

The AUsome Social Group
Teen/Adult Recreation/Social Group
Sponsored by the Autism Society of South Central Wisconsin (ASC); <http://www.autismsouthcentral.org/>
Contact: Nancy Alar, 3802 Gala Way, Cottage Grove, WI 53527
(608) 222-4378 or Nancy.L.Alar@gmail.com

What: **A-Maze-ing Day at Treinen Farm – night tour of the corn maze with a bonfire and S’mores.**
When: **September 26, 2015 (Saturday), 7:00 - 9:00 pm (We’ll be doing the corn maze in the dark – spooky!)**
Where: **Treinen Farm 5 miles west of Lodi on State Road 60. See directions below**
Cost: **Each AUsome member gets 1 corn maze ticket courtesy of ASC-** Additional Corn maze tickets are \$9 for adults, \$7 for age 6-11, age 5 and under free. You don’t have to do the maze. Sitting around the bonfire and making S’mores is covered by ASC funds. ****RSVPs are needed so that the gate has a list of names.** You can RSVP here: <http://goo.gl/forms/t1sWtmBvBv> or by calling Nancy Alar at 608/222-4378.

A big thanks to Alan and Angie, owners of Treinen Farm for working with us at their location to make this exciting event happen. The picture in the corn maze is different every year. This year the corn maze picture is inspired by Aesop’s fable about the fox and the grapes (see picture below).

The rest of the A-Maze-ing Day activities (face painting, wagon rides, pumpkin patch, pony rides, pond slingshot, etc.) actually end at 5:00 pm, but the corn maze is open until 9:00 pm. For our AUsome Group activity, we’ll have a big bonfire site reserved where we can sit around it and enjoy burning up some wood, making S’mores and hanging out. It’s kind of fun to try to find your way through the corn maze at night. Busloads of people actually come out to the farm after dark just to do this. If you want to just hang out at the bonfire, you can join me there. I’m not planning to go in the maze. If you want to go in the corn maze be sure to mention that you are with the AUsome Group when you pick up your maze tickets and **remember to bring a flash light with fresh batteries!**

We’ll have an AUsome gathering around a bonfire with or without a trip through the corn maze. I’ll provide the fixings for the S’mores and sticks to roast marshmallows. This activity will go on rain or shine. If it looks like rain, bring an umbrella. If it rains too hard, we’ll eat the chocolate bars in the barn!

Corn Maze Details - This is the centerpiece of the farm activity. As you enter the maze you get 2 things, the first is the 1st of 8 pieces of the maze map and a stapled shut “cheat” copy of the whole maze map. You have to follow the clues on the 1st piece of the map to find the 2nd piece. If you make it back with all 8 map pieces without opening your “cheat” map, you win a piece of candy. There are 8 special places in the maze where you can find paper punches to punch holes in your map. If you find and punch these special places, you can win prizes.

You can find directions and more details about the farm at <http://www.treinenfarm.com/>. The basic directions to get there are pretty simple. Take I90/I94 north of Madison to the State Road 60 exit to Lodi. Follow State Road 60 West through Lodi and out the other side. The farm is about 5 miles west of Lodi on State Road 60 on your right. Parking is across the road on the left and you walk through a tunnel under the road to reach the farm.

You can find more details about the A-Maze-ing Day for Autism at the web site <http://www.autismsouthcentral.org/>. This is an activity where those on the spectrum and their families can have fun in an outdoor activity and contact others in the autism community in a relaxed and accepting atmosphere.

There will be a lot of things to do at A-Maze-ing Day if you want to come before 5:00 on Saturday:

- **Horse Drawn Wagon Rides to the pumpkin patch** – Pick out and buy your own pumpkin for Halloween. Ride to and from the patch in a horse drawn wagon.
- **Pond Slingshot** – buy 3 gourds for \$1 and then use the giant slingshot to try to hit the inner-tube target in the middle of the pond.
- **Volunteer Opportunity** – Contact ASC at autismsouthcentral@gmail.com if you would like to help at this fun event. You can also work with our other wonderful volunteers from the UW – Badgers with a Heart.

- **Free ice cream for ASC members** – ASC will have a create-your-own sundae bar for ice cream. If you have a single membership you get 1 free sundae; for a family membership you get 2 sundaes. Additional sundaes are only \$1 for ASC members.

Important Items and Sensory Issues:

- ☺ The maze may be crowded, even after dark.
- ☺ Bring a Flashlight with fresh batteries
- ☺ Bring an umbrella if it looks like rain
- ☺ Dress appropriately for the weather and wear sturdy shoes.
- ☺ Bring a coat or heavy sweatshirt just in case. It can get quite chilly after dark.

This Year's maze picture (fox and the grapes).



Important Information:

1. Visit <http://www.autismsouthcentral.org/> for other services and activities sponsored by the **Autism Society of South Central Wisconsin**. Be sure to sign up for their email group to get the “News you can Use” messages sent out by the ASC. There are autism related activities happening almost every month now.

- What:** A trip through Jack Steinberg's Haunted House Ghost Walk; snack afterwards at Luigi's Pizza.
- When:** October 30, 2015 (Friday), 7:00 - 9:00 pm
- Where:** Jack's Parent's home - 4017 Meyer Avenue, Madison, WI (directions and map below); Luigi's Pizza, 515 S Midvale Blvd, Madison, WI 53711
- Cost:** Free for the haunted house; bring money for pizza.

We did this activity last year and it was so much fun that we're doing it again! Jack Steinberg is a member of the AUsome Social Group who has created a fun haunted house experience for the public at his parent's home for many years. Jack is a creative and hard-working guy with a lot of mechanical and construction talents that he puts to use in this spooky project. Each year Jack turns his parent's entire basement (and their porch and usually the garage) into a creepy Halloween spectacular complete with strobe lights, scary music and hair-raising decorations. He invites the entire neighborhood to come through his creation and passes out treats on Halloween night. Each year he has about 200 kids come through on Halloween. But he's giving our group a "sneak peek" on the day before. Here is a link to Jack's haunted house page on Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Haunted-House-Ghost-Walk/131708638203>

Since we are going through the day before Halloween, we won't have to fight the crowds. Also Jack will be able to customize the lights and sounds for us if anyone has sensory issues with them. See the directions and map below on how to get to the haunted house. There is on-street parking in the area. Jack will have porch lights on and the walk up to the house is lit.

Come to the front door. We will gather in the living room. Because the basement is kind of a tight space, it works best if only about 8 people go through the haunted ghost walk at a time. Jack will lead groups of 8 from the living room down a flight of stairs into the basement and through the walk. Then attendees can come back to the living room and go back through the ghost walk again. It takes about 8 minutes to go through the walk. Depending on how many people show up, we should be done with the walk by 8:00.

Attendees will get a small "goodie bag" with treats and a spooky gift to take home.

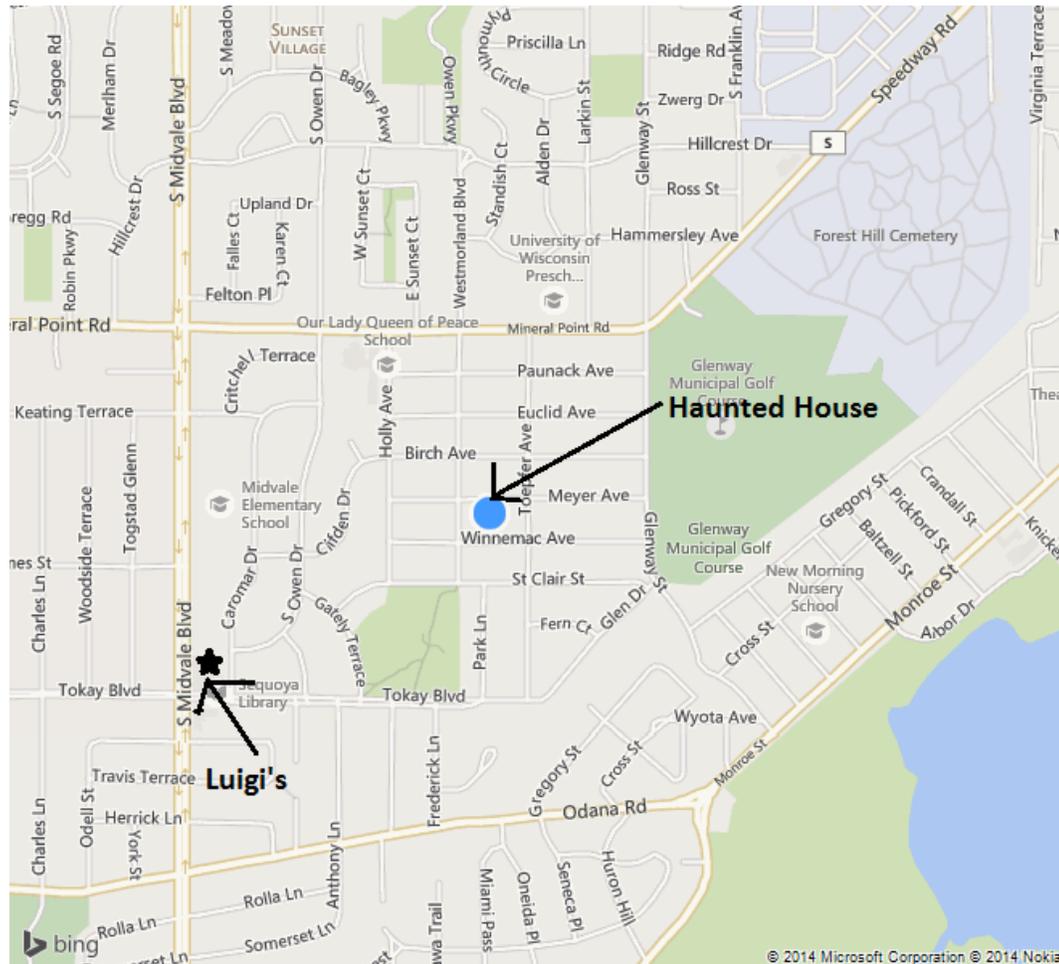
To get there: If you're coming from Midvale Lutheran/Sequoia Library, take Tokay Boulevard to Toepfer Avenue (at the curve in the road), turn left on Toepfer. Go 3 blocks to Meyer Avenue and turn left on Meyer. The house is in the middle of the block surrounded by large evergreen trees. There will also be a sign out front near the sidewalk. Parking is on the street and may get a bit tight if we get a large crowd, so some people may have to walk a block or so to/from their cars. Bus service is available on Route 6 (Get off at Mineral Point/Toepfer and walk about 4 blocks down Toepfer) or route 7 Via Tokay (get off at Toepfer and Meyer)

Luigi's Pizza fronts on the same parking lot as the Sequoia Library and is directly across from the Chocolate Shoppe Ice Cream place on Midvale Blvd.

Important Items and Sensory Issues:

- ☺ The walk activities are indoors, but consider the weather since you may have to walk a ways from parking on the street
- ☺ You will NOT need to bring a flashlight for the walk
- ☺ Let Jack know before you go on the walk if you are bothered by strobe lights or if you want him to turn the sound volume down
- ☺ You will need to be able to go down and then up a short but somewhat steep flight of stairs to the basement, since it is in an old house.
- ☺ Bring money for pizza at Luigi's if you plan to go there with the group

Map to Jack Steinberg's Ghost Walk Haunted House and Luigi's Pizza for November 1st (October outing).



What Happened at AUsome's Last Outings?

Flying Drone Demonstration Put on by the TATTS (Taking Autism to the Sky) Project; Sunday, July 19, 2015, 1-2 pm; Snack afterwards at Culver's in Middleton

This was a REALLY interesting demonstration that combined science, technology and video games. We also got a lot of information about the rules for flying drones and how you can get in big trouble if you don't follow these rules. We had 18 people turn out for this activity. The weather cooperated by being warm and sunny. We had an ideal flying site up on a small hill in the park and there were no bugs! It was a little bit windy, but not too much for flying the drone.

A VERY BIG THANKS!! To Paul Braun (the brains behind TATTS) who did a lot of work to set up his drone flying simulation computer and his actual drone equipment so we could really see what all the fuss is about drone flying. Paul started off with a general presentation about drones. Because drones are so new, Paul said that the drone environment is kind of like "the wild west" right now. There are some important rules – no flying at night, stay under 400 feet high, stay at least 3 miles away from airports, etc. But there is really no good way to enforce these rules, especially since so many "civilians" are buying drones and flying them. Small drones with minimum

features sell for as little as \$400. There are even some smaller, cheaper ones designed to fly indoors. The drone Paul flew for us was more expensive. It cost about \$2500. Paul's drone has built in GPS to keep it stable in the sky and a video camera to film the terrain below it. The software in this drone makes it possible for you to program it to fly to a certain location, do something, film something and come back. You can see the video that the drone sees in real time by wearing goggles that are linked to the drone camera. It's like you are riding in the drone.

Paul also explained how cell phone technology was the breakthrough that made drone flying possible because components became small enough to put in a flying machine. The most popular drone right now is called the Phantom. The company that makes them are selling between 40,000 and 50,000 new machines a month. But drones have quite a few limitations. The batteries last only for 10 minutes of flying and they are the heaviest part of the little machine. It takes a lot of practice to learn how to fly a drone and control it. But there are lots of possible ways that drones can be useful. Learning drone technology, maintenance and flying is a rapidly growing new career possibility. Farmers use them to inspect crops and fences for problems. Building maintenance staff can use them to inspect roofs and other parts of buildings for damage. And of course the military uses them for spying and weaponry.

This is where the "video game" part of the presentation is important. Paul has flight simulation games on his laptop that helps you learn to fly the drone. Students have to log a certain number of hours on the flight simulator before Paul will allow them to fly the real (expensive) machine. All of us got a chance to try out the flight simulator. It was a big hit with video game fans. When I tried the simulator, I crashed the drone right into the lake every time. It is not as easy as Paul makes it look.

Paul also explained the team concept of drone flying. There are 4 "jobs" on the team – the Operator, the Visual Observer, the Safety Officer and the Maintenance Crew. The operator is the one controlling the drone (the operator is not called a pilot because they are not in the machine). The operator's job is to control the drone and keep their eyes on the drone at all times. The Visual Observer (co-pilot) keeps watch in the sky around the drone and lets the operator know if there are any hazards like planes, flocks of birds, storms, etc. that might cause problems for the drone. The Safety Officer watches for hazards on the ground and manages spectators. The Maintenance Crew assembles the drone and checks equipment for and fixes problems.

Finally Paul started up the drone and flew it for us. He showed us how the lights on the drone show you the orientation of the machine (2 red lights are on the front and 2 green lights on the back).

Afterwards we went over to Culver's in Middleton for some good food and ice cream.

Private Swimming Party at Monona Pool – August 10, 2015

Just like last year, the weather was perfect at swimming time. We started swimming at 7:00 in the evening (instead of 6:30 like last year) because the Monona Staff changed the time of their pool rental. Hope this is the last time they change things. Even at the later time, it was sunny and in the high '70's when we started. We had over 100 people sign up to come, but because the weather looked "iffy" early in the day, not everyone came. We had our usual great turnout with about 55 people showing up including about 40 swimmers in the pool. Those who didn't swim had a good time relaxing in the deck chairs around the pool.

A number of attendees took advantage of the convenient opportunity to join or renew their membership in the Autism Society of SCW. As usual, the water slide was a big hit. The diving boards and the deck lounge chairs got a lot of use. Some people bought pool "noodles" and other water toys. Jack brought a cool submarine toy that could "fly" underwater. It didn't even have a motor. All you had to do was throw it in the water at an angle.

Thanks to the lifeguards at the Monona Pool for all their help getting us set up and assisting our folks getting ready for swimming. As the evening wore on and the sun started to go down, the air started to get a bit chilly. By 9:00 the swimmers didn't need much encouragement to get out of the pool and dry off.

Also like last year we had popcorn and lemonade available for refreshments. But we didn't go out for pizza this time because it was so late in the evening.

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. However, it does not include membership to the Autism Society of America, and membership to the Autism Society of Wisconsin does not include membership to ASC. ASC purchases memberships to ASW as a benefit of ASC membership – but that benefit does not flow both ways. 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 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.