

DEVELOPMENT AND BEYOND NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 90
February 10th
2026

A monthly newsletter by The Autism Program at Boston Medical Center for families and individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) & other neurodevelopmental diagnoses

Happy February!

It has been a cold and snowy month so far, and we hope that our friends and families have been able to stay warm. The groundhog recently saw its shadow, which means we may have 6 more weeks of winter this year - but spring is nonetheless on its way!

Last month, our Teens Engaged as Mentors (TEAM) hosted a fantastic Talent Show to highlight all the incredible talents that our participants and facilitators have to share. From singing, dancing, special skills, stand up comedy, sports, magic, musical instruments, poetry, and more, we were truly lucky to celebrate a Saturday morning filled with much joy, vibrance, and inspiration from our TEAM community. Thank you to everyone who participated and made it happen - we hope to do it again soon!



in this edition:

PAGE 2

Resource Highlight:
Dick & Judy Hoyt
Grant for Inclusion

PAGE 3

Upcoming events:
Learning opportunities,
Community gatherings

PAGE 6

Study Recruitment:
ASD & Colonoscopy
Focus Group

Dick & Judy Hoyt Grant for Inclusion

RESOURCE HIGHLIGHT

#Financial Assistance

#Recreation & Inclusion

#Open to families

In partnership with the Hoyt Foundation, the Doug Flutie Jr. Foundation for Autism is distributing a total of \$50,000 through this community grant to support people with autism and other disabilities. This grant can be used to **specifically promote meaningful inclusion for folks with disabilities in community settings & experiences**, such as:

- Side-by-side participation with non-disabled peers in a swim program, with the grant allowing for a private lifeguard and individualized support
- Participation in dance training and competitions along with non-disabled peers via grant allowing for lessons and staff to assist in adaptive dance training
- Competitive horseback riding supported by the grant to purchase specialized equipment to allow a rider to compete against non-disabled peers

Application details:



Using this link/QR code, complete the application:
https://webportalapp.com/sp/login/2026_hoyt

Application deadline is March 8th, 2026. Make sure to apply today if interested!

For more information, please visit the Doug Flutie Jr. Foundation website & make sure to reach out directly with any questions!



<https://flutiefoundation.org/helping-families/direct-financial-support/dick-judy-hoyt-grant-for-inclusion/>

Joey's Fund & Hope Fund

These two grants by Doug Flutie Jr. Foundation is a direct family support grant **open to families with 2+ individuals with ASD and other disabilities**. From essential services and support, to classes, camps, and more, these grants are designed to meet families where they are.

Application deadline is March 5th, 2026 at 5PM. Apply today!

#Financial Assistance

#Open to families

#Essential Support

#Education

#Recreation

Application details:



You can complete one application for **BOTH** Joey's Fund & Hope Fund:

<https://flutiefoundation.org/helping-families/direct-financial-support/joey-s-fund-hope-fund/>

upcoming learning opportunities

Click the title or scan the QR code to find more information.
Resources below are free of cost or offer financial assistance.

2/10 Insurance & Advocacy

February 10th, 2026 | 10AM

Join this webinar to hear more about insurance advocacy with Amy Weinstock and Terri Farrell from the Insurance Resource Center.

RSVP required. Virtual webinar.



2/11 Aggression in Adults: Importance of Assessment & Collaboration

February 11th, 2026 | 6:30PM

The Lurie Center for Autism invites you to join Nicole Simon, EdM, LABA, BCBA, and Susanna Mierau, MD, PhD, for a presentation on understanding and addressing changes in aggressive behaviors in adults with autism. The presentation will include collaborative approaches to identify the source or sources of changes in behavior (e.g., new medical problems) to reduce the risk of harm to self or others.

RSVP required. Virtual webinar.



2/11 What Makes a Quality Neuropsychological Evaluation

February 11th, 2026 | 6:30PM

Not all evaluations are created equal. In this presentation by NESCA of Metrowest, Ann Helmus, Ph.D., will explain what a neuropsychological evaluation is and how a quality one can help to access the appropriate supports or interventions for a child or adolescent who is struggling.

RSVP required. Virtual webinar series.



2/24 Strengthening Parent-Provider Relationships

February 24th, 2026 | 6:30PM

Children make the most progress when parents, teachers, and providers work together. This presentation by Autism Alliance will focus on practical ways families can stay connected with their child's team, choose meaningful goals, and support new skills.

RSVP required. Virtual webinar series.



Lunar new year celebration @ Dorchester!



VTCMV warmly invites Vietnamese families of children with disability and autism to attend our **annual lunar new year celebration** at Florian Hall (Florian Hall 55 Hallet St, Dorchester Center, MA 02124) on **Sunday, February 22, 2026 from 12:00 to 3:00 PM**. This celebration is an opportunity for families to gather, welcome the New Year, and take part in a tradition that has been an important part of our community over the years. VTCMV encourages families to have their children wear traditional áo dài and participate in the fashion show!

<https://en.vtcmv.org/>



Đăng ký tại đây

Register here!

Nhân dịp Mừng Xuân Bính Ngọ 2026, Vong Tay Cha Me Việt (VTCMV) trân trọng kính mời toàn thể gia đình Việt có con bị khuyết tật và tự kỷ cùng tham gia hội Tết. **Chương trình mừng xuân Bính Ngọ sẽ được tổ chức vào Chủ Nhật, ngày 22 tháng 2 năm 2026 từ 12 giờ trưa đến 3 giờ chiều tại Florian Hall** (Florian Hall 55 Hallet St, Dorchester Center, MA 02124). VTCMV mong muốn sự kiện này sẽ mang đến các gia đình một môi trường thoải mái, để các con có thể tham gia vào các hoạt động vui chơi Tết và hoà nhập cùng cộng đồng. VTCMV khuyến khích gia đình giúp con em mặc áo dài truyền thống và tham gia trình diễn thời trang.

<https://www.vtcmv.org/>

FEBRUARY BREAK IDEAS

1

Local museums are a great place for affordable indoor programming. They may likely already have programs scheduled for the break! For example, Museum of Fine Arts at Boston has planned a robust week of free art activities, all ages welcomed.

2

Public libraries also offer wonderful resources for families and individuals, often free of cost. Check out your local library's events calendar, typically available in the library or on their website.

3

Family Support Centers & Autism Support Centers are local organizations across the state that provide support and community connection for families. Many host recreational events throughout the month, including vacation weeks!

For more information:

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/dds-family-support-centers#family-support-centers>

MFA Boston



The Museum of Fine Arts at Boston is excited to now offer a **low-sensory space**, designed for neurodivergent visitors or anyone in need of a break during their visit. The room remains a **quiet-space** and features **low lighting, tactile fidgets, bean bag chairs, and noise-reducing headphones**. The room is located off the **Rotunda on the first floor** and we encourage everyone to check it out!

PARENTS HELPING PARENTS

This virtual support group is open to anyone parenting a neurodivergent child of any age. Moms, dads and caregivers join together to find connection and share experiences of parenting kids whose brain processes information differently than neurotypical children. Topics can include:

- **Managing behaviors of neurodivergent kids**
- **Support and advocacy strategies for neurodivergent kids in school**
- **Discipline and consequence strategies for neurodivergent kids**
- **Personal grief and loss when you can't participate in "normal" family experiences**

[Register today](#)



Current Group Meeting Schedule

Tuesdays 7pm-8pm EST

Thursdays 12pm-1pm EST



<https://parentshelpingparents.org/>

The Fred Gaspari
Fund for Families
2026

The Fred Gaspari Fund for Families will **open for applications on February 17** and **close February 26, at 5pm**.

The Fred Gaspari Fund for Families accepts applications from families in Massachusetts who are caring for a loved one with an intellectual or developmental disability. The family member must be living with the family or independently in their own home within the community.

Eligible families may apply for up to **\$500** for any need necessary to care for their family member. Family needs are broadly defined. Examples of past awards include, but are not limited to:

- Summer camp tuition
- Therapeutic horseback riding classes
- Swim lessons
- iPad tablet
- Shoes and leg braces
- Hiring someone to take a family member into the community for social activities

<https://advocates.org/news/fred-gaspari-fund-families-2026>



Study Recruitment



Boston University
RESEARCH RECRUITMENT FLYER

Paid focus group: We are looking for autistic people who have had a colonoscopy, or been told by a doctor that they should have a colonoscopy and did not get one, for an online focus group on March 4, 2026 at 6pm EST. Earn a \$50 e-gift card to Amazon.com.



Are you:

- ✓ Age 18 years old or older?
- ✓ Diagnosed or self-diagnosed with autism, Asperger's, or PDD-NOS?
- ✓ Live in the USA?

Find out if you are eligible:

<https://redcap.bumc.bu.edu/surveys/?s=KME3YR38AWRJKHYL>



Please complete the eligibility survey so we can determine if you can participate in the focus group. We will contact you to let you know if you are eligible.



erothman@bu.edu



<https://redcap.bumc.bu.edu/surveys/?s=KME3YR38AWRJKHYL>



Focus groups are on Zoom



617-353-7518 (PI, Emily Rothman)

Researchers at Boston University are looking for autistic people who have had a colonoscopy, or been told by a doctor that they should have a colonoscopy and did not get one, for an online focus group on March 4, 2026 at 6PM. Participants will be compensated with a \$50 e-gift card to Amazon.

Are you:

- Age 18 years old or older?
- Diagnosed or self-diagnosed with autism, Asperger's, or PDD-NOS?
- Live in the USA?

Find out if you are eligible by submitting this form:

<https://redcap.bumc.bu.edu/surveys/?s=KME3YR38AWRJKHYL>

You will be contacted to be notified if you are eligible to participate. For more information, please email erothman@bu.edu with subject line "Colonoscopy Focus Group Question".

PLANNING FOR TWO LIFETIMES

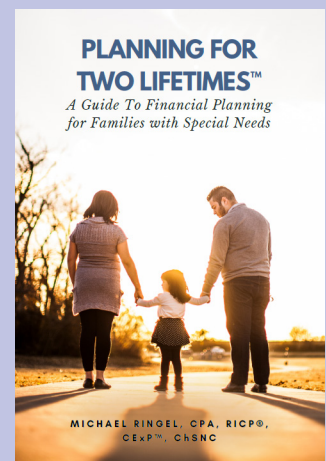
#Financial Resource



Scan the QR code to receive a free copy or visit below:

<https://planningfortwolifetimes.com/>

Michael Ringel is a seasoned financial professional with over two decades of experience in empowering individuals and families with disabilities through financial planning strategies. His new book & action guide, *Planning for Two Lifetimes*, is a family friendly guide to thoughtful financial planning. You can access his book and action guide for free, by PDF or physical copy.



DEVELOPMENT AND BEYOND NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 90: February 10th, 2026



Resources

Clinic

The Autism Program is continues to support families in many ways both inside and outside of Boston Medical Center. Check out our website to learn more about the services, supports and programs we offer including our Autism Friendly Hospital Initiative, Teens Engaged as Mentors (TEAM) program, and our training offerings. We also have a huge resource library where you can access free information on a variety of topics such as safety, behavioral support, transition to adulthood, insurance and more!



www.bmc.org/autism

[@BMCAutismProgram](https://twitter.com/BMCAutismProgram)

autismprogram@bmc.org

Our DBP clinicians are available for developmental evaluations, assessments and follow up. To connect with the clinical team, please call 617-414-4841 and follow the prompts for Developmental Pediatrics.

Marilyn Augustyn, MD
Arathi Reddy, DO
Rachel Amgott, NP
Christina Lazdowsky, NP
Mei Elansary, MD
Audrey Christiansen, MD
Sarah Canale, MD
Mary Ellen Killion, NP
Arielle Spellun, MD
Bridget Poznanski, PhD
Rachel Vuolo, MD

About this newsletter...



Development and Beyond is brought to you by the Autism Program at Boston Medical Center, a family support program of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics. Join our mailing list for future newsletters, community resources and more - just scan the QR code to the right!

