

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

What: Game Night and Pizza at Midvale Community Lutheran Church

(If you bring TV set/video game setup, bring extra controllers and extension cords)

When: Saturday, November 21, 2015, 6:30 – 8:30 pm

Where: Midvale Community Lutheran Church (4329 Tokay Blvd. - corner of Tokay Blvd. and Midvale Blvd. On the West side of Madison - see map on next page)

**Cost: Free! Pizza and soft drinks provided by ASC
Please bring an item for the church food pantry**

Please RSVP by Thursday, Nov. 19 so I know who is coming, what game gear/TV setups you can bring and how many pizzas we need. You can RSVP on-line at this website <http://goo.gl/forms/YpyZibheH3> or you can call me at 608-222-4378. We will probably order the pizzas from Pizza Hut. We should have a fairly good turnout, since this has been one of our most popular activities in past years. This church is the same place we have had it before. You can park in the parking lot in back or there is street parking.

Our game night activity will be in the Fellowship Hall (basement) of the West wing under the main church. As you face the building from the parking lot, the door to this basement room is labeled Fellowship Hall/Kitchen. Go down the stairs to the basement. There is a map attached below. Cost is FREE and includes all the pizza and soda you can eat! Thanks to the Autism Society of South Central Wisconsin for covering the cost of the food and church rental! Parents are welcome to stay but don't have to if your family member can manage on their own. I'll need some help with setup and cleanup. We will need to leave the room as we found it. Everyone must leave the building by 9:00.

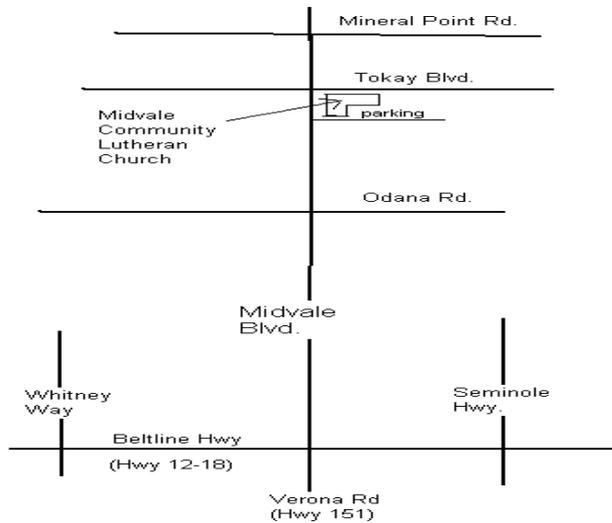
We are bringing 2 projectors and Matt Ward's Nintendo 64 (with race games). I know this is old technology, but it still works. **I do need others to bring your complete TV/game setups. The TV's and extension cords are the most critical since TV's are hard to lug around and lots of things need to be plugged in. If you can bring a "splitter" for extension cords, that helps too. Even if you can't bring a TV/game setup, bring any extra controllers you have!** With multiple controllers, more than one person can play a game. Note that a game machine without a TV is not usable, so either bring the whole thing or just your extra controllers. The emphasis here is on fun with multiple players, so try to bring games that more than one can play. **Please don't bring really violent games or other inappropriate things.** Please come even if you have no game gear to bring. With multiple player setups we should do fine. Even if you don't want to play you can come to watch and eat pizza. If you have a dance-dance revolution game, be sure to bring the mat and cables. Feel free to bring board games or other such activities if you would prefer something non-electronic. There should be plenty to do. As always, feel free to leave early if you need to.

I'll arrange for the pizza (from Pizza Hut) to be delivered between 7 and 7:30. Soft drinks will be provided. **Please bring a non-perishable food item to donate to the church pantry as a way of saying "Thank You"** to Midvale Community Lutheran for letting us use their building.

Important Items and Sensory Issues:

- ☺ **Label everything that you bring with your name – There are often duplicate game items**
- ☺ There will be a noise level with some yelling
- ☺ Bring your food pantry item(s)
- ☺ Bring Board games if you prefer
- ☺ Bring your TV/game gear setup; Bring any extra game controllers even if you don't bring a full setup.
- ☺ **Bring extra extension cords** – the church power outlets are scattered.

Map to Midvale Community Lutheran Church



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 about current happenings. Send an email to 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. **Day with the Experts: Autism** is being planned for **January 23th, 2016** at the Waisman Center. It’s your chance to learn cutting edge information on UW autism research plus network with others in the autism community. Best of all – it’s free! Watch for more information on registration coming soon.
3. **The annual conference of the Autism Society of Wisconsin (ASW) will be April 7 - 9, 2016 at the Kalahari Resort in Wisconsin Dells.** The early bird registration deadline is later this year – January 13, 2016. There will again be a special track of activities designed for those on the spectrum to learn information and meet others like themselves. ASW conferences have had as many as 900 attendees in the past. About 10% of them are people on the spectrum. You can find out more details and the early bird registration form at <http://www.asw4autism.org/>

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- What:** Veterinarian presentation on selecting and caring for a pet; Ice Cream at the Chocolate Shoppe afterwards
- When:** December 5, 2015 (Saturday), 1:00 – 2:30 pm
- Where:** Sequoia Public Library, 4340 Tokay Blvd, Madison, WI 53711
- Cost:** Free; Bring money for ice cream

Are you interested in animals? Are you thinking about getting a pet? Get information from an experienced vet (Sonja Covington from Sun Prairie) on how to figure out what kind/breed of pet would be best for you. This information will include brief details about what each kind of pet requires for care.

Sonja Covington received her Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree in 1995 from the University of Wisconsin School of Veterinary Medicine. After 14 months as a Dairy Practitioner, Dr. Covington has been a small animal practitioner for the past 18+ years. She has been a part-time veterinarian at Token Creek Veterinary Clinic for the past 6 years where she works exclusively with dogs and cats. She is a Committee Member in Boy Scout Troop 333, Sun Prairie. She is currently enrolled in a leadership course called “Wood Badge”. This course teaches leadership skills that help the individual become a more effective Troop leader. Part of the requirements for this course is to complete 5 “Ticket items” in order to earn the “Wood Badge Beads”. These ticket items are designed by the student and mentor to help the student gain valuable leadership skills, to help improve themselves, their Troop and contribute to their community. This presentation will help fulfill one of Dr. Covington’s 5 ticket items. She spends her free time with her husband and son and her dog Koda. She enjoys reading, walking, fishing, Scouting and anything that involves time with her family.

Dr. Covington’s presentation will cover “Choosing a Pet for your Family”. She will discuss things to consider when choosing a pet (especially for Special Needs Families), requirements of various pets (dogs, cats, reptiles, birds etc.), time, food, health and monetary commitments of pets and the Human/Animal Bond. She will be hoping to generate discussion and answer questions you may have regarding these topics.

After we are done hearing about pet options, we’ll adjourn to the Chocolate Ice Cream shop that is in the same shopping area as the library. Hope you can join us.

Parking is free in the parking lot by the library. If the lot is full, you can find additional parking on side streets.

By coincidence, our Badgers with a Heart (BWAH) team of volunteers from the UW is also having a “cookie decorating” activity the same date and time in the same library in the room next door. If anyone is interested, you can stop by next door and decorate some cookies when our presentation ends. The cookie decorating lasts until 3:00.

Important Items and Sensory Issues:

- ☺ Bring money for ice cream.



What Happened at AUsome's Last Outings?

A-Maze-ing Day for Autism at Treinen Farm – night tour of the corn maze with a bonfire and S'mores; September 26, 2015; 7:00 - 9:00 pm.

We had a lovely evening and beautiful weather, including a beautiful full moon. The temperature was perfect and there was no threat of rain. It was very peaceful and beautiful. I had spent the afternoon dishing out sundaes for farm visitors, so I welcomed the chance to just sit and look into the fire. I still have one bad knee so I had no desire to go into the maze.

About half of the rest of the folks who showed up were up for the challenge of the maze. We had about 14 people in all and about 8 of them went into the maze. My group of volunteer helpers (that included my daughter, Liz) all went into the dark maze and had a spooky good time. We also found out this evening that one of our AUsome Group members (Jonas Moore) is moving to Utah to be closer to family support. We will miss his smiling face at our activities.

Once again Richard had to try his hand at the pumpkin sling shot. He did so well that he won 3 pumpkins. Al Treinen gave me a guided tour and explanation of the new pumpkin sling shot launch platform. It has seats that you can sit back in as you pull the sling back as well as boards you can brace your feet against to get maximum leverage and distance. The most amazing detail was that Al and a helper had built that new launch platform THAT DAY in about 6 hours. It looked like a 4 day project to me.

Once again Angie and Al Treinen made sure I didn't run out of wood to burn up. But I did bring a little batch of wood from home from our disintegrating wood pile. I wasn't even once tempted to start burning the benches☺. We had a lovely fire that was just right (except when it really flamed up as I loaded it with a new round of logs) for roasting marshmallows. And we made good use of it. We went through a whole box of graham crackers, more than 1 bag of marshmallows and several packages of candy bars. I suspect some of the candy bars didn't make it into the S'mores process. Al and Angie even came and hung out with us for a while, telling us details about the farm. We even got a visit from a very friendly farm cat. It was a relaxing evening. We went home content and smelling of wood smoke.

A trip through Jack Steinberg's Haunted House Ghost Walk; snack afterwards at Luigi's Pizza. October 30, 2015 (Friday), 7:00 - 9:00 pm

This was a really unique and fun activity thanks to the creativity and hard work of Jack Steinberg (and the incredible tolerance of Jack's parents). Through weeks of dedicated work, Jack had transformed his parent's home including their front lawn, entryway, basement, garage and hallway into a creepy haunted house ghost walk! Not only did Jack create this all by himself, but he's been doing it for Halloween for years. On Halloween night he invites all the neighborhood trick-or-treaters to go through his ghost walk and hands out candy. Last year on Halloween over 200 people went through his haunted house.

This spooky attraction includes ghostly spinning figures hanging from the ceiling with laser lighted eyes, a ghoul playing the piano, skeletal décor, narrow dark passages, hanging obstructions, a fog machine and a maze constructed of hanging white sheets. The maze was really disorienting because of the strobe lights reflecting off of every surface. The whole thing was scarily well done. Congratulations and thanks to Jack and his parents for getting things ready the day before Halloween so the AUsome Group could go through it. The fog machine was really working well this year and the sheet maze with strobe lights was even longer and more disorienting this year than last.

We had about 16 people come for this activity! The goody bags this year had some leftovers from our football camp as well as a few treats. We had some left over bags that Jack will hand out on Halloween. After going through the ghost walk, a bunch of us were invited by Jack's mom to "sneak behind the curtain" and hang out in the living room with the giant bowl of Cheetos. While we waited for the time to go to Luigi's for pizza, Valeria donned a mask and treated us to some truly scary screeches. She was so frightening that Jack invited her back for the next night to add a living scare to his Halloween.

After the flow of visitors to the haunted ghost walk dried up, about 12 of us went over to Luigi's for pizza. We had called in for a table ahead of time. We had a great time visiting and the pizza was very good.

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 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 now include membership to the Autism Society of Wisconsin, but not to the Autism Society of America. 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/category/ausome-social-group-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 47th 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 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.