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Hi, just a reminder that you're receiving this email because you have expressed an interest in Autism Society of Pittsburgh.

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April 2017

*Every cent raised is spent in our region
to help improve the lives of those among us
with autism and their families.*

Things you "AUT2KNOW"

Opinion-Commentary

"Let's Start Honoring People with Autism by Stopping the Celebration of Autism"

"World Autism Awareness Day hits me like a ton of bricks every year. As the mother of a child with autism, there isn't another day I loathe like April 2nd. Autism Speaks proudly proclaims on their website: "Every year, autism organizations around the world celebrate the day with unique fundraising and awareness-raising events. How will you celebrate?" [Read more.](#)

The views expressed are those of the Autism Society of Pittsburgh, and not necessarily those of the Autism Society of America.



NEWS OF IMMEDIATE INTEREST

SWIM TEAM



Join us at the Hollywood Theater in Dormont on **April 25th at 7 PM** for a free screening of the award-winning documentary, "Swim Team."

What would you do if your community gave up on your child? In New Jersey, the parents of one autistic boy take matters into their own hands. They form a competitive swim team, recruiting diverse autistic teens and training them with high expectations and zero pity. What happens next alters the course of the boys' lives. *Swim Team* chronicles the extraordinary rise of the Jersey Hammerheads, capturing a moving quest for inclusion, independence and a life that feels winning.

To register for your free tickets, go to [Swim Team](#) or contact The Autism Society of Pittsburgh at 412-856-7223 to reserve your spot.

State Reverses Course on Sheltered Workshop Requirements

A Harrisburg rally, originally scheduled as a protest to changes in state regulations regarding sheltered workshops, turned into a celebration Monday.

Hundreds of families gathered in the Capitol learned state officials were walking back requirements that would have spelled dramatic changes for handicapped adults. [Read more.](#)

Pittsburgh Blues Festival Returns this Summer

After a year's absence, Pittsburgh is getting the blues again.

Ron "Moondog" Esser of Frazer says many people have approached him since the Pittsburgh Blues Festival ended its 21-year run in 2015, after the sponsoring Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank decided to go in a new direction with its annual musical fundraising. [Read more.](#)

"Autism Society of Pittsburgh is Beneficiary"



April Love...

In honor of Autism Awareness Month, David Rapach, owner of Levity, a float studio located in Squirrel Hill, will be donating 10% of their monthly sales to the Autism Society of Pittsburgh.

Here's a link to the Levity website: <https://www.floatlevity.com/>

Faith-Based Guidance and Instruction for Special Needs

Continuing with our announcement in our December newsletter, below is a link to Chapter 5 of

Dr. Larry Sutton's book entitled "How to Welcome, Include, and Catechize Children with Developmental Disabilities" [Chapter 5](#)

MedicAlert® FOUND



24/7 Wandering Support Service for those Affected by Autism

MedicAlert Foundation operates under the mission "protect and save lives"; therefore, they developed the free MedicAlert Found® program to provide an additional layer of protection for the autism community. Their goal is to ensure every person affected by autism has autism medical IDs and 24/7 wandering service. They are committed to turning wandering tragedies into successful family reunification stories.

Reasons all people with autism need a Medical ID:

1. ID shows that the individual has an autism-related condition
2. Serves as a signal to law enforcement that the person has autism
3. Speaks for the person when they cannot, especially important for non-verbal individuals
4. Connects to family/caregivers in the event of an emergency through MedicAlert's 24/7 support service
5. States other conditions, allergies, or medications to avoid potential medical errors

This program is completely free for all people with autism. For more information on the program and how to enroll, go to www.medicalert.org/autism

Enroll for FREE with MedicAlert.

Enrollees in MedicAlert Found Will Receive:

- Free Medical ID Bracelet or Necklace
- Free Medical ID Shoe Tag
- Free 24/7 Wandering Support Service



Click here to [Enroll now.](#)

Visit their website for more information: www.medicalert.org/autism

Florida mother advocates for law mandating police training...

This April 2, once again we will light it up blue and spend several days discussing autism awareness. But for those of us who have children in the spectrum, every day is autism awareness day. [Read more.](#)

...And Pennsylvania already has such a law: an autism-focused justice system training, [click here.](#)



Eight hundred thousand Pennsylvanians with disabilities and their families are about to receive some great news.

Pennsylvania officially launches its PA ABLE Savings Program on April 3, 2017 in a HUGE media and legislative event in the Capitol Rotunda at 12:30 p.m.

(If you can't attend, write a note of praise to PA State Treasurer Joseph Torsella, PA Treasury, 129 Finance Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120).

On that date, the PA Treasury ABLE program officially begins accepting accounts for enrollment and opens the door on hope for individuals with disabilities and the families who care for those loved ones. Join Treasurer Joe Torsella, U.S. Senator Robert Casey and PA Senator Lisa Baker as ABLE officially opens for business.

So, if you wish, do be there to celebrate this important milestone-Pennsylvanians with eligible disabilities are about to receive the tools they need to build a sound fiscal future. ABLE accounts mean a new, fresh perspective on what living as a financially empowered individual can mean, and you helped make this happen.

Feel free to share this information with anyone who has a stake in the successful launch of this new product. While program material will be available at the launch event, we also ask that you send any requests for bulk material and outreach or speaking opportunities to us by email. The more people who know about this program and what it means to be ABLE to look to living a secured future, the better.

Also, we want to tell the stories of those who are going to benefit from the ABLE account. If you know of a compelling story that we should be sharing, would you send us an email (info@PAABLE.gov) about it by March 24, 2017? You might be surprised to get a phone call asking you to let Treasurer Torsella tell that story in his remarks at the event and in other ways, too! He would love to hear stories of how ABLE would help.

Finally, please follow our Twitter handle @PATreasury for the latest updates, and help us drive the conversation with the hashtag #PAABLE.

Please join us on April 3! It will be a great event and we want Pennsylvania to see that ABLE has arrived and is about to give the power to our families and their loved ones with disabilities to use the tools they need to build a sound fiscal future.

PS: Remember to RSVP your attendance and number by March 30 to info@PAABLE.gov.

This is how to apply for a savings account for your autistic family member:

Important Information for People with Disabilities and Their Families

PA ABLE is an extraordinary, new, low-cost saving vehicle that allows people with disabilities and their families to have greater control of their finances and to plan for a more financially secure future.

Saving with a PA ABLE account helps people to save for a wide range of disability-related expenses without jeopardizing government benefits. Plus, savings benefit from several great tax advantages, including tax-free growth when used for a wide range of qualified disability expenses.

If you want to learn more about the features and benefits of the PA ABLE Savings Program, please join us for a webinar. [Webinar Link](#)

To read important disclosures and to enroll, [visit PAABLE.gov](http://PAABLE.gov) or or call 855-529-ABLE (2253).

The Pennsylvania ABLE Savings Program is administered by the Pennsylvania Treasury Department. Before investing, please carefully read the disclosure statement (available at PAABLE.GOV or by calling 855-529-2253) to learn more about the program, including its effect on federal and state benefits, investment objectives, risks, fees, and tax implications.

PA ABLE Savings Program | PAABLE.gov | 855-529-ABLE (2253)

Horses & Humans Research Foundation Study at Slippery Rock University

It has been proven that the bond between animals and humans is effective in creating an emotional, healing bond. Individuals with autism may benefit from equine therapy due to the motor, emotional, and sensory sensations that come from riding a horse. Storm Harbor Equestrian Center at Slippery Rock University is looking for volunteers to participate in a research study to better understand those benefits and the benefit that horseback riding can have on stress. Please consider getting involved:

- **The purpose of this study is to better understand the effectiveness of therapeutic horseback riding & other stress management techniques.**
- **Seeking young adult volunteers, ages 13-25, on the autism spectrum.**



- The study involves three phases of 10 weeks, each with rest periods in-between.
- All participants will receive both the therapeutic horseback riding program and the stress management program.
- There is a monetary incentive of \$150 for participants who complete the entire study-a 1 ½ year period.



Please contact Betsy Kemeny at elizabeth.kemeny@sru.edu or (724)738-4306 or if you have any questions or would like to enroll in the study.

<http://www.sru.edu/>



The University of Pittsburgh Center for Excellence in Autism Research

The Perspectives Program

This research project explores a **treatment intervention program for individuals with autism spectrum disorders to help them learn to interact better with others, manage their emotions, feel more comfortable in social situations and accomplish their life goals.** Participants are randomly assigned to one of two groups: Cognitive Enhancement Therapy or Enriched Supportive Therapy.

Who qualifies?

Adolescents and adults qualify if:

- IQ > 80
- Ages 16-45 with ASD and able read and speak English at a 6th grade level.

What is involved?

Research includes weekly visits to the University of Pittsburgh over the course of the 18-month intervention. These research interventions provide support and are designed to improve social function, problem solving, stress management and more. There are several paper and pencil testing sessions throughout the study. The testing time points also include an fMRI scan where we will take pictures of your brain.

Compensation.

There is no charge to participate in the intervention program. All eligible participants will be compensated for completing eligibility testing and all testing time points.

Questions? Interested in joining the study? Please contact The Perspectives Program at 866-647-3436 or autismrecruiter@upmc.edu

ups: Cognitive Enhancement Therapy and Enriched Supportive Therapy. Eligible participants will be randomly assigned to one or the other group.

The ASSET Program

This research project explores a treatment intervention program for individuals with autism spectrum disorders to help them manage their emotions.

Who qualifies? Adolescents qualify if:

- IQ > 80
- Ages 12-17 with ASD

What is involved? Participation involves individual sessions, online resources and home practices over the course of 14-18 weeks. There are several testing timepoints that occur before the beginning of treatment, half-way through treatment, at the end of treatment and 3-month follow up that occurs online only

Compensation.

There is no charge to participate in the intervention program. All eligible participants will be compensated for completing eligibility testing and all testing time points.

Questions? Interested in joining the study? Please contact The ASSET Program at 866-647-3436 or autismrecruiter@upmc.edu.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sorely Needed Initiative - you can help!

Kasey Walls, BSN, RN, is completing her doctorate degree at Robert Morris University. She will be certified as a psychiatric nurse practitioner upon graduation in July. She is working on her doctoral research project, which focuses on the lack of sexuality education for adolescents on the autism spectrum.

Ms. Walls has created a brief survey for parents concerning this experience for their child and hopes to receive as many responses as possible. The survey will take parents approximately 1 minute to complete. Here is the link to the survey. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/B3KX2PC>

With these responses, Ms. Walls hopes to demonstrate the need for a practical instructional and training curriculum, as well as create an open dialogue between providers and families regarding this topic. Results will be shared first with all participants.

S.P.E.A.K. Applications are available!

The Autism Society of Pittsburgh will mail S.P.E.A.K. applications to prior year students no later than February 17th!

S.P.E.A.K. is an Extended School Year (ESY) program founded by the Autism Society of Pittsburgh in 1974 to ease transitioning between school years by preventing or reducing learning regression common to children with autism.

S.P.E.A.K is a program for children ages 5 through 21 who have a primary diagnosis on the Autism Spectrum, are in good health, mobile, and able to participate in community activities. S.P.E.A.K. provides Community Based Instruction (CBI) and addresses each child's ESY goals and objectives. The program also provides music therapy, speech services, swimming, CBI classroom trips, field trips, art activities, and adapted physical education.

Download the 2017 S.P.E.A.K. application and brochure below or click here for more information. If you have additional questions or would like to request a paper application to be mailed to you, please contact the Autism Society of Pittsburgh at 412 - 856 - 7223.

[2017 SPEAK Application](#)
[2017 SPEAK Brochure](#)

EVENTS AND WORKSHOPS

We offer a range of services, including workshops and support groups, training and educational programs, fundraising events, and community awareness building activities. We stay up-to-date on relevant happenings throughout our local autism community.

[Click here to view our calendar.](#)



AUTISM RESOURCES

We know that those with autism can present parents, families and providers with many challenges and a solid support system is essential. Be sure to check our website for a comprehensive listing of resources involving education, family support services, vocational training, nutrition and legal.

[Click here to download our complete list.](#)



Social Awareness - Building Resources

Adults:

Adults ASD Outings Group
Heather Conroy
heather.a.conroy@gmail.com

Discussion Group for Adults w/HFA/ASP
Squirrel Hill
Lance Hershberger
lancehersh@gmail.com

TGIF Airport Area Adult Social
Group AS/HF
Terry Doughty
TGIF.ASGroup@gmail.com

Evolve Coaching
711 S. 21st Street, #218 (Formerly 2100 Mary Street)
Pittsburgh, PA 15203
412-345-1170
<https://www.evolve-coaching.org/social-and-self-advocacy>

Children/Adolescents:

Wesley Spectrum Outpatient Groups
<https://www.wesleyspectrum.org/autism/outpatient-groups/>

Watson Institute
Social Skills Group
<https://www.thewatsoninstitute.org/programs/psychological-services/therapy-services/>

Family Behavioral Resources
Social Skills Play Groups
<http://www.familybehavioralresources.com/support-groups1.html>

WAYS TO HELP

Our programs and services would not exist without the help of the caring individuals, businesses, and volunteers that support us. Contributions of any size are our lifeblood - vital to our existence and effectiveness - providing the means for us to help children with autism, their families, and professionals who work with them.



[Donate](#)

Please consider visiting [our donations page](#) today to make a contribution through PayPal or learn about other ways to donate.

Volunteer

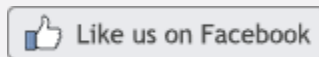
From time to time we need caring volunteers to help with our programs and fundraising events. If interested, please complete [our contact form](#) and we will be in touch when a volunteer opportunity arises that meets your interests and availability.



Give us a call today!
412-856-7223

Visit www.autismsocietypgh.org or call us for more information and resources.

STAY CONNECTED



Autism Society of Pittsburgh, 4371 Northern Pike, Monroeville, PA 15146

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