



**AUTISM ALLIANCE**  
*Empowering Families for 30 Years*

**AUTISM ALLIANCE**  
A Program of **Advocates**



## November Newsletter



Pam McKillop (left) and Allison Daigle (right)  
Executive Co-Directors, Autism Alliance

November is the time to be thankful, a time to remember, and a time to embrace those who enrich our lives. In this time of Thanksgiving, we, at Autism Alliance, wish to thank and express our sincere appreciation for our amazing Executive Co-Director, Pam McKillop. Pam has given so much of herself to the Autism Alliance over the years, and we are so incredibly grateful. Her journey with the Autism Alliance began back in 1993! Pam, we appreciate your hard work, your persistence, your encouragement, your unwavering commitment, and, last, but certainly not least, your wonderful sense of humor. May the good things of life be yours in abundance, not only at Thanksgiving but throughout the coming year(s).

### ***From the desk of Pam McKillop:***

*I wanted to let you all know of changes in my role at the Autism Alliance. As of November 5th, I will be reducing my hours and resigning as a Co-Director of the Autism Alliance. My new title will be Advocates' Director of Community Outreach Initiatives. The Autism Alliance, a program of Advocates, has been an integral part of my life for the past 30 years and I anticipate it always will be. I joined the Autism Alliance when it was still the Family Voice and even before my daughter Kate, now 35 was diagnosed. I found a community that has helped me over the years to navigate parenting a child with profound autism. In the beginning, it was the support group, recreational activities, and bringing my son to Sib Shop. Later, I joined the Governing Board and volunteered at events. I was lucky enough to come full circle and start working at the Alliance, first as an Autism Waiver Broker and then as a co-director with Allison Daigle. I am proud to have worked alongside Allison and our fabulous teams to provide support and programs to families.*

While I will still be with the Alliance, particularly working on our Autism Welcoming Initiative and facilitating our Portuguese Support Group, it is time for the reins of the directorship to be entirely in the capable hands of Allison. She has the vision, creativity, and compassion to lead the team moving forward as The Executive Director of the Autism Alliance.

Thank you to all who have been a part of my journey. I look forward to this next chapter.

-Pam



**We want to hear from you because your feedback matters!** We would like to know what you think about the services the Autism Alliance provides to you and your family. We value your input and will use your responses to better meet your needs and directly improve our services. Thank you for your time and the opportunity to serve you and your family and our community.

The estimated time to **complete the survey is 5 minutes.**

Survey will be open November 1st through November 14th.

[English Survey](#)

[Portuguese Survey](#)



For some, Thanksgiving is a time to give thanks and enjoy the company of loved ones. For others, it is a sensory overload comprised of crowds, making small talk, and enduring the pressure of conforming to social norms. Additional stress may come in the form of having to travelling outside the home for holiday gatherings. Throw in food aversions and selectivity, and Thanksgiving can turn into a very difficult holiday to maneuver for families living with autism. We hope this [sensory-friendly Thanksgiving](#) guide offers some support and guidance to help ease any challenges you may endure.



## A Thanksgiving Social Story

Social stories are learning tools created to support safe and meaningful communication between individuals with autism and their parents and caregivers. Reading the story makes the individual more prepared for what's to come. It also helps them grasp socially appropriate behavior and learn how to respond to situations. **Social stories can assist with:**

- Teaching social norms
- Improving social skills
- Learning to empathize and have compassion for others
- Reducing anxiety

Thanksgiving social story [here](#).  
Thanksgiving cooking social stories [here](#)

## Our Support Groups



### [Just for Dads Support Group](#)

First Wednesday of Every Month

**Next Date: November 1st | 7:00pm-8:30pm**

Morse Institute Library | 14 East Central Street | Natick, MA



### [Grief and Loss Support Group](#)

First Thursday of Every Month

**Next Date: November 2nd | 12 noon-1:00pm**

Location: Virtual | Contact [Allison Daigle](#)



### [Autism Support Group for Parents of children aged 10 and under](#)

First Wednesday of Every Month

**Next Date: November 1st | 12 noon-1:00pm**

Location: Virtual | Drop-in's welcome



### [Portuguese Educational Autism Family Support Group](#)

Fourth Monday of Every Month  
**Next Date: November 27th | 6:30pm-8:30pm**

Location: Virtual | Drop-in's welcome



### [Mom's Self-Care Support Group](#)

Third Thursday of Every Month  
**Next Date: November 16th | 12noon to 1pm**

Location: Virtual | Contact: [Penny Anderson](#)



### [Sibshop Support Group](#)

Meets Monthly  
**Next Date: December 2 | 2:30pm - 4:30pm**

Sibshop meets monthly during the school year. In addition to the traditional sibshop curriculum, participants will also enjoy activities such as archery, orienteering, navigational games, snowshoeing (weather permitting), animal tracking and survival skills. There's still room in this amazing program. [Registration required.](#)

## Autism Alliance November Social Programs



### **Fall After School Zoo Club** **Tuesdays 4:00-4:30pm | Ages 5-12** **8- weekly classes**

The very successful After School Zoo Club is in the midst of our fall session. We meet virtually each week and are creating our VERY OWN virtual zoo which includes animal preferences and voting from everyone in the club. If you have a special interest in learning and talking about animals, you can still join by registering below. Upon registration, you will be sent the zoom link.

Register



## School Day Off - Video Gaming Truck November 10 | 11am - 12:30pm | Ages 13+

Ages 13 and older meet at the Advocates/Autism Alliance Office Building in Framingham where we all jump on the ULTIMATE Video Game Truck. We will meet and explore playing video games together. **Space is limited to 8 participants.** Parent/Guardian or Aide are required to be onsite- parents may come inside the Autism Alliance Office during program, and or accompany participant as needed.

Register

## November's Guest Speaker

### Advocates Family Services Presents Project IMPACT Governmental Benefits Planning Overview: Are You Confused About Your Benefits?

**Date:** Thursday, November 9

**Time:** 6:30-7:30pm

**Zoom Information:**

**Join Zoom Meeting Link:** [PLEASE CLICK HERE](#)

**Meeting ID:** 981 3941 6792

**Passcode:** 981097

Join us for this informative virtual presentation as we welcome guest speaker Ingrid Farelli from the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission! Project IMPACT provides personal benefit counseling to people that get Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and/or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and are employed or looking for a job. This can help individuals with disabilities understand what may happen when they go to work or increase earnings. Project IMPACT and Work Without Limits provides this resource in: Essex, Barnstable, Bristol, Dukes, Nantucket, Norfolk, Plymouth, Suffolk Counties, Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden, Hampshire, Middlesex or Worcester Counties.

## Looking Ahead to December's Guest Speaker



Autism Care  
Partners

**Date:** Tuesday December 12, 2023

**Time:** 6:30-7:30pm

**Location:** Virtual

Please join [Autism Care Partners](#) for a virtual presentation Their clinicians will be discussing the utilization of Applied Behavior Analysis in addressing unexpected changes to daily routines with children. Zoom link can be found by clicking below.

[Guest Speaker: Autism Care Partners | Autism Alliance](#)

## Local Service Spotlight: Autism Care Partners



In anticipation of December's guest speaker, you may be wondering "Who is [Autism Care Partners?](#)" ACP has over 20 service centers across New England. They offer and incorporate applied behavior analysis (ABA), speech and occupational therapy, social work, and diagnostic evaluations to empower children and their families throughout all stages of development and growth. They currently have immediate openings in their Center-Based Program for children ages 2 through 6 years old! For more information about their programs or to tour the center, contact [Framingham Center](#) | [Autism Care Partners](#) or call 774-213-2361.



**AUTISM ALLIANCE**



**Autism**

*Welcoming*

**Fall Sensory-Friendly Hours Within Our  
Autism Welcoming<sup>SM</sup> Community**



When you have a family member with autism or other sensory sensitivities, even everyday outings can present challenges. Through our Autism Welcoming Initiative<sup>SM</sup>, businesses learn how to welcome individuals and families, creating a more inclusive community for all. Many of our Autism Welcoming<sup>SM</sup> certified businesses offer sensory friendly hours. Find a complete listing of these hours [here](#).

## Thank You Jam Time, Our Newest Certified Autism Welcoming Business



**Jam Time**  
Indoor Play and Enrichment Center  
86 Powder Mill Rd, Maynard MA  
251 West Central St Natick MA  
1245 Worcester St, Natick MA (Natick Mall)  
111 Lenox St, Norwood, MA

Autism Alliance is proud to announce that [Jam Time](#) has officially become Autism Welcoming certified. Jam Time offers climbing structures, playhouses, a bouncy house, play tables, kiddie gym equipment and infant + toddler soft play toys amongst many other activities unique to their center. In addition to offering public play times and hosting private parties, they also offer a variety of fun, stimulating, and creative classes that nourish your child's social and physical skills while providing hands-on playtime for children and caregivers. Enjoy class themes such as Roaring Dinosaurs, Bugs and Butterflies, Teddy Bear Picnic, Balls of Fun, Black and White, Splash Time, and Little Constructors. Lots of creative play while children work on their motor and social skills!

## Autism Welcoming Business Spotlight



# Sensory Friendly Play Time

Join us at Jam Time in  
Maynard, West Natick \*not the mall  
& Norwood for a Sensory  
Friendly hour of play!

The 2nd Thursday of each month starting

**Thursday, Nov. 9th**

**5:30 - 6:30pm**

**\$15/child**

Children that would benefit from a  
limited capacity visit are welcome!



Jam Time is a newly certified Autism Welcoming business with a dedicated monthly hour of play with a sensory-sensitive environment! We offer accommodations like dimmed lighting, limited capacity, quieter play space, and relaxed "shoe wearing policy". You can even wear pajamas for a late-night play session! Siblings welcome. Sensory kits available upon request.

Email [play@jamtime.com](mailto:play@jamtime.com) or call your local Jam Time for details!



## Just Announced:

**Sensory Friendly Hour at Jam Time**  
**2nd Thursday of each month**  
**First Date: November 9th | 5:30 - 6:30pm**

Jam Time in Maynard, West Natick (**not** Mall) & Norwood are proud to announce their new offering of Sensory-Friendly Hour! Lights will be dimmed. There will also be a reduced number of guests, offering a quieter sensory-sensitive environment. Additionally, they will offer a more relaxed "shoe wearing policy" for little ones that need to keep their shoes on during play. You can even wear pajamas for a late-night play session! Admission of \$15/child. Siblings welcome. Sensory kits available upon request.

To kick off this exciting new offering, The Autism Alliance is proud to offer free admission to the **first 10 attendees** at each location on the **FIRST** sensory-friendly hour on November 9th.

## Caregiver Workshops Happening Within Our Community

### Parent and Caregiver Workshops



[Parent and Caregiver Workshops \(view schedule\)](#) The Lurie Center for Autism invites parents, guardians and families to participate in our Parent and Caregiver Workshops. **All workshops are held virtually and open to the public.** Registration is Required. Reserve your spot by contacting us at [LurieCenter@partners.org](mailto:LurieCenter@partners.org) or 781-860-1700. Virtual meeting links will be emailed to all confirmed registrants prior to event day. A list of current workshops being offered, workshop descriptions, and scheduling details are [available here](#).

## Sensory-Friendly Seasonal Happenings



[Click here](#) for a helpful social story to describe the experience.

### [A Christmas Carol](#)

**December 17, 2023, | 1:00 pm**  
**The Hanover Theater, Worcester MA**

Celebrate the holiday season with this sensory-friendly performance of Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol. Accommodations of support will be provided, including a quiet area for individuals and families that need a break from the experience. Staff and volunteers will be on hand to help assist patrons' needs. Additionally, [The Hanover Theatre](#) will soften the most startling moments of the show. House lights are dimmed for the entirety of the performances and sounds are lower in volume and intensity.



[Click here](#) for a helpful *social story* to describe the experience.

### [The Nutcracker](#)

**November 24, 2023, | 1:00 pm**  
**The Commonwealth Ballet, Acton, MA**

Share the merriment of the holiday season as the [Commonwealth Ballet](#) presents a special sensory and family-friendly performance of The Nutcracker. This is a shortened version - mostly Act I and suitable for younger audiences, including children of all ages. Join the family party set before a magical tree and enjoy the laughter, magic, and wonder of this holiday classic, accompanied by the beloved Tchaikovsky score. It's the perfect start to the holiday season! This special Sensory and Family-Friendly performance is offered at a reduced price.



### [Holiday Pops Sensory-Friendly Concert](#) | **December 2, 2023, | 10:30 am** **Symphony Hall, Boston, MA**

The show is designed for all families with children or adults with an autism spectrum disorder or sensory sensitivities. This is a shortened 60-minute version of our standard Holiday Pops concert, with a flexible, non-judgmental environment. Modifications include relaxed house rules, reduced volume and lighting levels, extra space for movement, available noise-reduction headphones, designated quiet room and support spaces, modified food concessions, and credentialed autism therapist volunteers on site.



## Rain, Rain, Go Away....

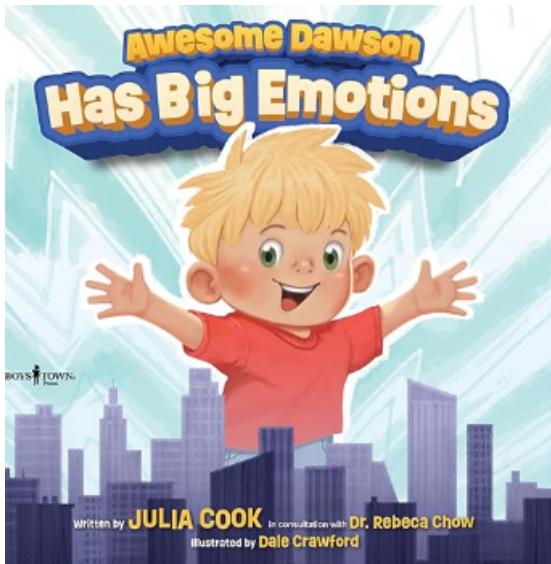
It certainly has been a rainy summer and fall. Did you know there have only been 5 rain-free weekends in Massachusetts since Memorial Day? Now, as we prepare for winter, we are faced with even more indoor time (sigh).

Finding ways to have fun at home with your child while simultaneously developing things like social, communication, language, self-regulation, and fine and gross motor skills can be a challenge for any parent.

Luckily, the internet has lots of indoor activities for kids with autism, and we've found 10 ideas to spark your creativity.

- [Self-Esteem Mirror Craft](#)
- [Junk Jam Music Game](#)
- [Make an Indoor Obstacle Course](#)
- [Create a Worry Jar](#)
- [Create a Themed Sensory Bin](#)
- [Bundled Q-Tip Autumn Tree](#)
- [Explore the Many Uses of Pool Noodles](#)
- [Leaf Hunt Activity: Gather and Sort](#)
- [Squishy Paint Autumn Tree](#)
- [Take a Virtual Field Trip](#)

## Book Corner



### Awesome Dawson Has Big Emotions by Julia Cook

Dawson experiences lots of strong emotions – anger, sadness, excitement, and worry. Each one feels gigantic. Can he, with the help of a caring teacher, find a way to harness those emotions in a safe, healthy way? Or will Dawson's biggest feelings be the boss of him?

Bestselling author Julia Cook and renowned play therapist Dr. Rebeca Chow team up in this colorful, empowering story about how to stop emotions from spinning out of control. A special page written by Dr. Chow, who is a clinical counselor and registered play therapist, offers practical strategies parents and educators can use to help children manage their big emotions.

Available from [Amazon](#)

## Recipe Corner



Recipe Submittal from Christy:  
Yaya's Pastitio

1/2 lb macaroni(elbow pasta) cooked & drained  
1/2 lb feta cheese, crumbled  
Grated Parmesan cheese  
3-4 eggs, well beaten  
1 cup milk  
1 lb butter  
Bread crumbs

\*Grease bottom of 9x13 pan with butter & sprinkle with some of the bread crumbs.  
\*Combine macaroni with the feta cheese & half the butter(melted) \*place in dish and sprinkle top with bread crumbs.  
\*Add milk to well beaten eggs, carefully pour over macaroni.  
\*Sprinkle top with grated Parmesan & drizzle with remaining melted butter.  
\*Bake in hot oven 350\* until top is lightly brown and butter is sizzling. About 25 minutes.



Did you miss seeing one of our featured guest speakers? If so, click on the link and you will see the recordings on the Autism Alliance of MetroWest YouTube Channel.

YouTube

*Please submit requests for accommodations, including ASL interpreters, at least 2 weeks prior to the event date to [AutismAlliance@advocates.org](mailto:AutismAlliance@advocates.org) or call (508) 652-9900*

## Connect With Us



[www.AutismAlliance.org](http://www.AutismAlliance.org) | (508) 652-9900 | [AutismAlliance@Advocates.org](mailto:AutismAlliance@Advocates.org)  
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