

DEVELOPMENT AND BEYOND NEWSLETTER

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

IN THIS ISSUE:

PAGE 3
Family Activities &
Back to School
Resources

PAGE 7
Hispanic Heritage
Month: Ways to
Celebrate and Connect

PAGE 9
Learning Opportunities
and Community
Connections



Dear Friends & Families,

Happy September!

We hope that everyone has been staying cool and dry this month - believe it or not, we are beginning to see the end of Summer 2026! Savor these last few weeks before we transition into long sleeves, hot coffee, and foliage (much needed).

We would like to celebrate the tremendous success of our conference held on August 5th, *Autism Across the Lifespan: Deepening Your Professional Competency*. We were thrilled to welcome approximately 100 participants from around the world, and engage in meaningful discussions about creating more inclusive, accessible, and autism-friendly care environments. Thank you to everyone who attended, presented, and contributed to making this event such a success!

On a personal note, I am starting graduate school this fall, and will no longer be the editor of this newsletter. My colleague Phoebe will be taking on that role, with this edition being her first. While it is bittersweet to say goodbye, I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to help share stories, resources, and opportunities that support the autism community. It has been a privilege to amplify the voices of autistic individuals, families, caregivers, and advocates, and to witness the strength, compassion, and dedication that define this community. Thank you for allowing me to be part of this journey. I leave this role inspired by this incredible community and have no doubt that you all will continue to shape me as I step into my Masters of Social Work program this Fall!

Wishing you a wonderful end to the summer, and thank you for being part of our community.

Warmly,

Juju Ha

The Autism Program at
Boston Medical Center

Adult Living Skills Class

The Adult Living Skills Class is back for season 2! This summer, our Adult & Transition Resource Specialists recently led a full session of classes catered to two different skill levels, which again focused on culinary skills and healthy eating habits for autistic adults. Thank you so much to our wonderful participants and staff for making this class a huge success! See below for a glowing review from one of our students.

Thanks Katie, I have a new favorite food cuz of class! Since I'm autistic, I have trouble with foods so I get excited when I have added a new food to my roster



I hope you're proud of yourselves, cuz you get to see the effects your class has on other people. I also have social anxiety and get nervous before class but I always leave with a smile on my face and happiness in my heart.

You are making my heart sing!
This is incredibly meaningful to us and everything we want our participants to get out of it :)





September Family Fun



Special Olympics CheerAbilities: Stoughton-Adaptive Cheerleading,

Starts September 12, FREE (Stoughton, MA)

The CheerAbilities Team is for children aged 3+ with special needs. The team will meet once a week for 1 hour, and learn motions, cheers, jumps, and tumbling. Registration required.

<https://spedchildmass.com/event/special-olympics-cheerabilities-stoughton/>

Sensory Friendly Sunday at the Dr. Seuss Museum and Springfield Science Museum,

September 13 (Springfield, MA)

From 9:00 AM to 11:00, enjoy an inclusive morning at the Amazing World of Dr. Seuss Museum and the Springfield Science Museum. Some exhibits will be modified, sensory-friendly crafts will be available, and there will be a quiet room for breaks. Admission fees apply.

<https://springfieldmuseums.org/program/sensory-friendly-sunday-3/2026-09-13/>

Especially for Me- a Sensory-Friendly Afternoon at the Acton Discovery Museum,

September 15, FREE (Acton, MA)

Join the Acton Discovery Museum for an afternoon of fun! Resources such as headphones and social stories will be available. There will also be a sensory map of the museum! This event will be from 1:30 to 4:30 PM. Registration is required.

<https://www.discoveryacton.org/visit/especially-me>

Especially for Me- An 18+ Inclusive Evening at the Acton Discovery Museum,

September 19, FREE (Acton, MA)

Join the Acton Discovery Museum for an evening of fun! This event is for visitors 18 or older with a disability, and their families. Resources such as headphones and social stories will be available. There will also be a sensory map of the museum! This event will be from 5 to 8 PM. Dinner will be provided. Registration is required.

<https://www.discoveryacton.org/visit/especially-me>

Autism in MY Pocket Harvest Festival,

September 26, FREE (Brimfield, MA)

The Brimfield Winery will be hosting a harvest festival with Autism in MY Pocket, with food, crafts, vendors, and a Jeep show! The best decorated Jeep for autism awareness will win a trophy. This event will be from 8 AM to 1 PM.

https://www.facebook.com/events/1317449993528038/?active_tab=about

Topsfield Fair Sensory Day,

October 5 (Topsfield, MA)

This is an opportunity for people with autism or sensory sensitivities to experience the Topsfield Fair. Vendors and Kiddie Land will have no flashing lights, music, or announcements. Other announcements will also be at a lower volume. Entrance fees apply.

<https://www.topsfieldfair.org/event/sensory-day/>



Back to School Tips



Before School:



Reset bedtime and start a morning routine before school begins



Review IEP or 504 accommodations- your child's needs may have changed



Prepare a one-page profile about your child, for teachers, aides, or bus drivers



Identify specific fears- is your child anxious about making friends? Lunch or bathroom breaks?

After School:



Provide a calm, sensory-friendly space. School can be a lot of stimulation, and your child might need time to decompress or self-regulate.



The transition from school to home can be difficult! Try providing a visual schedule of the after-school routine, or using timers.



Check out this article for more ideas! It breaks down why after-school regulation is important, and how parents can help.

How to Find School Supplies



Student Support Back to School Resource Fair

September 13, Madison Park Gym (Boston, MA)

This is an event for Boston Public School students and their families! Find free hair cutting/braiding, mental health resources, food access, and back to school resources!

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DcW4eR1vOsA/>

Find more specific resources

Cradles to Crayons is an organization that helps connect families to service partners. These service partners supply the families with their needs, like clothing, diapers, winter clothes, school supplies, and more!

<https://www.cradlestocrayons.org/boston/family-assistance/>

To use Cradles to Crayons, follow the link or QR code and enter your zip code. This will show you different service partners in your area. Click each one to see who they serve- some only serve individuals with complex medical needs, or those facing housing insecurity.



Pedestrian Safety

Pedestrian safety is needed everywhere- sidewalks, parking lots, driveways, and more! Motor vehicle accidents make up 1 in 4 accidental deaths for children under 13. People with disabilities are even more likely to be victims of these accidents, but knowing the rules can help keep you safe.

(<https://www.iihs.org/research-areas/fatality-statistics/detail/children>)

Safety at home:

- Play freeze tag to teach 'stop vs go'
- Teach your child road signs
- Read social stories or listen to songs about road safety

Safety outdoors:

- Model good behavior! Don't use your phone on the street
- Wear reflective clothing
- Utilize car door locks

Check out the BMC Autism Program's Safety Resource Guide for more! Travel information is on page 10: <https://www.bmc.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/Safety-Guide-2022.pdf>



Hispanic Heritage Month

History

National Hispanic heritage month is celebrated from September 15th through October 15th. The goal of this event is to celebrate the impact that Hispanic and Latino people have made on the United States. 18.9% of the nation's total population have Latino heritage- that's over 60 million! According to the Smithsonian Museum of the American Latino, the term Hispanic means a connection to Spain or the Spanish language. The term Latino is used to describe peoples with cultural or ancestral ties to Latin America or the Caribbean.

The holiday was first enacted as a week-long celebration in 1968, and became a month-long event in 1988. It spans September 15 through October 15 because several countries in Central America celebrate their independence on 9/15! September 15th is the independence day of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. The 16th is Mexico's Independence Day, with the 18th being Chile's, and the 21st for Belize.

Notable People Influenced by Disability



Jean-Michel Basquiat (1960-1988) was a Haitian/Puerto Rican artist, born in Brooklyn. He was self-taught, and used abstract art to convey themes of classism and racism in society. Basquiat is also known for his human imagery and use of anatomy. When he was 7 years old, Basquiat was in a car accident that left him in the hospital for several months. During this time, he was given an anatomy textbook, which greatly influenced his art.

[Wikimedia Commons]



Frida Kahlo (1907-1954) was born in Coyocoan, Mexico City, and is considered one of Mexico's greatest artists. Kahlo is best known for her self-portraits and work with symbolism. At age 6, Kahlo contracted polio, which left her right leg damaged. In 1922, she was in a bus accident that left her pelvis and spine fractured, leaving her in intense pain. It was during this recovery that Frida Kahlo painted her first self-portrait! She often used art as a way to talk about her pain.

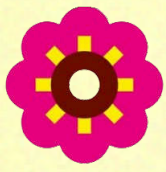
[Magda Pach, 1933, Creative Commons]

Hands-on Activity: Papel Picado

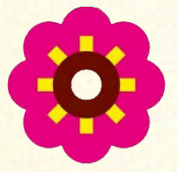
Papel Picado is a traditional craft from Mexico, made of colorful paper with intricately cut designs. Papel picado is made year-round, but is more popular around Day of the Dead and Mexican Independence Day. You can make papel picado by folding paper, cutting designs, and unfolding it to reveal the end result.

[Follow this QR code for a step-by-step tutorial guide on making your own papel picado!](#)





Hispanic Heritage Month: Ways to Connect



Dance and Journey through Latin America with Veronica Robles

September 12th, FREE (Boston, MA)

Join the JFK Presidential Library for a bilingual program of traditional music from countries across Latin America. A Flexible Calming Space (quiet room) is available for anyone who needs a break. Youth 17 and under are always free, and on the 12th from 10:00 AM- 2:00 PM admission will be free for all ages.

<https://www.thebostoncalendar.com/events/dance-and-music-journey-through-lat-in-america-with-veronica-robles>



Bilingual Story time for children aged 2-5 years old

September 17th and 24th, FREE (Boston, MA)

The Honan-Allston Library branch of the Boston Public Library is hosting a Spanish-English event with stories, songs, and crafts! Please reach out in advance for accommodations.

<https://bpl.bibliocommons.com/events/6a34287b16554cd59fc9b411>



Hispanic & Latino Community Support

Portuguese Language Autism Support Group

September 28 (Virtual)

This group is for Portuguese- speaking families, to share experiences raising children with ASD. Meetings also include discussion on ASD news, techniques, and more.

<https://autismalliance.org/events/portuguese-speaking-support-group-1?instance=13>

Haitian Support Group

September 15

This group is for Haitian families of people with intellectual or physical disabilities. Parents meet to discuss their challenges and learn more about ASD.

<https://arcofgreaterbrockton.org/events/haitian-support-group-2/>

Grupo de Apoyo Hispano- Hispanic Support Group

September 14, 21, 28 (Virtual)

Join to connect, share, and learn with other parents of children with social, emotional, or mental disabilities.

<https://ppal.net/events/virtual-grupo-de-apoyo-hispano/2026-09-14/>

Learning Opportunities

September is Suicide Prevention Month, and September 10th is World Suicide Prevention Day. This month is dedicated toward learning to talk openly about mental health and recognize the warning signs for suicide. This is especially important for the autistic community. We've highlighted some events on suicide prevention, to help you get started talking about mental health!

Workshop- Beyond Crisis: Supporting Suicide Prevention in the Autistic Community presented by Anne Kirby, PhD, OTR/L with AANE
September 17 (Virtual Event), \$35 to attend, \$60 for CE credit

This session will cover recent research advances related to suicide prevention for the Autistic community. The presenter will encourage participants to think broadly about suicide prevention and how Autistic people can be better supported, rather than waiting to respond to crisis moments. Advance registration is required, and CE credits are available for the live session. Financial assistance available.



<https://aane.org/events/ce-workshop-beyond-crisis-supporting-suicide-prevention-in-the-autistic-community-9-17-26-1200-pm-200-pm-et/>

Free Mental Health First Aid Training at the Northeast Arc
September 17 (Danvers, MA) FREE

Learn the skills to help adults (including those with disabilities) facing mental health crises. This course includes information on the common signs of mental health challenges, signs and symptoms of substance use challenges, how to interact with someone in crisis, and how to connect a person with help.



<https://ne-arc.org/mental-health-first-aid-training/>

988 offers 24/7 judgment-free support for mental health, substance use, and more. Text, call, or chat 988.

988 | SUICIDE & CRISIS
LIFELINE

More Ways To Learn

Workshop- Executive Functioning Deep Dive with AANE

September 14 (Virtual), \$25

Join AANE for a deep dive into Executive Functioning for both families and professionals! In this 90-minute webinar, the presenter and participants will explore executive functioning, and learn practical ideas to support yourself or your loved one. Advance registration is required, and financial assistance with the attendance fee is available.

<https://aane.org/events/workshop-executive-functioning-deep-dive-9-14-26-700-pm-830-pm-et/>

Autism in the Wild: Creating Technologies to Support More Effective Interventions in Real-World Environments

September 16 (Virtual) FREE

How can technology help us better understand and support autistic people in daily life? Matthew Goodwin, PhD explores cutting-edge technologies being developed for researchers, clinicians, and families. His work spans automated detection of repetitive motor movements, and real-time monitoring of physiological signals that precede aggression. Advance registration is required.

<https://autism.org/webinar/autism-in-the-wild-creating-technologies-to-support-more-effective-interventions-in-real-world-environments/>

Toileting Challenges in Autism: What Current Research Tells Us

September 23 (Virtual) FREE

Learn about evidence-based, effective strategies to manage constipation, encopresis, and other toileting issues in autistic individuals. This event is hosted by the Autism Research Institute, with Mindy Scheithauer, PhD, BCBA-D. Advance registration is required.

<https://autism.org/webinar/toileting-challenges-in-autism-what-current-research-tells-us/>

Family Action Meetup with Autism Housing Pathways

September 28 (Virtual) \$5 for non-AHP partners, free with registration

These monthly meetings are a great way to learn about housing options for people with disabilities in the state of Massachusetts. The meeting includes an overview on housing, discussion of housing models followed by breakout group discussion, and an optional email group. Advance registration is required.

<https://fcsn.org/event/family-action-meetups-7/>

ways to **Find Support**

For Parents

Caregivers of School-Aged Children September 19 (Brockton, MA)

This is an opportunity to share experiences, resources, and support with other parents of school-aged children with disabilities. Children welcome, RSVP in advance for childcare.

<https://arcofgreaterbrockton.org/events/caregivers-of-school-aged-children-37/>

Transition Age Caregiver Meet-Up September 17 (Virtual)

A virtual group for caregivers of individuals aged 14 and older, who are preparing to transition to adulthood. Meeting include a workshop or presentation.

<https://arcofgreaterbrockton.org/events/transition-meet-up-9/>

Caregivers of 22+ October 2 (Brockton, MA)

Do you care for a loved one aged 22 or older who has an intellectual/developmental disability, chronic illness, or mental health condition? Join other caregivers for support. Please RSVP.

<https://arcofgreaterbrockton.org/events/caregivers-of-22-9/>

For Adults with ASD

Community Connections for Autistic Adults

October 6 (Virtual)

This is a discussion session for adults with ASD to connect with each other. Sessions hosted on Zoom with a facilitator. Spots limited- register in advance.

<https://aane.org/events/community-connection-session-for-adults-10-6-26-1100-am-1200-pm-et/>

Support for BIPOC Adults September 8 (Virtual)

This is a support group for autistic people of color, aged 18 and up. The space is peer-led, allowing participants to share their specific experiences. Advance registration is required.

<https://aane.org/events/support-group-for-bi-poc-adults-9-8-26-1200-pm-100-pm-et/>

Support Group for Women September 28 (Virtual)

This group is for those who identify as female. The discussions will focus on what it means to be independent, sexuality, and what it means to be a woman with ASD. Advance registration is required.

<https://aane.org/events/support-group-for-women-9-28-26-600-pm-730-pm-et/>

DEVELOPMENT AND BEYOND NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 96: September 2nd, 2026



Resources

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

Clinic

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

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!

