



AUTISM ALLIANCE OF MICHIGAN PRESENTS

# MiNavigator

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MiNavigator Newsletter Issue 31

Presented by Autism Alliance of Michigan  
[www.AAoMI.org](http://www.AAoMI.org)

Help. Hope. Answers. Today



## Just for Me

*Contributed by Mireya Martinez - Creator, Just for Me Social Club*

When my daughter, Bianca, was younger it felt as though only families who were wealthy were able to provide for all of the needs of their children with autism, and families like mine simply were not. Expensive therapies, special diets, special schools, you name it, were all unobtainable for me and my girls. I have always been a person, however, who takes the time and effort to count blessings.

In a world of haves and have-nots, most would categorize me as a “have-not”. I have known what it means to be poor. I worked hard, obtained college degrees and started on a new path in a career working for the Federal Government. I then found myself divorced, however, and raising two girls on my own, one of which with special needs. Once again, I learned how difficult it was for our family to feel financially secure. I became a single mother who, more often than not, worried about how we would pay for groceries.

cont.





But I have blessings; I now have two grown daughters who love me and love one another fiercely. My daughter, who is on the spectrum, has benefited from the protection, influence and joy she has had in large part due to her younger sister who is not on the autism spectrum. We have formed strong bonds with school, clinical and public



agency staff, and we are thankful that they want to help. As I transitioned from my previous line of work to working in the disability field, I have had access to expert opinions and resources that I would not have had otherwise.

Yet, with a transition-age child aging out of the public school system, we can't help but feel like "have-nots" given the options available for a young woman in Bianca's situation. I've done the work by planning for the elusive "transition" for several years with staff, touring the day and vocational programs, participating in the person-centered planning meetings with Bianca as well as listening and heeding to her wishes. The fact remains, however, that the lists of "things to do" for someone like Bianca are limited; so we decided to create our own.

To support this effort, I am proud to launch the **Just For Me social club**. The idea is to help people with autism prepare and get ready for the rest of their lives as well as offer a network and valuable friendships along the way.

Hosted at the **Ford Resource & Engagement Center, 2826 Bagley St. Detroit.**

Remaining 2019 Meetings **4:00-7:00 p.m.** on: **May 18, June 22, July 13, August 24, September 28, October 26, November 16, December 21.**

RSVP: **313.720.9700**







## Mom to Mom Insights:

*This month we asked some of our AAoM staff and board members, who are honored to be mothers to individuals with disabilities, to share a tip with other moms. It takes a village, so enjoy the benefit of these perspectives and feel free to share yours at [navigator@aaomi.org](mailto:navigator@aaomi.org).*

Involve your family as much as possible. It's easy to alienate your spouse and other siblings unintentionally when you are laser focused on trying to "fix" everything. Seek out parent support groups or friends who are in similar situations. It's good to bounce ideas off of one another and get information on programs, doctors, and techniques. Plus, it feels good to know you are not alone. Don't be ashamed of your family! Go out and live your life. Don't skip going out to eat or traveling because it might be more difficult. Parents who own their issues and deal with them confidently are people that should be admired!

Amy, AAoM Board Member

Your child is not broken like a toy. They are more than the sum of their parts or their disability; so celebrate their uniqueness, teach them through experience and bring them into the community early and often.

Joanna, AAoM Community Resource Specialist

Educate yourself about your kid's needs, but don't forget to also listen to them. Even non-verbal kids have ways to communicate and let you know when they are not comfortable with the interventions they are receiving. And don't forget about fun! It is just as important as therapy and school.

Emma, AAoM Resource Navigator

Teach your brain that there is always something to find joy and gratitude for each day, and start intentionally looking for those things. Some days it is easier than others, and your 'moment' may just be that you all have ten fingers and toes and are breathing in and out. However, training myself to intentionally find and appreciate things in a day reminds me that even though I may feel like I am drowning, I still have the strength to keep my head above water, breathe in and out, and if nothing else I am grateful for that strength.

Trisha, AAoM Behavioral Consultant

cont.







### TO DO:

1. Begin or end every stressful day with a hot tub soak.
2. Don't let yourself go, wash your face and put on some makeup!
3. Call a friend and laugh about nothing!
4. Help another ASD mom with something you have already solved- this allows you a real 'feel good' moment for yourself too.
5. Read a book outside of your usual genre.
6. Ask your partner to do something special with your ASD child while you have time alone or spend it with your other children.
7. Remember nothing is the end of the world if the mom is still in it!

Ginny, Upbound at Work Professional Coach

Celebrate the small achievements!

Jill, AAoM Clinical Specialist

### IF YOUR CHILD IS HAVING A MELTDOWN OR ACTING OUT IN PUBLIC, REMEMBER THREE THINGS:

- 1) People around will take their cue on how to respond from you. Try not to lose it. If you remain calm and measured, others will generally act in kind.
- 2) Try to ignore the judgemental faces of onlookers. I would look so deeply at my son, that I would literally blur those faces out. I try to focus on how much I love him and to empathize with what he must be feeling.
- 3) Try to find the humor in things. Some of the most embarrassing episodes make for hilarious stories.

Michelle, AAoM Board Member

Find a support group (online, through your special department, or through an autism organization) I needed to talk to my therapist, but also to other mothers who knew the community and school system, who understood the isolation parents of kids on the spectrum can experience, and who were as determined as I was to advocate for their child and give her the best opportunities possible.

Peggy, AAoM Supporter and Board Spouse

Never assume. I waste needless energy worrying about how my daughter will handle new challenges (puberty, new school etc...) and so far she has always handled things much better than my nervous expectations. So I just plan the best I can for transitions and accept that I can't control the world. Enjoy the moment. Best moment this week was watching my daughter in superhero cape and mask pretending to fly across the lawn, her energy and laughter were infectious and bring me joy every time the memory tickles my mind.

Wendy, AAoM Supporter and Board Spouse







## Authentic Voices:

Several adults with ASD have added their thoughts with messages to their own mothers, others on their journey or those raising and supporting people with ASD.

The best way to help is to never give up on trying to get the best doctors, support, and treatment for your child, and for yourself too! Autism can be a tough battle, but the rewards are worth it!

Katie

A person with autism needs to develop their skills and enjoy life as it comes to them. We want to be great, for you and for us.

Ali

Please try to understand that when I "reject" your hugs and kisses and rough, physical play, I am not rejecting you or trying to be difficult/naughty. I have sensory problems and all of the touching hurts, so I need to receive and give affection in a different way. For me, I try to show my affection by being good and giving and doing anything you want when you want, as long as it makes logical sense to me. Sometimes I can handle a hug if I am asked and know it's coming. Warm, kind words and praise when deserved have a hug-like effect for me. And lastly, please know that I want to be able to receive and give hugs and kisses like everyone else and feel very sad and guilty that I cannot, but hope that whatever I can find and do as a replacement will be enough and that you won't hold it against me.

Love, Your Aspie Daughter





## MAY AT A GLANCE

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			<b>1</b> <a href="#">Moving Forward with LAMP (Grand Rapids)</a>  <a href="#">Early On: Making a Plan (Bad Axe)</a>	<b>2</b> <a href="#">Learn About: Goals &amp; Objectives (Stanton)</a>	<b>3</b> <a href="#">Charity Auction at The Waterfront (Wyandotte)</a>  <a href="#">2019 Pediatric Symposium (Saginaw)</a>	<b>4</b> <a href="#">SF Saturday at Greenfield Village (Dearborn)</a>  <a href="#">LEAD Lansing (East Lansing)</a>
<b>5</b> <a href="#">ASK Walk for Autism (Grand Rapids)</a>  <a href="#">LEAD Kalamazoo (East Lansing)</a>	<b>6</b> <a href="#">American Sign Language Class (Troy)</a>  <a href="#">iCan Bike (Midland)</a>	<b>7</b> <a href="#">Language Acquisition through Motor Planning (Holland)</a>  <a href="#">Self Determination Training (Sterling Heights)</a>	<b>8</b> <a href="#">Moving Forward with LAMP (Holland)</a>  <a href="#">Rethinking Guardianship: Facilitating Lifelong Self Determination (Roscommon)</a>	<b>9</b> <a href="#">IEPs and Communication Skills (Ann Arbor)</a>  <a href="#">2019 Life without Limits through AT Conference &amp; Expo (Dearborn)</a>	<b>10</b> <a href="#">WRAP Training (Auburn Hills)</a>	<b>11</b> <a href="#">Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat SF (Midland)</a>  <a href="#">Celebration Cinema Sensory Showtimes (Multiple locations)</a>
<b>12</b> HAPPY <i>Mother's Day</i>	<b>13</b> <a href="#">American Sign Language Class (Troy)</a>	<b>14</b> <a href="#">Support Services, Accommodations and Modifications (Stanton)</a>  <a href="#">For The Love of Safety-What are my Rights? (Lansing)</a>	<b>15</b> <a href="#">Mental Health &amp; Aging Conference (East Lansing)</a>  <a href="#">Service vs. Emotional Support Animals, What's the difference? (Grand Haven)</a>	<b>16</b> <a href="#">More Than Checking a Box: Assistive Technology in the IEP (Greenville)</a>  <a href="#">Indepen-Dance (Marquette)</a>	<b>17</b> <a href="#">GO FAR Friday Night Parties (Birmingham)</a>	<b>18</b> <a href="#">ABA Training for Parents of Younger Children (2-8 yrs.) (Rochester)</a>  <a href="#">SENSEational Story Time (Bloomfield Hills)</a>
<b>19</b> <a href="#">Abrams Planetarium SF show (East Lansing)</a>  <a href="#">LEAD Detroit (East Lansing)</a>	<b>20</b> <a href="#">Nutrition / Cooking Class (Marquette)</a>	<b>21</b> <a href="#">Youth Mental Health First Aid (Lansing)</a>	<b>22</b> <a href="#">NAMI Michigan Annual Conference (Acme)</a>	<b>23</b> <a href="#">SOMIfit (St. Clair Shores)</a>	<b>24</b> <a href="#">Michigan Activity Pass (MAP) program kick off (Multiple locations)</a>	<b>25</b> <a href="#">Ann Arbor Symphony! "Sensory Friendly Saturday" (Ann Arbor)</a>
<b>26</b> <a href="#">SF Junie B. Jones (Lansing)</a>	<b>27</b>  HAPPY MEMORIAL DAY	<b>28</b> <a href="#">Nutrition / Cooking Class (Sault Ste. Marie)</a>	<b>29</b> <a href="#">Extended School Year (St. Joseph)</a>	<b>30</b> <a href="#">2019 State Summer Games (Mount Pleasant)</a>	<b>31</b> <a href="#">5th Annual Michigan Peer Conference (Lansing)</a>	

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

## WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

Provide Help, Hope, and Answers Today with Autism Alliance of Michigan



- **Create** an Autism Hero Walk Team
- **Hold** a Jeans Day, Funny Sock Day, College Shirt Day, Etc.
- **Participate** in Change for Autism, collecting coins at your business for AAoM

- **Host** AAoM for a Lunch and Learn session to increase Autism Awareness in the workplace
- **Volunteer** as a team at an AAoM event
- **Nominate** a Young Professional on your team for AAoM's Young Professionals Board

