Welcome to our February newsletter presented by the Autism Caregiver Group. Within these pages you will find information about resources, activities and events happening in our community. Check out our spotlight and fun pictures. Enjoy your Valentine’s Day with those you love!

“Where there is love, there is life.”
-Mahatma Gandhi
For Kids:
Bullying is a significant issue that affects children nationwide, and unfortunately, children with autism experience it at higher rates. Learn more about signs of bullying, prevention and the overall relationship between autism and bullying.

For Teens:
Creating and maintaining friendships are important aspects of life which are especially important during the teen years. Learn more about facilitating friendships from the TACA.

For Adults:
Living independently is a challenging task. Download an Adult Planning Checklist and consider working on some of the skills.

Autism in the Media

The first PBS Kids series starring an autistic character, “Carl the Collector,” will debut in the fall of 2024.

“Carl the Collector”, centers on a kind-hearted raccoon and is the first to include a lead character on the autism spectrum.

The animated TV program, which was created by Zachariah OHora, the New York Times best-selling author and illustrator, celebrates the diverse ways children can think and express themselves while assisting them in creating a sense of identity and community. The show, which debuts in the fall of 2024, is intended for kids ages 4 to 8.

For more information, visit the Organization for Autism Research.
“The Dot” by Peter H. Reynolds is a book about a little girl who thinks she can’t draw. Her art teacher encourages her to “Just make a mark and see where it takes you.” This encourages the main character Vashti to explore her art skills and get creative.

Sensory Activities:

• A great activity to do along with this book is one that encourages art abilities. Some examples would be painting with blocks or finger painting. Encourage kiddos to “Just make a mark and see where it takes you.” This will make sure they understand that art can be so many different things and everyone is capable of creating it.

• To paint with blocks, all you need is blocks like Legos or shaped blocks, paper and paint. Simply dip the block in your favorite color paint, place it on the paper and go from there. You can also expand on the art with markers or pens and create anything your mind can come up with.

• To fingerpaint, you simply need paint and paper. For a mess-free version, put the paper with paint in a plastic bag and create a design in the bag.

Upcoming Events

**Polarpalooza**

Feb. 3
Noon to 3pm
Hopkin’s Park
(1403 Sycamore Road)

The DeKalb Park District is organizing a winter festival where your child can enjoy some sensory-friendly outdoor activities such as snowman bowling, snow volcano and ice treasure digging.

**NIU Autism Caregiver Group and Dimensions Dance Academy Dance Event**

Feb. 15, 4:30 p.m.
Registration: Free
Dimensions Dance Academy

Join Dimensions Dance Academy for a fun sensory friendly dancing event; a safe space for your child to express themselves through motor movements. Please register [online here](#) or email mmaxwell1@niu.edu.

**Annie’s Story Time**

Feb. 4,
1 to 1:30 p.m.
921 W. Lincoln Highway
(next to Glidden Florist)

Join DeKalb Public Library’s fun story and art event. This event welcomes children to engage in an interactive story time where they can listen to music, engage in movements and more — a great opportunity to practice working on attention span and listening skills.

**All Ages Story Time**

Feb. 28
10 to 10:30 a.m.
DeKalb Public Library

DeKalb Public Library welcomes the opportunity for children ages 2-5 to come together, read stories, and engage in singing and sensory play involving lots of bubbles. This is a great activity to address your child’s visual-motor skills.

**Polarpalooza**

Feb. 3
Noon to 3pm
Hopkin’s Park
(1403 Sycamore Road)
The Community Foundation of Northern Illinois had recently donated a grant of $34,500 to support RAMP’s program called the Fast Track Transition Services. RAMP is a nonprofit, nonresidential center for independent living (CIL). CILs are run by people with disabilities to help others with disabilities. The Fast Track Transition Services support high school students with disabilities, helping them maximize their potential. They promote college enrollment, prepare for careers and foster independent living. Offered in groups or individually, they involve activities like developing job skills, securing internships and finding community employment. The aim is to equip students with the tools for a successful transition to higher education or employment.

Learn more about the Fast Track Transition Services by RAMP.