

The AUsome Social Group
Teen/Young Adult Recreation/Social Group
Sponsored by the Autism Society of Greater Madison (ASGM)
Contact: Nancy Alar, 3802 Gala Way, Cottage Grove, WI 53527
(608) 222-4378 or ausome@hughes.net

- What:** Spring Fling Dance (see flyer on page 2)
When: May 2, 2010 (Sunday afternoon), 12:30 – 3:30 p.m.
Where: Blackhawk Church, 9620 Brader Way, Verona, (2 miles west of Madison on Mineral Point Road)
Cost: Free! Thanks to Blackhawk Church and Community Living Connections for inviting our AUsome Group to their dance party!
Dress: This is your chance to dress up if you want to – semi-formal dress is suggested but not required.

Blackhawk Church is sponsoring this dance as a service to the local community and those with disabilities. It is part of a larger effort called “Love Madison” that Blackhawk Church is doing on May 2nd. The church and the Community Living Connections service organization invited our AUsome Group to participate in the dance portion of “Love Madison”. Blackhawk Church is a (very) large building west of Madison. Go 2 miles west of the beltline on Mineral Point Road. The church is on the right just behind an office building. Here is a link to the church web site <http://www.blackhawkchurch.org/>. Here’s a link to a [map to the church](#)

There is a 2 level parking structure behind the church. It would be most convenient if you park on the upper level. The dance will be held in the gym (this church is big enough to have its own gymnasium). Volunteers will meet us at the door and escort us to the gym. The music they will be using for the dance is recorded (not a live band). They’ll have 70’s and 80’s music and dance mixes. There will also be the chance to do some of those fun things like the Macarena and Y-M-C-A. We always do those at the ASW conference dance and they are lots of fun. You don’t have to dance; you can just come and watch and listen to the music. The church is big enough that there will be a quiet area you can go if you need to take a break. You don’t have to stay the whole time if you don’t want to.

There will also be plenty of refreshments available including fruit, cheese, crackers, plus other snacks and munchies. I will also be bringing gluten free crackers and Chex mix and popcorn. Lemonade and other soft drinks will also be provided.

A Big thanks to Blackhawk Church and Community Living Connections for inviting us to join in their dancing and fun!

- ☺ The music may be loud, but there will be a place to go to take a break
- ☺ Semi-formal dress is suggested, but not required
- ☺ We will have gluten free snacks available
- ☺ Wear comfortable dancing shoes!

Spring



Fling Dance

Sponsored by Blackhawk Church



Sunday, May 2, 2010

Time: 12:30-3:30pm

Where: Blackhawk Church

(9620 Brader Way - Dance will be in the gym)

**Spring is here, so it's time to freshen up
in your best attire and spring into
fun by dancing the afternoon away!
Bring a date or find one at the dance!**

Music, snacks & fun!

Directions: Head west on Mineral Point Road. You will travel past West Towne and the beltline. Continue one mile past the beltline and you will see the church on the right. Turn right on Brader Way and follow it to the parking lot. The dance will be held in the gym.



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Contact: Nancy Alar, 3802 Gala Way, Cottage Grove, WI 53527

(608) 222-4378 or ausome@hughes.net

- What:** Visit Fine Feathered Friends Bird Sanctuary for exotic pet birds; visit to Culver's afterwards
- When:** Saturday, June 5, 2010; 4:00 – 5:00 P.M.
- Where:** 1570 County Highway A, Edgerton, WI 53534; Culver's afterwards at 571 East Richardson Springs Road, Edgerton, WI (see directions below)
- Cost:** Free! Bring money for a snack at Culver's

Fine Feathered Friends Sanctuary is like a dog rescue organization only it is for pet birds. They are a nonprofit organization committed to providing a safe haven, including proper veterinary care, nutrition, socialization, physical and mental stimulation, and clean, spacious living areas for exotic birds. They have a lot of large parrots like Macaws and Cockatoos. Like other rescue organizations, their goal is to place their birds in appropriate forever homes. You can learn more details about this bird rescue on their web site at <http://www.feathered-friends.com/Home.html>.

Normally Fine Feathered Friends closes at 4:00, but we are getting a private, after-hours visit. We will get a tour of the sanctuary and get to meet some of the birds. We will also learn about the joys and challenges of keeping large birds. For example they have a special room where just the cockatoos are kept. Cockatoos shed a lot of fine, white powder that sometimes causes breathing and allergy problems for the other birds. (I know this is absolutely true because I used to have a big Moluccan Cockatoo named Sammy. I was always battling this fine white dust in my house.)

The calls of these big birds can be VERY loud. If you have noise sensitivity, you might not be able to stay in the building – especially the cockatoo room. The caretakers will bring a (quiet) tame bird outside to interact with anyone who can't handle the noise.

This activity is a little farther away than usual. Give me a call if you need transportation help. To get to the bird sanctuary, go south on I90 to Exit 156 (Hwy 51). Turn right (west) at the bottom of the exit ramp and go about 2 miles to Washington Rd. Turn left and go about a mile to Co Hwy A. Turn left onto Co Hwy A. The bird sanctuary is just around the corner on the left. There is a big wooden model of a macaw on a pole in the front. There are a few parking spaces in their driveway. If these are full, you can park on the road, but be careful of traffic.

The driveway The Culvers we are going to is a few miles farther from Madison just off I90 at Exit 163. This is right by the Rock River bridge. I've been told it is the biggest Culvers in the state.

Important Items and Sensory Issues:

- ☺ Birds can be VERY loud. I will have ear plugs available.
- ☺ Be sure to keep your fingers out of the cages.
- ☺ Do not attend this activity if you have any kind of respiratory illness. The dust from the birds may aggravate it and some human diseases are transmissible to birds.

Important Information:

1. Visit <http://www.autismmadison.org/> for other services and activities sponsored by the **Autism Society of Great Madison (ASGM)**. The 3rd Tuesday evening of the month is either a parent support group meeting at the Midvale Community Lutheran Church or a special presentation. There is also sensory friendly Saturday movies on the last Saturday of the month and quarterly birthday parties at “Pump-it-up”. There are also many other special events (such as A-Maze-ing Days at the Treinen Farm Corn Maze) through out the year.

What Happened at AUsome’s Last Outings?

Medical Home Community Conversation/Resource Sharing (with a Pizza Lunch) March 6th, 2010 (Saturday), Noon - 2:00 p.m.

This activity was held at the Waisman Center (which generously provided the use of their very best (8th floor!) conference room for us to meet. A BIG thanks to Gail Chodron and Kristin Gowen (and student Maisie) for setting up this activity, providing the pizza and other snacks and leading the discussion. We even had a good selection of gluten and dairy free pizza and snacks. The Southern Regional Center for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs (they’re looking for a catchier name) used this gathering as a way to connect directly with those on the autism spectrum.

Gail and Kristin work for the Southern Center. They were interested in gathering information about what has worked and not worked for people on the spectrum in the medical environment. They were especially interested in novel ideas that they might get through the usual professional channels. Sixteen people showed up to share their ideas; we had a real animated and intense discussion. We were supposed to end at 2:00, but we had so much to say we didn’t stop talking until 2:15.

Some of the places mentioned where people have gotten useful information and assistance of various kinds included (besides the Internet of course) the prescription assistance program, reading billboards in all agencies/schools, cub scouts, school clubs, 4H, Toastmasters, acting as a mentor for others, the STEM education program and the 211 information phone number. Everyone participated in the discussion, which was very lively.

At the end, Gail and Kristin shared lots of information and various lists with the group including such things as dentists that take Medicaid, contact information for prescription assistance, web sites for various Waisman Center resources, medical research participation opportunities and pamphlets explaining a wide range of local resources for people with disabilities. This included an extensive transition booklet provided by DPI. You can see some of the materials in our AUsome scrapbook. Just be aware that any resource list is on the way to being outdated as soon as it is published.

It was such an interesting and useful day that we have talked about doing this again in another year.

James Williams Discussed and Explained the “Hidden Curriculum” of Facebook Friday Evening, April 2, 2010; 7:00 – 8:45 P.M.

A BIG thanks to Tom Alesia (our ASGM staff member) for taking care of the logistics for James’ visit while I was out of town. Tom had a lot to do, including taking pictures, making sure the library was set up correctly with the needed technology, setting up refreshments and picking James up from the bus station. You might remember that this was exactly the weekend that the bus station was changing its location about once a day - very confusing! But thanks to Tom, James and cell phones, it all worked out in the end. Also a continuing thanks to the Capital Times Kid’s Fund for paying James’ expenses and speaking fee.

Below is the summary of James’ Williams Facebook discussion that Tom wrote up for us:

Making his third appearance in almost four years to the AUsome group, James Williams discussed another timely subject: the proper use of Facebook. Williams, who is in his early 20s and has high-functioning autism, encourages teens and adults on the spectrum to use the social online tool. His presentation was informative and entertaining, and he discussed Facebook’s positives and negatives.

Williams warned how it’s important to avoid writing everything that is happening in your life, especially personal matters, on Facebook that can be read by many people. Still, he emphasized that it is a terrific option for anyone on the spectrum to interact with others. It also gives people who are non-verbal a new option for communication, he said.

Instead of a typical-style lecture, Williams had the seven guests ask him questions about Facebook and let them control the direction of the presentation.

With Williams’ Facebook home page projected on the wall behind him, he noted how to approach friends online and how to do direct conversations with them if you don’t want everyone to read a notation. He also talked about acronyms that dominate much of the text in Facebook writing.

By the end of the evening, Williams sold the two copies of his novel and made a few new friends.

AUSome Social Group Philosophy and Ground Rules

Group Sponsor:

The AUSome Social Group is sponsored by the Autism Society of Greater Madison (ASGM). **It is highly recommended that you join the Autism Society of Greater Madison. You should at least subscribe to the Autism Society of Greater Madison newsletter (subscription cost is only \$5) if you are not a chapter member.** It is possible that Madison chapter membership may be required in the future as the AUSome group becomes larger and requires more resources. You can get more information about the Madison Chapter (including an extensive autism resource list), by calling (608) 213-8519 or sending a note to ASGM, 2935 Fish Hatchery Rd #101, Madison, WI 53711

See the ASGM website at <http://www.autismmadison.org/> for membership information and a link to the AUSome Group web pages <http://www.autismmadison.org/ausome/index.htm> . If you join the Autism Society of Greater Madison, this automatically gives you the chapter newsletter plus membership in both the state (ASW) and national Autistic Societies so you will get all those mailings as well. (Changes are underway with national vs local membership, so check with the website to confirm membership details.)

Group Purpose:

The AUSome group was organized to provide recreation and social opportunities for people ages 12 and over who are challenged by sensory/communication issues related to Autism/Asperger's/PDD/Tourette's. However, anyone is welcome to join the activities. I try to set up activities that allow for social interaction between group members and between parents and siblings of the group. Friends of group members are welcome to come along.

The AUSome Newsletter:

The AUSome Group has a separate newsletter that is sent out every other month, containing details for the next 2 outings and a summary of what happened the past 2 months. The AUSome newsletter will be sent out at least a week in advance of the next outing (I hope). Some things may be planned with short notice if something interesting comes up. If you have an e-mail address and are OK with receiving the newsletter that way, let me (Nancy Alar) know. It saves time and postage if notification can just be sent electronically. I will maintain a mailing list of participants, and will verify this list annually – usually in January in conjunction with a call about tickets to the juggling show. Our AUSome newsletter is also available on the web at <http://www.autismmadison.org/newsletter/index.htm>

General Activity Plans:

The general plan is to have an activity about once a month that will last from 2 to 4 hours. The target day will be the first Saturday of the month. However, this is subject to schedule conflicts and availability of interesting activities. Activities that we have done include bowling, miniature golf, gymnastics, movies, a talent show, art gallery visit, fossil hunt, Little Amerricka (a local amusement park), swimming, horse back riding, Go Cart driving, farm market, airplane rides, pottery making and a limousine ride. Each January we attend the 47th annual Madfest Juggling show. In August we join other ASGM members for a private pool party at the Monona Pool. Every November we have “video game night”. If you are especially interested in a particular activity or have other suggestions, please let me know.

Sensory Issues:

Every effort will be made to accommodate sensory issues by limiting cigarette smoke, strong odors, unusual lighting, large crowds and high noise levels where possible. If an activity might involve some of the sensory problems mentioned above, they will be described in the AUSome newsletter. It will not be possible to accommodate everyone's needs all the time so individuals must decide their tolerance levels for each activity. Please let me know if you have any special requests in this area. Also, please be sensitive to requests from group members who have special sensory needs (such as problems with others chewing gum.).

Logistics:

Some individuals may need to arrange for a support person to accompany them. Please use your best judgment in this area. Transportation will be the responsibility of each individual. However, effort will be made to provide help with transportation by designating central meeting points, etc. **Please call me, Nancy Alar, (608) 222-4378 or e-mail me at ausome@hughes.net if you have transportation problems, and I'll try to help work out a way for you to get there.**

Since these activities are loosely organized social outings, each person participates at their own risk.