

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:** 47th Annual Madfest Juggling Show at the Barrymore Theater
When: January 13, 2018 (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: \$20 (\$15 if ASC members) See ticket ordering details 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, spinning tops, 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 and parking is a challenge, but it’s worth it! If you want to read more about the show at the juggling convention web site, see <http://www.madjugglers.com/Madfest2018> .

The base ticket price is \$20, however, we are going to give a \$5 discount to members of the Autism Society of South Central Wisconsin (ASC) who purchase the tickets in advance from us (Note that an individual annual ASC membership costs \$15 while a family membership is \$30 so this is a great membership value). Show attendees who are not ASC members will be able to purchase tickets at our cost of \$20. This allows you to sit in our special seating section and also avoids the on-line processing fee. 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 events like our February winter pool party and reduced cost for other ASC activities like the February Winter swim. You can check your ASC membership status at any time by emailing info@autismsouthcentral.org . Include your name and address to help with verification.

In the past, there has been a lot of confusion about who had a current ASC membership when tickets were purchased on-line. To avoid this confusion and simplify things, we’re trying a 2-step on-line ticket ordering process. The first step will be to place your order using an on-line link. Our office staff will process your order and check your membership status. Then they will send you a return email with a PayPal link where you can make your payment for the correct cost of your requested tickets based on your confirmed membership status.

Do NOT order tickets from the Barrymore or Juggling show website if you want to be part of our special seating section for the AUsome Group and get the \$15 reduced cost.

To give us time to process your order, the deadline for the first step of ordering tickets is Thursday, January 4th. Here’s the link to the ASC ticket ordering website. <http://autismsouthcentral.org/events/juggling/>

At this link you can also indicate you’d like to become a member of ASC (if you are not a current member) along with your order of juggling show tickets. You will also be asked to provide a cell phone number for emergency contact the night of the show. After you order your tickets the office will verify your ASC membership, within 48 hours you will receive an email with a link where you can pay for the tickets. This link will have your correct cost (either \$15 or \$20 per ticket) calculated based on your ASC membership status and your ticket count. You’ll be able to pay for it all with a credit card or with a PayPal account.

We must have the payment completed by Wednesday, January 10 to be able to get your tickets. If you want to pay for your tickets with a check instead of using the web site, contact the ASC office (608-630-9147/ info@autismsouthcentral.org) by Jan. 4th to confirm the ticket count and the total cost before you mail your check to the ASC office. We must have the payment at the office by Wednesday, January 10 to be able to get your tickets. **I hope you can join us for this always fun activity.**

The show has sold out in many past years. It kind of depends on the weather. I will be buying all our tickets at once from the theatre on Jan. 11th (so we can give our membership discounts) which is why our deadline is Jan.

10th. 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 the ASC office 608-630-9147 or me (Nancy Alar – 608-222-4378) 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. **Do not go to the regular ticket window to get your tickets unless you arrive very late.**

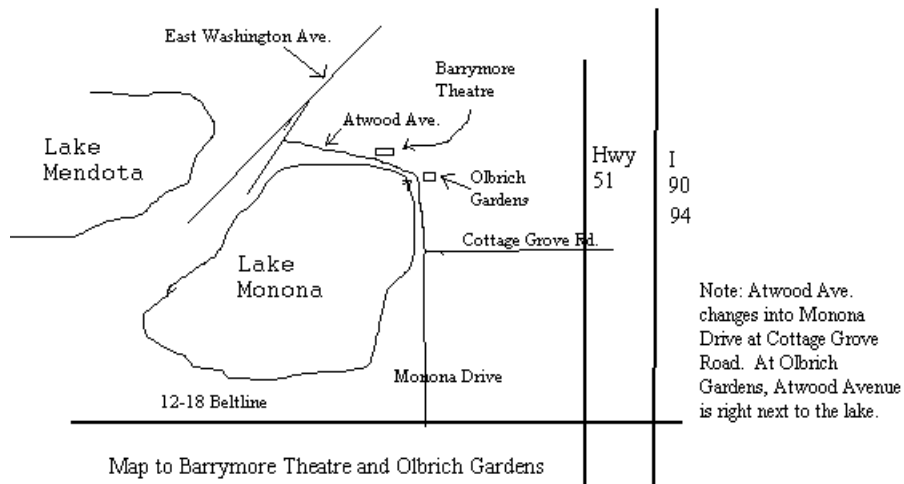
As before, they are setting aside a special section for us so we can all sit together. We are the only group who gets special seating. All other audience members are seated on a first-come, first-served basis. We will be sitting in a reserved section in the back on the right side on the main floor. This 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 for purchase. Plan to bring some extra money if you want to buy popcorn, soda, 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 at intermission 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 you ordering tickets online which will result in a payment request email coming back to you is Thursday, Jan. 4th.
- ☺ Deadline for your response to the payment request email online or paying at the ASC office is Wednesday, Jan. 10th
- ☺ This all may seem confusing. Feel free to contact Nancy Alar (608-222-4378 / nancy.l.alar@gmail.com) or the ASC office (608-630-9147/ info@autismsouthcentral.org) if you have any questions.

Map to Barrymore Theater (Location of January Juggling Show)



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What: Winter Pool Party
When: Saturday, February 17, 2018, 4:00 – 6:00 pm.
Where: SwimWest Madison, 1001 Deming Way, Madison, WI 53717
Cost: Free for ASC members! \$5 for non-member families; \$2 for non-member individuals
(There will be light refreshments)

In the middle of February we all get pretty sick of winter. This is your chance to have some fun with a more summer-like activity to chase the chill away. SwimWest has a great indoor pool with lots of room to swim and have fun with friends. You can bring your own pool toys.

We did this activity last year and had over 50 people come. We even had someone available to teach basic swimming skills and hope to have her there again this year.

There are men's and women's changing rooms with showers to get dressed and change into your suits. Remember to bring your swimsuits and towels and any additional things like shampoo and a comb to get cleaned up after you get out of the pool. There is a large parking lot with free parking. There will be lemonade and popcorn provided for snacks.

The cost of swimming is free for members of the Autism Society of South Central Wisconsin (the ASC). So this might be a good time to join the ASC if you aren't a member already. See the ASC web site at <http://autismsouthcentral.org/> for more details on ASC membership cost (\$30 for a family; \$15 for an individual), how to join and details about the Winter Pool Party. You will also be able to join ASC (and save the fee for swimming) at the pool as you check in. If you are not an ASC member, fees will be collected as you check in.

Pre-registration is required because we need a count for the number of lifeguards and the pool capacity. The Autism Society office is coordinating the Swimming party registration. You can register on-line at this link <http://autismsouthcentral.org/events/winter-pool-party/> You will be asked to let us know how many people are coming and how many plan to swim. We need this information to for life guard staffing. If you don't have email access, you can call the office at 608-630-9147 and leave a message with your name (with spelling), number attending (both swimming and not swimming) and your phone number so we can check back if we need to. Please speak slowly and clearly so we can get accurate information.

Important Items and Sensory Issues:

- ☺ The pool area can be loud and “echoy” when there are a lot of people there
- ☺ Be sure to pre-register so we know how many are coming.
- ☺ Remember to bring your suit and towel
- ☺ Feel free to leave early if it gets to be too much.



What Happened at AUSome's Last Outings?

Video Game Night and Pizza at McFarland Community Center Saturday, November 11, 2017, 6:30 – 8:30 pm

This was the 2nd year we had Video Game Night at the McFarland Community Center. It was sure handy having the pizza place (Spartan Pizza) right across the street so picking up the pizza was really easy. The only hitch (we really have to remember this next year) they had the doors set to automatically lock at 7 and we didn't know that. We wouldn't hear our pizza deliverers banging on the door because of all the noise we were making. At least they had my cell phone number to call so we could go let them in. We propped the door open after that, but we may have lost some people who wanted to come if they showed up and found the door locked.

As usual, this was a really great time!! We had 22 people show up. There was a conflict with the Badger football game which caused some traffic problems all over town and may have discouraged some attendees. We had about 14 large pizzas from Spartan Pizza – about 4 each pepperoni and sausage, 3 veggie and 3 cheese. We did have some pizza left over because of fewer attendees, but only a few. It was a surprisingly hungry bunch. As usual, the dessert cookies disappeared completely by the end of the night, but there were plenty of carrots left. We had a good selection of soda. We had a couple bottles of soda left that were forwarded on for use at the monthly Monday evening board game night.

This year we only had 2 video game setups but several hand held games were popular. Thanks to all who brought TV/game setups and controllers!! It also was helpful that several people remembered to bring extension cords and power strips. I know it is a pain lugging that heavy stuff around, but we couldn't do it without you! At least the newer flat screen TVs are not as heavy as the older bulky models. A special thanks to all the group members for their efforts on technical support. AUSome members should be proud of their skills with equipment.

Those who were there as spectators enjoyed looking at the 20 AUSome scrap books of our past activities. A lot of family members and friends joined in the fun. There was a lot of visiting and discussion going on besides the friendly competition. There were also at least one board game set up that generated keen interest.

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.

Thanks to all those who helped with the setup and cleanup and putting the chairs back the way we found them. Also thanks to those who brought treats to share – especially the chocolate chip cookies.

A special thanks to Mary Fruits who handled ordering the pizza and purchasing the soda.

Mindfulness Presentation by Ed Maxwell and how it can help to control Anxiety; Snack afterwards at the Chocolate Shoppe Ice Cream Store; December 9, 2017 (Saturday), 3 – 4pm

Our presenter for today was Ed Maxwell. He is someone I know from my Toastmasters Club. Ted does training on mindfulness as part of his business and has even given one of the popular TED talks about this subject. The title of Ed's presentation was "How to Reduce Anxiety With Mindfulness". 26 people turned out for this activity. There was a lot of audience participation and questions during the presentation.

He started us out with a brief relaxation exercise where we practiced focusing on deep breathing. He encouraged us to practice breathing slowly and deeply by filling up our lungs with each slow breath so that we were pushing out our lower abdomen. If you can keep breathing this way until you notice that you feel like yawning, that is a sure sign that it has relaxed you. Ed then explained that the definition of mindfulness = Paying attention on purpose with curiosity.

He further explained that our thoughts and responses to happenings around us are often like a rushing river. We are swept along thinking and reacting without pausing to contemplate. Mindfulness teaches us that there is a "space" between a stimulus that happens to us and our response to it. In that space we can exercise the power of our mind to insert awareness and choose our response to the stimulus rather than just automatically react without thinking.

For example: If someone bumps into us, our automatic response might be to react with anger. By exercising mindfulness, we can choose our response to the incident rather than reacting automatically.

After this explanation, we did another mindfulness practice where we spent several minutes just focusing on what it felt like to breath. Afterwards some attendees commented on how their bodies felt relaxed. Others noted that they were distracted by the sounds of others in the room breathing or static background sounds. Ed noted that it helps to maintain focus if you count slowly to 10 as you focus on your breathing.

As part of his presentation, Ed shared some statistics about scientific experiments that have shown the benefits of mindfulness. He also explained how many sports teams and successful companies have used mindfulness to improve their performance. Mindfulness has been shown to promote better sleep, increase happiness, improve focus and especially reduce stress and anxiety.

Lastly, Ed shared 5 simple things we can do every day to promote mindfulness.

1. Relaxed breathing – practice breathing slowly and deeply. It helps to calm your mind and body.
2. SLLS – Stop, Look, Listen and Smell. Take a break from what you are doing to stop and briefly focus one at a time on the sensory input from your vision, hearing and olfactory systems. It is a way of staying in touch with your body while giving your mind a rest.
3. Grounding – Focus your mind on the sensations and feelings produced by the soles of your feet touching the ground. Slowly expand that focus to include all the feelings coming from your feet. Since your thoughts are in your head, this helps to bring your focus away from your thought processes. This is especially helpful if your thoughts are being especially troublesome at any given time.
4. Gratitude – Think of 3 things or people you are grateful for. This helps to maintain a happy outlook and is a great way to start your day.
5. Loving Kindness – Wish yourself and others well. Do this in 4 steps starting with yourself. Ed suggested using the following phrasing and saying it silently to yourself:
 - a. May I be safe and free from suffering. May I be happy and healthy. May I have calm and peace.
 - b. May (*person you love*) be safe and free from suffering. May (*person you love*) be happy and healthy. May (*person you love*) have calm and peace.
 - c. May (*person you know but have no special feelings about*) be safe and free from suffering. May (*person you know but have no special feelings about*) be happy and healthy. May (*person you know but have no special feelings about*) have calm and peace.
 - d. May (*person you know but have a conflict/problem with*) be safe and free from suffering. May (*person you know but have a conflict/problem with*) be happy and healthy. May (*person you know but have a conflict/problem with*) have calm and peace. I found it especially amazing how this last wish for loving kindness left me feeling “lighter” and freer somehow.

Important Information:

1. **Visit <http://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.
2. **Monthly Game Night Activity.** This is a new activity for teens and young adults separate from the AUsome Social Group. The focus is on board and card games. This happens every month on the 4th Monday of the month; 6:30 – 8:30 pm. The location is the Madison College Health Education Information Technology Building, 1705 Hoffman St (across the street from the main Truax campus), Room 101 (room is subject to change – look for signs).
3. **AUsome Adult Support Group.** This support group is for adults (18 and over) with Autism Spectrum Disorders and those who suspect they may have an ASD. The group meets the third Wednesday of every other month (Jan, Mar, May, July, Sept, Nov) to discuss life issues and support one another. Time 6:30 – 8:00 PM. Location Vantage Place II Building, 2nd Floor, ASC Office conference room - 437 S. Yellowstone Dr. Madison, WI.
4. **Day with the Experts: Autism is January 20, 2018** 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! See <https://www.waisman.wisc.edu/events-experts-autism-2018.htm> for more information on the registration coming soon.
5. **The annual conference of the Autism Society of Wisconsin (ASW) will be April 19-21, 2018 at the Kalahari Resort in Wisconsin Dells.** 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/>

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 info@autismsouthcentral.org or send a note to Autism Society, 437 S Yellowstone Dr, Suite 217A, Madison, WI 53719. See the ASC 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).

The Autism Society of South Central Wisconsin is an affiliate of the Autism Society of America, a nationwide organization. However, membership in ASC does not include membership in the Autism Society of America. The ASC serves South Central Wisconsin with reach into Southwest Wisconsin – Dane, Columbia, Sauk, Iowa, Rock, Green, Lafayette, Grant, Richland and Crawford counties are in our service area. 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 our local 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 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 annual Madfest Juggling show. In August we have a private pool party at the Monona Pool. Every November we have "video/board game/socialization 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.