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## **Celebrating Neurodiversity, Promoting Acceptance, Understanding Challenges**

### **Programs of the Autism Society of Alabama (ASA)**

#### **SAFETY:**

- **First Responder Trainings throughout Alabama**

In collaboration with Interaction Agency Group, ASA conducts first responder trainings to train law enforcement, fire fighters and emergency medical professionals to better interact with those on the autism spectrum. Those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are seven times more likely to come in contact with a first responder than others in the population.

- **Safety Net Campaign**

ASA continues to lead a Safety Net Campaign in Alabama to educate families about the availability of Project Lifesaver. Project Lifesaver is a program that can locate children or adults on the autism spectrum who wander, roam or bolt from safety. Project Lifesaver is in 61 of Alabama's 67 counties. Project Lifesaver was available in 27 Alabama counties at the beginning of the Safety Net Campaign. ASA's efforts have increased the availability of Project Lifesaver and saved lives.

- **Alabama Autism Identification Card**

ASA collaborated with the Alabama Department of Public Health and the legislature to create an Alabama Autism Identification Card. The Alabama Autism Identification Card is the first ID Card for those with ASD in the U.S. The card can be used by anyone with ASD, it was created particularly for independent teens and adults with ASD who may come in contact with First Responders.

- **Emergency Preparedness**

ASA collaborates with other community providers and advocacy groups to prepare Emergency Preparedness materials for Special Needs Families.

#### **Information and Support:**

- **Conferences for teachers, parents, therapy providers and adults living with Autism Spectrum Disorder**

ASA organizes annual conferences in Tuscaloosa, Huntsville, Mobile, Birmingham and Cullman. Conferences in other towns including Montgomery, Dothan, Auburn, Clanton and Athens have also occurred. Conferences allow teachers, parents, providers and consumers to learn from ASD researchers and leaders. The University of Alabama Autism Conference is one of the largest Autism Conferences in the U.S.

- **33 ASA Network Support Groups**

ASA supports volunteer leaders in 33 Alabama towns. These leaders communicate with and organize events for families in the area who live with ASD. The cornerstone of ASA advocacy is conducted through these Network Groups because parents can access local support.

- **CARE Binders**

ASA distributes binders at no charge to help caregivers organize their child's or adult's journey with autism including IEPs, medical information, therapies, agencies and other important topics.

- **Resource Materials**

ASA provides autism resource books and media for each of Alabama's 67 counties' public library systems.

- **Sibhops**

ASA hosts workshops for siblings of those on the spectrum. The workshops offer a special time for siblings to voice concerns, meet other siblings and have fun while understanding their role as a brother or sister of a sibling with special needs.

- **Exhibits and Sponsorships at Conferences**

ASA exhibits at or sponsors statewide conferences throughout the year. These include the Early Intervention Conference, American Academy of Pediatrics, Alabama Chapter Conference, Special Needs Expo, Education Conferences, Employment Conferences, Disability Conferences and others.

## **Advocacy:**

- **Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council**

ASA holds a permanent seat on the Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council that coordinates state agency services for those with ASD.

- **Regional Autism Networks (RAN)**

ASA serves on the Board of Directors of the RAN centers. RAN strives to assist those who have questions, concerns or resource needs regarding ASD and are located at these universities: UA, UAB, AU, UAH, USA.

- **Ongoing Collaborations/ State Partnerships**

ASA collaborates with other advocacy groups and service providers. ASA collaborates with state agencies, RAN,, ECHO, SEAP, AAPN, Disability Coalition of Alabama, Glenwood Rights Responsibilities and Ethics Committee, Alabama Respite, ARC, United Ability, Emergency Preparedness for Special Needs and Easter Seals to name a few.

- **Autism Friendly Alabama**

ASA is aiming to build welcoming communities by partnering with businesses, recreational facilities and venues. Regions Bank is the first bank in Alabama to launch a campaign and offer a sensory friendly environment.

- **Bullying Prevention**

ASA provides a bully prevention kit to each Network Group leader as a tool to share with local schools. In addition, ASA provides links on the topic on its website to assist with concerns.

- **Advocacy**

ASA is a voice for individuals with ASD and their families. Most recently, ASA worked with families, lawmakers and many constituents to mandate health insurance coverage for autism. As a result, Alabama became the 46<sup>th</sup> state to require meaningful insurance coverage for autism. More work to improve upon HB 284 will continue.

## **Grants and Scholarships**

- **Community Grants**

ASA offers grants twice annually to 501(c)3 organizations providing enrichment activities which foster the lives of spectrum individuals.

- **Respite Program**

ASA sponsors a respite program to provide funds for caretakers to hire help and get a break from caretaking. ASA will provide families statewide with approximately 20 hours of respite during a three month period while funding is available.

- **Scholarships**

ASA provides scholarships to individuals with autism, caregivers and professionals interested in attending ASA sponsored trainings, workshops and conferences.

## **Events**

- **Annual Legislative Day**

ASA hosts families and advocates from throughout Alabama at the Alabama State House each March for Autism Legislative Day. Families meet with lawmakers and share their concerns. Families learn about the legislative process and participate in a noon rally on the State House Front Steps.

- **Family Camps, Camp Frog**

ASA hosts families in the May and September Family Camps at ASCCA, Camp Frog. Children on the autism spectrum enjoy traditional camp activities in a supportive environment with their families.

- **Sensory Movies/Theatre/Santa**

ASA organizes Sensory Movies throughout the state. A Sensory Movie is a movie with the light level increased slightly and the sound level decreased. Families living with ASD can enjoy a family outing to the movies with these accommodations. A special time during the holidays is allotted for those with autism to visit with Santa in a sensory friendly environment at area malls/shopping centers statewide.

- **Autism Day at Semi-Pro Baseball Games**

In collaboration with other autism groups in Birmingham, Montgomery, Mobile, ASA hosts families at a game in May. Families attend the game free of charge.

- **Network Support Group Leader Workshop**

ASA hosts the families of leaders of 33 ASA Network Support Groups each July. Network Support Group Leaders meet to collaborate and learn from one another to better serve their home community families living with ASD.

- **Governor's and Mayors' Proclamation naming April as Autism Awareness Month in Alabama.**

The Governor's and local Mayors' Proclamation of Autism Awareness Month occurs annually in April.

To subscribe to the monthly ASA e-newsletter, visit [www.autism-alabama.org](http://www.autism-alabama.org).  
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