

THE VOICE



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Calendar:

Board Meetings

ASK Office—160 68th St. SW
Grand Rapids, 49548 — 6:30 pm

- January 8, 2024
- February 5, 2024
- March 4, 2024

Elementary Age Social Group

- 1/17/24—DIY Workshop Kit
- 3/13/24—Lego & Pizza Night
- 4/24/24—Flower Pot Painting

Teen and Young Adult Social Group

- 1/13/24—Bowling at Spectrum Lanes
- 2/6/24—Grand Rapids Glow Golf
- 3/5/24—Uno Tournament and Pizza Party
- 4/30/24—Canvas Painting

GRCM Sensory Friendly Night

- 2/19/24

Walk for Autism

- 5/19/24

Golf Outing

- 8/1/24



News from ASK

As we approach the end of another transformative year at Autism Support of Kent County, we find ourselves reflecting on the incredible impact that our community has made possible.

In 2023, we witnessed firsthand the power of compassion, collaboration, and generosity. Please look at our 2023 Annual Report on page 12 of this newsletter to see all that we accomplished last year!

We are excited about the positive changes that will be brought to our community and the individuals and families we serve. None of this would have been possible without friends like you who share our vision for an accepting and inclusive world. Your dedication to ASK goes beyond financial contributions; it's a testament to the collective belief in creating meaningful change.

As we begin the new year, we pause to say thank you to **Richard (Rick) Elias III** who is retiring from the ASK Board after 15 years as Board President.



Rick, on behalf of the Board of Directors, staff, volunteers, donors and families, we thank you for your service to our autism community in West Michigan.

Rick played a crucial role in hiring both the first Executive Director a decade ago and the recent appointment of Jennifer McGeehan in late November. During the challenging times of the Covid pandemic, Rick provided leadership that supported growth, including the addition of Clubhouse and Social Groups, the Full Spectrum Players Theater Group, and Family events.

As we turn our gaze towards 2024, we are filled with hope and optimism for what we can accomplish together. To continue our impactful work, we are reaching out to our community of supporters with an invitation to join us once again. Your generosity will directly fund our programs, enabling us to make an even greater difference in the lives of those we serve.

There are several convenient ways to contribute:

- Make a secure online donation at: autismsupportofkentcounty.org/donate
- Mail a check to ASK at P. O. Box 150348, Grand Rapids, 49515.
- Contact our office at 616-752-8577 to discuss other giving options.

Every donation plays a crucial role in propelling our mission forward. Your support is an investment in positive change, and we are immensely grateful for your partnership. Together, we can continue to make a lasting impact on the lives of those who need it most.

With gratitude,

Jenn McGeehan
Executive Director

Rick chaired the annual Golf Event and contributed to the successful addition of the Bike Ride for Autism fundraiser.

Even in retirement, Rick has expressed his intent to stay involved with key events, showcasing his continued dedication to the organization. Rick plans to transition to the Advisory Board, maintaining a connection with ASK and offering valuable insights based on his extensive experience.

Rick has asked and I have agreed to become the new Board President effective January 1, 2024. I look forward to working with the Board of Directors and Executive Director. A heartfelt hat tip to Rick for the legacy he has built, providing services, hope, and opportunities to countless families and individuals with autism.

Larry Andrus, Board President



**The Grand Rapids Children's Museum
has set aside Monday evening,
February 19, from 4:00 to 7:00 pm
for anyone with sensory challenges!**

Admission is free, but registration is required by
February 15. No late registrations or at
event registrations will be allowed.

To register, click here:

<https://www.autismsupportofkentcounty.org/event/s/2023/6/14/sensory-friendly-night-at-the-gr-childrens-museum>. You will need to go to the cart and you will receive an email confirmation after registration.

**A huge thank you to Reyes Coca Cola
Bottling for donating the proceeds of
their annual golf outing to ASK and to
Reyes employee Jacob Miller for
nominating us!**



Art Gala & Auction

SPECIAL OLYMPICS UNIFIED SPORTS & INCLUSION CENTER
160 68TH STREET SW
GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49548

**ALL PROCEEDS BENEFIT
AUTISM SUPPORT OF KENT COUNTY**



COMING SOON!

WWW.AUTISMSUPPORTOFKENTCOUNTY.ORG/EVENTS

FOOD • COCKTAILS • MUSIC • ART AND SILENT AUCTION



**Thanks so much to Thornapple Financial
Center and its parent company Money Con-
cepts International Inc. for the donation of
proceeds from its annual golf outing!
We are very grateful for your support!**





Teen/Young Adult Social Group

Saturday January 13th, Noon — 2:00 pm

Bowling at Spectrum Lanes

Tuesday, February 6, 6:00 — 7:30 pm

Grand Rapids Glow Golf

Tuesday, March 5 (ASK Office), 6:00 — 7:30 pm

Uno Tournament & Pizza Party

Tuesday, April 30 (ASK Office) 6:00 — 7:30 pm

Canvas Painting

This group is open to anyone ages 12 and up. A guardian must also attend as we are not insured for drop off. The Center is located at 160 - 68th Street SW, Grand Rapids, between US131 and Division Avenue. Please park in the EAST LOT, which is the one closest to Division Avenue. Enter via the doors under the triangle roof. Head down the main hall. **Registration is required:**

<https://www.autismsupportofkentcounty.org/events>

Elementary Age Social Group

Wednesday, January 17, 2024

6:00 — 7:15 pm — **DIY Workshop Kit**

Wednesday, March 13, 2024

6:00 — 7:15 pm — **LEGO and Pizza Night**

Wednesday, April 24, 2024

6:00 — 7:15 pm — **Flower Pot Painting**



**WE ARE SO EXCITED TO BE ABLE TO
OFFER A SOCIAL GROUP FOR
ELEMENTARY AGE KIDS!**

Please join for a fun night of friendship, crafts, and snacks! This group is open to any child ages 6–11 who has an autism diagnosis or is awaiting diagnosis. A parent or guardian must accompany each child.

Cost to attend is \$10 per child. (Parents do not need to pay.) **Registration is required:**

<https://www.autismsupportofkentcounty.org/events>

We will meet in the ASK office at the Special Olympics Center. The Center is located at 160 - 68th Street SW, Grand Rapids, between US131 and Division Avenue. Please park in the EAST LOT, which is the one closest to Division Avenue. Enter via the doors under the triangle roof. Head down the main hall.

We can't wait to see you! Feel free to contact ASK at 616-752-8577, or by email to ed@autismsupportofkentcounty.org





The Full Spectrum Players finished season 5 with their performance of "The Pretenders" on December 8 and 10. The cast and crew did an amazing job entertaining their audience. K-Rock kicked off the night with their rendition of "All I Want For Christmas". There was laughter with holiday-themed jokes by Knight Link (Josh K). Later in the show we were dazzled by Bria D's dancing routine to "Gimme Chocolate" by Baby Metal. "The Pretenders" is about a royal family that lost its youngest prince to a band of marauders. It's a story filled with secret plans and hidden identities. Who is the enemy? Who is the hero? What happened to the prince? By the end of scene 7, all secrets were revealed. *Long Live the King!*

THE FULL SPECTRUM PLAYERS

Thank you to all who came out to watch our amazing Full Spectrum Players. Stay tuned for information on our Spring performance in April 2024! Anyone who would like to join the Spring 2024 production as cast or backstage volunteer should come out on Tuesday, January 9 from 6:30–8:00 pm for our first night of season 6.

Along with our theatrical performances at the beginning of December, a number of our Full Spectrum Players and directors took part in Wealthy Street Theater's inaugural Winter Theater Forum held on December 27–30. On Thursday, December 28, The Full Spectrum players held a panel on adaptive theater. Later that evening they participated in the forum's "Celebration of Theater" with performances by K-Rock, Sydney D's rap "My Shot", and our actors performing scene 3 of "The Pretenders".



Conferences, Workshops, and Webinars

Michigan Alliance for Families On-Demand Free Webinar Series

A webinar is an online presentation you can attend without having to leave your home or office. It's an opportunity to hear an expert speak for about an hour on a topic that interests you. These webinars can be viewed at any time on the Michigan Alliance for Families YouTube Channel:
<https://www.youtube.com/user/MichiganAlliance/videos>
Online Learning Opportunities
<https://www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org/upcoming-events/>

Autism Alliance of Michigan List of Virtual and In-Person Community Events:
<https://autismallianceofmichigan.org/events/>

Autism Speaks On-line Events and Webinars
https://www.autismspeaks.org/events?event_type=All

Autism Research Institute
 Free Online Webinars — Autism Education for Individuals, Parents and Professionals
<https://autism.org/webinars/>

84th Annual Michigan Council for Exceptional Children (MCE) Conference
 February 28 – March 1, 2024
 Amway Grand Plaza Hotel, Grand Rapids, MI
 Keynote Speaker: Dr. Muhammad Khalifa
<https://site.phedloop.com/event/AnExceptionalCelebration/home>

2024 AAoM Navigating Autism Today Conference
 Friday, March 8, 2024
 Suburban Showcase Collection
 46100 Grand River Ave., Novi, MI
 The event provides a keynote speaker, complimentary breakfast and lunch, networking opportunities, and an autism resource fair with 30+ vendors.
<https://autismallianceofmichigan.org/2024-conference-registration/>

US Autism Association
2024 Virtual World Autism Conference
 Friday, April 19 - Sunday, April 21, 2024
Keynote Speakers: Temple Grandin, Ph.D., Stephen Shore, Ed.D., and Raun K. Kaufman
<https://worldautismconference.org/>

23rd Annual START Conference
 April 22, 2024
 Kellogg Hotel & Conference Center at MSU
 219 S Harrison Rd, East Lansing, MI 48824
<https://www.gvsu.edu/autismcenter/start-conference-167.htm>



Lights Up. Sound Down. Enjoy The Movie!

Showtimes - Saturdays at 11:00 am (It's always a good idea to check theater listings.).

<https://www.celebrationcinema.com/events-series/detail/Sensory-Showtimes>

Check the website for current lineup!



Congratulations to Keenan "Red" Miller and Keegan Russell of K-Rock on being honored with the Discover Ability Award at the annual Disability Advocates of Kent County Gala!

"Seeing these guys perform with such talent and joy shows the world that a disability doesn't need to define you, hold you back, or limit what you can do or be," Autism Support of Kent County wrote in its nomination. "We are grateful for the guys of K-Rock for showing the world what they are capable of!"

"The Discover Ability Award recognizes young people with disabilities who are making a difference for others with disabilities. We are proud to present this award to Keegan and Keenan, who are doing just that," says Dave Bulkowski, Disability Advocates of Kent County's longtime executive director.



SOCIAL GROUPS

We currently offer four **Social Group Programs**. Email ed@autismsupportofkentcounty.org or call (616) 752-8577 or more information on any of our groups.

TEEN & YOUNG ADULT SOCIAL GROUP.

This group is run by Jennie Miller, ASK Program Director. This group meets either monthly or twice each month for fun and friendship. It's open to anyone ages 12 and up. Events are publicized on our EVENTS page, email blasts, and on Facebook. A guardian must accompany each individual to the events.

YOUNG ADULT SOCIAL GROUP—PUZZLE PARTNERS.

This is a closed group that is ONLY for individuals with Level I autism and social challenges. Individuals must be at least age 18 to participate. This group is run by Jennie Miller, ASK Program Director. Contact Jennie at PuzzlePartnersYA@gmail.com. This group meets 3 times each month for fun, friendship and support. To participate in this group, you must be verbal and able to communicate back and forth 3-4 times, be

free from behaviors, and be able to attend on your own. To be eligible to join, you must have a short phone call with Jennie. Events are only publicized by an email from Jennie.

AUTISTIC ADULT MEETUP GROUP. This is a closed group that is ONLY for individuals with Level I autism and social challenges. This is a group for anyone with diagnosed or suspected autism who is over age 30. This group is run by Ann Mary Dykstra, longtime ASK volunteer and Puzzle Partners Group Leader. Contact Ann Mary at PuzzlePartners@gmail.com. To be eligible to join, you must have a short phone call with Ann Mary. This group meets monthly for fun, friendship and support. Events are publicized through emails from Ann Mary only.

ELEMENTARY AGE SOCIAL GROUP—NEW!

This group is run by Jennie Miller, ASK Program Director. This group meets monthly and is open to any child age 6—11 who has an autism diagnosis or is awaiting diagnosis. Events are publicized on our EVENTS page, email blasts, and on Facebook. A parent or guardian must accompany each child.



CLUBHOUSE SOCIAL PROGRAM

*Deep Roots Produce
Halloween Party*



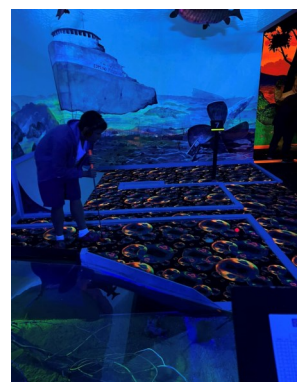
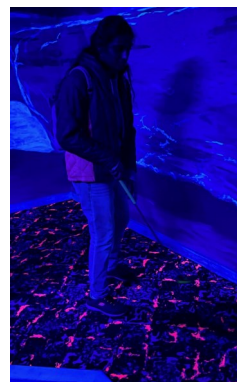
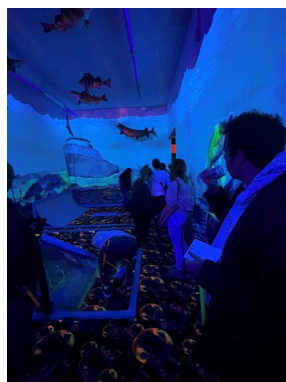
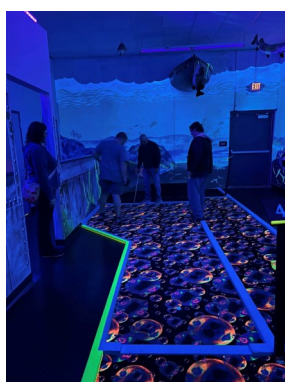
FAMILY EVENTS — Hearts for the Arts Studio



ELEMENTARY SOCIAL GROUP — Pumpkin Painting and Lego Day



TEEN/YOUNG ADULT SOCIAL GROUP — Great Lakes Glow Golf





Our Family Holiday Party is always so much fun! Thanks to all of the wonderful families who came out, to the kind volunteers who helped out — and to jolly Santa himself! The ASK Board Members showed up in full force too, so thanks to all of them!



Meet the ASK Team

Staff

Jennifer McGeehan, Executive Director

Jenn McGeehan joined ASK as Executive Director in November 2023. She comes to us with over ten years of experience in the nonprofit world and several years as a community leader, having served on the board with both local and state Junior Chamber and various nonprofits. Most recently, she worked with the national fundraising team for a nonprofit based in Washington DC. Jenn lives in Holland with her husband Travis and rescued dachshund mix Jerry, and is an avid knitter, writer, and crafter.

Ann Mary Dykstra, Group Leader of Puzzle Partners

Ann Mary graduated from Calvin University with a degree in elementary education. After teaching 5th grade and launching 4 children, she started a tutoring program at her children's elementary school. She then began 17 years in a resource room at Sylvan/GR Christian Middle School. During that time, she developed an interest in autism and learning differences and took many classes and workshops. This led to jobs at The Gray Center, Hope Network Center for Autism, and finally ASK. Ann Mary has led a variety of social groups and currently facilitates a group for adults ages 30+. The group averages 15-20 attendees per meeting. Ann Mary enjoys meeting each new adult as well as the monthly meetings! Her other interests are traveling with her husband Chuck to visit their kids in various states, pottery, reading, and knitting.

Laura Hall, Theater Director

Laura grew up in Saginaw, Michigan, on the east side. In high school, she took drama classes and actively participated in performances. During her time at GVSU, she continued her involvement in theater. After school, she worked in bookstores and childcare, balancing work with her evolving role as a parent to her son Ryan. Recognizing Ryan's autism, she entered the world of parenting a child with special needs. Ryan developed an interest in acting and theater, participating in community and middle school productions. In 2021, Laura became involved with ASK, where she was given the opportunity to tour the SOMI building. She expressed the desire to utilize the auditorium and was asked to help make that happen. Starting with improv activities, she organized the first performance, "The Quest for Pixie Dust," in the fall of 2021. The success of that first production led to an offer from ASK to become the Theater Director. ASK now offers participants the chance to join the cast in performances twice a year.

Jennifer Miller, Program Director

Jennifer has been serving as the Program Director for social events at ASK since January 2022. Her background includes experience in early childhood education and paraprofessional work in early childhood special education. Jennifer has a personal connection to the autism community through her daughter, who has been involved with ASK for four years. As a mom of a 14-year-old, Jennifer is expecting twins at the

end of February, showcasing her dedication to her family and her commitment to ASK. She is passionate about the social groups and enjoys planning and attending various group events. Jennifer's favorite aspect of working for ASK is witnessing the positive strides participants make in social interaction, confidence, and taking chances.

Executive Board

Larry Andrus, President

With over 50 years of sales, leadership, and ownership experience, Larry has focused on service to clients and supporting his teams. His focus was on people, passion, and performance. He sold his technology company in 2018 and now works on entrepreneurial endeavors with his family. Nonprofits have been his passion and he has volunteered with the GR Jaycees, BBB, CTC, ASK, Make-A-Wish and others in board or advisory roles. Larry has been married to Celia for 46 years. They have three sons – Christopher, Bradley, and Joshua. Joshua was diagnosed with ASD in 1991. Celia and Larry have been advocates for the ASD community for many years.

Doug Domine, Vice President

Doug is a semi-retired business professional with a 30-year-old son diagnosed at an early age on the ASD bandwidth (PDD – NOS). He is a compassionate parent-advocate supporting young adults and their families in the Greater Grand Rapids area since 2012. Doug has been on the ASK Board since 2015. He brings broad management and leadership experience from the public sector along with parental insight on the transitional scope of late teens and adults with ASD. Doug has a BBA and MA in management and contributes on our ASK team with his perspective and proactive style.

Mary Kay Anderson, Treasurer

Mary Kay graduated from Grand Valley State University with a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration. She worked for various non-profit agencies for 15 years before going back to Grand Valley to get a Bachelor of Science Degree with an emphasis in Special Education and then completing her Master's Degree in Educational Technology. Mary Kay worked for Grand Rapids Public Schools for 17 years, 12 years as a Special Education Teacher and five years as Assistive Technology Consultant.

Celia Andrus, Secretary

Celia has been involved with ASK since 1999 and has served in many capacities, including Secretary, Treasurer, Newsletter Editor and Social Media Coordinator. Celia and her husband Larry have three sons—Christopher, Bradley, and Joshua. Joshua was diagnosed with ASD in 1991 at the age of six. While serving on the ASK board, Celia also represented Forest Hills Public Schools on the Parent Advisory for Special Education Committee for three years and as President of HALO RPM in Austin, Texas. Celia's background is in administrative management. She holds a Bachelor of Business Administration from Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas.

Continued on page 10

Meet the ASK Team

Continued from page 9

Directors

Jennifer Amorose

Jennifer is a graduate of Adrian College and Oakland University and has a Master's Degree in Special Education with a teaching endorsement in Autism. Jennifer is in her 19th year as an educator working with students with autism. She has worked on both the east and west side of the state and is currently the Autism Teacher Consultant for Caledonia Community Schools. She is also active in the professional group KENT CAN and is the Kent County Peer-to-Peer/LINKS Coach. Jennifer is passionate about connecting those with autism and their families with the resources to pursue a vision and a change for a better future. Jennifer and her husband Steve reside in Grand Rapids and keep busy with their three boys — Nick (13), Luke (9), and Jack (7).

Nancy Cool

Nancy earned her Master's degree in Special Education from Oakland University. She dedicated an impressive 39 years of her professional life to Grand Rapids Public Schools. For 36 of those years, Nancy focused on teaching children with autism. From 1980 to 2000, she played a multifaceted role as a gymnastics coach and special events coordinator for the gymnastics company now known as Gymco. While teaching at Pine Grove Learning Center, Nancy applied her expertise as a Master Gardener to contribute to the maintenance of the sensory garden. In her final year of teaching for Kent ISD, Nancy faced the formidable challenge of battling throat cancer. She is excited to be cancer-free and a part of this wonderful organization.

Lynne Kindy

Lynne was a school social worker for Grand Rapids Public Schools for 28 years and for Kent ISD for four years. She retired in August, 2022. Lynne earned her B.S. in Psychology from the University of Michigan and her Masters in Social Work from GVSU. She has been attending monthly meetings of Autism Support of Kent County in 1991 and has been a board member since 1994. She continues to enjoy serving on the board in her retirement. Lynne and her husband Steve enjoy traveling and camping with their long-haired dachshunds Gretel and Buster.

Judi Kuiper

Judi served as a teacher for 30 years within the Grand Rapids Public Schools (GRPS) and Kent Intermediate School District (KISD). Her teaching experience covered various positions, but her passion was evident in her work with transition-aged students with autism. Judi earned her degree from Grand Valley State University, with endorsements in General Education (Gen Ed), Emotional Impairment (EI), Mental Impairment (MI), and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). She pursued further education and obtained a Masters in Administration from Grand Valley and Oakland University, showcasing her commitment to continuous learning and professional

development. Outside of her professional endeavors, Judi enjoys traveling. She frequently visits her five children and eleven grandchildren, who are scattered throughout the United States.

Tasha Oltman

Tasha has been working in the social services field since 2006, with a heart for those who have disabilities. She currently serves as Supervisor of Community Supports with MOKA, in a program that provides opportunities for individuals to learn valuable skills for increased independence and lead fulfilling lives through community involvement and employment. Tasha and her husband Will live in Grand Rapids and enjoy spending time antiquing, gardening, dancing, and finding a variety of interesting things to do in the area. Tasha is grateful for the opportunity to serve with ASK again this year.

Jenny Shumard

Jenny graduated from Grand Valley State University with a Bachelors Degree in Psychology. After graduating, Jenny worked with children with disabilities until 2008, when she started working as a Program Instructor in a Skill Building Program at Hope Network. She was also a Supports Coordinator for Hope Network, supervisor of a day program for Muskegon County, and a Home Supervisor for MOKA in Ottawa/Allegan counties. Jenny currently works as a Supervisor of Community Supports with MOKA and is looking forward to serving on the ASK Board again this year.

Renée Walter

Renée graduated from Central Michigan University with a B.S. in Child Development, Early Childhood. She spent nine years in the non-profit early childhood sector, gaining valuable experience in various Head Start programs. Renée acquired significant experience in social work, helping connect families with essential resources in the community. Despite finding fulfillment in her work, Renée decided to take a break and eventually entered the finance field at Purposeful Wealth Strategies (PWS). Kevin Gardenier, the founder of PWS and a member of the autism community, tasked Renee with exploring local programs for potential involvement and donations. This led Renée to discover ASK, where she began volunteering and building a working relationship between PWS and ASK. In 2021, Renée spearheaded PWS's first Autism Acceptance Campaign, focusing on spreading awareness and acceptance of autism. The campaign also fundraised for ASK, specifically to support the launch of their Clubhouse program. Renée recently got married and is enjoying married life with her husband. They share interests in spending time with family, traveling, reading, working on projects around the house, and relaxing with a good movie or show.

In addition to the generous sponsors of our Walk for Autism, Golf Outing, Ride for Autism and Theater Group, many loyal supporters give to us each and every year. Thank you for your gifts in 2023 which allow us to continue the important work that we do!

American Legion Louis Teiler Post
Jennifer and Steven Amorose
Marlene Andrus
Larry and Celia Andrus
Julie Arends
Kelly Aukema
B2 Great Lakes LLC
Behavior Analysts of W. Michigan
Brian Beukema
Big E's Sports Grill (Grand Rapids E. Beltline)
Mary Blaicher
Elyse Bradford
Aaron Bregg
Keith Brophy
Brad Carey
Tom Cook
Ben Davidson
Dale and Dawn Day
Mark de Waal
Devos Family Foundation
Deanna Devries
Doug Domine
Nicholette Driggs
Nate Dykstra
Heath Eisman
Cindy Elder
Exit 76 Corp.
Robert Fischer
Dan and Sandi Folkertsma
Daniel Fornatto
Katherine Franklin
Kevin Gardenier
Gardner Family Gift Fund
Grand Rapids Skate and Activity Center
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Money Concepts International, Inc.
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Eli Petersen
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Anthony Richtsmeier
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John Skinner
Belinda and Mitch Stapley
John Sznewaj
Joseph and Kristie Teague
The Mitten Foundation
Thornapple Financial Center
Jane Toscano
Madeline Trimby
Universal Traffic Service
Donna Velting
Jayne VerLee
VerLee Family Fund
Robert Walter
Tom Williams
Doug and Jill Wilterdink
Wittung-Baker Charitable Fund
Anna Worbois
Eric Wu

In Memory Of Monty Colter
Daniel and Diane Lang

In Memory of Rick Oppenhuizen
Jerry and Carol Dykstra
Harvey and Elaine Heneveld
Ronald and Sharon Longstreet
Jim and Nancy Meyer
Larry Palma
The Preuters
Ken and Mary Jane Timmer
Carla Zondervan Family Fund

*Thank
you!*

**United
Way**



**Heart of West Michigan
United Way**

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.*

Visit our website to view and/or
download the ASK Community
Resource Directory:

www.autismsupportofkentcounty.org



THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS 2023 WALK FOR AUTISM SPONSORS

Event Sponsor



Gold Sponsors



We see the world differently too



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DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT



DE DEVELOPMENTAL ENHANCEMENT
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH



THIRD COAST
ORAL & MAXILLOFACIAL SURGERY



Silver Sponsors



Bronze Sponsors



THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS 2023 GOLF FOR AWARENESS SPONSORS

Gold Sponsors



Silver Sponsors



Meal Sponsor



Bronze Sponsors



Hole-in-One Sponsor



Tee Sign Sponsor



**AUTISM SUPPORT
OF KENT COUNTY**

2023 Annual Report

ACCEPTANCE SUPPORT KNOWLEDGE CONNECTION

OUR PROGRAMS AND SERVICES



We remain one of the most active autism organizations in Michigan! Our focus is on making life better and more productive for people with autism by sharing resources, supporting families, offering social programs, providing opportunities for connection, and by giving people with autism the chance to grow, learn, make friends, and become the best they can be.

2023 was filled with so much time together!

- 50 Clubhouse Gatherings
- 36 Young Adult Level 1 Adult Group Events
- 6 Elementary Group Gatherings
- 12 Family Events
- 10 Support Groups
- 6 Hiking Group Outings
- 12 Gatherings of the Autistic Adult Meetup Group
- 4 Performances of the Full Spectrum Players Theater Group
- 1 Sensory Friendly Performance at the Grand Rapids Civic Theater

We held our first ever Art Gala and Auction showcasing the artistic and musical talent of persons with autism.

We held our annual Walk for Autism at LMCU Ballpark with over 600 attendees.

We held the 15th Annual Golf for Awareness Event with a full flight of golfers.

We held the 3rd Annual Ride for Autism with bikers riding between 25 and 100 miles.

We collaborated with many other nonprofits that serve people with special needs.

We offered resources and a listening ear to over 450 people via calls, texts, and emails.

We held informational workshops and support groups for parents and caregivers featuring knowledgeable speakers on many topics:

- Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS)
- Dr. Kelsey Woolner from Pine Rest
- IEP and School Support - Jen Amorose
- ABA Therapy - Rebound Home and Community Therapy
- Dr. Michael Wolff from BRAINS
- Dr. Anthony Richtsmeier - co-founder of the Helan DeVos Children's Hospital Autism Clinic

And finally, former Executive Director Pam Liggett spoke to over 15 local organizations on various topics related to autism and resources available through ASK and other non-profits in West Michigan.

For more information, contact:

Jennifer McGeehan, Executive Director at: ed@autismsupportofkentcounty.org
ASK Voice Mail: (616) 752-8577
Jennifer's Phone: (616) 337-2678

We Need Your Support

Autism is the fastest-growing developmental disability in the United States, with 1 in 36 children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Autism Support of Kent County (ASK) works every day to measurably improve the quality of life for individuals and families affected by autism in our community. By donating today, you can help us in our mission to create connections and empower everyone in the autism community with the resources needed to live fully.

Your tax-deductible gift to ASK will help support our many life-changing programs and enable us to assist families living with autism. Can you please join us to make life better for the special and capable people we serve? All amounts make a huge difference to us! Here are ways to donate:

- Via our website at:
www.autismsupportofkentcounty.org/donate
- You can **mail** donations to:
Autism Support of Kent County, Inc.
P.O. Box 150348, Grand Rapids, MI 49515

**Donations to ASK are tax deductible
(Tax ID #27-0292064).**

Thank you for your support!

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 ASK does not endorse any specific therapy, product, treatment, strategy, opinion, service, or individual.

**Autism Support
of Kent County**

Autism Support of Kent County (ASK) is on Facebook, so visit our page for updates on our programs and events. Don't forget to "like" our page to stay up to date on what's happening. Click [here](#) to visit us on Facebook.



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.

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.

