



Dear WAAM members,

Thank you for taking the time to read this edition of the WAAM Connection. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Andrea Jones and I am Chairwoman of WAAM. My daughter Kendall was diagnosed with autism at age 3. Autism has touched Kendall and my entire family, however she is so much more than her diagnosis. One of my primary goals in life and with WAAM is to ensure that the community at large learns more about autism and what acceptance truly means. During our next meeting on October 11th, I am hoping to learn from each of you your perspective on what, and how, we can achieve various goals through this committee. This is a committee designed by women and for women hoping to improve the lives of those affected by autism in Michigan.

Sincerely,
Andrea Jones

WAAM Success Story

When the initial WAAM meeting took place in December 2016, the group was just an idea with no official direction. The women in that Meadowbrook ballroom were to take this idea of WAAM and run with it. And, that's exactly what AAoM's board member and Development Committee Chair Amy Fangboner did. She had a vision to create a group of women in her community, tapping AAoM's vast network of parents and providers, who could learn from each other's experience, as well as bring in professionals to share resources. Here is her WAAM story.

Last December, when Amy Fangboner and Rachelle Vartanian started a friendly chat at the WAAM reception, they had no idea that it would lead to something big. Rachelle has been a friend of AAoM for some time and owns the Living and Learning Center in Downtown Northville, an enrichment center assisting those with Autism Spectrum Disorders and related challenges.

The two women discovered that they had a lot in common and decided to meet for coffee. From that meeting, the Moms Support Group was born. The Moms Support Group welcomes all female caregivers of persons on the Autism Spectrum. The group meets on the first Wednesday of every month at the Living and Learning Center. The goal of the group is to empower women through information. Members share programs, providers, and other sources of information with one another and meetings include professional guest speakers.

AAoM, as a statewide organization, maintains a directory of support services and groups across the state, and looks forward to the growth of these types of support opportunities for families in other communities, filling a regional need for families. We are excited to partner in the growth of Moms Support Group going forward.

Topics for guest speakers have included technology, self-care, understanding social security and co-dependency. To date, more than 30 women have joined and it keeps growing. **For more information, female caretakers can contact Amy Fangboner at afangboner@gmail.com.**

3rd Annual Autism Hero Walk

Sunday, July 30th | The Detroit Zoo

Register & Learn More At
www.AAOMWALK.com

Join fellow WAAM members at the Autism Hero Walk on Sunday, July 30th at the Detroit Zoo. When registering, don't forget to join **Team Women Advocating for Autism in Michigan** when you RSVP for the Walk. WAAM members will have their own special check-in line for easy entrance into the Zoo. And, once inside, make sure to stop by the WAAM table in the main picnic area.

The Autism Hero Walk is AAoM's second largest fundraiser of the year. While a completely free and family-friendly event, the Walk raises crucial funds for AAoM programs and over 3000 people come together to celebrate the autism heroes in Michigan.

For more information, contact
Lauren.Lewis@AAoMi.org



Why WAAM?

by Carla O'Malley

When I joined the Autism Alliance of Michigan just over a year ago, I was amazed by the number of powerful women who surrounded me. I knew that AAoM had to find a way to bring these women together and harness this talent to continue to grow. And, that, is how WAAM was born. As Margaret Thatcher famously said: "If you want something said, ask a man; if you want something done, ask a woman."



Notes from the Navigator Trail...

Submitted by Tammy Morris, M.A., CCC-SLP, Chief Program Officer, AAoM

The MiNavigator is a keystone program and the heart of AAoM. Some days navigating can feel like guiding others down a winding, confusing, unmarked trail of policies, resources, professional services, and information. Other days the term 'trail' doesn't begin to do this service justice. On those days navigating is a white-knuckled, terrifying ride of uncertainty of the rails below.

These are the days when a naked, disheveled, nonverbal young man is spotted in a park in rural Michigan by a resident, and through relations with local police, navigators are able to establish the status of a harmless teen with autism and a tendency to wander and subsequently provide a GPS and ensure follow up care and first responder education.

These are the days when a mother calls for help with the legal system after making a desperate call to police one day while alone with her aggressive son. The mother who needed physical help that day, unfortunately becomes the mother needing help to address the myriad of expenses, complications, and decisions as a result of making that phone call.

These are the days when AAoM steps in as 'surrogate' parent in public school proceedings in Metro Detroit because there is no responsible caregiver to represent the student with complex special education needs.

All of these resilient individuals with autism share a collective uniqueness. They help navigators identify gaps in services, awareness and acceptance in our respective communities. We are so grateful to these caregivers, providers, and individuals for teaching us something every single day. To the groups who support and advocate for improved quality of life and community acceptance, we are equally grateful.

The mission of Autism Alliance of Michigan is to lead collaborative efforts across the state that will improve the quality of life for individuals with autism through education, access to comprehensive services, community awareness, inclusion efforts and coordinated advocacy.

You are Invited to a WAAM Networking Night & Brainstorming Session!

WAAM will be hosting a networking night at the Autism Alliance of Michigan office. Mark your calendar for Wednesday, October 11th in Southfield for a fun night with fellow women dedicated to improving the quality life of those affected by autism!



Mark your calendars for upcoming WAAM events:

July 30th--Autism Hero Walk at the Detroit Zoo

October 11th--WAAM Networking Night at the AAoM office

December 6th--WAAM End of Year Meeting

AAoM invites WAAM to Volunteer

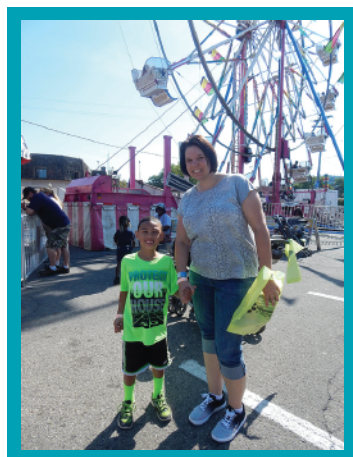
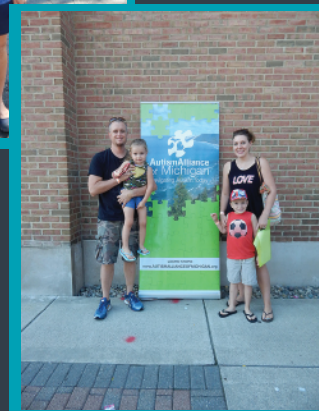
All Labor Day Weekend long, AAoM staff and volunteers will be running Autism Family Days at Arts, Beats and Eats and we would love your help!



presented by *Soaring Eagle*
CASINO & RESORT®

Register To Volunteer

<https://autismalliance.wufoo.com/forms/arts-beats-and-eats-volunteer-form/>



Gate Charity: Saturday September 2nd

Shift Time: 2:15PM to 6:45PM

Saturday, Sunday and Monday September 2nd-4th

Shift times: 9:30AM to 12:30PM and 11:00AM to 2:30PM

Morning volunteers will be checking in over 700 people to Autism Family Days at Arts, Beats and Eats; this includes handing out bags, water bottles and wristbands. Second shift volunteers will be serving lunch to families inside a nearby restaurant. It is all buffet style.

About Autism Family Days

Autism Family Days allows families affected by autism to enter the Arts, Beats and Eats an hour early to enjoy the same festival at no cost in a calmer environment. Families are offered free parking, carnival rides and lunch thanks to Kroger and Ford's Arts, Beats and Eats.

Questions?

Contact Renee.Cameron@AAOMI.org