

AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH



It's April...Autism Awareness Month.

This month has always been the busiest for AAoM, as we would normally be preparing for our annual gala. Like 2020, we decided to move the event to September 11th and while the additional time for planning is welcome, it feels a little strange to not have the opportunity to celebrate in our traditional way. With COVID, few of us are motivated to celebrate anyway.

This pandemic has changed our lives, and those of our families in dramatic ways. We hear every day about the challenges they are facing: remote learning demands competing with work schedules, disrupted and reduced treatment programs, deteriorating behavior and loss of skills. Through the past year of one crisis after another, we have been here for the community. Our navigators stand ready to take calls and guide families to the help they need. As we see our state reopening, our community inclusion efforts become even more important. So, while we aren't celebrating our amazing families in a formal way, it is still Autism Awareness month and we will continue education efforts, to raise awareness and advocate for inclusion for all now, and every year.

Sincerely,



Colleen Allen, Ph.D.

President & CEO, Autism Alliance of Michigan

Our generous individual, government, corporate and foundation donors provide a consistent source of funding, or “fuel,” to help AAoM fulfill our mission for the autism community in Michigan. They make it possible for us to create, grow and maintain our critical services and build positive, lasting change.

We couldn't do what we do without these funders!

Navigation

Since 2014, AAoM MiNavigator is a dynamic navigation case management program for caregivers, professionals and community members offered free of charge across the state of Michigan. Navigators provide online resources and professional consultation to guide families through issues - birth to lifespan - related to diagnosis, treatment, support, education and health care for individuals with autism and their families. Navigators work directly with families navigating the autism roadmaps that are often confusing to families and cause delays to needed diagnosis and important treatments. Over 6,000 families statewide have worked with our specialists to find resolution to their issues.

A generous grant from the **Michigan Department of Health and Human Services** makes it possible for AAoM to provide navigation services to families all across the state.



Employment

AAoM's innovative employment program features a highly skilled multidisciplinary team of experts from autism and related fields. AAoM partnered with manufacturers to build the first disability employment model within the automotive industry, but that has also been proven to be effective across a wide range of industries and jobs.

AAoM boasts a retention rate that exceeds 95% through maintaining a dual customer model with the employer and job seeker and from the tremendous amount of research, job development and frontloading employer training offered. Exceeding 600 job seekers, many with multiple college degrees, AAoM has broken the ceiling on disability jobs codes, salary ranges and demonstration of advanced technical skills within a competitive workforce.

AAoM transitions employees to natural and sustainable supports in the work environment with strategic fading of staff and external supports, without an interruption in the workday. AAoM's employment program also supports companies hiring or learning to hire individuals with disabilities, state vocational agencies and job seekers across the state of Michigan.

The **Richard and Jane Manoogian Foundation** and the **DeRoy Testamentary Foundation** awarded AAoM generous grants to support our employment program. Additionally, we received a grant from the **Rotary Charities of Traverse City** for employment activities in the Traverse City region.

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In late 2020, AAoM set an ambitious ten-year “moonshot” goal to place 101,000 Michigan adults on the autism spectrum into jobs. Thanks to a grant from **DTE Energy**, AAoM is able to start the process to make this goal a reality.



RICHARD AND JANE
MANOOGIAN
FOUNDATION



Safety/GPS

AAoM’s Michigan Autism Safety Training (MAST) program provides critical training and education opportunities to first responders, schools and community mental health agencies. Awareness, risk and safety trainings brings to light the behaviors of a person affected by autism and how to effectively prepare and respond to them in multiple situations.

This increases their understanding and ability to manage interactions with individuals with autism as well as a means of circumventing risk situations. It also allows AAoM to provide additional professional consultation and support to these community institutions.



We are grateful to **Enbridge** for their generous support of this program for our families all across Michigan. As part of AAoM’s comprehensive safety program, Global Positioning Devices (GPS) are offered free of charge for children with autism who tend to wander into danger and away from the safety of their home and caregivers.

The GPS program offers families across the state a GPS device and a one-year service subscription at no cost. To date AAoM has awarded nearly 300 families with life-saving GPS devices and the program typically receives over 100 applications per year.

This program is 100% funded through philanthropic donations, including the generous support of the University of Michigan Greek Life “Winterfest” event, Kalamazoo Community Foundation, Community Foundation of St. Clair County, Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation and PhRMA.



Community Education and Outreach

AAoM offers training opportunities to diverse audiences to keep individuals with autism safe, supported and welcomed across the community through programs such as the following:

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START

AAoM seeks to increase the rate of early autism screenings and referrals for intervention services in Michigan through the START program: a multi-pronged education effort focusing on those who have the most interaction with a young child: clinicians, educators and families.

Additionally, AAoM provides intensive caregiver bootcamp training sessions designed to prepare parents, grandparents and caregivers for the range of the issues they are likely to encounter raising or caring for a child with autism, and provide them resources and a network of other parents to continue their individual learning.

We are grateful to the **Karen Colina Wilson Foundation** for their funding of this important program.

Watch Me Grow

With a goal of increasing understanding and identification of developmental milestones from birth to five years of age, this training program teaches families and community service providers to identify red flags for autism spectrum disorder and other developmental disabilities.

Trainings also identify resources available for high quality early intervention services which can truly change a child's developmental trajectory and improve outcomes for children, families and communities.

We are grateful to **The Carls Foundation** for their significant funding of this important program.

THE CARLS FOUNDATION

Transition Bootcamps

Navigating services and resources for transitional students with autism can be extremely complicated and limited for families.

Thanks to a grant from the **Herrick Foundation**, AAoM is able to provide bootcamp workshops for older students and their families to increase access to these resources as they transition into adulthood.



Parent Conference

AAoM's 2021 Navigating Autism Today Virtual Conference, on March 19, brought together hundreds of parents/caregivers to network, connect to professionals and acquire critical information to address the day-to-day challenges families face with a loved one living with autism.

We are extremely thankful to once again have the support of the **Children's Foundation** as our Presenting Sponsor.



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MICHIGAN HEALTH ENDOWMENT FUND

Psychiatric Support

AAoM was awarded a grant in 2020 by the **Michigan Health Endowment Fund** to support the creation of a model of care to improve outcomes for children with ASD or a related disability who are brought to Bronson Hospital in Kalamazoo with a psychiatric crisis.



Community Outreach

We are deeply grateful to our donor, **Karen Colina Wilson Smithbauer**, who continues to provide transformative support of our community outreach program efforts statewide

Together We Find A Way...

During the month of April we recognize families and individuals who have a connection to Autism. With this recognition we would like to thank our brave families who entrust the Autism Alliance of Michigan navigator team to be their compass of hope.

Navigator for Life (Anonymous):

I'd been navigating the autism world for seven years when I first contacted the Autism Alliance of Michigan. I have two sons on the spectrum, 7 and 10. My first contact at AAoM was Jennifer. I called with a random question about donations and it turned into receiving a level of guidance I hadn't expected! Throughout the next three months Jennifer would help me to navigate services through my insurance company and start the process of applying for additional benefits and resources I didn't know were available to me, not to mention a connection with a doctor who is actively trying to help treat PICA. Having been part of the ABA experience for seven years and then finding out that Jennifer was a Behavior Analyst, I was thrilled to have such an experienced advocate working alongside me! Jennifer and AAoM have exceeded my expectations with support and resourcefulness.

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Kimberly Robinson & Family:

The journey for my family and most of all for my grandson has been set on the right path with the kind and generous help of the Autism Alliance of Michigan and for that we are sincerely appreciative to this group of people and to Dennis our Navigating Specialist. His knowledge, care, and understanding brought us to a far better place with our eyes open to a solid plan of care for my grandson's Autism. I have to say above all of these things I have shared. The most encouraging safety net is that we can call anytime for help, or a motivational word. If we hit another roadblock, the Autism Alliance of Michigan will knock the roadblock down. The Autism Alliance of Michigan will help all people on this journey fulfill a better way of life for their loved one.

Joshua Waddles:

Kim from Autism Alliance is a lifesaver! I had absolutely no idea what to do. I was freaking out because Medicaid never sent me my renewal papers and DHS doesn't answer their phones. I texted Kim and she called them for me, somehow managed to get a person on the phone, and found out that they're not requiring renewal this year because of Covid. She also figured out some weird issue with my account on the DHS website that confused me very much. I'm currently talking to a psychiatrist every week after the recommendation she gave me and it's helping a lot.

Forever Grateful (Anonymous):

November 2020, my daughter was diagnosed with level 1 Autism. Like most parents, I experienced every emotion possible. I was in denial, and had no clue as to what was ahead of me. Doctors explained that ABA therapy would be beneficial. After contacting the recommended facility for ABA therapy, I was denied services multiple times. I was told her case of Autism was not severe enough. I was extremely disappointed and had become discouraged. I was determined to get my daughter the necessary help she needed. I reached out to her speech therapist, I explained the situation and she recommended Autism Alliance of Michigan. I contacted the company, and spoke with Dennis. After just 5 minutes on the phone I felt like my prayers had been answered. Dennis, Chaunta, and Joanna were extremely helpful, compassionate, dedicated, and determined to get my daughter the help she needed. They went above and beyond. I am forever grateful, and overwhelmed with gratitude to have met a group of great people! Thank you all so much!

Exceeding Expectations (Anonymous):

I want to take the opportunity to thank Jennifer so much for the time spent with me. It shows indeed the humanity and the professionalism in helping the community for a great and a noble cause.

SAVE THE DATE

AutismAlliance of Michigan

AUTISM HERO WALK

SUNDAY JULY 25, 2021

900 WALKERS WILL GAIN ACCESS TO THE DETROIT ZOO

REMAINING FUNDRAISERS WILL RECEIVE A ZOO TICKET VOUCHER

PRESENTED BY DTE Foundation



Free Virtual

CAREGIVER BOOTCAMP

Funded by the Karen Colina Wilson Foundation, presented to the Downriver Community

To register visit aomi.org/trainings

ALL DAY BOOTCAMP
8:00 AM - 4:00 PM
May 1, 2021

EVENING SERIES
4:00 PM - 6:00 PM
June 1, 2021
June 3, 2021
June 8, 2021
June 10, 2021

MORNING SERIES
10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
July 6, 2021
July 8, 2021
July 13, 2021
July 15, 2021



LEARN MORE! FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT AOMI.ORG OR CALL 877.463.2266



Upbound at Work, a fully-integrated program within the Autism Alliance of Michigan, leads and supports disability-employment initiatives throughout the State of Michigan. Contact Upbound at Work to receive additional information.

Website: <https://autismallianceofmichigan.org/employee-pre-assessment/>

Website: <https://upboundatwork.com/>

Email: upbound@aaomi.org. **Phone:** 248.590.2773

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Date	Event
April 11 – June 7	Smartphone Photography Spring 2021
April 12	Building Parent Leadership Skills In Early Childhood
April 13 – June 1	Gaming Club Spring 2021
April 13 – June 1	Yoga Spring 2021
April 14 – June 2	Uniquely Me Women on the Spectrum Connect Spring 2021
April 14	ABA Training for Parents of Younger Children
April 15	The After I'm Gone Program- Supporting People in Decision Making
April 15	Michigan Alliance for Families- IEP Course
April 16 – April 18	Camp Fish tales Respite Weekends
April 17	Ingham County Sibshops
April 20	Webinar: Disability & Employment
April 21	ABA Training for Parents of Younger Children
April 22	10 Successful & Assertive Steps for Working with Professionals
April 27	Inclusive Spring Celebration!
April 27	Webinar: Employee Disclosure
April 29	The After I'm Gone Program- Estate Planning for your Future

