



## AN END OF YEAR MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

### An End of Year Message from Our CEO,

It's hard to believe we are already approaching the end of the year. And what a year it's been! As all of us began emerging from the pandemic crisis, a "new normal" has emerged. In some respects, we've grown more resilient and more appreciative of the freedoms we have and ability to engage in community. The lock downs taught so many of us that connection to others is critical. For families and persons living with autism, the return to community programs, jobs, school and therapies was welcomed. Unfortunately, mental health challenges and support needs in the aftermath of COVID continue to rise. As always, AAoM has remained steady in our support of families and persons with autism. Our navigators stand ready to provide much needed guidance and connection to support and services, as we all make our way into 2023. Let's hope for continued healing and growth.

With Sincerity,  
Colleen Allen | President and CEO



# HAPPY HOLIDAYS

CONTRIBUTED BY AAOM'S DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE

This holiday season we want to highlight just a few of the many celebrations and traditions that take place this time of year. Plus, we give tips on how you can have a sensory-friendly holiday for yourself or your loved ones.

## Hanukkah | December 18th-26th

For eight days and nights, Jewish people around the world celebrate Maccabees's victory over King Antiochus, who forbade Jews to practice their religion. The dates of Hanukkah change because this holiday follows the lunar cycle but it typically falls sometime in December. Hanukkah is celebrated for eight nights with prayer, the lighting of the menorah, and food. Families also celebrate by playing games, singing songs, and exchanging gifts. Potato pancakes, known as latkes in Yiddish, are traditionally associated with Hanukkah and are served with applesauce and sour cream.

## Kwanzaa | December 26th

Kwanzaa is a holiday created by Dr. Maulana Karenga to celebrate African heritage and culture. Celebration entails gathering with family and friends to exchange gifts and light a series of black, red, and green candles. These candles symbolize the seven basic values of African American family life: unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith. It also includes a feast of faith, called Karamu Ya Imani.

## Diwali | October 24th

Diwali is a five-day festival celebrated in the fall by Hindus, Sikhs, and Jains around the world, however it holds a different meaning and significance for each of the areas and religions that celebrate it. While there are some differences among the groups that celebrate it, Diwali does hold one common symbolism to them all – the triumph of good over evil and light over darkness. Families celebrate by illuminating their homes using clay or oil lamps and creating intricate designs made from rice or flour in front of doorways or shrines.

## Las Posadas | December 16th-24th

In Mexico (and some parts of the U.S.) you can find people celebrating Las Posadas between December 16 and December 24. Families celebrate the journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem. Each evening during the festival, a child dressed like an angel leads a procession through the streets of the town. The festival culminates with a beautiful feast at the Cena de Noche Buena (Christmas Eve Dinner). Some of the traditional dishes include romeritos (baked shrimp), bacalao (dried cod fish), roast turkey, salad, and mounds of sweet and sugary buñuelos. You can also find families in Guatemala and parts of the Southwestern United States celebrating Las Posadas.

cont.



## Chinese New Year | January 22nd

The Chinese New Year is possibly the most important of the traditional Chinese holidays. It falls on different dates each year, sometime in January or February, depending on the lunar calendar. This celebration lasts for about 15 days, and although celebrated in winter, it is also called the Spring Festival because it marks the end of the coldest part of the year. Marking this holiday involves going home to be with your friends and family. Celebrators hang decorations in red, the traditional color of the holiday, and give gifts wrapped in red packages. Chinese New Year celebrations include traditional dances, fireworks, and elaborate parades.

## Tips for a Sensory-Friendly Holiday

### Keep It Comfy

You can reduce stress by dressing comfortably for holiday events. Wear familiar clothing to eliminate any possibility of sensory issues. If possible, find out the menu beforehand and maybe bring a dish that you're comfortable with so you don't have to choke down some gross food that your Aunt made. Strategically sit near family members and friends who you feel comfortable around to avoid getting overwhelmed.

### Avoid Stress and Surprises

Though the holiday season sees many changes in routine, try to stick to the regular schedule when possible. Know who to avoid at holiday events. Certain family members can add stress to your holiday, do your best to avoid them. Prepare for the environment of holiday events and have plans in place to mitigate stress.

### Pack a Stress Relief Bag

Pack a bag with fun and familiar items to help reduce anxiety. Books, toys and games are good to keep close in case you get overwhelmed and need to sneak away to relax or occupy your mind. Each person relieves stress in a different way so know what works and plan to have it on hand when stress inevitably arises.

### Find a Quiet Place to Escape

The holidays often find you in external or unfamiliar environments. Identify a place to escape to when the holidays get overwhelming. Find a room where you can sneak away, go for a walk outside or slip into the basement to have a moment of quiet.

### Practice Patience and Go With the Flow

Expect the unexpected and you won't be disappointed. Go easy on yourself and do your best, you can only plan and control so much so do what you can. If you are a parent, maybe set aside goals and lessons and just let your child focus on getting through the holidays and having fun however they can.

References and Helpful Links:

<https://spoken-here.com/language-services/winter-holidays-around-the-world/>

<https://www.jcfs.org/blog/tips-sensory-friendly-holiday>

<https://dfwchild.com/how-to-holidays-with-children-who-have-special-needs/>

<https://researchautism.org/autistic-adults-share-what-helped-and-what-didnt-manage-the-stress-of-the-holidays/>

<https://the-art-of-autism.com/5-tips-for-surviving-the-holiday-season-from-an-adult-on-the-autism-spectrum/>

(From Ron Sandison, our GR Conference Speaker)





## A Gift That Lasts a Lifetime

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about Jack,  
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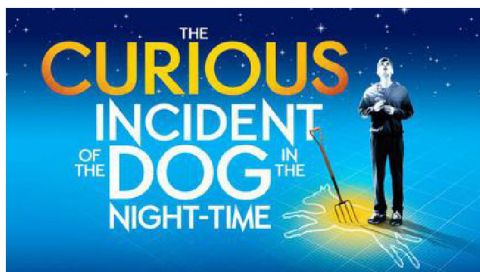
**Jack**  
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**Jade**  
An Education  
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**Javon**  
An Employment  
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The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time, based on the best-selling novel by Mark Haddon, is part mystery, part adventure, and part love story. At the heart of the play is Chris, a fifteen-year-old whose singular mission to find the perpetrator of the murder of a neighborhood dog results in a journey of discovery and, ultimately, love and acceptance. Note: the play is set in England and, even though we are not changing the setting, we are NOT going to use British accents.

Performance Dates are **January 12 at 7:30 PM, January 13 at 8 PM, January 14 at 8 PM, and January 15 at 2 PM**

If there are questions about this or anything else, feel free to reach out to [marketing@a2ct.org](mailto:marketing@a2ct.org) or [suzipetersonsteward@gmail.com](mailto:suzipetersonsteward@gmail.com)



AAoM's very own **Drew Shaw**, who acts as our Navigation Resource Specialist, will be performing in the lead role of this performance! We hope you will join us in supporting him during the listed event dates.

For tickets, click link or scan QR Code:  
<https://a2ct.ludus.com/200430791>





# Upcoming Community Events



Date	Event
December 12	<a href="#">Annual Holiday Party for Families</a>
December 12	<a href="#">Inclusive Arts &amp; Craft Class</a>
December 15	<a href="#">Teen &amp; Young Adult Social Group: Holiday Party</a>
December 15	<a href="#">Mental Health First Aid</a>
December 18	<a href="#">Sensory Friendly Hours</a>
December 18	<a href="#">Sensory Friendly Programs - Abrams Planetarium</a>
December 27	<a href="#">Almost New Years Party</a>
December 31	<a href="#">Sensory Showtime - Puss In Boots: The Last Wish</a>
January 11	<a href="#">Due Process Complaint and Hearing</a>
January 18	<a href="#">Self-Determination in the IEP with Stephanie Nichalls</a>
January 25	<a href="#">Transition Beyond IDEA</a>

Looking for more to do?  
Scan the QR Code for  
more events!





POWERED BY AUTISM ALLIANCE OF MICHIGAN

Upbound Staffing, a fully integrated program within the Autism Alliance of Michigan, leads and supports disability-employment initiatives throughout the State of Michigan.

Contact Upbound Staffing:

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

Email: [upbound@aaomi.org](mailto:upbound@aaomi.org)

Phone: [1-\(248\) 508-8693](tel:1-(248)-508-8693)



**MiPAAC**

MICHIGAN PARENT, ADVOCATE  
& ATTORNEY COALITION

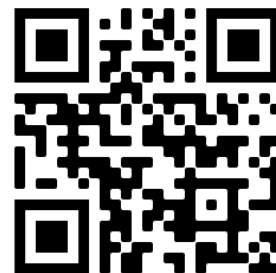
Powered by  Autism Alliance  
of Michigan

Michigan Parent, Advocate & Attorney Coalition (MiPAAC) is a newly formed statewide group focused on student centered advocacy.

Contact MiPAAC:

[MiPAAC membership Form](#)

<https://mipaac.org/>



**MiNavigator**

The MiNavigator team is a group of professionals ready to serve and connect those touched by autism with the most up to date services and resources available in our state.

Contact MiNavigator:

Website: <https://aaomi.org/contact-minavigator/>

Email: [navigator@aaomi.org](mailto:navigator@aaomi.org)

Phone: [877-463-2266](tel:877-463-2266)

Navigators are available Monday through Friday,  
from 9 am to 5pm

