

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 (note change in location!)**
(If you bring TV set/video game setup, bring extra controllers and extension cords)
- When:** **Saturday, November 5, 2016, 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**

We needed to move our game night activity from our usual place since the Midvale Church did not have any days available in November this year. I know 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. 3 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 me at 608-222-4378. We will probably order the pizzas from Spartan Pizza in McFarland. 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 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 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.

I'll arrange for the pizza to be delivered at 7:00. Soft drinks and carrots will be provided.

Important Items and Sensory Issues:

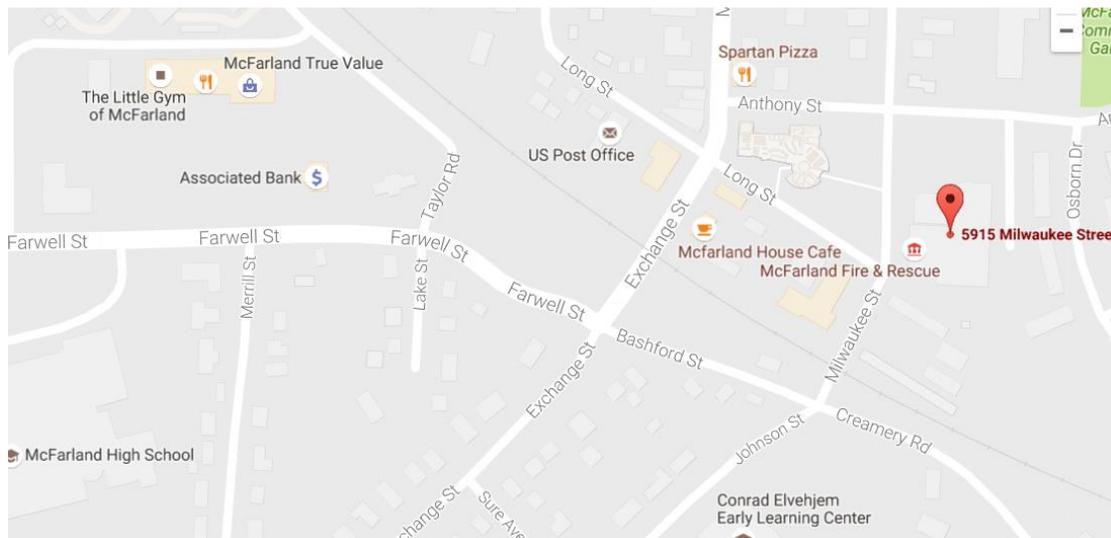
- ☺ **Label everything that you bring with your name – There are often duplicate game items**
- ☺ There will be a noise level with some yelling
- ☺ Bring board games if you prefer
- ☺ Bring your TV/game gear setup; bring any extra game controllers even if you don't bring a full setup.
- ☺ **Bring extra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

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:** Visit the Cat Café and hang out with friendly felines
When: December 3, 2016 (Saturday), 10:00 – 11:00 am; Snack afterwards at McDonalds, 1102 Regent Street, Madison
Where: Cat Café, 1925 Monroe St, Madison, WI 53711
Cost: Free; Bring money for McDonald's

Are you interested in kitties? Do you like to pet friendly cats? Then the Cat Café is the place for you! They have about a dozen friendly felines here plus a bunch of comfy chairs. The cats wander around looking for laps to hang out in and hands willing to pet them. The place also has a magnificent array of cat climbing places for the kitties to go when they want to get away from people for a while.

There are “cat biographies” of the current resident felines hanging on the walls. When I was there setting up the outing, I found out one of the residents had escaped and gotten lost. Be careful going in and out that none of the residents make a break for it.

Also be aware that although friends and siblings are often welcome to come along on our AUsome outings, children under 8 are not allowed in the Cat Café for everyone's safety. An RSVP is not required, but I would appreciate an email to Nancy.L.Alar@gmail.com if you are coming so I have a general idea on how many to expect.

I would like to thank the Cat Café for working with me to set up this outing at a time when they are normally closed so we could have their cats and comfy chairs all to ourselves.

Of course, if you are allergic to cats, this might not be the best place for you. Use your best judgement.

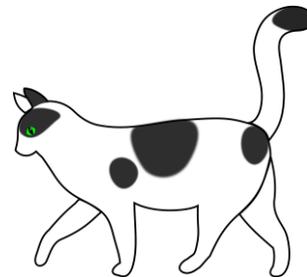
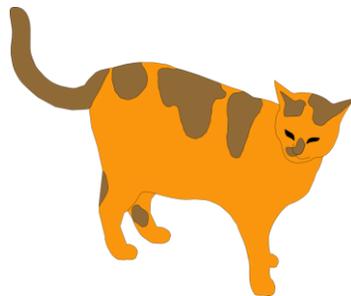
They also have a nice gift shop here with a selection of some interesting cat items like caps, totes and pictures. Some of the cats in the café are available for adoption.

After we are done hanging out with the cats, we will go over to the McDonald's on Regent Street to have a snack. Hope all the animal lovers can join us.

Parking is somewhat challenging on Monroe Street, so keep that in mind.

Important Items and Sensory Issues:

- ☺ Bring money for McDonald's
- ☺ Wear clothes that don't show cat hair



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 24, 2016; 7:00 - 9:00 pm.

We had a lovely evening and beautiful weather, except it was cloudy. In past years we've had a 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.

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 about 10 people go into the maze. A good friend of ours – Tim Markle and his son – just happened to be at the farm that evening also so we invited them to join us for S'mores after they came out of the maze.

Once again Richard had to try his hand at the pumpkin sling shot earlier in the afternoon. As usual, we won a couple of little pumpkins. I helped out with the ASC do-it-yourself ice cream sundae booth in the afternoon while Richard was shooting for pumpkins.

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 didn't go through as many S'mores supplies as last year because so many people spent a lot of time in the corn maze. 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.

A guided tour by Mark Huntsman of the Maple Hill Cemetery in Evansville, WI; October 9, 2016 (Sunday), 1:00 - 3:00 pm

This was a very interesting activity, especially since we were hearing cool details and information from an expert on old cemeteries – Mark Huntsman (Thanks, Mark!!). The weather was just perfect for a fall afternoon – warm, sunny and not windy. We had 9 people show up. There might have been more if there hadn't been a big accident on Hwy 14 that blocked traffic going to Evansville for over an hour.

We learned things like people back in the early part of the 1900's treated cemeteries as parks. They went there for picnics and took their girlfriends there for dates. I wonder if the ground was as lumpy back then as it is now. Maybe this is just a feature of very old cemeteries. We learned that if a stone had a lamb or a dove on it, it usually meant the person buried there was a child. We saw some tombstones that looked like tree stumps. Mark explained that they came from a company called "Woodsmen of the World". This organization was a cross between an insurance company and sort of a secret society. If you paid for their highest level of membership, when you died, they bought you a grave marker that looked like a tree stump. The company quit doing this around the 1920's when it got too expensive, but there are still a lot of these tree stump monuments in Wisconsin cemeteries.

We also saw some more modern headstones that were etched with pictures from the lives of people buried under them. The pictures showed things like the full layout of a farm and a guy going fly fishing. Modern technology makes it much easier to work with hard stones like granite. Many older tombstones were made out of marble which is softer than granite (and easier to work with). It looked nice when it was first carved, but tended to weather pretty fast and dissolve in acid rain. That's why it is often hard to read the older, white monuments from the 1800's.

We also learned about some of the colorful people buried in this particular cemetery. We saw the grave of Colonel George "Popcorn" Hall who popularized the idea of serving popcorn at circuses. Col. Hall had his own small circus that spent the winter in Evansville. The book "Weird Wisconsin" describes how Col Hall's animals caused

problems in the town. His leopard escaped once and killed a bunch of sheep. His gorilla made so much noise he was accused of disturbing the peace. Plus his alligator escaped and hung out in a local pond until it was finally recaptured. We also saw Almanon Eager's grave, which is the biggest monument in the cemetery. It is so big it is on the register of historic places. It has a 20 foot tall statue of a goddess on top of it. The whole thing is made out of white granite and is about 70 feet tall. It cost about \$10,000 when it was made in 1901. To make something like that now would cost about \$600,000.

The only real problem was at the end when we realized that Romano's Pizza didn't open until 4:00. But since we had already spent 2 hours walking around in the cemetery, we called it a day and went home.

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.
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). There will **NOT** be a game night in December because of the holiday.
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 being planned for **January 2017** 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 exact date and registration coming soon.
5. **The annual conference of the Autism Society of Wisconsin (ASW) will be April 27 - 29, 2017 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).

Membership to the Autism Society of South Central Wisconsin *does not include* membership in the Autism Society of Wisconsin or membership in 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/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.