

The AUsome Social Group

Teen/Young Adult Recreation/Social Group

Sponsored by the Autism Society of Greater Madison (ASGM); <http://www.autismmadison.org/>

Contact: Nancy Alar, 3802 Gala Way, Cottage Grove, WI 53527

(608) 222-4378 or ausome@hughes.net

What: Video Game Night and Pizza at NEW LOCATION

(Please! Bring your TV set/video game setup, Extra controllers and extension cords if you can)

When: Saturday, November 7, 2009, 7:00 – 9:00 pm

**Where: Lussier Community Education Center (LCEC), 55 S. Gammon Rd, Madison, WI 53717
(Next to Memorial High School On the West side of Madison) - see map on next page**

Cost: Free! Pizza and soft drinks provided by Capital Times Kid's Fund

We had to have video game night in a different location this year because the church where we usually have it is being remodeled. Hopefully by next year the church will be available again.

Please RSVP (phone or e-mail) by Wednesday, November 4, 2009 so I know who is coming, what game gear/TV setups you can bring and how many pizzas we need. We should have a fairly good turnout, since this has been one of our most popular activities in past years. As usual, the AUsome scrap books will be available for everyone to look at.

The LCEC is just north of Memorial High School and shares a driveway with the school. It is the first stoplight on Gammon Road north of the intersection of Gammon and Mineral Point Road (see map). Here is a link to the [google map](#). There is a parking lot right in front of the LCEC. There should be plenty of room.

Call if you need more detailed directions and to discuss which game gear you'll be bringing. Cost is FREE and includes all the pizza and soda you can eat! Thanks to Nancy Ishikawa for setting up the LCEC location for me. Also thanks to the Capital Times Kid's Fund for paying for the rental of the LCEC space and our pizza! Parents are welcome to stay and watch the games, but don't have to if your family member can manage on their own. I'll need some help with setup (starting at 6:30) and cleanup. We must leave the building by 9:30.

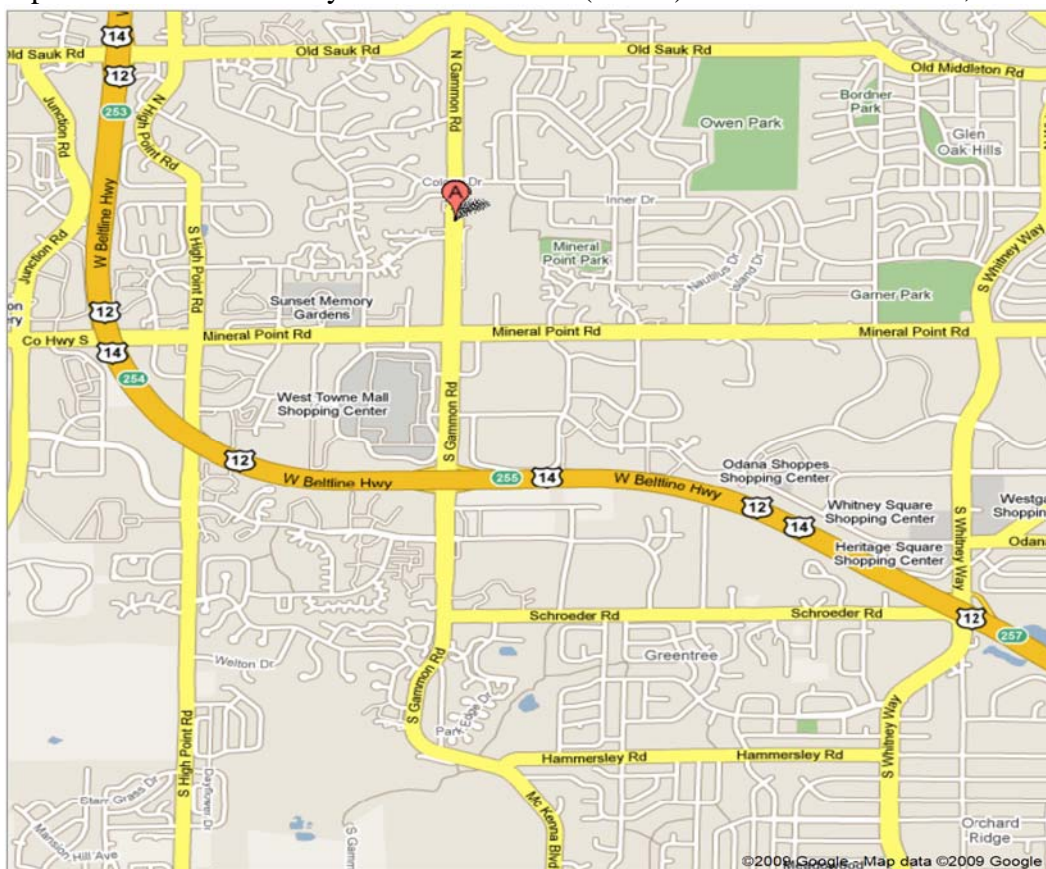
We are bringing 2 TV sets and Matt Ward's Nintendo 64 (with race games). I know this is old technology, but it still works. **I do need others to bring your TV/game setups. The TV's and extension cords are the most critical since TV's are hard to lug around and lots of things need to be plugged in. If you can bring a "splitter" for extension cords, that helps too. The good news is they have lots of electrical outlets in the room we'll be in. Even if you can't bring a TV/game setup, bring any extra controllers you have!** With multiple controllers, up to 4 can play Nintendo 64 at once. 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. If anyone has a Play Station 2 or an X-box, that would be great if you could bring it with a TV. Please come even if you have no game gear to bring. With multiple player setups we should do fine. Even if we don't have enough, we'll take turns. Even if you don't like 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.

I'll arrange for the pizza (from Pizza Hut) to be delivered about 7:30. Soft drinks will be provided.

Important Items and Sensory Issues:

- There will be a noise level with some yelling (There will be a "quiet room" area to get away).
- Bring your TV/game gear setup
- Bring any extra game controllers you have even if you don't bring a full setup.
- **Bring extra extension cords** just in case.

Map to Lussier Community Education Center (LCEC) – 55 S. Gammon Rd., Madison, WI



Important Information:

1. Visit <http://www.autismmadison.org/> for other services and activities sponsored by the **Autism Society of Great Madison (ASGM)**. The 3rd Tuesday evening of the month is either a parent support group meeting at the Midvale Community Lutheran Church or a special presentation. There is also sensory friendly Saturday movies on the last Saturday of the month and quarterly birthday parties at “Pump-it-up”. There are also many other special events (such as A-Maze-ing Days at the Treinen Farm Corn Maze) through out the year.

2. **The Annual Autism Society of Wisconsin (ASW) conference will be March 18-20, 2010 at the Hotel Sierra (formerly the Regency Suites) in Green Bay.** This is much earlier than usual. The early bird (cheapest) conference rates are only available through November 25, 2009. The registration form is a little confusing because the full conference rate for someone on the spectrum is \$90 (up from \$60 last year, but still a real bargain) regardless of when you register. Parents and other attendees have to pay a lot more, but they do get an early bird rate. See the ASW web site for more information - <http://www.asw4autism.org/>.

Yes! We will have 2 special autism conference strands (youth and “across the lifespan”). We will have a hospitality room and an art/favorite things display. On Friday evening, we’ll have a pizza supper, a talent show, and a dance. Register early so we know how many to plan for.

At this conference we try to make those on the spectrum as comfortable as we can. We will take sensory issues and dietary restrictions into consideration as much as possible. Those who want to participate in the youth and self-advocacy strands will need to register for the conference and pay the registration fee (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 this conference exists.

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Contact: Nancy Alar, 3802 Gala Way, Cottage Grove, WI 53527
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What: Lochlan Masters the Magician
When: Saturday, December 5, 2009, noon – 2 pm
Where: Lussier Community Education Center (LCEC), 55 S. Gammon Rd, Madison, WI 53717
(Next to Memorial High School on the West side of Madison) - see map on next page
Cost: Free! Bring a treat to share – soft drinks will be provided

Lochlan Masters is a well known magician in the Madison area. Engaging humor is always part of his performance of incredible object manipulation tricks that seem to defy the laws of physics! Some of you may have seen him do his magic tricks at other functions. I have not seen his magic act before myself, so I am looking forward to seeing him perform. You can learn more about Lochlan at his website at <http://www.lochlanmasters.com/>.

Lochlan will perform magic tricks for us using coins and ropes and other everyday objects. Some of us in the audience will even be invited to participate in some of the tricks. Even though Lochlan often makes balloon animals when he performs, he will NOT be using any balloons in his act for us. There won't be anything that makes loud noises or fire so it should be a spectrum friendly show.

As part of the show, Lochlan will teach us how to do a magic trick with one of his props. This will give you an inside look at how these magic tricks are performed. Lochlan makes the magic look easy, but it takes a lot of practice to be good at what he does. Come expecting to be amazed by Lochlan Masters the Magician and his magic abilities!

Please bring some type of finger food snack to share. I will provide soft drinks (and hot chocolate if it is cold). After the performance, we will have refreshments and get a chance to talk to Lochlan about his career as a magician. This is also our chance to socialize and renew our friendships. I would appreciate it if some group members can help with setting up and putting away the chairs for the performance.

The LCEC is just north of Memorial High School and shares a driveway with the school. It is the first stoplight on Gammon Road north of the intersection of Gammon and Mineral Point Road (see map). Here is a link to the [google map](#). There is a parking lot right in front of the LCEC. There should be plenty of room.

Thanks to Nancy Ishikawa for contacting Lochlan and setting up the location for me. Also thanks to the Capital Times Kid's Fund for paying for the rental of the LCEC space.

Important Items and Sensory Issues:

- ☺ There will not be any balloons
- ☺ Bring a snack to share

What Happened on AUsome's Last Outings?

Visit Madison's Henry Vilas Zoo; Snack afterwards in Zoo Food Court

Saturday, September 5, 2009; 1:00 – 3:00 P.M.

The good news about our trip to the Henry Vilas Zoo is the weather was perfect. In a way, this was also the bad news because it was so nice that I think everyone in town decided to go to the zoo that day. We all had problems finding a parking place. We eventually waded through the crowds and found the nicely shaded outdoor auditorium that zookeeper Rick Bilkey had reserved for us and our private animal show. It was great to be able to have that part of the zoo all to ourselves.

Rick was busy elsewhere, but the volunteer husband and wife team of Jim and Helen really did a good job showing us some of the zoo animals up close. First Jim shared with us some general information about the zoo. It is one of only 10 free zoos in the whole country. Jim and Helen have been doing animal shows for the zoo for almost 30 years. They apologized for not having the "biggest Toad in the World" available to show us. They had planned to, but the toad had come down with something and had to make a trip to the "toad vet".

We had about 16 people there seated on comfortable bleachers to watch the rest of the show. First we got to meet Bart, the barred owl. Bart was sitting on Jim's leather-gloved hand. Bart's talons are so sharp they would cut right through skin without the really thick leather glove. Bart can't fly very well because he had a broken wing that didn't heal properly. But the owl could fly a little so they had a leash around his leg called a "jess" which is what people use to work with falcons. Barred owls can live 25 – 40 years and eat 2-3 mice a day. The gross part was where Jim described how the owl eats a mouse and then vomits up an "owl pellet" of bones and fur leftovers a few hours later. We also learned that only Native Americans can possess owl feathers and that crows try to chase owls away if they see one sitting in a tree. Jim pointed out that Bart had really big eyes because owls hunt mostly at night. Owls can see and hear a lot better than we can. Also, owl feathers are very soft and fluffy (we got to feel them) because this allows them to fly very silently. Jim said if a barred owl flew past you just above your head at night, you would never hear it and wouldn't know it was there. This allows the owls to sneak up on mice when they hunt.

After the owl, we met Jimmy-John, the giant, white rabbit. He was a mixed breed rabbit, part lop-ear and something else. He was black and white, mostly white. He had been left at the zoo door like a baby orphan. They have thicker fur in winter and live 6-7 years. Jimmy-John was really shedding fur. We all got a chance to pet him and every stroke left a cloud of white rabbit hair wafting through the air. We all had rabbit fur stuck to our clothes.

Next Jim brought out the ball python – Monty. They have another python called Julius Squeezer. Monty was 5 feet long and 8 years old. They can live to be 20. Some interesting things we learned about snakes: They have no eyelids; All snakes can swim and climb trees; They can't hear, but they sense vibrations from touching the ground and other things in their environment.

Finally we met Lucky, the black foot penguin. These penguins come from the southern tip of South Africa (all penguins are found in the southern hemisphere). Penguins have very tiny feathers – about 70 per square inch of penguin skin – that they molt each year. Lucky eats about 16 small fish a day that he swallows whole. He kind of stinks like fish. Male and female penguins mate for life. It is hard to tell the males and females apart. The zoo bands the male penguins on the right wing and the female penguins on the left wing so they can keep track of the sexes.

Jim said if we want to ask him more questions about the zoo, we can contact him at jimdolphinman@att.net.

After our visit with Jim and Helen and the animals, we went to get some refreshments.

**A*Mazing Days for Autism – night tour of the mermaid corn maze with a bonfire and S’mores.
October 3, 2009 (Saturday), 7:00 - 9:00 pm**

Although the actual AUsome outing was in the evening, we had a full range of activities all day and lots of good food.

The weather for the evening AUsome activity was a bit chilly for a spooky night trip through the corn maze. Also it had been raining earlier in the day, so the maze was a bit muddy. But it didn’t rain (much, OK, maybe a few sprinkles) on us and our fire. We had about 10 people turn out for this. Everyone who came got a light necklace.

The Treinens really have the maze experience well organized. They give you a maze map, but it is in the form of an 8 piece puzzle and you only get the first piece to start. You have to find a mail box in the first part of the maze with the second piece of the puzzle so you can find the 2nd mail box and the 3rd piece of the puzzle, etc. Besides finding the maze puzzle pieces, there are 8 posts with paper punches scattered around the maze. If you find one, you put the punch on your map. If you get 4 punches, you get a prize. If you find all 8 punches, you get a bigger prize. There is also a reward of a piece of candy if you don’t open your “cheaters” map that they give you in case of emergency. Everyone always asks what happens if they get lost. The maze workers always reply that they always find everyone when they harvest the corn in November! That always gets a laugh.

We had the bonfire for the S’mores in a different place from last year. We had a private area right next to the corn maze with picnic tables all around the fire to sit on. It sure made it easier to make the S’more with a flat surface to work on. Even though we were a smaller group than last year, we ate up almost as much graham crackers, chocolate and marshmallows as we did last year.

It is very quiet and peaceful at the farm at night. The fire was stoked high and then burned down just right for marshmallows (I love building fires – we burned up all the wood in the vicinity!) I enjoyed the conversation I had with Lori Wing and David Smith. It was a stellar night.

AUSome Social Group Philosophy and Ground Rules

Group Sponsor:

The AUSome Social Group is sponsored by the Autism Society of Greater Madison (ASGM). **It is highly recommended that you join the Autism Society of Greater Madison. You should at least subscribe to the Autism Society of Greater Madison newsletter (subscription cost is only \$5) if you are not a chapter member.** It is possible that Madison chapter membership may be required in the future as the AUSome group becomes larger and requires more resources. You can get more information about the Madison Chapter (including an extensive autism resource list), by calling (608) 213-8519 or sending a note to ASGM, 2935 Fish Hatchery Rd #101, Madison, WI 53711

See the ASGM website at <http://www.autismmadison.org/> for membership information and a link to the AUSome Group web pages <http://www.autismmadison.org/ausome/index.htm> . If you join the Autism Society of Greater Madison (\$55 for family membership), this automatically gives you the chapter newsletter plus membership in both the state (ASW) and national Autistic Societies so you will get all those mailings as well. (However, it does not work the other way. If you join just the national Autistic Society, you will not get state and local mailings. This is confusing for a lot of people because sometimes you get renewal notices from all three groups. I find it most convenient to join at the local Madison organization. Then you can ignore all the other renewal notices.)

Group Purpose:

The AUSome group was organized to provide recreation and social opportunities for people ages 12 and over who are challenged by sensory/communication disorders such as Autism/Asperger's/PDD/Tourette's. However, anyone is welcome to join the activities. I try to set up activities that allow for social interaction between group members and between parents and siblings of the group.

The AUSome 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. If you have an e-mail address and are OK with receiving the newsletter that way, let me (Nancy Alar) know. It saves time and postage if notification can just be sent electronically. I will maintain a mailing list of participants, and will verify this list annually – usually in January in conjunction with a call about tickets to the juggling show. Our AUSome newsletter is also available on the web at <http://www.autismmadison.org/newsletter/index.htm>

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, horse back 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 June 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.

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 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 ausome@hughes.net 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.