Welcome Back!

WE HAVE MISSED YOU!

We are a group of NIU faculty and students with interests in supporting families to those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Our focus is to provide helpful information, resources and a supportive environment while also providing families with opportunities to connect with community professionals and therapeutic or recreational activities.

This year our organization will look a little different. We plan to provide a monthly newsletter packed with resources, webinars, crafts, activities, and connection opportunities for families.

At this time, we will not be hosting any in-person gatherings or activities. However, NIU student volunteers are still eager to be involved with the organization, and we hope you are too!

In this letter, we talk about:

- INVOLVEMENT SURVEY
- RESOURCES
- ACTIVITIES
- CRAFTS
Coping During COVID-19

INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Our featured resource of the month is the Autism Research Institute’s COVID-19 page. There are helpful webinars showcased on this page. A few we would like to highlight are “Sensory Smart™ Strategies During the Pandemic,” “Talking to kids about changing schedules, altered plans, and disruption during COVID-19,” and “Home All Day – Basic supports and strategies to get us through COVID-19.” Each of these webinars last roughly 1 hour.

There are also stories that help explain COVID procedures to kids. The link is below if you would like to check it out!

https://www.autism.org/covid-19-resources/

Survey
Please take this survey! We will set up Caregiver Coffee Chats via Zoom, and would love to know when you are available to meet. Caregiver Coffee Chats are times for families to connect during this time and give and receive support. Please have your responses in by Sunday, October 11th to allow time to schedule events for this month!
http://go.niu.edu/cztki6

Crafts
There are three craft activities attached to this newsletter to try! We suggest your family pairs up with an NIU student volunteer to complete them! You can also do the activities on your own, as a list of materials needed and directions are provided. See ‘NIU Student Volunteer’ section for more details!

Activities
Below are a few links for exercises and book readings for your family to try!

Exercise
Halloween Yoga:
http://go.niu.edu/1h3m
Funny Skeleton Yoga:
http://go.niu.edu/9hm9h

Books
The Biggest Apple Ever:
http://go.niu.edu/npu6
Pete the Cat: Trick or Pete:
http://go.niu.edu/0kurm

NIU Student Volunteers
If your family would like to have a volunteer do a video call with your child(ren) and do a craft, read a book, or do an activity, please contact Dr. Gladfelter via email at agladfelter@niu.edu. Also, please include information about which days and times work for your family, how many kids will be on the call and their ages, and any other information you would like the volunteer to know!

Joke:
What would you find on a haunted beach? A sand-witch!
AUTUMN TREE PAINTING

Materials:
- Printable branch template
- Blue cardstock or construction paper (for sky background)
- Acrylic paint in fall colors (yellow, red, orange) and brown for the tree trunk.
- Paintbrushes
- Glue stick
- Paper plate
- Cotton balls
- Clothes pin (can use finger to hold cotton ball or any other type of pin/clip if no clothespin available)

Instructions:
- Download template and cut it out
- Glue it to the blue cardstock or construction paper.
- Pour some paint of each color onto the paper plate.
- Start with brown and paint the tree trunk
- Attach clothespin to cotton ball.
- Dip cotton ball in the red paint and dab it on and around the branches.
- Continue this with orange and finally with yellow.
- Let it dry and your autumn tree is finished!
Apple Tree Template
Materials:
- Puffy ghost template
- Card stock paper
- Elmer’s liquid school glue
- Cotton balls
- Black construction paper (for eyes and mouth)
- Scissors
- Optional: black yarn

Instructions:
- Download puffy ghost template or trace your own ghost.
- Cut out the ghost.
- Glue ghost on cardstock paper and then cut ghost out again.
- Glue the cotton balls on the ghost.
- Cut out eyes and mouth for the ghost with the black construction paper.
- Glue the eyes and mouth on the ghost.
- Optional: tape a piece of black yarn on the back of the ghost to hang on wall or doorknob.
Virtual pumpkin painting led by NIU students via Zoom. If you are interested in having this activity be taught virtually, please schedule a volunteer time with Dr. Gladfelter (see NIU Student Volunteers section).

**Materials Needed:**

- Pumpkin (your choice of size)
- Paint (different colors if possible)
- Paintbrushes
- Extras *not required* (stickers, googly eyes, glitter, glue)