

## 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:** 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Madfest Juggling Show at the Barrymore Theater  
**When:** January 16, 2016 (Saturday) 7:00-9:00 P.M. (come between 6:30 –6:45)  
**Where:** Barrymore Theater – 2090 Atwood Ave, Madison (limited parking behind the theater – come early)  
**Cost:** **Members of the ASC can get 1 or 2 half-price tickets depending on membership. See ticket cost structure below\*.**

**The Best Juggling Show in town!** There is a juggling convention in Madison every January. The culmination of that convention is always a Saturday night juggling show where the best jugglers at the convention show what they can do. I like to call it an “object manipulation show” because they don’t just juggle. They do yoyos, unicycles, jump ropes and many other things that seem to defy the laws of physics. The AUsome Group has gone to this every year since 1999. It is a hoot! There’s lots of creativity, humor and slapstick in the show and the juggling talent is really good.

It’s always freezing cold (but maybe not this year if our warm temps hold) and parking is a challenge, but it’s worth it! If you want to read more about the show at a creative and outrageous web site, see <http://www.madjugglers.com/madfest/>.

\*Because the base ticket price is \$20, we are no longer able to cover the full cost of some tickets like we did in some past years. However, we are going to give some half-price ticket opportunities to members of the Autism Society of South Central Wisconsin (ASC). Those with an individual ASC membership can purchase one half-price ticket for \$10. Those with a family ASC membership can purchase 2 half-price tickets for a total of \$20. (Note that an individual annual ASC membership costs \$15 while a family membership is \$30 so this is a great membership value). Additional tickets can be purchased at our cost of \$20. Note that being a member of the AUsome Social Group is free and is not the same as being a member of the ASC. Also remember that ASC membership will give you other “perks” like free admission to the annual swimming party and reduced cost to other AUsome activities like the upcoming March Rock and Jump activity. You can check your ASC membership status at any time by emailing [autismsouthcentral@gmail.com](mailto:autismsouthcentral@gmail.com). Include your name and address to help with verification.

To make ticket purchasing easier, we have developed an on-line web site application for the Autism Society to help you order tickets. Do NOT order tickets from the Barrymore or Juggling show website if you want to be part of our AUsome Group. **The ABSOLUTE deadline for ordering tickets is Tuesday, January 12<sup>th</sup>**. Here’s the link to the ASC ticket website. <https://www.eventbrite.com/edit?eid=20260246944>. At this link you can join the ASC and order juggling show tickets (both half and full price) and pay for it all with a credit card. There is a credit card processing fee for the transaction that is explained on the web site. If you want to pay for your tickets with a check instead of using the web site, contact either me (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)) before **Jan. 12<sup>th</sup>** to confirm the ticket count and the total cost before you mail your check to the ASC office. Payment must be received before January 13<sup>th</sup>. All attendees will need to provide a cell phone number in the on-line app in case we need to contact you for some reason the night of the show. I hope you can join us for this always fun activity.

The show has sold out in many past years, and I think it did last year. I will be buying all our tickets at once from the theatre on Jan. 13<sup>th</sup> (so we can give our membership discounts) which is why our **deadline is Jan. 12<sup>th</sup>**. You will still be picking up your tickets from me in the lobby the night of the show just like last year. Feel free to call me if you have any questions about the ticket purchasing process. I can walk you through our ticket website if you need help.

**Please meet me in the lobby the night of the show between 6:30 and 6:45 to pick up your tickets!** I or one of my helpers will be waiting for you with the tickets -- Look for the AUSome Social Group sign.

As before, they are setting aside a special section for us so we can all sit together. We are the only group who gets special seating. All other audience members are seated on a first-come, first-served basis. We will be sitting in a reserved section in the back on the right side on the main floor. This will make it easy for you to get out if you need to. Don't worry if you have to leave early. Someone has to leave early almost every year.

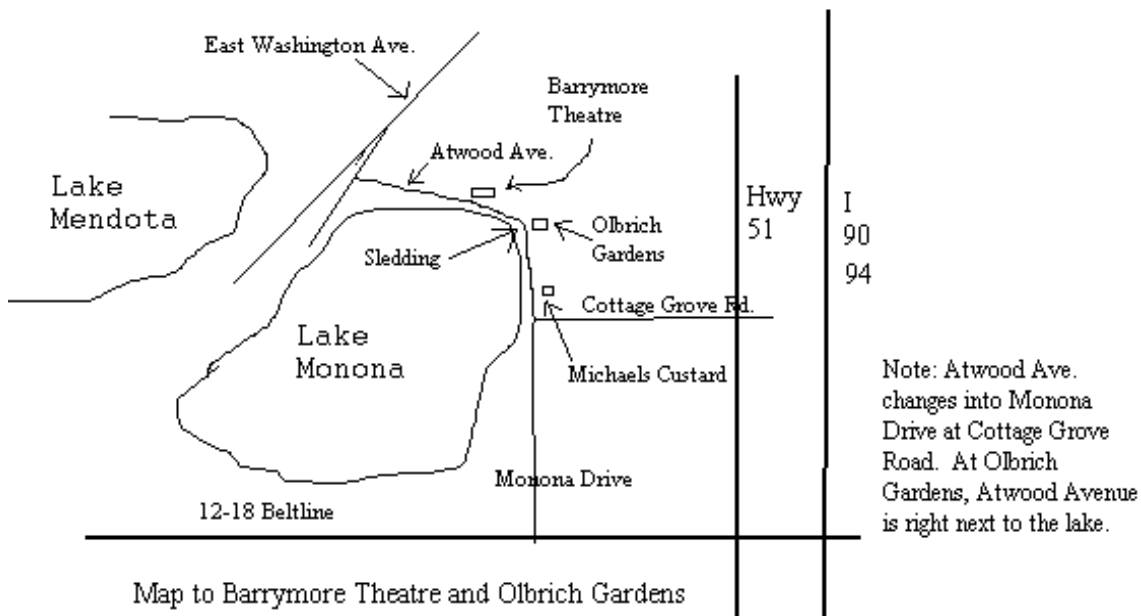
There is a parking lot behind the theatre, but it is rather small. There is the usual theatre food available there. Plan to bring some extra money if you want to buy popcorn, soda or other treats or a juggling show T-shirt.

**Important Items and Sensory Issues:**

- ☺ The show is rather long and the theater is crowded.
- ☺ There also are lots of noisy people in the audience (we will be some of them!).
- ☺ Feel free to leave early if it gets to be too much.
- ☺ There may be balloons in the crowd and/or in the show.
- ☺ There is a 20 to 30 minute intermission in the middle, but the lines for the bathroom are long.
- ☺ **Deadline for ordering and paying for tickets is Tuesday, Jan. 12<sup>th</sup>**
- ☺ This all may seem confusing. 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.



Map to Barrymore Theater (Location of January Juggling Show)



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**What:** Nancy Alar's 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party for all her friends  
**When:** Friday, February 5, 2016, 6:00 – 9:00 pm.  
**Where:** Eastside Great Dane Pub, 876 Jupiter Dr, Madison, WI 53718 (just off Cottage Grove Road by the I90 overpass)  
**Cost:** Free! (There will be refreshments and cake!)

I (Nancy Alar) have been the coordinator of the AUsome Social Group since it started in 1997. I am turning 70 (Egad!) this year and decided to celebrate this special age milestone with as many friends as I could get to show up in one place. This includes all my friends in the autism community as well as relatives, former co-workers, neighbors and other important people in my life.

**In lieu of presents (lord knows I don't need any more stuff in my house) I am requesting that everyone fulfill 2 birthday wishes for me.**

1. Please honor my special birthday by donating something in my name to the Autism Society of South Central Wisconsin. Here is a link to their donation website <http://autismsouthcentral.org/get-involved/donate-to-asgm/> or you can bring your donation to the party or mail it to Autism Society of South Central WI, 437 S Yellowstone Dr Suite 217A, Madison WI 53719. It is a great cause everyone knows is close to my heart and donations are tax deductible.
2. I would like to make a scrapbook of life memories to honor my friendships from this event. It would be the best present ever if you could write a paragraph or 2 of memories of our relationship for inclusion in my scrapbook. If you have a special picture or 2, that would be great too. So either bring or email or snail mail your memories and/or pictures to me for inclusion in my scrapbook. Even (or especially) if you can't make the party, I'd love to have something from you for the scrapbook.

The party will be one of those come when you feel like it, stay as long as you want to, leave when you are ready type of things. There will be lots of food and non-alcoholic beverages plus a cash bar available. There will be a special birthday cake that we will cut at 7:00. **Please RSVP to [Nancy.L.Alar@gmail.com](mailto:Nancy.L.Alar@gmail.com) or 608-222-4378 with the number coming** so I know how much cake and food to order.

Many of you know that I love a good card game. My favorites are Sheepshead, Hearts (especially a weird version called cancellation hearts) and Rook. I'm also learning to play Euchre. Everyone that comes will get a commemorative deck of cards. We'll have some card tables set up in case someone wants to organize a game.

As well as playing cards, I love to tell my favorite funny/interesting stories from my past. Many of you have already had to listen to me tell them. But just in case you haven't heard them before, I'll have printed copies of some of my favorite short stories available so you can read about things like "the Great Root Beer Disaster of 1969", "Autism Causes Puppy Love", "Casper the Cockatiel Sets himself on Fire" and My "Temp Job" as an Ambulance Driver in Tel Aviv, Israel.

A good friend of ours, Jim Mooney, an excellent piano player, will be playing low volume live music for background entertainment.

So come to share friendship, fun, food and maybe a card game. I hope the weather cooperates.

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

- ☺ There will be live music but it will be low volume
- ☺ Please RSVP to [Nancy.L.Alar@gmail.com](mailto:Nancy.L.Alar@gmail.com) or 608-222-4378 with the number coming.

## What Happened at AUsome's Last Outings?

### Video Game Night and Pizza at Midvale Lutheran Church

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

As usual, this was a really great time!! We had about 50 people attend. We enjoyed the 18 pizzas from Pizza Hut. EVERYONE brought hearty appetites. We had only a few pieces of pizza left over. The cookies and other sweet treats were a hit (Thanks to those who brought treats to share). But we had plenty of carrots left over.

We only had one serious video game system going, and it took us a while to get it working. A word to the wise: don't leave your Wii controllers sitting around for a long time with batteries in them. Matt Ward found out his batteries had all corroded and none of the controllers worked. Luckily I had some extra batteries. With a little work to clean out the corrosion they were able to get the Wii system working again. A number of people enjoyed playing it. A special thanks to all the group members for their efforts on technical support. AUsome members should be proud of their skills with equipment. A few other people bought board games.

Those who were there as spectators enjoyed looking at the 18 AUsome scrap books of our past activities. A lot of family members and friends joined in the fun. Every one enjoyed the evening sitting around and visiting. Even the church door locks cooperated this year and didn't lock us out before it was supposed to.

AUsome now owns 2 (very old) surplus projection units to hook up to our video games instead of a TV! We'll use them until the bulbs burn out (a very expensive replacement proposition). These projectors are very useful because popular games can be projected on a screen or wall so others can watch.

We bought the pizzas this year at Pizza Hut on Mineral Point Rd. Pizza Hut also gave us plates and napkins. We also had soda, carrots and Oreo cookies, and some other nice treats and munchies that people bought. Our goal is to make sure there are snacks for people with all kinds of food issues.

Thanks to all those who helped with the setup and cleanup and putting the chairs back the way we found them. I especially appreciated the help with breaking up all those pizza boxes for recycling. Also thanks to those who brought treats to share and food for our food pantry donation. We did have a very nice amount of food to donate including a couple unopened bottles of left over soda pop. It was our chance to give back to others in need.



## **Veterinarian presentation on selecting and caring for a pet; Ice Cream at the Chocolate Shoppe afterwards; December 5, 2015 (Saturday), 1:00 – 2:30 pm**

This was a very informative presentation by Sonja Covington, an experienced small animal practitioner from the Token Creek Veterinary Clinic. She is also a Boy Scout leader working on her Wood Badge Certificate and this presentation counts as a step toward that goal for her so this was a win/win for all of us. She is married and has a son (Kelee) who helped out with the presentation. She also has a dog named Koda.

She had a very nice PowerPoint presentation to help get her points across. I learned several new things. Sonja started out by telling us the most important thing to think about first when considering a pet is NOT the animal, but the people and the home environment of your family. The family needs to have a good insight into their lifestyle, what they are looking for, how much time they can devote to an animal, what they can afford, etc. before they can think about how an animal might fit into their life.

Then Sonja explained the different types of pets (dogs, cats, fish, birds and “pocket pets – (hamsters, etc.)”). Then she went into detail about the important things to keep in mind about each type. For example certain types of dogs need LOTS of exercise and all dogs should go through obedience training. Also cats should be fed primarily wet, canned cat food (rather than just dry food) to insure they get enough moisture in their diet. I was fascinated by her pictures of outdoor cat runs that let cats enjoy the great outdoors but keep them safely caged. She showed us an incredible picture of a bedroom with a giant aquarium built over the bed like a headboard so you could lay in bed and watch fish swimming all around you. She talked about pet birds (a subject close to my heart). Some of the larger parrots live 50 years.

She discussed the importance of good pet nutrition and how you can read pet food labels to tell what good food looks like. She talked about miscellaneous exotic pets like reptiles, amphibians and insects and how they can be educational.

And finally she talked about the role pets can play in the world of autism. Pets can help boost social skills. Caring for a pet and teaching it commands can help build confidence. Reading to a pet can help reading skills. A devoted pet (especially a dog) can be an adoring and non-judgmental friend. And of course many animals have been trained to assist people with disabilities as Service Animals.

A special thanks to Sonja for sharing her valuable information with us. The one problem: I got so engrossed in the presentation that I forgot to take any pictures – Bummer!

We had planned to go over to the Chocolate Shoppe Ice Cream Store around the corner, but we never made it there. The Badgers With A Heart Cookie Decorating activity in the room next door sounded like so much fun we just moved over and joined in there. The cookies were delicious.

### **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 ASC is planning an indoor swimming activity on February 27, 2016.** Watch for more details
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 keynote speaker this year will be Barry Prizant, discussing his book, “Uniquely Human- A Different Way of Seeing Autism”. 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 at <http://www.asw4autism.org/>. Early bird registration this year is open until January 13. At this conference they try to make those on the spectrum as comfortable as they can. The fee for those on the spectrum is only \$90! This conference is a place where those on the spectrum are valued for their differences. You are the reason that this conference exists.

## 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).

Starting in 2016 Membership in the Autism Society of South Central Wisconsin will include membership in the Autism Society of Wisconsin. However it does not include membership in the Autism Society of America. Membership in 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 Americka (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.