disclaimers**

Articles, conferences, workshops, presenters or information contained in this newsletter or at meetings are not endorsed by Autism Support of Kent County. Articles occasionally offer information about medical/pharmacological research, treatment and therapies or legal issues. This information is given for informational purposes and is not intended to act as a substitute for professional advice. Readers are encouraged to consult with their own practitioners for individual or specific advice.

*Autism Support of Kent County (ASK) in Grand Rapids, Michigan, is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization of parents, school staff, and others who actively seek to support and advocate for persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and their families.*

ASK is committed to partnering with local schools and agencies to promote the welfare of individuals with ASD in our community.

Please note that Autism Support of Kent County does not endorse any specific therapy, product, treatment, strategy, opinions, service, or individual.