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In this issue

President's pen	1-2
Monthly Meeting	2
Parent Resources	2
Upcoming Even	3
Potassium	4-5
Community events	5-6
Gatekeeper gene	7
Amazon Smile	8
Big Red Safety Box	8
Realtor Fundraiser	8
Water Safety	9-10
Sponsors	10
Donations & Board Members	11

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S PEN

By Nagla Moussa

Before you know it the first week of school will be here and our children will be facing a new school year.

Transitions and changes are uncomfortable for us all, but for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder they can cause anxiety, fear, and confusion. Facing new school staff, possibly a new school, different peers, and a different classroom environment can be very traumatic. The good news is there are steps you can take to help smooth that transition and alleviate some of the anxiety and fear. Now is a great time to start getting your child ready to face the new school year.

You can begin by talking about the new school year, finding books like Froggy Goes To School and First Day Jitters, that address attending a new school or a new grade. You can find social stories about a new school year or first day of school. Here's a great website to help with preparing for the new school year with social stories and other tips: <https://wrfn.info/preparing-for-the-new-school-year/>. Help your child prepare by reading these books and social stories many times throughout the summer.

Next step is to drive by the school, walk to the school, explore the adjacent playground or area around the school. Do this several times during the summer and especially the week before school begins. Take pictures of your child by the building or the playground to show to your child and talk about the new school year.

When teachers are back in school, usually the week before school starts, ask to do a walk through the school and a brief meeting with the teacher just to say hello and introduce your child. Take a picture of your child and the teacher. Show it to your child often and talk about the new teacher.

Attend the open house if possible, ( sometimes they are too loud and chaotic for our children, if you know your child will be overwhelmed it is best not to attend). You can take a picture of your child, write a one page letter to the teacher highlighting important need-to-know things about your child and put these in bullet points. Attach your child's picture to this letter and give it to the teacher on the first day of school, or when you meet with her prior to school starting.

Finally prepare yourself mentally for the new school year. Having a positive and calm attitude towards the new school year will also help your child be calm and positive. Our children are very sensitive to our feelings and these feelings are easily transferred to them. Talk to yourself even if you fear and anticipate

## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S PEN

problems (and there will be some), tell yourself that they can be easily fixed and you can work on them and find solutions. Transition is difficult, but being smart and preparing yourself and your child mentally and emotionally can make transitions easier.

I wish you all a wonderful new school year without any difficulties or problems.

## MONTHLY SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS

### **Parents of children of all ages:**

When: 3rd Tuesday of each month, 11:30am — 1:00pm, during the school year

Where: Corner Bakery(941 N. Central Expy, Plano)

Facilitators: Nagla Moussa, Dori Schaefer

### **Parents of younger children**

When: 2nd Tuesday of each month, 9:30 - 11:00 am, during the school year

Where: Corner Bakery(941 N. Central Expy, Plano)

Facilitators: Nagla Moussa, Nanci Roessner

### **Spanish Speaking Support Group**

When: 1st Saturday of each month, 7:00 - 8:30 pm,

Where: St Marks Pastorla Center, 1100 W 15 Street, Suite 209 Room 5, Plano, TX

<http://naa-nt-spanish.squarespace.com>

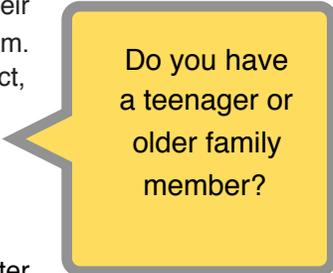
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### **Self-Advocacy Group**

For Teens (7th Grade and up) & Adults with Autism Participants will learn about autism and its' effect on their lives while developing a great appreciation for their individual gifts and talents. It is important that participants know they have autism. Trained volunteers including some with autism, facilitate this group. Bring an object, book, picture or other item that represents your talents and interests, \$5.00 to pay for pizza, snacks and drinks.

When : Tuesday, Sep 6th, 2016 at 7:00 pm

Where : St. Andrew UMC, 1401 Mira Vista Blvd. Please check in at the Theater room upstairs on the 2nd floor), Plano, TX 75093



Do you have a teenager or older family member?

## PARENT RESOURCE PACKET

Looking for an autism friendly pediatrician, dentist, private school, hair salon, attorney , therapy providers for speech, OT, ABA, or just about any services that make your child lives easier?

Email **Nagla Moussa** at [nagla\\_alvin@verizon.net](mailto:nagla_alvin@verizon.net) for a comprehensive parent resource packet. It's invaluable!

## UPCOMING EVENTS

NAA-NT is partnering with Gordon Biersch to raise funds for the scholarships that help parents pay for swim lesson to keep kids safe, behavioral and social skills therapy, iPads that Give a Voice' to our children, and much more. In the past year, NAA-NT has already awarded 16 scholarships, and we're raising money for more.

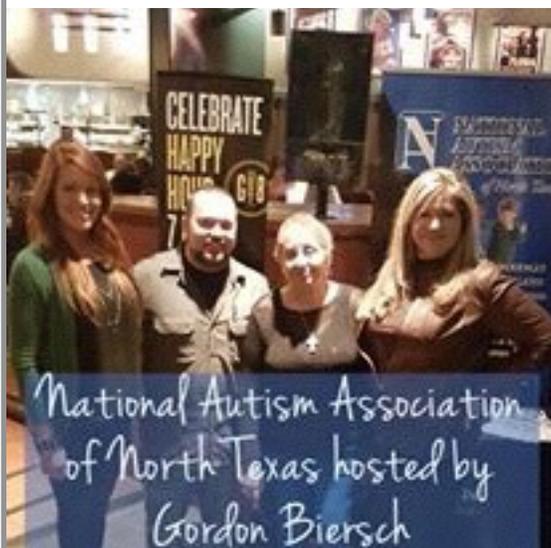
Join the party and help our families and our children or if you can't make it and would like to donate, here is the link to make a donation:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/national-autism-association-of-north-texas-donations-tickets-1485014719?aff=es2>

When: August 3rd, 2016 5:00 - 7:00p.m.

Where: Gordon Borsch - Plano

7401 Lone Star Dr, Ste B120, Plano, TX 75024



Join us for a free family Swim/Picnic event on

Tuesday, August 2 at 5 PM - 7 PM

RSVP: <http://goo.gl/forms/cdV3yYIQHTIBRjOS2>

Bring your picnic basket, wear your bathing suit, flip flops, bring your sun block and join us for a fun family swim time. Join us at Frisco Aquatic Center, 5828 Nancy Jane Lane, Frisco, TX 75035.

Admission is paid for by NAA-NT. Please bring your own picnic supplies, food, drink and towels. No glass containers



The annual Bubble Ball event will be held on September 23rd from 5-7pm at PSA2 in Plano. Watch out for details on how to sign up on our Facebook page.

<https://www.facebook.com/NAANorthTexas/>



## Nicole Wallace

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My interest in potassium started in 2013 when my son's chiropractor tested his urine and told me that he needs potassium. I happen to like and trust this chiropractor so without much hesitation I asked, "how much?". He handed me a bottle with a green label and said put these drops in every glass of water he drinks. And so I do. It was shortly after that time when my son began sleeping through the night. So now he doesn't go a day without potassium. I did get a little concerned when I began reading about how dangerous too much potassium can be. Electrolyte balance is important and should not be taken lightly. I looked back through years of blood testing and in all the years of blood tests, my son has never shown low potassium. But my son's chiropractor was not testing his blood, he was testing his urine. I've since learned that RBC level of potassium is a better indicator of an individual's potassium status than the commonly used serum level.

Potassium is an electrolyte along with chloride and sodium. Dr. Peter Jailliet, neurological chiropractor, says potassium is the most important electrolyte for the brain. He suggests that potassium is optimal at 4.6 in the standard blood tests. Potassium is inside the cell, sodium is outside the cell. Around the cell is a sodium/potassium pump that regulates the balance. If a person is not eating any fresh fruits and vegetables, and is putting table salt on food, sodium levels rise and too much sodium merges into the cell, and the cell swells. This is high blood pressure. Low blood potassium is called hypokalemia. Keep in mind that magnesium helps maintain the potassium in the cells.

Hyperkalemia is elevated potassium in the blood. The kidneys will clear excess potassium in the case of high intake. So if it is high in the blood a decrease in renal function is a possible cause. Aldosterone, the adrenal hormone, stimulates the elimination of potassium by the kidneys. GI bleeding or a major infection, may also cause elevated potassium levels. People with kidney disease must be especially careful to avoid excess potassium. Cardiac function is affected by hyperkalemia. Proper balance of potassium within the body is critical as too much or too little potassium can cause cardiac problems, and even death.

According to Elson M. Hass, MD, deficiency of potassium is much more common than toxicity, especially in the aging or in chronic illness. Common problems associated with low potassium include fatigue, congestive heart failure, cardiac arrhythmias, impaired glucose metabolism, elevated blood sugar, and hypertension. Diarrhea, vomiting and other GI problems may reduce potassium. Potassium is important for normal growth and for building muscle. People who consume excess sodium can lose extra urinary potassium and people who eat lots of sugar may also become low in potassium.

Maintaining consistent levels of potassium in the body is vital to body function. You don't want too much or too little. Inorganic potassium salts are found as chloride, sulfate, oxide or carbonate. Organic salts are potassium fumarate, citrate and gluconate. There is no RDA for potassium but it is thought 2.5 to 3.5 grams per day are needed and that the American diet includes 2-6 grams per day. Most over-the-counter supplements contain 99 mg per tablet. The best way to get potassium is through foods like bananas, spinach, broccoli, oranges, nuts and seeds.

This week I brought my son's chiropractor a cup of his first morning urine. He tested it in his office using some unusual tools based on Carey Reams work. Carey Reams was known in agricultural circles but applied his knowledge to the human body as well. I looked into his work briefly but haven't learned it well enough to

## KNOW YOUR POTASSIUM

explain it here. In any case, the result was that my son still needs potassium daily. I give him Body Bio potassium 13 drops in his water 2-4 times per day.

This is not medical advice. I am not a doctor. I'm just a mom. Please do not consider using potassium supplements unless under the care of a health care practitioner. Do consider adding potassium containing fruits and vegetables to your child's diet if there are no allergies to those foods.

*Nicole Wallace is a warrior mom , who through her support and knowledge, has been an invaluable resource to the autism community. She works as a Care Manager at the Kotsanis Institute in Grapevine, TX. The information provided in this article is her opinion, and cannot be substituted for medical advice.*

## COMMUNITY EVENTS

On June 6th 2016, NAA-NT partnered with My Possibilities to participate in the EIs #GameON Autism Golf Clinic, hosted by the First Tee of Greater Dallas. About 18 kids, ages 6-23 years, had the opportunity to participate in a free 1 hour golf clinic, that included 40 minutes of golf, 10 minutes of bodily/kinesthetic activity and a healthy refreshment break of 10 minutes. The event was held at TPC Four Seasons Las Colinas in Irving, TX.



## COMMUNITY EVENTS

NAA-NT hosted its annual Teacher Appreciation Dinner on April 5th, 2016. It was a great opportunity for parents to show their appreciation to teachers, teacher assistants, therapists, and care givers, About 150 guests were treated them to a delicious dinner at a beautiful hotel venue, great entertainment by the famous jazz sax player Ray Baker, a gift bag, and a surprise present raffle.

The annual Angel Award winners were presented for exceptional contributions to the society to Colleen Kugler and Julia Chalker.

Colleen Kugler, has been working for 22 years in the field of special education. Her current role is an in-home parent trainer in Frisco ISD. her other contributions include brining Hope Park - an inclusive playground to Frisco, founding the Sibships program for sibling of special needs children, co-ordinating the Diverse Abilities Day program and founding the Parent Sanctuary and Lending Library in Frisco.

Julia Chalker is the Cofounder of Sibshops, Video Game Club, Social Skills Lunch Program, Sparrows Ministry, and Liberty H.S. chapter of Best Buddies - all programs that serve individuals with autism and/or their families. She also serves on the board for REACH (Resource Centers on Independent Living) since 2010



## Paul Goldstein

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### Refreshing the Gatekeeper Gene Linked to Autism Using “CRISPR”

By Paul Goldstein, Ph.D.

Autism, where over a 1000 genes have been identified, is defined as Polygenic Inheritance. Because of this complexity, the possibility of developing a therapeutic technique to treat and prevent autism remains elusive. Scientists, for many years, have been searching for one or two genes that can turn the system off and decrease the incidence of Autism. Recent advances, in detection and replacement of such target genes, may now be a reality.

Is there a gatekeeper gene, one that must be turned on or off in order for the clinical condition to be present, for Autism? A data-based search of Online Mendelian Inheritance in Man, which is the main reference base for physicians and scientists concerned with genetic disorders, begins the process to find the “gatekeeper”. The answer may reside in closer examination of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), where there is a polygenic inheritance of about 170 genes. ASDs are types of disorders involving the development of nerves characterized by continual deficits in social communication and interaction along with repetitive patterns of behavior and activities (Wang et al., 2015, *Molecular Autism* 201,56:55). But the “gatekeeper” gene, the one that turns the system on or off, is difficult to identify, and even if it was found, what could be done?

Scientists at the University of North Carolina School of Medicine may have identified how a mutation, or change, in a single gene causes autism. They have recently identified the gene controlling a molecular regulatory switch controlling the production of the enzyme “UBE3A”. If the switch is nonfunctional, due to a mutation in the gene, the enzyme cannot be turned off and causes abnormal brain development. Previous studies have suggested that excessive UBE3A causes Autism is the result of a duplication in the 15q region of the chromosome. This type of chromosomal duplication is common in people with Autism and is called the “Dup15q Syndrome”. Medications are available to decrease the production of UBE3A, however, can the mutated gene be replaced with a normal gene?

Such a replacement may now be possible using the CRISPR/Cas-9 technique, which is a new genome editing tool. CRISPR is actually a naturally occurring, ancient defense mechanism found in a wide range of bacteria. It is comprised of two parts. The latter part of the defense mechanism is a set of enzymes called Cas (CRISPR-associated proteins), which can precisely snip DNA and CRISPR is a collection of DNA sequences that tells Cas9 exactly where to snip. Once the scientist has attached the selected DNA sequence to Cas9 (for example, a gene linked to Autism like UBE3A or CHD8), it can be cut and pasted into the genome wherever it will be most functional. It is like a word processor for genes.

This could transform the treatment of Autism. CRISPR allows scientists to edit genomes, by cutting out mutated genes, with extreme precision, efficiency, and flexibility. Functional DNA, that carries the correct code, is then inserted into the DNA strand. CRISPR/Cas9 can be used to modify five genes at once, leading to a strong role in a new therapeutic approach in the treatment of Autism.

## DO YOU SHOP AT AMAZON?



Support families with Autism all year round just by doing your normal shopping!

Just click <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/20-8388811> to support the National Autism Association when you purchase at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com). Your Amazon prices remain the same, and with each purchase, NAA-NT receives a donation. Thanks for your support!

Love shopping at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)?

same, and with

## DO YOU HAVE A CHILD THAT WANDERS?



The National Autism Association's Big Red Safety Box is back in stock! If you have a child that wanders or know one that wanders, please click on this link <http://nationalautismassociation.org/big-red-safety-boxes-now-available> to learn how you can get this box with tools to help keep children with autism safe.

## BUYING OR SELLING A HOUSE?

We are excited to have the generous support of a real estate agent, Kirk Iverson! Kirk will donate 25% of net proceeds directly to NAA-NT anytime someone buys or sells a home and mentions NAA-NT as a referral.

Check out his page <https://www.facebook.com/kirk.iverson.942?fref=ts> or <http://BuyHousesSellHomes.KWRealty.com>

Support our sponsor

## **Kayl Wilson**

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In 2008, Danish researchers found that the mortality rate among the autism spectrum disorder (ASD) population is twice as high as the general population. In 2001, a California research team found that elevated death rates among those with ASD were in large part attributed to drowning. According to a 2012 study in Pediatrics, 49% of children with ASD have a tendency to wander or bolt from safe settings. Individuals with ASD are often attracted to water, yet have little to no sense of danger. Accidental drowning is a leading cause of death in children with ASD.

In this interview, Kayl shares his experiences of teaching swimming to children with special needs, and how parents can be involved in their children's' water safety.

### **How can you teach children who are afraid of the water to swim?**

Some children with autism, while they may love water, are afraid to swim because they have a sensory aversion to the feel of water on their face. When I teach children with autism, I break down the process into very small steps and make it a fun experience for them. One of the very first steps I teach them is to put their face in the water and make it a fun experience, by having their favorite reinforcers in the water,

### **Do you use specific techniques to teach the actual process?**

Most children may need hand-over-hand demonstration of every small step. A visual demonstration of swimming technique is not very successful in teaching children with autism. Also, the same technique may have to be taught at different parts of the pool, and from one point to another at different parts of the pool, to generalize the learning.

### **How can parents help with practice and to generalize the learning from your pool to other pools?**

Often times, parents do not have to teach the swimming process or get the child to practice in other pools. The first step, would be for parents to get into the pool, in the community or in their backyard or other public pools, and make it a fun experience. The experience can be just fun and not a teaching moment, to help the child generalize the fun factor in swimming.

As for practice, many children hold their breath while they swim, and that makes them tired. You could teach your child to practice correct breathing techniques (exhale under the water and come up to inhale) using toys in the bathtub for younger kids, or on the steps in your backyard or community pool for older kids.

### **Children with autism are often drawn to water. How can you build a healthy fear of water in children who are drawn to water?**

A healthy fear of the water is necessary for any child, whether struggling with autism or not. When I have a student who is fearless of the water, but does not know how to swim, I do not enable them in the water. If they take an unnecessary risk and struggle, I let them try to make an effort to safety, before I help them to safety. I

## WATER SAFETY & SKILLS

would advocate that parents allow their children an opportunity to successfully correct the situation themselves if they run into trouble rather than always instantly come to the rescue. I am not advocating that parents allow their kids to breath in or choke on water or remain under water. That could be very dangerous and parents should judge the situation and their child's ability.

### **How can older children benefit from swimming lessons?**

When a student is older, they typically come to me with some basic knowledge of swimming. I use the lessons to help them with technique, so that swimming is a form of exercise for them. Swimming is also a great opportunity to practice social skills.

### **What are some of the social skills that you teach in your swim lesson?**

If the child is ready, I teach my kids the rules of play in a pool with competition, trash talking and horsing around in the pool. If a child is not comfortable, I teach them to advocate for themselves if they don't like water being splashed in their face, if they're pulled into the water or another kid climbs on them. On the other hand, I also teach them what is appropriate and what to expect if they initiate the horsing around in the pool.

Kayl has taught swimming to children of all abilities and adults for 19 years. He is also a special education teacher for a self contained unit in a middle school. [www.annswimclasses.com](http://www.annswimclasses.com)

Please teach your children to swim and download the wandering safety information AWAARE <http://awaare.nationalautismassociation.org>

## PLEASE SUPPORT OUR SPONSORS

St. Andrew United Methodist Church

Region 10 Educational Service Center

Concept Connections-Jenny Keese

RBC Wealth Management (Plano)

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Therapy and Beyond - Regina Crone Ph.D

Plano ISD SAGE Committee

The Behavior Exchange - Tammy Cline-Soza

Gordon Biersch Restaurant/Kraft Works Corporation

Help, Hope, Solutions – Cristina Busu

The Motch Family Foundation



**Did you know that ....**

- all the money the NAANT raises goes directly to help families dealing with autism in the North Texas area?
- the NAANT uses donations to educate and serve our community by holding educational and advocacy seminars?
- the NAANT gives grants to local families with annual salaries below \$50,000 for autism treatments?
- the NAANT works with the law enforcement to ensure the safety of our kids?
- the NAANT holds weekly parent support groups including one in Spanish?
- the NAANT provides fun events to help families dealing with autism relax?
- the NAANT provides support for autism couples and financial assistance for counseling?
- the NAANT has an online parent and professional support yahoo group: <http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/ascc2/> ?
- the NAANT has a Parent Resource Packet that is free?

The National Autism Association of North Texas (NAA-NT) is a 501C3 chapter of the National Autism Association (NAA). The mission of the National Autism Association is to educate and empower families affected by autism and other neurological disorders, while advocating on behalf of those who cannot fight for their own rights. By donating to NAANT you are helping children and their families who live in our community.

*“No person was ever honored for what he received. He was honored for what he gave.” – Calvin Coolidge*

**NAA-NT honors each and every one of our contributors that have made all of the above programs possible.** It is from what you give that our families are able to move forward with success. Please consider a donation of any denomination. With your help, our new year will bring many new beginnings for our families affected by Autism.

Donations can be made by check to PO Box No. 261209 Plano, TX 75026-1209 or online at: <http://naa-ntorg.eventbrite.com>

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This letter can serve as your tax deductible contribution receipt.

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