HAPPY AUTISM ACCEPTANCE MONTH!

Hello! Welcome or welcome back to the NIU Autism Caregiver Group monthly newsletter! April is Autism Acceptance Month and this month’s newsletter is filled with resources and activities that promote neurodiversity and autism acceptance! We hope you stay connected with us and engaged in our group through our monthly Caregiver Coffee Chats, Pen Pal opportunities, and other activities. The faculty and students at NIU Autism Caregiver Group are here to support your family as well as provide resources and activities. We started creating our online newsletters in Fall 2020, and have received a great response! We are so excited about how many people are getting the chance to follow our newsletters and connect with us. Thank you for all of the positive feedback and supporting our organization!

Celebrate Neurodiversity!

HISTORY OF AUTISM ACCEPTANCE MONTH

In 1970, the Autism Society created a nationwide effort to promote autism awareness. In 1972, they launched the first annual National Autistic Children’s week, which eventually evolved into Autism Acceptance Month (AAM). In 2021, the Autism Society of America is celebrating Autism Acceptance Month with a “Celebrate Differences” campaign, using the #CelebrateDifferences on social media. (Source: Autism Society) You can also read about their shift from Autism Awareness Month to Autism Acceptance month by clicking this link.
Autism Caregiver Group Resources & Activities

Exercise & Video Activities
- Sensory Yoga for Autism Video
- Can’t Stop the Feeling Dance Video
- Level Up! Video Game Workout for Kids
- Hey Bear! Sensory Rainbow Dance Party
- Scarf Dance (grab some scarves or shirts for this video and dance along!)

Caregiver Coffee Chat
NIU Autism Caregiver Group Coffee Chat
The NIU Autism Caregiver Group is virtual this year! If you would like to join our Caregiver Coffee Chat, please RSVP by emailing Allison Gladfelter at agladfelter@niu.edu to receive the private Zoom link. Our April Caregiver Coffee Chat will be on Monday, April 26th, from 11:00am - 12:00pm. For more information about our group, please visit our website.

Dial-in Information
Email Allison Gladfelter at agladfelter@niu.edu to receive the private Zoom meeting link.

Pen Pal Program
If your child(ren) would like to have a pen pal with a student from the NIU communicative disorders student association (undergraduate speech pathology and audiology students) to exchange letters in the mail, please send an email to Dr. Gladfelter (agladfelter@niu.edu) to get paired with a student! Be sure to send how many kids will be writing, their names, and ages. We are also beginning to offer pen pals for Spanish speakers! If you are interested in learning more details, please email Dr. Gladfelter (agladfelter@niu.edu)

About Temple Grandin
Dr. Temple Grandin is an autistic individual who is a well-known spokesperson for the autism community. Dr. Grandin currently works at Colorado State University and has been there for 25 years working as a professor of animal sciences. Her love and empathy for animals is shown with cows, in particular! For more information, please visit her website! (Source: templegrandin.com)

Check out our website! go.niu.edu/asdcaregiver

ABOUT TEMPLE GRANDIN

"The world needs different kinds of minds to work together."

-Dr. Temple Grandin
**AMAZON SMILE**

Anytime!

Amazon has a program called Amazon Smile, which is a way for you to support your favorite charities while shopping online at Amazon, at no additional charge to you! This is a great way to support your favorite organizations, and we encourage those who shop through Amazon to check out this opportunity and support an organization through your orders! You can connect your existing Amazon account, and shop the same way as you typically would. Learn more about Amazon Smile here.

**EASTER SEALS TELETHON**

Saturday, April 17, 2021

Easterseals Joliet is holding a telethon! If you would like to participate, please go to their website. Below is a message from Easterseals Joliet about the event.

"During April, Easterseals Joliet holds its annual community event, The Celebration of Giving Telethon. This event will be on Saturday, April 17. It will be a hybrid event. The purpose of this event is to raise money to continue our amazing programs. Monies raised from this event will have a portion to offset costs to our Autism Clinic. The money raised will be donated to Easterseals Joliet. They can earmark their monies raised at the telethon for Autism services."

**INSAR VIRTUAL 5K**

May 1-5, 2021

"INSAR, the International Society for Autism Research, is a scientific and professional organization devoted to advancing knowledge about autism." They are hosting a virtual (completed anywhere!) 5K run/walk. You can complete your run/walk between May 1-5. The deadline to sign up is April 30, 2021. The cost to participate is $25, and all proceeds directly benefit The Color of Autism Foundation. Sign up or click here for more information!

**AUTISM ACCEPTANCE MONTH INVOLVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

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**NIU STUDENT ADVOCACY**

NIU students took these pictures and posted them to their social media accounts to celebrate Autism Acceptance Month! Join us in spreading Autism Acceptance messages through social media by creating your own Autism Acceptance sign and sharing it online with your friends and followers!
DIY RAINBOW SENSORY BOX

MATERIALS:

- Rice
- White vinegar
- Food coloring
- Several Large plastic bags (depending how many different colors you are using)
- 1 large container with a lid
- Small toys, figures, shapes, etc. to put inside container with the rice.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Decide how many different colors rice you’d like to include in your sensory box and set aside that number of plastic bags.
- Fill each bag with 5 cups of rice along with 2-3 tablespoons of vinegar and 30-40 drops of food coloring.
- Seal each bag and mix and shake the color around to cover the rice.
- Open each bag and allow them to air out overnight (this will dramatically reduce the vinegar smell).
- Pour the bags of rice in the container forming a color order of your choice.
- Add in small toys, figures, shapes, etc. get creative!
- The rainbow sensory box is now ready for your kiddos to dip their hands in, mix, and play!
LAVA LAMP SENSORY BOTTLES

Materials:
- Water
- Vegetable oil
- Food coloring
- Alka-Seltzer tablets
- Bottle or jar

Instructions:
- Fill your bottle or jar 2/3 full with vegetable oil.
- Pour in water so the bottle is almost full (leave a space at the top).
- Add a few drops of food coloring of choice.
- Add Alka-Seltzer tablet to the bottle and place the lid (works best if tablets are crushed in the packet first).
- Watch lava lamp come to life!
- Lava lamp sensory bottle is kid safe.
MATERIALS:
- Acrylic paint (white, black, light pink)
- 3 paint brushes
- Colored construction paper or cardstock paper.
- Paper plate or paint tray
- Googly eyes

INSTRUCTIONS:
- Pour a good amount of all paint colors on your paper plate or paint tray.
- Paint child’s hand white or they can dip their hand in the paint. Add small black spots all over. Add black hooves on the tip of their fingers.
- Press hand onto a piece of construction or cardstock paper.
- Next, curl your child’s hand into a fist and paint the finger end of fist with white and pink paint, which will make the head.
- Press child’s fist onto paper and the cow’s body and head are done!
- Add extras: googly eyes, udders, tail, ears, nostrils etc.

This craft was inspired by Temple Grandin’s love for cows. Temple Grandin is an Autism activist and consultant to the livestock industry on animal behavior. Learn more about Temple Grandin HERE.

All done!