

## The AUsome Social Group

Teen/Young Adult Recreation/Social Group

Provided by the Autism Society of South Central Wisconsin (ASC); <http://autismsouthcentral.org/>

Group Coordinator: Nancy Alar, 3802 Gala Way, Cottage Grove, WI 53527

(608) 222-4378 or [Nancy.L.Alar@gmail.com](mailto:Nancy.L.Alar@gmail.com)

- What:** Tour of Roxie Stillman's animal farm just east of Madison
- When:** May 17 (Sunday) Noon-2:00 P.M. (a lunch of hot dogs and soft drinks will be provided)
- Where:** 4122 County Hwy AB, Madison, 53718 (Note that Hwy AB is the extension of Buckeye Road – see map on last page)
- Cost:** Free! (Thanks to Roxie for making lunch for our group!)

Roxie Stillman has a small farm on Cty Hwy AB just east of Madison. She has a large number of animals including horses, goats, pigs, turkeys, chickens, rabbits, a llama, a donkey and cows. Many of them are miniature animals. This is not a regular petting zoo, but a working farm. Roxie specializes in helping disabled animals find a home. Note that Roxie doesn't have a website so you won't find her operation on the internet.

As part of this activity, you will be able to touch and feed some of her animals. You'll meet a pig named Dexter who likes to have his belly rubbed. There will be a new crop of baby goats to feed. There will be baby chicks to see and a nature trail to follow for those who want to take a short hike. Roxie will provide food to give to the animals. Do not bring food with you for the animals since many of them require a special diet. Also do not bring any of your own animals. This is a precaution to prevent spreading diseases.

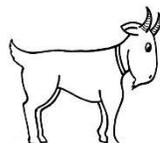
In case of rain bring umbrellas and a raincoat. Roxie has an indoor space we can use so we can still have lunch and be able to see some of the animals. About 1:00, we will have lunch. (Note: If you are on gluten restricted diet, contact me. I can arrange to have some gluten free buns available. I will only do this if I hear from someone who needs it.)

The AUsome Group actually visited Roxie's place once before in 2001. We had a great time then and I'll bring our album with pictures from that outing. But Roxie's place is much bigger now than it was then and she has a lot more animals. It was so very nice of Roxie to do this for our AUsome group again. I have been driving by her farm for years and have watched her herd of animals increase during that time. Her farm is only a couple miles from my house. She is very helpful and so friendly. She even volunteered to provide hot dogs for lunch for us. I'm sure we will enjoy this activity very much.

Directions: Roxies' farm is about 1 mile past the interstate on Hwy AB. From Madison, go east on Buckeye Road (Cty Hwy AB) over the interstate. Watch for the sign for Roxie's on the left side of the road. Pull in the driveway and part in the dirt parking lot. If you come to the railroad tracks, you've gone too far.

### **Important Items and Sensory Issues:**

- ☺ There will be the usual farm smells associated with animals.
- ☺ Dress appropriately for the weather and bring an umbrella if it rains
- ☺ Wear shoes that can handle muddy ground.
- ☺ Feel free to contact Nancy Alar (608-222-4378 / [nancy.l.alar@gmail.com](mailto:nancy.l.alar@gmail.com)) or the ASC office (608-630-9147/ [autismsouthcentral@gmail.com](mailto:autismsouthcentral@gmail.com)) if you have any questions.



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**What: Autism Society of South Central Wisconsin Summer Picnic**  
**When: Saturday, June 6, 2015; 4:00 – 7:00 PM**  
**Where: Demetral Park Shelter, 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Madison, WI, 5370?**  
**Cost: Free for ASC members! \$10 per family for non-members. Hot Sandwiches and Soft drinks will be provided. Bring a salad, chips, dessert or other dish to share**

The AUsome Group will join with the rest of the Autism Society of South Central Wisconsin family for a fun afternoon in the park. If you can, bring a dish to share. The Autism Society will provide hot pulled pork and shredded turkey sandwiches this year so we don't have to mess with a grill. The Autism Society will also provide plates, tableware, cups, lemonade and condiments.

Please RSVP at <http://autismsouthcentral.org/events/member-picnic/> or [autismsouthcentral@gmail.com](mailto:autismsouthcentral@gmail.com) with "Picnic" in the subject line and the number of people coming so we know how many people to plan for.

The picnic is free for those who are ASC members. The cost is \$10 for per family for those who are non-members (but you can become an ASC member at the picnic which will save you money and get you other "perks" at future events like our summer pool party!) There will also be materials available about local autism resources from ASC partners and information about future ASC activities.

Also bring any "yard games" you might like to play. I have an extensive collection of bubble making materials I will be bringing (I'm just a kid at heart). We had great fun (and great pictures) with the bubbles last time I brought them. The Demetral Park shelter has a nice big parking lot and plenty of room in case it rains. Assuming (and we are hoping) it doesn't rain, there are large grassy areas for games and a playground for the younger set. It also has bathrooms and electrical outlets if you need to plug something in.

This is a chance to meet other families who share your issues and concerns in a casual environment. Come to eat good food, hang out and have a good time.

### **Important Items and Sensory Issues:**

- ☺ Watch the weather and dress appropriately.
- ☺ Bring a dessert, salad or other dish to share.
- ☺ Bring "yard games" you enjoy.
- ☺ Bring sunscreen and insect repellent if appropriate.
- ☺ Please RSVP at <http://autismsouthcentral.org/events/member-picnic/> or [autismsouthcentral@gmail.com](mailto:autismsouthcentral@gmail.com) with "Picnic" in the subject line and the number of people coming so we know how many people to plan for.



## **Important Information:**

1. Visit <http://www.autismsouthcentral.org/> for other services and activities sponsored by the **Autism Society of South Central Wisconsin (ASC)**. Be sure to sign up for their email group to get the “News you can Use” messages on current happenings. Email [autismsouthcentral@gmail.com](mailto:autismsouthcentral@gmail.com) to communicate with the Autism Society of South Central Wisconsin and request addition to the email contact list. There are autism related activities happening almost every month now.
2. **The AUsome Adult Group** is a support Group for those 18 and older on the autism spectrum that meets at the Goodman Center in Madison every other month on Wednesday evening. You can get more details on this group at <http://autismsouthcentral.org/find-support/ausome-adult-support-group/>
3. **There will be a trip to the Mallard’s game available this year.** Save the date July 12, Sunday afternoon at 4 pm. The game is against the Battle Creek Bombers. You will have an option to get dinner (\$18) or a baseball cap (\$10) along with your game ticket.
4. **The TATTS (Taking Autism to the Sky) youth Drone flying program**  
There will be an information session about this ASC sponsored summer program (four two-hour sessions) that teaches kids and young adults to safely fly drones and capture video from the air in real time. It will be at the Ashman Public Library, 733 N. High Point Rd, Madison, WI 53717. **RSVP required to assure space.** | [RSVP now!](#) Presented by [The TATTS Project](#), Taking Autism to the Sky. See flyer with more details [here](#).

## What Happened at AUsome's Last Outings?

### **Downhill Snow Tubing at Cascade Mountain; March 5, 2015; 6:30-8:30**

This was the last really cold night of the winter, but it was just perfect for a night of winter sports. Everyone was bundled up (snowmobile suits came in handy), but there was no wind so it didn't feel that cold. Because it was so late in the season and it was a Thursday night, we had the hill almost to ourselves. There were about 25 of us in our group. The snow texture and depth was perfect and the hill was lit up like a Christmas tree so we could easily see where we were going.

The staff at Cascade was very accommodating. They even let us bring our own treats. We saved some money with our own hot chocolate and rice krispie treats. But that didn't stop some of us from enjoying the pizza, soft pretzels and other goodies in the refreshment stand.

I had never been tubing at Cascade before and was very impressed with the condition of the tube slides and the tubing equipment they provided for us. You don't have to have any kind of athletic skill at all to do this. The snow tubes are big and comfortable. You go down fast, but you have to work at it to get hurt. The hill is laid out with troughs like one of those giant slides at the carnival except they are much bigger. Everyone gets their own trough to go down in. The Cascade staff makes sure everyone starts down at the same time so there are no collisions at the bottom. The bottom of the sliding area is paved with rounded stones that gently stop the snow tubes from going too far or stopping too fast. I now consider myself an expert about this because I went down the hill myself – twice!

But the highlight of course is the “moving sidewalk” that takes you back up to the top of the hill without you having to do any hard climbing. It is also the only part of the operation that requires any athletic skill. You have to hold onto your giant snow tube and pull it behind you while balancing on the lumpy moving sidewalk that's going uphill. I also consider myself an expert on this part of the operation because I managed to fall down into my snow tube the first time I tried to go back up the hill. It was quite embarrassing to have to be rescued from my own snow tube by the Cascade staff member. But the second time I jumped on the moving sidewalk and rode confidently up the hill as though I knew what I was doing. So it actually must be kind of easy if you try a few times.

It really is an exciting feeling to go whooshing down the hill so fast. The snow tube provides a padded ride with no jarring bumps so I wasn't even a bit sore the next day. Some brave souls even “hooked up” with other riders and went down in groups of 2 or 3 snow tubes in the same trough at the same time. I drew the line at that activity. But after a couple hours on the hill on a cold, dark night, the thrill starts to wear off and we were all ready to go home.

Thanks to Julie Heibel, Danielle Tolzmann, the Badgers With a Heart and the Cascade Staff who all helped to arrange this activity on short notice and make it a fun time!

**Special Art Program – Insights from Autistic Artists at UW Madison McPherson Eye Research Institute's Mandelbaum & Albert Family Vision Art Gallery, Wisconsin Institutes for Medical Research; 9<sup>th</sup> Floor; Saturday, April 11, 2015, 1:00 – 2:30 pm.**

This small UW art museum, hidden away on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor of one of the northern parts of the UW Hospital building complex, is not well known to the public. It specializes in visually interesting artwork – hence the eye research connection. From January to May of 2015 this museum is featuring an exhibit composed completely of works by artists with disabilities. Two of the artists on the autism spectrum (Matt Ward and Nicole Pollex) were at the exhibit on April 11 to take part in a program showcasing their art contribution to the exhibit. I had originally thought there were going to be 3 artists, but that was incorrect.

We had about 20 people attend this program. After the attendees spent about 30 minutes viewing the entire collection, Gail Stirr, the museum director, explained how the exhibit had been organized and other details about the museum.

The first autistic presenter was Matt Ward. Matt is a member of the AUsome Social Group. His part of the exhibit is a rolling electronic display of over 100 fractal graphic pictures, including a brief explanation of the mathematics behind the “Asian Pillow” series embedded within his display. Matt has a degree in mathematics from the UW Madison and is also an origami expert. In his comments, Matt explained that his art is a way for him to make math visual and create beautiful things that he can sell in his business. Matt’s mother, Nancy Alar, also spoke about the history of art and math in Matt’s life and how both things have been stepping stones to accomplishments and successes through the years.

Nicole Pollex (known as Nicky by her friends) is an autistic artist who recently graduated from high school. She has a passion for creating art and is best known for her cartoon illustrations of birds. Her dad, Rich Pollex, spoke on her behalf. He explained her history as an artist and the subtle meanings contained within her lovely pictures. Rich also spoke eloquently on the difference art therapy has made in his daughter’s life. He also stressed how it is in our best interest to get involved in advocating for those with disabilities in the political process because it is the right thing to do.

Ron Wendt is another disabled artist who has stained glass art on display in the current exhibit. He does not have ASD but I know him because he lives in Matt Ward’s apartment building. I worked with Ron Wendt to arrange a surprise thank you gift for Gail from both the ASC AUsome Group and Ron. I already own a lovely piece of Ron's work in the form of a stained glass serving tray created on a round microwave tray. I use it a lot. Since most of Gail's museum programs involve light refreshments, I thought she would enjoy having a similar tray from Ron to use to serve her refreshments. Thanks to Goodwill, I was able to find a pair of trays that Ron was able to use to create 2 trays for Gail. I presented these trays to Gail at the end of the program.

Gail was very surprised and happy with the result. The trays Ron had created formed a contrasting set. One had a kneeling monk figure in the rays of the sun and other had a monk under the glow of the moon. They are very lovely and perfect for the museum. Unfortunately, Ron was unable to join us for the presentation because of health issues. But the trays will now be a reminder of this special exhibit for future years. The exhibit will be over by the end of May. Thanks again to Gail Stirr for helping me organize this activity and to Ron Wendt for creating the stained glass trays.

It was a lovely and relaxing afternoon.

## AUsome Social Group Philosophy and Ground Rules

### Group Sponsor:

The AUsome Social Group is a service provided by the Autism Society of South Central Wisconsin (ASC). **It is highly recommended that you join the ASC.** Chapter membership will save you money at future AUsome Group activities and other ASC events. Individual ASC membership is only \$15 annually. To get more information about the ASC, call 608-630-9147, email [autismsouthcentral@gmail.com](mailto:autismsouthcentral@gmail.com) or send a note to Autism Society, 437 S Yellowstone Dr, Suite 217A, Madison, WI 53719. See the Autism Society website at <http://www.autismsouthcentral.org/> for membership information. The website also has a link to the AUsome Social Group web pages on the left side (there is also an AUsome adult support group for those on the spectrum).

Membership to the Autism Society of South Central Wisconsin does not include membership to the Autism Society of Wisconsin or the Autism Society of America. That being said, as separate, equal and peer organizations, we usually extend the courtesy of member rates for conferences to those who are members of the Autism Society of Wisconsin, and they have often extended the same courtesy to our members when it comes to their conferences. It should also be noted that those considerations are made on a case by case basis and may end at any time. Membership to the Autism Society of South Central Wisconsin assures local programs, services and supports are able to continue, and includes several free or discounted events right here in the Madison area.

### Group Purpose:

The AUsome group was organized to provide stimulating, fun, and educational 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. We try to set up activities that allow for social interaction between group members and between parents and siblings of the group. We also strive to provide new and interesting experiences that will broaden the world view of participants and expose them to educational and potential job environments.

### The AUsome Social Group 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. The ASC will maintain a mailing list of participants. The newsletter will be sent out via email. If you need to have a paper copy mailed to you, that can be done by special request. But remember that it saves time and postage if notification can be sent electronically. Reminders and special messages will only be sent electronically. Our AUsome newsletter is also available on the ASC website at <http://autismsouthcentral.org/find-support/social-and-support-programs/ausome-newsletters/>

### 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, horseback riding, Go Cart driving, farm market, airplane rides, pottery making and a limousine ride. Each January we attend the 47<sup>th</sup> annual Madfest Juggling show. In August we have 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. Some activities will coincide with general activities planned by the Autism Society such as the annual August swimming party.

### 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 [Nancy.L.Alar@gmail.com](mailto:Nancy.L.Alar@gmail.com) 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.