

# **AUTISM SOCIETY**

*Improving the Lives of All Affected by Autism*

*Nebraska*

**2011 YEAR IN REVIEW**



**NEWSGRAM**

On behalf of our Board of Directors, I would like to thank our support group leaders, members and all volunteers who have helped support and advocate for individuals with autism and their families in Nebraska.

Our support groups in Omaha, North Platte, Kearney, Grand Island, and Norfolk have continued to hold meetings and events bringing people together in 2011. We are also pleased to have co-sponsored several events in Lincoln as well. It is our continued hope that we are a source of support and information for those affected by autism spectrum disorders in the coming year. The Autism Society of Nebraska will continue to help start support groups in new communities in Nebraska. If you are interested in developing a new group in your area please contact us!

We are very pleased to have created new grants that we will be awarding in 2012 because of all the hard work, support and commitment of everyone who participated in our annual ASN Puzzle Walks. We will be sharing detailed information about our new grants in upcoming Newsgrams and on our website beginning mid January.

We wish you a safe and happy New Year!

Megan Misegadis  
ASN President



**In union there is strength.  
—Aesop**



**THANK YOU** to the many great individuals who donated monies, services, and even their valuable time to the Autism Society of Nebraska and the Nebraska autism community!

We are a **GRASSROOTS** organization whose leadership comes directly from the community we seek to serve. **Our voices are your voices!** When you see the Autism Society at a conference you know that you are talking to someone who understands first hand what autism has brought to your life. They understand the challenges...and the joys!

In 2011 the Autism Society had to call on our community members to help us represent at many different events. We needed to be at the resource fairs so that we could greet those new families. We needed to be on the school committees so that the needs of our students would be understood. We needed to share our stories so that we could help the world understand that autism is not a tragedy. We needed to help them understand that **EVERY** person deserves the chance to live the life of their choosing as well as access to the supports to make that happen.

Our voice....is your voice! And we'd like to thank you for using it!

*Autism Puzzle Walk*



*resource fairs*

*parades*

*presentations*

*meetings*

*family events*

*fundraisers*

*panel discussions*

*statewide autism committees*

*workshops*

*interviews*

*conferences*

## YAHOO! GROUPS

Thank you to everyone who has joined the Autism Society of Nebraska Yahoo Listserv. For over 4 years the Autism Society has been helping bring our Nebraska community together through a virtual support network.

The Autism Society listserv has been created to help families communicate about the resources, therapy options, doctors and schools in our state. Our listserv network comes together to share so many of their same thoughts, questions and desires. Autism is impacting the lives of families in Nebraska City, Ogallala and virtually everywhere in between. Some listserv discussions are focused on a location but most are about connecting with a new found community....one that understands their life and all the quirks that come with it.

The Autism Society is proud of being able to provide a soft landing spot for those new families just receiving a diagnosis. Our families, who have felt their energy drain from them, are finding that by coming together they are finding a newfound strength. There is a confidence that comes from finding each other and knowing that we are not alone. Autism is a lifelong journey full of so many joys ... and challenges. No one understands that better than someone who is traveling those same paths along with you!

Not already a member of the listserv? Been away awhile? We'd love to have you join us!

We encourage the newly diagnosed as well as the more seasoned families to express themselves in a safe environment. There can be a lot of division within the world and the autism community is no exception. ASN follows an "options policy" and believes that each person with autism is a unique individual. Each family and each individual with autism should have the right to learn about and then select the options that they feel are most appropriate for the individual with autism. So whether it is a discussion about ABA or biomedical interventions, we are here to support one another. It is our mission to connect you with each other and allow you to make the decisions based on what is best in your situation.

Click [here](http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/asnebraska/) to join or visit <http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/asnebraska/>

The Facebook logo, consisting of the word "facebook" in white lowercase letters on a blue rectangular background.

Not already an Autism Society of Nebraska fan?...Click [HERE!](#)  
Be sure and check us out on Facebook to stay up to date in  
between our Newsgrams!

*My son really loves all the activities. I've noticed an improvement in his self confidence when he gets the opportunity to get out and try new things.*  
*(Autism Society Parent)*



**What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters, compared to what lies within us.**

**—Emerson**



*My son was invited to a roller skating party about a year ago. Even with my help, he really struggled with it and ended up leaving early in tears. Part of the frustration came from other kids strapping on skates for the first time and being able to take off after only a few minutes. When I saw that the Autism Society was hosting a roller skating event last month, I was hopeful that it would be the right kind of environment to try again. It was! Everyone was so supportive that by the end of the event my son was not only skating independently but smiling from ear to ear over his accomplishment. Thank you for giving him an opportunity to prove to himself that it may take a little more time but he can succeed at anything he desires!*

*—Joanne Lathrop*

**The Autism Society of Nebraska would like to thank the families of**

**RACHEL FORTNER  
and  
GAYLE JOHNSON**

**for their generous donations in memoriam of their loved ones.**



*The Autism Society is a proud member of the ONE Coalition who hosted the 2nd Annual Husker Heroes event in 2011. Thank you to the University of Nebraska - Lincoln, Husker athletes, wonderful volunteers and amazing families who joined us for such a great evening!*



The highest result in education is tolerance.

—Helen Keller



*The Autism Society has meant to our family a safe, enjoyable, judgment-free social environment for our kiddos while you have the pleasure of meeting strong, resilient moms and dads and share in each other's journey of learning, education and support. We are so glad you are here!*

—The Wachners





In April 2011 we had several families participate in a sleepover at the Henry Doorly Zoo. Here are a couple of our members sleeping in the aquarium. Some even slept under the sharks!

**The Autism Society of Nebraska would like to thank employees from**

**Covidien  
Howard County Memorial Hospital  
McClain Bank  
Thrivent Financial for Lutherns  
Wells Fargo**

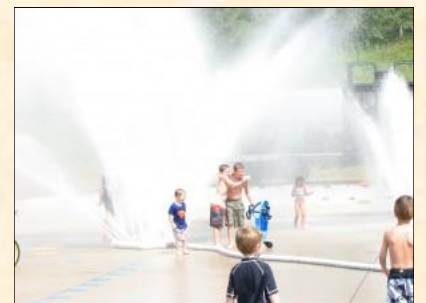
**for their generous donations in 2011!**

*The Autism Society events have given my son experiences that I would have never been able to give him. Without the "sensory friendly" and accepting environment, we could have never done something as overwhelming as a Fire Safety Day.*

*(Autism Society Parent)*



Research indicates that persons with autism and other developmental disabilities are approximately seven times more likely to come in contact with law enforcement professionals than a member of the general population. This was the 4th year the Autism Society has partnered with the Bellevue Fire Department to host a Fire Safety Day for our community. Individuals of all ages came out and met real firemen, talked with real policemen, witnessed a helicopter land and even take off. They had the opportunity to ride on a fire engine, practice climbing safely out of a window, and even watched the firemen put out a real fire! Then they got to finish off their afternoon with some of the greatest sprinklers imaginable!



We owe THANKS to so many community groups and businesses.  
Special thanks to

Alpha Sigma #3812  
Autism Center of Nebraska  
Bellevue Fire Department  
Beta Sigma Phi Sorority  
Lincoln Racket Club  
Methodist College Student Government  
Pump It Up  
Rainbow Girls  
Shadow Lake Church  
Union Pacific Railroad  
UNO National Student Speech Language Hearing Association

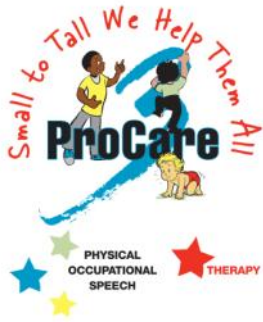


*To us, the Autism Society of Nebraska is somewhere we can go and just be ourselves, without having to worry about people staring if our son screams or cries because people are clapping or being too loud. We don't have to apologize if our son is being rude (many times just speaking the truth), because everyone understands. They are someone to turn when we have questions on the best way to handle our son's behavior, need advice, or just someone to talk to who is going through the same situation.*

*-Tanya Hanson*



# And a BIG THANK YOU to our 2011 Omaha Autism Puzzle Walk Sponsors



Lorrie E. Bryant, Ph.D., PC  
Galaska and Son, Inc  
Keys to Harmony  
Kids, Inc

PE 101  
Handprints & Footsteps  
Boulder Creek  
LaNeis Rindone

The Autism Society of Nebraska would like to thank the following schools who rallied behind our community by hosting fundraising events to benefit the Nebraska autism community!

Gretna Public School  
Peter Kiewitt Middle School (Omaha)  
Northwest High School (Omaha)

Thank you to the autism community in western Nebraska who rallied and hosted an Autism Puzzle Walk in North Platte!



Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.

—Henry Ford





OMAHA WALK COMMITTEE VOLUNTEERS

Thank you to the Autism Puzzle Walk Volunteers for all of your hard work. These advocates donated their precious time to make the Autism Walk a success and for that we are all extremely grateful. Their gift allows us to have pool parties, support group meetings, and among many other things—family scholarships.

These amazing advocates are mothers, fathers, wives, husbands, sons and daughters. Their lives are touched by autism. They have jobs, school meetings and therapy appointments yet they came together to make the 4th annual Autism Puzzle Walk a reality—and a success!

When you see one of these amazing advocates please take a moment to thank them for all that they do for our community!

(Because we couldn't do what we do—without them!)

ONE HUNDRED percent of the earnings from the Autism Puzzle Walk stay in Nebraska where they can be used by the Autism Society of Nebraska to further our mission of improving the lives of all affected by autism. This amazing community event is our primary means for funding our many endeavors and in 2011 we had more than 1000 people statewide rallying behind the Autism Society. The Autism Walk provided almost \$50,000 that the Autism Society is using to directly impact our Nebraska families!

Our largest walk is in Omaha but we have had other communities join in the effort. We have even set up a “Virtual Walker” designation so that you don’t have to travel to support the cause. It would be our dream to have the autism community all across Nebraska coming out and rallying behind the Autism Society’s Autism Puzzle Walk.

We would love to have you join us in 2012!

*(Email us at [autismsociety@autismnebraska.org](mailto:autismsociety@autismnebraska.org) to see about hosting a walk in your community!)*



The Autism Society presents their Excellence in Autism Award at the 2011 State Autism Conference.

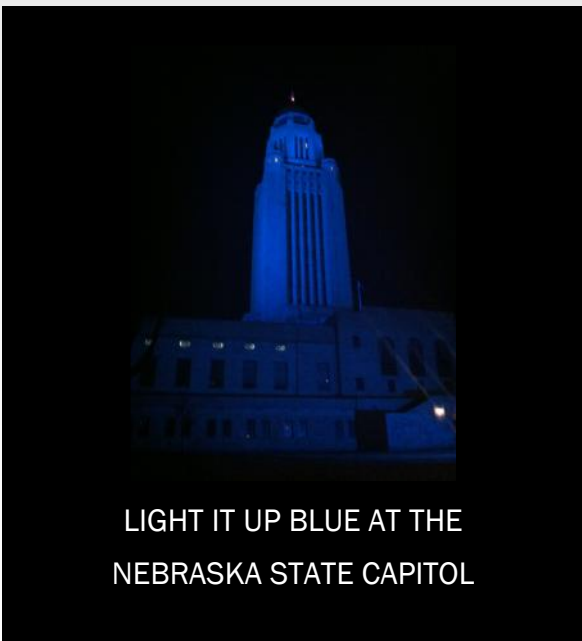
The Autism Society presents the Dan Archwamety Post Secondary Scholarship at the 2011 State Autism Conference.



Save the Date!

The 5th Annual  
Autism Puzzle Walk  
will be

Saturday, April 28, 2012



LIGHT IT UP BLUE AT THE  
NEBRASKA STATE CAPITOL



PARENTS ATTENDING THE 40TH  
ANNUAL SENATORIAL DINNER  
HOSTED BY THE ARC OF NEBRASKA

A big **THANKS** to the employees at

**Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska  
ConAgra Foods  
First National Bank of Omaha  
Millard Lumber  
National Indemnity  
Omaha Public Power**

**and all the others who designate a portion of their United Way contributions to the Autism Society of Nebraska!**



**And special thanks to our**

**Volunteer Board of Directors**

**MEGAN MISEGADIS—LINCOLN  
WENDY HAMILTON—OMAHA  
REBECCA ROSSELL—NORTH PLATTE  
DAN KOSMICKI—LINCOLN  
ROBYN ROBERTS—OMAHA  
SUZANNE VANBOENING—DONIPHAN  
MARVIN BRINKMAN—OMAHA**

**Communications Director**

**SHAWN NEFF—OMAHA**

**And a big thanks to their families who hold down the fort while our board members donate so much time and energy to the Autism Society of Nebraska!**

*ASN has allowed my family to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance. No longer are we alienated or misunderstood. As advocates for adults with ASDs, we take our role in the autism community very seriously, and ASN has been a tremendous source of support.*

*From Fred, Leroy, and Moppy, we thank you and wish you all the happiest of holidays!*

*—Wendy Hamilton*

And THANK YOU to our Facebook fans!  
Not already a fan?...Click [HERE!](#)



## Help us make this Newsgram relevant to you!

We rely on our community to help us find useful information to share with you through this Newsgram. If you have an event that you would like added to the Autism Society of Nebraska Newsgram please email us at [autismsocietynewsgram@autismnebraska.org](mailto:autismsocietynewsgram@autismnebraska.org).

You are our eyes and ears across the state. Please help us help you AND your neighbors by sharing your resources and contacts with us!



To have your event added to the Autism Society Newsgram and calendar please email [autismsociety@autismnebraska.org](mailto:autismsociety@autismnebraska.org) or you can post it directly to our calendar at [www.autismnebraska.org](http://www.autismnebraska.org). Please be aware that it may take 24 hours for your event to appear on the site.

### Autism Society of Nebraska

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E-mail: [autismsociety@autismnebraska.org](mailto:autismsociety@autismnebraska.org)

We appreciate your help including our statewide community events! Please help us help you AND your neighbors!



All information on this Newsgram is also available by visiting our web site at [www.autismnebraska.org](http://www.autismnebraska.org)