

THE VOICE



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Calendar:

Board Meetings

ASK Office—2505 Ardmore SE
Grand Rapids, 49506

6:30 p.m., Public welcome.

- September 9, 2019
- October 7, 2019
- November 4, 2019
- January 6, 2020
- February 3, 2020
- March 2, 2020
- April 13, 2020
- May 4, 2020
- June 1, 2020

Events:

Parent Support Group

- September 10, 2019
- October 15, 2019
- November 12, 2019

Post Family Farms

- September 23, 2019

Frozen Jr. — GR Civic Theater

- October 23, 2019

ASK Night at Mitten Brewing

- October 28, 2019

Pool Party at Indian Trails

- November 17, 2019

Connor's Friends at GRCM

- November 20, 2019

ASK Holiday Party

- December 9, 2019

Walk for Autism

- May 3, 2020



NEWS FROM ASK

The start of a new school year is always an exciting time here at ASK. We plan new programs, improve upon what we've done in the past, and start fresh. As I think about all of that, I want to publicly thank our amazing Board of Directors that makes it all happen. These volunteers are dedicated, committed, and energetic, and we could not do what we do without them. I am lucky to work alongside such a great group!

As we think about what we've accomplished this past year, we are so proud! Everything we do is growing and that means that we are serving more families than ever before. Thank you to the donors and supporters who make this happen! Recently, we were granted funds from a

local group of "Women Who Care". Thank you to these generous women for the funds that we will use to support and add to social opportunities for teens and young adults with autism. Thank you to our many corporate sponsors and golfers who took part in a very fun Golf Classic Event in July. We are grateful to all of you!

Something BIG is happening in West Michigan, and we are thrilled to be asked to be part of it. I can't say too much more now, but stay tuned for information about a collaborative project that will be fantastic!

Please check our events calendar both in this newsletter and on the website. Join us at an event. We can't wait to see you!

If you have a suggestion, comment or need, please reach out to me via voicemail, cell phone, or email. I try to respond to every single one in a day or two. Thank you, again, for being part of the family of ASK! See you soon —

Pam Liggett
ASK Executive Director

ASK Elects 2019-2020 Board of Directors

AUTISM SUPPORT OF
KENT COUNTY IS PROUD
TO ANNOUNCE THE
2019 — 2020 BOARD OF
DIRECTORS. SEE PAGES
12 AND 13 FOR BOARD
MEMBER BIOS.

Executive Board:

Richard Elias III, President
Doug Domine, Vice-President
Mary Kay Anderson, Treasurer
Jenny Shumard, Secretary

Directors:

Jennifer Amorose
Brad Andrus
Susie Fischer Dennis
Lynne Kindy
Allison Malick
Tasha Oltman
Carmencita Perdomo

SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS

Our Support Group Meetings are open to everyone. Please join us — no reservation necessary!

Unless otherwise stated, all Support Group Meetings are held at 7:00 pm at the new ASK Office at 2505 Ardmore Street SE, Grand Rapids, 49506 (lower level).

Tuesday, September 10

Speaker: Representative from IKUS
Topic: REC Connect, Respite, and Camp Opportunities

Tuesday, October 15

Speaker: Bonnie Miller from DAKC
Topic: Supports for Those Over Age 18

Tuesday, November 12

Speaker: Dr. Michael Wolff from BRAINS
Topic: The Top 10 Best Things You Can Do for Your Child With Autism

Contact Pam at (616) 752-8577
for questions or 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**

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!



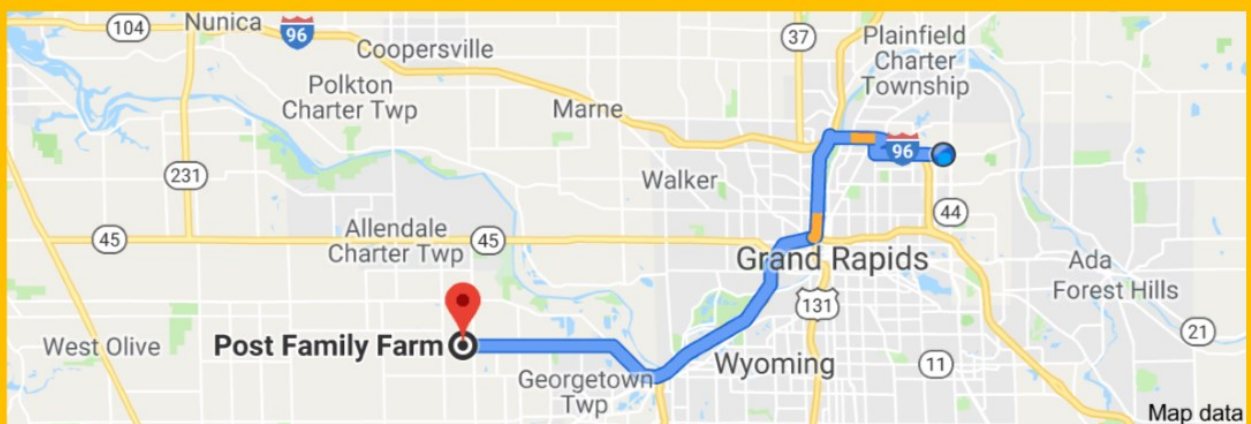
Post Family Farm and Autism Support of Kent County invite you to come out and enjoy an evening on the farm!

**Monday, September 23
6:00 — 8:00 pm**

Cider, donuts, hayride to the Pumpkin Patch and lots of fun on the farm!

Cost is \$5.00 per family — Register and pay on the website: www.autismsupportofkentcounty.org (click on "Events")

Space is limited and you must RSVP to reserve tickets.



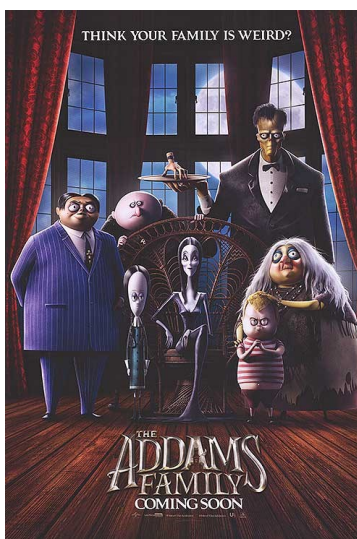
5081 Bauer Road, Hudsonville, MI 49426



Enjoy the BIG SCREEN experience in an accepting environment! Developed in partnership with Family Hope Foundation, Sensory Showtimes make movies extra welcoming to guests with special needs, including autism. So come relax, be yourself, and enjoy a movie at Celebration! Cinema! Lights will dim, but remain on • Volume will be lowered • Movies begin at show time with limited previews • Shown in 2D with open captioning • Cheering, calling out, or even strolling around the theatre is welcome!



Abominable
October 5



The Addams Family
October 19



Frozen II
November 39

10:30 a.m. showing with regular matinee pricing.

Check the website for a theatre near you at

<https://celebrationcinema.com/events/sensory-showtimes/>



Throughout the month of October, **The Mitten Brewing Company** will be donating a percentage of sales to Autism Support of Kent County (ASK). Stop in any time in the month of October and sample the tasty craft beer and gourmet pizzas. **On Monday, October 28, 50% of all food sales will go to ASK.!** This includes carry out! The Mitten is family-friendly, with vegan and gluten-free options. The upstairs will be sensory-friendly too! Proceeds will go ASK to help fund our programs and events.

The Mitten is located at 527 Leonard St. NW in Grand Rapids. Phone number to order carryout is: (616) 608-5612. We hope to see you there! Thanks for your support!



GRAND RAPIDS
CIVIC THEATRE



A Special Low Sensory Performance!

**Wednesday, October 23
7:30 pm**

A theatre evening where the script and entertainment never changes, but the environment does. Reduced sound volume, adjusted lights, and an opportunity to learn about the show ahead of time make productions a more pleasant experience for individuals with diverse sensory needs and their families/caregivers.

Mark your calendar for this great event! Limited tickets to allow for more space for attendees. More information coming soon — check your email and Facebook for updates on ticket information!

Conferences and Workshops

Focus Group: Help Us to Shape the Future of Transportation in Michigan!

September 12, 2019 1:00 – 2:30 pm

The Arc Kent County

2922 Fuller NE, Suite 201, Grand Rapids, MI

The Michigan Developmental Disabilities Institute (MDDI) is hosting focus groups to discuss driverless, autonomous vehicles and how they might impact you AND YOUR FAMILY, For more information, go to:

<http://www.arckent.org/upcomingevents>

A Future that Includes Employment: A Workshop for Families

September 17, 2019 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

This free workshop is intended to show that work is possible for all people regardless of disability, to help address questions families may have, and to connect families with the resources they need to begin advocating for competitive employment for their sons and daughters. To Register:

<https://maro.silkstart.com/events/a-future-that-includes-employment-a-workshop-for-families-grand-rapids>

7th Annual Michigan Autism Conference

October 9–11, 2019

Preconference workshops on October 9.

Radisson Plaza Hotel & Suites, Kalamazoo, MI

The mission of the Michigan Autism Conference is to disseminate information and training on scientifically validated, behaviorally based treatments to parents, caregivers, and professionals who work with and care for individuals with autism spectrum disorder, and to promote awareness and training of closely related conceptual, scientific, and ethical issues. This mission aims to increase functional skill development and decrease behavioral excesses to ensure individuals with autism can live enriched high-quality lives.

www.michiganautismconference.org

AAoM Navigating Autism Today Regional Conference

October 25, 2019 10:00 a.m.— 3:00 p.m.

The MTG Space

4039 Legacy Parkway, Lansing, MI 48911

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. Register at: <https://aaomconference.org/register/>



The 2019 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.

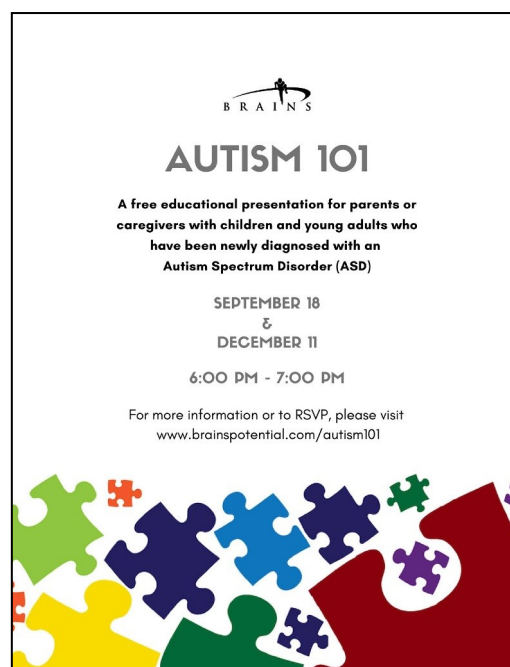
Program participants meet for two hours once a month (6:30 to 8:30 p.m.) at the Spartan Stores YMCA in Wyoming by Metro Hospital (unless otherwise noted). Each monthly event serves 12–24 young adults, plus their parents/caregivers. There is no cost to participate. **2019 dates:**

Saturday, September 7th: 10:00 am — 12:00 noon:
Camp Manitou Lin

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 GRAND RAPIDS
SPARTAN STORES YMCA
5722 Metro Way, Wyoming, MI 49519
(P) 616-885-5523
(E) evanduren@gymca.org (W) www.gymca.org





Indian Trails Camp/IKUS Life Enrichment Services
Sunday, November 17, 2019
2:00 — 4:00 p.m.

- * Snacks Provided!
- * Registration limited to 35. Siblings and friends are welcome.
- * Register on the website:
www.autismsupportofkentcounty.org (click on “Events”)
- * Please specify number of swimmers.
- * Lifeguard on duty!



indian
trails
camp

O-1859 Lake Michigan Dr. NW
Grand Rapids, MI 49534
Phone: (616) 677-5251
info@ikuslife.org



Sponsored by Autism Support of Kent County



Give back.

At Mika Meyers, caring for the community is part of our culture. Our attorneys and staff members are involved in dozens of nonprofit organizations from schools to churches, civic groups and business associations.

Many of us have been honored for our efforts, but all of us have been rewarded with the knowledge that we are making West Michigan a better place to live.

mikameyers.com
(616) 632-8000

Mika Meyers PLC
Attorneys at Law



Thank you so much to the 100+ Women Who Care group!

On July 15, ASK was granted their quarterly proceeds of \$5,000!!! This money will go directly to programming — specifically to enhance social connection opportunities for the special people we serve.

We are thrilled and so grateful! Thank you to the amazing women who care!

PEOPLE WITH AUTISM DOING AWESOME THINGS!



Emma
Clevenger

A few months ago, we were contacted by Shannon Andrus of *Hearts for the Arts* studio about a talented young woman who attended one of her Art Workshops. Shannon told us that the young woman makes beautiful portable mats for the homeless so they don't have to sleep on the ground. Naturally, we had to find out more!

After making a few contacts, we learned that this talented young lady is Emma Clevenger. Emma's mother, Tonya Clevenger, sent us several photos and explained the process that Emma goes through to create these beautiful mats: The bigger mats are knitted with wooden dowels that Emma has crafted into huge knitting needles. The smaller mats are crocheted. Both are made from plastic grocery bags.

Emma makes her mats at the Kroc Center in Grand Rapids. She goes there almost every day to hang out and knit, sometimes for hours at a time. Kroc members and employees have gotten to know Emma and bring in bags for her to knit (one member contacted Meijer and secured donated bags as well).

Last year, after Emma finished her first mat, she asked Kroc Program Supervisor Jessica Pollins to help her deliver the project to a local shelter. "It feels good," said Emma. "I feel like I have a purpose in this world."

We are excited to feature individuals who are doing something extraordinary. If you know someone with autism doing something awesome, or even someone doing something awesome FOR people with autism, please let us know!





Presents

CONNOR'S FRIENDS

A special night for children and
families affected by autism.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2019

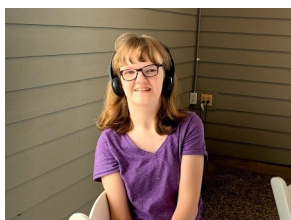
FREE EVENT | STARTS AT 6:00 PM | FREE VALET PARKING

Space is limited and reservations are required.

Registration information coming soon!

Visit grcm.org for more information.

22 SHELDON AVENUE NE, GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49503



Thank you very much to all who donated, supported, and golfed in our Annual Golf Outing! It was our biggest and most successful golf event yet, and we can't wait to fund scholarships for even more individuals to attend camp at Indian Trails! Special thanks to:

Event Sponsor: Tom & Mickie Fox Foundation

Gold Sponsors: Miller Welding and The Andrus Family Trust

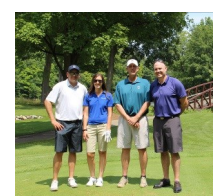
Silver Sponsors: Dr. Rick Elias, *Elias Dental*, Larry Andrus, Rehmann Technology Solutions, and Mr. and Mrs. Dick and Joan Elias

Beverage Cart Sponsor: Mercantile Bank

Hole-In-One Sponsor: Yesterdog

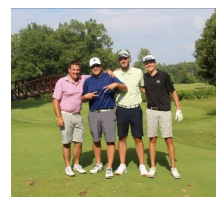
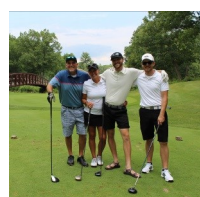
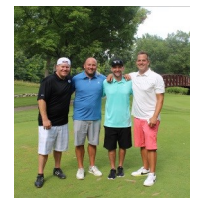
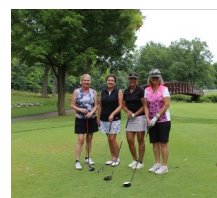
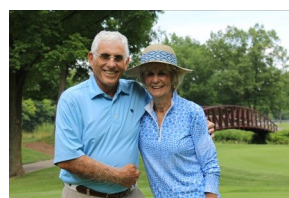
Special thanks to the generous and dedicated Golf Committee and Volunteers: Dr. Rick Elias, Larry Andrus, Brad Andrus, Ken Kranz, Bruce Pienton, Andre Marchena, and Amy Elias

Finally, thanks to our fantastic event emcee *Kim St. James of Nash FM 94.5!*





ASK Golf Outing July 26, 2019 The Golf Club at Thornapple Pointe



Meet the ASK Team

Staff

Pam Liggett, Executive Director

Pam is the Executive Director of ASK and has been on board for seven years. Under Pam's direction, ASK has grown programming, increased funds raised, and served more families than ever before. Pam is ASK's only staff member and works hard to keep staffing costs as low as possible. Talking with, getting to know, and spending time with families affected by autism is Pam's favorite part of the job. She loves seeing her autism family as often as possible. Outside of ASK, Pam volunteers for the Caledonia Community Schools and Park Church programs and enjoys hanging out with friends and family. Pam is married to Jeff. Together, they have two kids, Abby, age 18, and Jeff, age 15.

Celia Andrus, Newsletter Editor/Social Media Coordinator

Celia has been involved with ASK since 1999 and has served in several 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 Schools on the Parent Advisory for Special Education committee for three years. Celia's background is in administrative management. She holds a Bachelor of Business Administration from Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas.

Executive Board

Dr. Richard Elias III, President

Rick is serving his 12th term as President of ASK. He is an implant and cosmetic dentist in East Grand Rapids, taking special interest in individuals with ASD. Rick and his wife Amy have been married since 1989 and are parents of three boys — Jake, Luke, and Peter. Peter was diagnosed with classic autism at the age of 18 months in 1999. Rick is involved in many ASK projects throughout the year, including fundraising, Project Lifesaver, and the promotion of speakers and events. Rick recently organized the annual ASK Golf Classic. The four man scramble golf event was held at Thornapple Point and raised over \$14,000 for ASK. Dr. Elias looks forward to serving on the Board of Directors again this year and helping to promote autism awareness and ultimately benefiting those with ASD and their families.

Doug Domine, Vice President

Doug is a semi-retired business professional with a 28-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. His volunteer work includes working with the Spartan YMCA Family Hope program for young adults/adults with ASD. Doug has been on our Board since 2015 and is our recently elected Vice President. Doug brings broad management and leadership experience from the public sector along with a parental insight on the transitional scope of late teens and adults with ASD. Doug has a BBA and MMA 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 5 years as Assistive Technology Consultant. She is currently employed as a High School Autism Teacher for Montcalm Area Intermediate School District.

Jenny Shumard, Secretary

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 and supervised a day program for Muskegon County. Jenny currently works as a Supervisor of Community Supports with MOKA and is looking forward to serving on the ASK Board again this year.

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 16th 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 (Age 9), Luke (5), and Jack (3).

Brad Andrus

Brad holds a Bachelor of Business Administration from Alma College and a Juris Doctor from Loyola University Chicago School of Law. Brad currently works as the Legal and Compliance Manager for Rehmann Technology Solutions, an IT solution provider in Grandville. Brad has served on the Walk for Autism and Golf for Awareness committees for ASK since 2013 and is involved with the organization's website and other marketing activities. Brad's younger brother, Josh, was diagnosed with nonverbal autism in 1991 at the age of six. Brad previously served as Vice President of Autism Support of Kent County from 2015 to 2018 after serving as ASK Treasurer from 2013 to 2015.

Meet the ASK Team — Continued from Page 8

Susie Dennis

"I have lived in Grand Rapids my entire life. I attended Grand Valley State University and University of Phoenix. I worked in social services with Hope Network and Spectrum Community Services for over 8 years. When my children were born I went back to work for my family at Putt Putts bar, which has been a family-owned business for over 30 years! I am the Proud Mom of four beautiful daughters, and in 2016 our youngest, Charlotte, was diagnosed with nonverbal Autism just before her 3rd birthday. It is now my goal to learn as much as I can about autism and join the autism community to open up doors for her and for others. I am so excited to be joining this team!"

Lynne Kindy

Lynne was a social worker for GRPS for 28 years and now is proud to be employed by KISD. 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 since 1991, and has been a board member since 1994. Lynne has also volunteered as a crisis counselor for B93.7's Roofsit For Kids — a fundraiser for abused and neglected children — for several years. She and her husband Steve enjoy traveling and camping with their miniature dachshunds, Gretel and Buster.

Allison Malick

"Hi everyone! My name is Allison Malick, and I am a second-year medical student at Michigan State University College of Human Medicine in downtown Grand Rapids. I grew up in Northville, MI, a suburb of Detroit, and I have two brothers, Andrew and Aidan. I studied at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor where I majored in Spanish language and minored in Business Administration. In my spare time, I love to visit with friends and family and love going for walks outside. I became interested in joining ASK after volunteering as a soccer and volleyball coach for adults and children with autism during the year between undergrad and medical school. During that time I also worked as an in-home caregiver for a 26-year-old male with autism and had tons of fun doing that. I am so thankful for this opportunity to serve on the ASK board, and I am excited for all the events to come!"

Tasha Oltman

Tasha has been working in the social services field since 2006, with a heart for those who have special needs. She earned her BA in Sociology and Social Thought from Hillsdale College. She currently serves as Supervisor of Community Supports with MOKA, in a program that provides opportunities for individuals to expand their community involvement, learn valuable skills for increased independence, and lead fulfilling lives. 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 and excited about the opportunity to serve with ASK again this year.

Carmencita Perdomo

Carmencita graduated from Cornerstone University with a MA in Counseling Psychology. She is currently a bilingual therapist in private practice at Mi Casita Counseling Services. She previously worked at Catholic Charities as an outpatient mental health therapist and facilitated substance abuse, domestic violence and anger management groups for Michigan Department of Corrections. She also worked at Arbor Circle as the KSSN clinician at Cesar Chavez Elementary School, providing individual and group counseling, case management and home based services, as well as inpatient psychiatric hospitalizations. She has three teenage children and her youngest son has autism.

Advisory Board:

Larry Andrus
Rehmann

Scott Dwyer
Mika Meyers Beckett & Jones

Dan Folkertsma
Kent Record Management, Inc.

Bruce Pienton
Wells Fargo Advisors

Evette Pittman
City of Grand Rapids

Dr. Anthony Richtsmeier, M.D.
Helen DeVos Children's Hospital

Joe Russo
Retired Business Professional



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Email: info@autismsupportofkentcounty.org

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**

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.