

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/Socialization Night and Pizza at McFarland Municipal Center** (same place as last year - If you bring a TV set/video game setup, bring extra controllers and extension cords)
- When:** **Saturday, November 11, 2017, 6:30 – 8:30 pm**
- Where:** **McFarland Municipal Center (5915 Milwaukee St, McFarland, WI 53558 - see map on next page)**
- Cost:** **Free! Pizza and soft drinks provided by ASC**

For many years in the past we had this activity at the Midvale Church, but the McFarland location has worked out better for us for a bunch of reasons. One problem is the McFarland location is not on a bus line. If you need help with transportation, please give Nancy Alar a call at 608-222-4378 and we will try to find someone to give you a ride. The good news is there is no steep stairway we need to negotiate and we should get cell phone reception unlike at the church. I will bring all our old scrapbooks to look through and the newest pictures.

Please RSVP by Thursday, Nov. 9 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://autismsouthcentral.org/events/video-game-night/> or you can call Nancy at 608-222-4378. We will probably order the pizzas from Spartan Pizza in McFarland again. We should have a fairly good turnout, since this has been one of our most popular activities in past years. Even though the address for the building is Milwaukee Street, the main parking lot is on the side of the building facing Anthony Street. The sign on the building entrance from the parking lot says McFarland Municipal Center.

Come in the front door that faces the parking lot, we will be in the big meeting room on the left. There is a map attached below. Cost is FREE and includes all the pizza and soda you can eat! Thanks to the Capital Times Kid's Fund Grant for the Autism Society of South Central Wisconsin for covering the cost of the food! 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 start setting up at 6:00. We will need to leave the room as we found it. We should be out of 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.

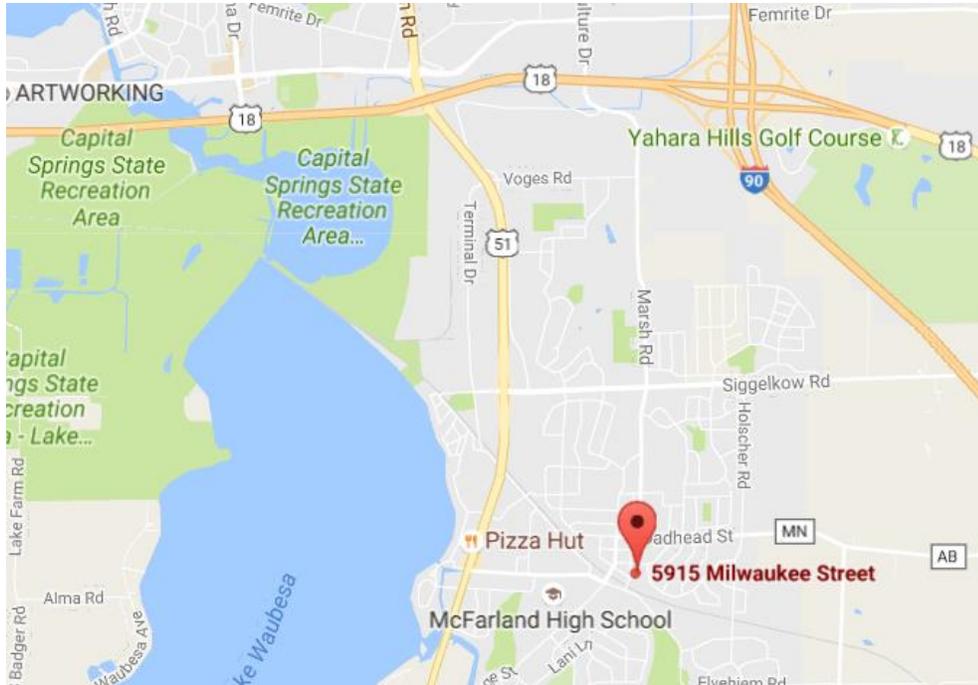
Feel free to bring board games or other such activities if you would prefer something non-electronic. There should be plenty to do. As always, feel free to leave early if you need to. Pizzas will be delivered at 7:00. Soft drinks and carrots will also be provided. If you would like to bring a dessert to share, that would be appreciated.

Important Items and Sensory Issues:

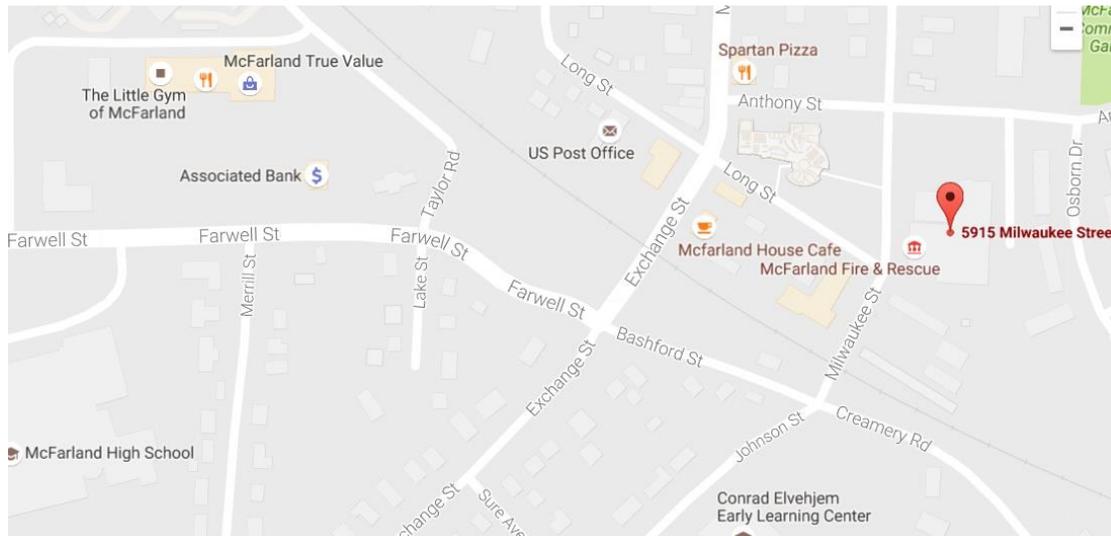
- ⊙ **Label everything that you bring with your name – There are often duplicate game items**
- ⊙ There will be a noise level with some yelling
- ⊙ Bring Board games if you prefer
- ⊙ Bring your TV/game gear setup; Bring any extra game controllers even if you don't bring a full setup.
- ⊙ **Bring extra extension cords** – the power outlets are scattered.
- ⊙ Bring a dessert to share if you want to.

Maps to McFarland Municipal (Community) Center

Go south on 51 from Beltline toward McFarland. Turn left at Farwell Street by Culvers



Here's a more close up map. Parking lot is on Anthony Street.



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- What:** **Mindfulness Presentation by Ed Maxwell and how it can help to control Anxiety; Snack afterwards at the Chocolate Shoppe Ice Cream Store**
- When:** **December 9, 2017 (Saturday), 3 – 4pm;**
- Where:** **Sequoia Library, 4340 Tokay Blvd, Madison, WI (corner of Tokay and Midvale Blvd) The Chocolate Shoppe is in the same shopping center.**
- Cost:** **Free; Bring money for ice cream**

Is anxiety a problem you struggle with in your life? Would you like to learn about one more tool you could use to help control your anxiety issues? Then this presentation is for you!

Ed Maxwell will be speaking to us in this activity and he is a very good speaker. He has even given one of the popular TED talks about this subject. I have heard him speak and he is very interesting and engaging to listen to. I know that anxiety is an issue for many people on the autism spectrum, so this should be an especially useful presentation for teens and adults on the spectrum. Some other possible benefits are learning techniques to reduce stress, remain more focused and calm yourself.

Ed runs the consulting firm Third Left Wellness, LLC. He will present several mindfulness practices that reduce anxiety. He will also explain what mindfulness is, as well as the scientific evidence for its benefits, and he will lead the group on several techniques so that everyone gets a chance to practice. If you would like to learn more before the presentation, go to his website: <http://www.3rdlw.com/> .

Parking is free at the Midvale Shopping Center where the Sequoia Library is located, but sometimes the lot gets full. There is extra free parking available on the streets behind the shopping center. Friends and family members are welcome to attend.

We have to put the room back in the same shape we found it. So anyone who can stay to help us put chairs away would be appreciated.

Important Items and Sensory Issues:

- ☉ Bring money for ice cream



What Happened at AUsome's Last Outings?

Bus Trip to of Cave Of The Mounds with stop afterwards at Culver's in Verona; Saturday, Sept. 16, 2017, 1 - 5 pm;

At a cost of only \$7 per person, this cave tour was a great deal! Thanks to our out-going ED, Mary Fruits, for all her work on organizing the tour and the bus. We had 33 people turn out for the tour. About half of them rode the bus. The bus from the Badger Bus Company was really a luxury ride. It was air conditioned, had a bathroom, seatbelts, cup holders and really comfortable, upholstered seats with arm rests and foot rests. We traveled in style – wish the ride would have been longer.

It was a lovely fall day for a ride out to the cave – sunny and warm. Before the tour we had time to look through the interesting stuff in the gift shop. They had lots of geology related stuff for sale like geodes and fossils. Because we had such a large group tour, we were able to get one free ticket, which was nice. The people organizing things at the cave entrance were very helpful and made sure we had accurate counts and receipts for our record keeping.

The tours started every half hour. Once everyone had arrived, we went as a group into the cave staging area. We had all been reminded to take a sweater or jacket because it was so cool (50 degrees) in the cave. It doesn't take long to get chilled in those temperatures. We started out seeing a short film about how the Cave of the Mounds was discovered. There was a farm operating above the cave for about 100 years before anyone had a clue it was there. Then one day in 1939 the farmer was blasting out some limestone from a quarry site on his land when they broke through into part of the cave. So many people wanted to come an look at the cave that the farmer's family decided to open it as an attraction in 1940 and it has been operating ever since.

It takes about an hour to go through the cave tour. There are lots of colorful and interesting rock formations along the tour trail. There is also one spot in the tour that is so narrow that the “wider” members of the group had to really “suck it in” to squeeze through. The cave was formed by water percolating through the limestone rock and slowly dissolving away the rock and redepositing it as stalactites and stalagmites. The colors of the formations are formed by different minerals such as iron and manganese. Because of my bad knee, I didn't get to see most of this stuff except in pictures. The tour trail is slippery and there are lots of stairs so I couldn't go on the whole trip. But I did get a chance to go into the cave and see a few of the formations near the entrance and exit with the help of a friendly guide. I even got a few “cave kisses” – drops of water from the ceiling of the cave that fell on my head.

After the tour was over, we got a chance to warm up in the gift shop before we boarded the bus for the trip back to Culver's in Verona. We got back to our starting point – the parking lot of the ASC office – just after 5:00.

Treinen Farm – night tour of the corn maze with a bonfire and S'mores; October 21, 2017; 7:00 - 9:00 pm.

We had a lovely evening and beautiful weather, really warm for this time of year. This was a big contrast to the previous weekend (Oct 14) when we were originally supposed to have this outing. We had to reschedule it to the next weekend (Oct 21) at the last minute due to the 100% forecasted chance of thunderstorms on the 14th. In fact, since it had rained for the previous 2 weekends, a large number of other bonfire groups had also rescheduled for the 21st. There were so many fires going that night that the farm was kind of covered in a smoky haze. I know we did our part. I burned up all the wood they gave us to start with plus the trunk full of wood I brought from home and half the wagon full they brought later.

It was very peaceful and beautiful. I still have one bad knee so I had no desire to go into the maze. Most of the folks who showed up were up for the challenge of the maze so I spent a lot of time burning up wood (which was fine with me – keeping a fire going is my favorite activity). 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 had about 10 people go into the maze and 4 just sat around the fire. Our biggest challenge was lack of flashlights. Jack's flashlight bulb burned out just as he got there. Nancy's daughter Liz and her friends completely forgot to bring any flashlights plus their phones were low on battery so using them as flashlights was not a good

plan. The Lee family had brought a really nice little battery powered lantern that helped a lot to illuminate the S'mores supplies. I think we will have to get us one of those!

Richard missed out on his favorite activity of the pumpkin slingshot this year because it was dark when we got there. He was really happy when Angie Treinen gave him a small pumpkin to take home in honor of his dedication to the farm. We were unable to do our usual Autism Society A-maze-ing Days activity this year because of a change over in our executive director position. Hopefully we will be able to do it again next year.

Angie Treinen came and hung out with us for a while, telling us details about the maze and the changes they continue to make to the farm. It was a relaxing evening. We went home content and smelling of wood smoke.

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 info@autismsouthcentral.org 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** 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. You can get more details on this group at <http://autismsouthcentral.org/find-support/ausome-adult-support-group/>

Note that the AUsome Adult Group (AAG) will be holding the election for the group Facilitator (the person who leads the meetings – currently Jack Steinberg) and the group Administrator (the person who maintains the mailing list and other administrative functions – currently Ben Gruhl) in January 2018. The Autism Society Office will be accepting nominations for these positions starting in November 2017.

3. **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).
4. **We are also always in need of volunteers** for our many activities sponsored by the ASC. Please contact info@autismsouthcentral.org to get on our volunteer list if you are available to help out with any of our activities.
5. **Day with the Experts: Autism** is being planned for **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! Watch for more information on the registration coming soon and on the Waisman Website - <https://www.waisman.wisc.edu/events-experts.htm> .
6. **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/>. Early bird registration is now open.

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 our 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.