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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S PEN

By Nagla Moussa

You've heard the saying that 'ignorance is bliss'. That saying might be true for some situations, but if you have a child with Autism Spectrum Disorder, I say knowledge is power.

Knowing what therapies are available, Knowing the latest research about biomedical treatment, Knowing how to deal with insurance companies, and knowing special education law are all crucial to helping your child thrive and progress.

Having to know all these things is extremely overwhelming and to many busy, and already overworked parents it can seem impossible. But it doesn't have to be if you know where to go for help.

Here are a few tips That can help you find information more efficiently:

1. Network with other parents. Many times we take our children to therapy and we sit in the waiting room. Use that time to talk with other parents and get to know them. Not only does this lead to finding out about helpful resources you might not have heard of, it has the added bonus of making you feel less alone, and possibly making good friends Who understand about having a child with autism.
2. Join Facebook groups that are specifically created to help parents navigate therapies, resources, and issues common to many families with children who have autism. These groups can be a treasure trove of information, and you'll find many parents there who can share experiences that can help you through different options for therapy, biomedical treatment and much more.
3. Attend local support groups. Nothing can replace face to face connection with other parents who can share resources, experiences, empathy, and understanding.
4. Learn how to use Google efficiently. In order to find all the options available it's important to use the right verbage on Google to pull up the information you need. Spend a few minutes learning how to search well on the internet.
5. Save important information electronically in organized files for easy retrieval. Being organized is key, It can help you find information quickly and save you time.
6. Read the Procedural Safeguards, and the Parental Rights booklets that you receive at the beginning of each ARD/IEP meeting. These 2 pieces of information are very important so you can understand how to participate effectively in school meetings. Spend some time reviewing them and figuring out how they can be applied to help you advocate for your child.

Knowledge is power. It can mean the difference between feeling in control and proactive, or feeling out of control and hapless. I hope that this inspires you to learn more about what resources are out there to help your child.

## MONTHLY SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS

### **Parent Get Together and Support Group Meeting**

For parents of children with autism of all ages:

When: 2nd Tuesday of each month, during the school year, 9:30a.m.-11:00a.m. at Original Pancake House, 2301 N. Central Expwy., Suite 156, Plano, Texas 75075

3rd Tuesday of each month, during the school year, 11:30am — 1:00pm, during the school year, Corner Bakery 2401 Preston Road Plano, TX 75093

**Please note our new venue! - Meetings will be held in August**

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### **Spanish Parent Get Together and Support Group Meeting**

For parents of children with autism of all ages - meetings will be conducted in Spanish

When : 1st Saturday of each month 6 7 pm – 8:30 pm

Where: St. Mark Pastoral Center 1100 W. 15th St. Rm 202 Plano, TX

Hosted by : Rose Henke , July Talevara Bekker, and Jesus Betancourt

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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 : 1st Tuesday of each month, during the school year, 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

No meetings in August - please join us for the Family Swim get-together

## 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

### Family Swim/Picnic Fun

When : Tuesday August 1st ,2017 4:30pm to 6:30pm

Where : Frisco Aquatic Center, 5828 Nancy Jane Lane, Frisco, TX 75035.

Admission is paid for by NAA-NT.

Bring your picnic basket, wear your bathing suit, flip flops, bring your sun block, picnic supplies, food, drink and towels.and join us for a fun family swim time.Glass containers are not allowed

Please RSVP: [Nagla\\_alvin@verizon.net](mailto:Nagla_alvin@verizon.net)

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### Mom's annual event

Our highly awaited annual mom's event is here. This year promises to be the best ever!!! Mark your calendars and line up your babysitters for this event:

When: Sep 18th, 2017

Where: Ipic theatre, Allen/Fairview.

But before you do that, like us on Facebook and visit our page regularly, to ensure a spot when sign-up opens. <https://www.facebook.com/NAANorthTexas/>

## COMMUNITY EVENTS

What is it like to be a sibling to a brother or a sister with autism?

On May 2nd, 2017, a panel of smart, funny, loving, and outspoken sibling gave insights about their families and how they feel about having a sibling with autism, how they deal with uncomfortable situations, and what peers and friends say about their sibling with autism.



## COMMUNITY EVENTS

NAA-NT hosted its annual Teacher Appreciation Dinner on April 4th, 2017 at the Glen Eagles Country Club, Plano, TX... About 150 teachers, therapists and autism professionals were hosted by parents to an evening of dinner, entertainment and a raffle draw. Jenny Keese, BCBA was awarded the NAA-NT Angel Award for her outstanding contribution to the autism community.



## **Debra Caudy**

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*Debra Caudy is the co-founder of 29 acres, and the mother of a child with autism. Debra has been involved for many years in supporting basic science research in understanding the causes of autism at UT Southwestern Medical School. After a successful career with Texas Oncology, she returned to UT Southwestern Medical School where she specialized in the treatment of breast cancer. Debra ultimately retired from the practice of medical oncology. She accepted the challenge of immersing herself in the process of connecting her son with ASD to the best technologies and people to support his growth, including direct teaching in a home-based therapy and educational program.*

### **What is 29 acres?**

29 acres is a \$11 million co-housing project that is offered to adults with autism and other neuro-diversities. Phase 1 of the community will offer 4 bedrooms, 4 bath homes with shared living space. Additional floor plans such as 2 bedrooms, 2 bath homes are also being contemplated. The objective of the project is to provide safe and quality housing, along with evidence-based, quality support programs.

### **What prompted you to set up 29 acres?**

We have a 19-year-old son with autism. He was homeschooled, enrolled in public school and is now in transition school. We began thinking of the future when he ages out of the school system and when we can no longer care for him. As we looked around for options that met his need for independent living, making social connections and physical, mental and economic needs. We found some opportunities but they were either not the right fit (adults and kids in the same setting) or just not enough (low support ratio). Additionally, our son had specifically expressed a need to be independent, purposeful and with his peers, and there wasn't a setting that offered it to him.

### **What is the model of 29 acres?**

29 Acres is a registered 501C3 and will offer programming and support for our residents. The capital for the build was raised by investors as a social impact investment opportunity

### **How do you envision life for an adult in a project like this?**

The 29 acres programming will be designed to provide support to the full spectrum of ASD. The programming will cover the domains of employment, independent living, wellness, pursuit of interests and passions and engagement and a sense of belonging.

29 Acres will offer a 2-year residential transition academy designed for adults with ASD who are motivated to live independently and enjoy competitive employment. This 2-year program allows students to build their work and independent living skills before moving on to a more independent living arrangement. It is being done in partnership with First Place, AZ, which has put a similar program in place.

## PLANNING FOR ADULTHOOD

For those adults with more intense needs and for those who 29 Acres may be their permanent home, the appropriate ratio of resident to staff will be put in place so that those adults can gain independence and pursue employment or volunteer opportunities while being fully supported. They will be encouraged to pursue their interests and passions while making friends and being a part of their local communities. 29 Acres will provide a clear path towards connecting our residents to their local communities. The services for this program would be provided through BCBA support, vocational training support, and other related fields. We will also offer internships for students at our local colleges.

### **What is the biggest challenge with a project such as this?**

No surprises here - the cost of building the community and even more so, the cost of funding on-going costs is the biggest challenge. Our business model has built in a component for scholarships to help offset costs. We will explore securing vocational and other government funding and also, explore the option of filing for insurance for some of these services.

### **How can families plan to make these services available to their children when they become adults?**

A study by Drexel university estimated that the annual cost of providing support to the most high-functioning adults on the spectrum would be about \$50000 annually. For those with more intense needs, the costs can be up to as much as \$88000. Families can think about setting up self-funded trust or ENABLE accounts and insurance policies in the form of special needs trusts.

WE have to Build more of these communities (and other types of living arrangements) and look for land in "affordable housing" area. Collaborate and identify partnerships with others who are doing the same thing. Learn from them. Continue to look for ways to offset the ongoing costs of supporting someone that needs support their whole life.

Our Phase 1 involves the completion of 6-8 houses and a community center. We hope to break ground by the end of the year.

*Debra Caudy is a fellow Warrior Mom, focussed on meeting the needs of the community, as individuals with autism step into adulthood. She can be reached at [info@29acres.org](mailto:info@29acres.org).*

## PLEASE SUPPORT OUR SPONSORS

St. Andrew United Methodist Church

Region 10 Educational Service Center

Concept Connections-Jenny Keese

RBC Wealth Management (Plano)

Junior League of Collin County

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

## 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 each

## 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?ref=ts> or <http://BuyHousesSellHomes.KWRealty.com>

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