



AUTISM ALLIANCE OF MICHIGAN PRESENTS

MiNavigator

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www.AAoMI.org

Help. Hope. Answers. Today



Kids with "Ausomizm"

Contributed by Tammy Morris, Chief Program Officer, AAoM

Do you recognize this face? CJ has been the face of several generously donated freeway billboards given to AAoM to spread awareness over the past year. A little background on CJ and his awesome family is necessary to introduce this edition's theme.

Pick your spelling, the terms 'awesomism'/'ausomism' have popped up in the autism community over the past several years. Not exclusively used in reference to autism, this can be a painful concept for families facing significant challenges or going through a crisis. However, it has been adopted by some to describe their children in an effort to celebrate the small things that are either not experienced at all, or possibly taken for granted, with neurotypical children. Autism families share a great appreciation for a smile, a hug or cuddle, beautiful innocence, milestones, special skills and keen interests. This concept extends to autism caregivers who celebrate their ninja parenting skills and become stronger advocates, drive change for others even beyond their own children, and in many cases develop skills and passions that can drive a parent to a career change or direction that one would have never experienced had it not been for their child's autism diagnosis.

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“Ausomizm” was first used around the Autism Alliance of Michigan by one particular autism super dad and volunteer, Chris, pictured below with his family and wearing an ‘ausomizm’ t-shirt. Chris was a car guy with intentional, brilliant relationships and experiences shared with both of his children. For CJ, that translated into a fascination with car keys, makes and models. We don’t know another human who could collect everyone’s car keys in a busy church congregation and then return the correct keys to everyone at the end of service! Chris passed away last summer, but he left us at AAoM and his beautiful family with many things, including the spirit of ‘ausomizm’ that is carrying them through their journey.



Ready To Go Chalk Wild?

When Hien Ho was about 10 years old, he and his father were watching kids skateboarding in a park. Hien noticed the beautiful art drawn on some canvas backpacks the kids were wearing, but he also noticed that they had used permanent markers. He turned to his father and said, “Dad, wouldn’t it be cool if they could draw on their backpacks and erase what they’d drawn to create new art whenever they want?” His father thought it was a great idea. When they got home, they searched online to see if an erasable backpack existed. They could find none.

Hien loves Pokemon and Dragons, so he draws a Pokemon character on his backpack every few days to show it off to his friends at school. About a year ago, Hien and his father began hearing from other parents with children on the autism spectrum that were discovering calmness and happiness while doodling and personalizing their bags.

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Hien and his father's new mission is to bring this "Portable Art Therapy and Art Gallery" backpack to more kids on the autism spectrum to enhance their creativity and uniqueness and also to experience the therapeutic benefits of art. The markers are non-toxic and washable, though it is recommended to supervise children while they are engrossed in drawing and coloring their backpacks.



www.chalkwild.com

Happy to be an Aspie



Jillian is a 13-year old 8th grader with Aspergers from Commerce Township. She loves playing Minecraft on her iPad. She also volunteers 2-3 days a week, which helps with her social skills. Jillian has decided to become a vegan, because of her great love for animals and the environment. She also enjoys working out daily, which she knows helps to decrease stereotypical behaviors, hyperactivity and aggression. Jillian is making A's and B's. Her self esteem has improved tremendously since she has come to realize that she can do anything she puts her mind to do, even if it's not her favorite thing.

Happy to be an Aspie is a children's book written by mother/daughter team, Julia and Jillian Dunbar of Michigan. Jillian describes her experiences with autism while Julia describes the trials of trying to get a proper diagnosis for her daughter. This book is available on Amazon and Barnes & Noble, and is a great local resource.

Please share your stories of accomplishment, and any needs for which we can assist you or your family, with our MiNavigator team at navigator@aaomi.org.





DECEMBER AT A GLANCE

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 Time for Transition (Lansing)
2 Caring Santa (Ann Arbor)	3 ESDM Advanced Training (Ann Arbor) ASK Holiday Party (Grand Rapids)	4 Mindfulness Workshop (Clinton Township)	5 Macomb ISD IEP Workshop Series (Clinton Township)	6 Accessible Learning Conference (East Lansing) Management of Complex Feeding Issues (Taylor)	7 Conflict Management in Special Education (Bloomfield Hills) Christmas Shopping (Grand Rapids)	8 Drum Away Your Anxiety (Ferndale)
9 Rosie Revere, Engineer; Iggy Peck, Architect; and Ada Twist, Scientist (East Lansing)	10 GOGO Christmas Party (Jackson) 26th Parenting Awareness Michigan Conference (East Lansing)	11 Functional Behavior Assessment (Berrien Springs)	12 Moving Forward with LAMP (Cadillac)	13 AS-MSD Holiday Party (Sterling Heights) Arts for All Holiday Open House (Traverse City)	14 The Fowler Center Weekend Respite Camps All Ages (Mayville)	15 Kalamazoo Valley Museum Sensory Saturdays (Kalamazoo)
16 Abrams Planetarium Sensory friendly show (East Lansing)	17 SF Skate Nights-Sensory Santa (Muskegon)	18 2018-2019 Talk & Tour Career Series Careers in Rehabilitation & Therapy (Grand Rapids)	19 Cookie Decorating and Dinner (Muskegon)	20 How Michigan Works! Works for You at MWSE! (Howell)	21 Interview to Impress (Brighton)	22 Celebration Cinema Sensory Showtimes (Grand Rapids, Portage, Benton Harbor, Mt. Pleasant, Lansing, Muskegon)
23 Rejoicing Spirits -no-shush worship service (Birmingham)			26 Oaks Victory Village Outreach (Monroe)	27 The Fowler Center Winter Camp (Mayville)	28 Almost New Year's - Adaptive Recreation (Waterford)	29 Celebration Cinema Sensory Showtimes (Grand Rapids, Portage, Benton Harbor, Mt. Pleasant, Lansing, Muskegon)

** For more information on any of these events, please contact the MiNavigator line at 877-463-2266.



NAVIGATING AUTISM TODAY

Connect with a navigator specialist who is assigned to your family, for life, from the very first call.

877.463.2266 | Navigator@aaomi.org | www.AAoMI.org

