



a program of  Advocates



Autism Alliance Newsletter | February 2024

## Building an Autism Welcoming Community

### Autism Welcoming Opportunity for Dentists

For people with autism or other sensory sensitivities and their families, even everyday outings can present challenges. The Autism Alliance, a program of Advocates, trains businesses on how to welcome individuals and families by making small but impactful accommodations to their locations.



In partnership with MassHealth, and thanks to funding from the Department of Developmental Services, **Autism Welcoming certification is now available free of charge for dental practices in Massachusetts.**

Interested in learning more? [Join us for an informational webinar](#) to learn about becoming a certified Autism Welcoming dental practice.

[Learn More](#)

### Autism Welcoming in the News

The MetroWest Daily News recently spotlighted a few of our wonderful Autism Welcoming business partners. [Read on](#) to learn how they're helping to build a more inclusive community for all.

## February Vacation Programs

## Little Kids Slime & Sensory Play hour

February 20 | 9:30-10:30am  
Learning Express, Natick Mall

### Ages 12 and Under

*NEW* Learning Express Private February Vacation event. Kids 12 and under are invited join us for a Slime & Sensory Play hour at Learning Express Natick Mall. This sensory hour will consist of slime creating and more! Come choose your color of slime, some glitter, magic and beads to mix in for a full slime sensory experience at the Slime Bar. Spaces are limited.



[Apply Here](#)

## Just for Teens - Dave and Busters Party

February 20 | 11:30am-1:30pm  
Natick Mall

### Ages 13-19

Let's meet new friends and have some fun at Dave and Buster's, with unlimited video game play and a fun buffet lunch in our private dining room. This event will have a limited number of slots available. We will let you know if you have successfully registered and received a slot. No drop-offs, adult caregiver must stay with teen guests.



[Apply Here](#)

## Little Kids JamTime & Build-A-Bear Party

February 21 | 8:30-10am  
Jam Time, Natick Mall

### Ages 8 and under

We will have the entire JamTime premiere indoor playcenter just for us, for an unforgettable fun-filled party! We will break into small groups and walk over to Build-A-Bear to meet our new bears. This event is sensory-friendly, and we have added several accommodations to support successful and positive experience for your child including limited waiting times, lowered lights, no music, and an event schedule. This program has 25 children's slots, apply at the link.



[Apply Here](#)

## **Tween Build-A-Bear Sensory-Friendly Event**

February 21 | 10-11am  
Build-A-Bear, Natick Mall

### **Ages 9-12**

We will have entire Build-A-Bear store just for us, for an unforgettable fun-filled party! Lowered lighting, no music, and a visual schedule to help with individualized support and success. You will receive notification if you receive a slot. We will have a waiting list. This program is designed especially for those that benefit from small groups and sensory-friendly accommodations.



[Apply Here](#)

## **Teen/Young Adult Yoga and Tibetan Singing Bowls**

February 22 | 10:30-11:30am  
Natick Mall

### **Ages 13-21**

Meet us at "The Vibe" for a beginner's level yoga class to relax the mind and body including gentle stretching and breathwork. We will also practice with a sound bath using the Tibetan Singing Bowls. Those that enjoy yoga or would like to be introduced are welcome to register. Spaces are limited.



[Apply Here](#)

*A special thank you to the Doug Flutie Jr. Foundation for Autism for your ongoing support and sponsorship of our vacation events.*



**Let's Build a Village  
Mom's In-Person Programs at the Natick Mall**



**NEW PROGRAM**

**Mom's Walking Group**

Thursday Morning

**February 1 & 8 | 9:30-10:30am**

Natick Mall, Vibe

Join us for conversation, connection, and cardio! **Children welcome!**

[More Information](#)



**NEW PROGRAM**

**Mom's Coffee & Jewelry Making**

Sunday Morning

**February 11 | 9:00-11:00am**

Natick Mall, Vibe

Join us for conversation, coffee and crafts! **Children welcome!**

[More Information](#)



**PROGRAMS BEGINNING IN MARCH**

**NEW PROGRAM**

**Outdoor Adventure Program**

Friday Afternoon

**March 8 - April 12 | 4:30-6:30pm**

YMCA | Hopkinton

Ages 12-17 are welcome to register for this our new outdoor adventure program in partnership with the YMCA. This is open to all abilities.

[Apply Here](#)





## WINTER SESSION

### Virtual After School Zoo Club

Friday Afternoon

March 8 - April 26 | 4:00-4:30pm

Virtual

Ages 5-12 are welcome to register for this our 8 week after-school zoo club program featuring Diana from the Roger William Zoo.

Register Today



## March & April Guest Speaker Cathy Boyle | Autism Housing Pathways

### Housing 101 "Thinking about housing"

March 19th, 2024

6:30pm-8:00pm

This presentation is "Housing 101" for parents. "Thinking about housing" introduces families to the range of public funds available to pay for housing and supportive services (including for those without DDS supports).

Learn More

### Applying for housing for people with disabilities in Massachusetts

April 30th, 2024

6:30pm -8:00pm

This presentation walks families and professionals through the range of affordable and subsidized housing options available to people with disabilities in Massachusetts. A strategy for completing a basic set of applications and tracking them over time is presented.

Learn More

### Did you miss seeing one of our guest speakers?

You can find the recordings on the [Autism Alliance YouTube Channel](#).



## Support Groups

### Just for Dads Support Group

First Wednesday of Every Month

**Next Date: February 7 | 7:00-8:30pm**

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



### Autism Support Group for Parents of Children Aged 10 and Under

First Wednesday of Every Month

**Next Date: February 7 | 12:00-1:00pm**

Location: Virtual | Drop-in's welcome



### Portuguese Speaking Support Group

Fourth Monday of Every Month

**Next Date: February 26 | 6:30-8:30pm**

Location: Virtual | Drop-in's welcome



### Mom's Self-Care Support Group

Third Thursday of Every Month

**Next Date: February 15 | 12:00-1pm**

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



## Advocates Launches Respite Options Program

At Advocates, we value the important work family caregivers do to support their loved ones. We also recognize the challenges that come along with being a caregiver.

Thanks to funding from the Executive Office of Health and Human Services Respite Innovations Grant, we launched our new **Respite Options program**, which provides families and other caregivers with temporary relief from the demands of caregiving. Daytime and overnight respite opportunities are available and provide safe and interactive environment.



[Learn More](#)

## Grants Available for Family Caregivers

Are you or someone you know caring for a loved one with an intellectual or developmental disability at home? Apply for a grant from the Fred Gaspari Fund for Families! You could receive up to \$500 to help care for your loved one. [Applications are open](#) through February 15.



[Apply Now](#)

## Autism Connections 33rd Annual Autism Conference A Whole Life: The Empowered Journey

Autism Connections, a program of Pathlight, is holding the 33rd Annual Autism Conference in Springfield MA on April 10. The day-long educational conference brings together families, caregivers, autistic individuals, agency and education professionals, sponsors and exhibitors to build knowledge, inspire and make meaningful connections. You can find out more [Here](#).

33<sup>rd</sup> ANNUAL  
AUTISM CONNECTIONS  
AUTISM  
CONFERENCE  
APRIL 10, 2024





# Autism Welcoming

Advocates | Autism Alliance

When you have a family member with autism or other sensory sensitivities, even everyday outings can present challenges. Autism Welcoming<sup>SM</sup>, businesses take extra steps to create an accepting and inclusive environment by educating staff and making simple but impactful accommodations to their locations.

Looking for sensory-friendly fun this winter? [Check out offerings at our certified Autism Welcoming businesses.](#)

## Open Door Theater's upcoming production of *The Wizard of Oz.*

Open Door's multicultural cast will present **7 performances March 15-24, 2024**, at the Dragonfly Theater, R.J. Grey Jr. HS, 16 Charter Road, Acton, MA 01720. All performances are relaxed/sensory friendly and feature ASL interpretation and open captioning. There will be audio-described performances on the second weekend. Tickets are \$15. Discounted tickets for EBT, WIC and ConnectorCare Cardholders.

[Tickets on sale now.](#)



## Connect With Us



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

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Donate

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