SEPTEMBER 19, 2020
9 AM-5 PM

By autistics, for autistics.
Our Life Purpose Is to Create the Community of the Future: Meghana and Chetan Junnuru

Through their non-profit organization, Autism Sibs Universe (ASU), Meghana and Chetan Junnuru envision and are testing a neurodiverse community where individuals on the spectrum can live without inhibitions or obstacles, a community where we can minimize fears and anxieties over how neurodiverse people are treated and what happens as support needs fluctuate as individuals age. They are envisioning a community where all can contribute, a community where everyone can feel less isolated and more valued. Meghana and Chetan will discuss this innovative, important project.

Meghana and Chetan Junnuru are non-verbal autistic siblings. After recently learning how to use a keyboard, they started teaching their family and teachers what they are capable of, what it feels like to be in their bodies. In just a few months, they went from non-verbal and unheard to penning a prominent blog and presenting at conferences and events to spreading the message of the fantastical and hyper-capable autistic mind. With the support of others in the autism community, they launched ‘Autism SIBS Universe (ASU)’, a nonprofit organization. Their vision is to create an intentional neurodiverse and intergenerational co-housing neighborhood designed with autistics in mind.

10:15-11:15 a.m. Breakout Sessions 1

Creating Social Spaces Autistically: Jillian Nelson

Society frames autistic people as not wanting to have friends. This is far from the truth. Autistic socialization looks different, and sometimes that creates challenges in building friendships and social groups. During this session, learn how to create different types of social spaces and engagement to have greater success connecting with autistic and neurotypical people.

Jillian Nelson, Community Resource and Policy Advocate for the Autism Society of Minnesota, was diagnosed with autism as a young adult. With a degree in human services and a background in self-advocacy, she has dedicated her career to helping others with autism achieve their goals, advocating for system change, and spreading a message of education and autism acceptance. Nelson currently sits on The Governor’s Council for Developmental Disabilities and is a Community Resource and Policy Advocate for AuSM. She also has worked in employment services, helping others with autism secure and retain appropriate, successful employment.
Living as an African American with Autism: Breanna Young
Young will share her experience of living as an African American with autism. She will discuss code-switching and its challenges, managing college, and other African Americans who live with autism.

Breanna Young is a young African American adult with autism. She was diagnosed with autism at age 3.

Pits and Peaks of Neurodivergence at Work: Ashley Oolman
Facilitated by a neurodivergent Black woman, this session will include storytelling and reflection to advance existing authentically at work. Explore some of the realities of disability discrimination, employment, and leadership. Learn about the barriers and benefits of being neurodivergent on the job and some of the nuances that impact other identities at their intersections.

Ashley Oolman, founder of Allied Folk, guides partners through evidence-based best practices, product development, and thought leadership. She transforms strategic business initiatives and advances equitable community spaces. With over a decade of leadership experience in advocacy, employment, and workplace culture, Oolman understands how to navigate complex environments and provide actionable insights for growth. Oolman earned an MBA with a concentration on human resource management, a BA in psychology with a minor in human development and family studies, and a certification in organizational diversity and inclusion. She is committed to inclusion as a means to advance human rights for all people.

Gender, Attraction, and Autism: Demystifying LGBT+ For ASD Individuals and Those Who Support Them: Colleen McCluskey
Understanding the terminology used to refer to the myriad experiences under the LGBT+ umbrella can be confusing. Learn how to make sense of the issues of gender and attraction, both romantic and sexual, which intersect with neurodiversity in the form of the autistic spectrum. Presented by an autistic LGBT+ individual, this session will include discussion of the differences between sex and gender, the nuances of attraction, and how to navigate these complex topics.

Colleen McCluskey is a graduate student at the University of WI Eau Claire, pursuing her Master's degree in English. She received a diagnosis of Asperger’s Syndrome while in elementary school. She currently holds an Associate's Degree in Ethnic Studies from the University of WI Marathon County and a Bachelor's degree in English from the University of WI Green Bay. McCluskey also holds teaching licensure through the WI Department of Public Instruction. As a nonbinary and asexual neurodiverse individual, she is committed to raising awareness for marginalized groups through intersectional activism.
12:30-1:30 p.m. Lunch
This time is free for participants to take a break and rest.
No programming will run during this hour.

1:30-2:30 p.m. Breakout Sessions 3

Intersectional Inclusion: Jules Edwards
Autism advocacy prioritizes inclusion, but what does real inclusion mean for a diverse community? Often, inclusion means we are welcome to join existing spaces while leaving our identities at the door. Explore how we can foster an inclusive community for autistic people that honors differences, including embracing the intersections of race, ethnicity, nationality, LGBTQIA+ identity, and co-occurring disabilities. The best part of neurodiversity is the diversity!

Jules Edwards is an autistic activist and parent of autistic children. Her advocacy includes founding the MN Autistics and Allies social media group; volunteer work in the areas of disability services, alternative education, and family services; political advocacy with a focus on child safety and disability rights; and grassroots work focused on intersectional disability rights. Edwards's roles include: Chair of the Minnesota Senate Autism Council, President of the Board for Minnesota Disability Support Alternatives, Board member of Minnesota Ombudsman for American Indian Families.

The Importance of Self-Advocacy for Aging Autistic People: Philip King-Lowe
The field of understanding the needs of aging autistic adults is emerging. Just like autistic children grow into autistic adults, autistic adults grow into autistic aging adults. What are the issues that the aging autistic community faces? How can the entire autistic community help advocate for our own future when we get to 50-years-old and beyond? This session is a beginning for these important conversations.

Philip King-Lowe was diagnosed with autism in 2011. He is a Contemplative Benedictine Anchorite who was named Br. Anselm Philip. He lives with his husband Jason. King-Lowe is very passionate about autism and advocacy for autistic people.

A Practical Guide to Voting: Kate Shields
Voting is a right, but when you are disabled, it can be more difficult to access that right. As we approach the 2020 election, concerns about COVID are making voting even more confusing. A long-time election judge will help you understand what to expect, how to use a mail-in ballot, and other practical tips to make sure your vote is counted.
Breakout Sessions 3 (continued)

At age 61, Kate Shields was diagnosed as being on the spectrum. She holds degrees in History; Library/Info Science; and Chemical Engineering, and has worked in libraries and corporate labs and more. Her autism kept her from fitting in well, but it also gave her creativity and experience in the work world. Shields learned to keep trying and never give up. She votes in every election, and has been a Ramsey County Election Judge since 2002.

2:45-3:45 p.m. Interactive Activity Sessions

Select an activity you can do at home in tandem with other participants. Learn a new skill, try out strategies from the day, practice mindfulness, or just join an activity to observe.

Qi Gong: Marilyn Johnson and Autumn Compton
In the privacy of your living space, learn a way to move with your breath. Allow energy to move through your body. Accept your body as it is today. Follow along with the video for 40 minutes, and then we'll talk about what you liked about it, what you didn't, why you stayed, why you left, what worked or didn't.
*Materials*: a space to move comfortably

Just One: Jillian Nelson
Join Jillian Nelson for some rounds of the game “Just One,” a simple word association game that is endlessly entertaining. Try to get another participant to guess the secret word. Here’s the catch: no two clues can be the same. Nelson will explain the rules and walk participants through the game.
*Materials*: writing utensil and paper

Knitting with Barb Luskin
Join other knitters for an hour of craft time. If you’re new to knitting, Barb Luskin will provide some simple instruction to get you started.
*Materials*: a current project OR knitting needles and yarn

For new knitters: take a few minutes to check out this Youtube video for an introduction: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jCksyWucP6A

Emergency Preparedness: Mike Tripodi
Learn about basic Emergency Preparedness in an interactive environment! We will cover the basic items that make up an emergency kit, prepare a basic emergency preparedness plan for you and your family, and discuss resources that you can access after a disaster strikes.
*Materials*: smartphone with the Kahoot! app is preferred but not required

Song Circle with Robert Waltz
Want to share your music with other autistics or just hear the music people with autism play? Join in our virtual song circle! All genres and all skill levels welcome. We'll follow a standard around-the-circle format until time runs out, and you can always pass. Includes a virtual menagerie of unusual instruments. Feel free to bring your own to share! Because of the limitations of virtual conferences, there can be no jamming; it will be one performer at a time.
*Materials*: any instrument you would like to play or share

4-5 p.m. Flappy Hour
Join a Zoom meeting to virtually hang out with other participants. Chat about what you’ve learned, make ongoing connections, and build community.
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Autism Society of Minnesota (AuSM)
The mission of the Autism Society of Minnesota (AuSM) is to enhance the lives of individuals and families affected by ASD. AuSM serves Minnesotans, throughout their lives, with a fundamental commitment to advocacy, education, support, collaboration, and community building. Meet the AuSM staff and learn how AuSM’s programs and services can support you.

Terms You May Want to Know
This conference may at times assume base knowledge of the conversations that are happening in autistic spaces. To help participants get up to speed, we’ve created some succinct definitions that you can refer to throughout the Summit.

Person First and Identity First Language
There currently isn’t a universally accepted way to refer to an individual on the autism spectrum. Some recommend person-first language (“a person with autism”) to highlight that an individual is a person before a disability. However, others, often self-advocates, note that autism is an important part of their identity that cannot be separated from who they are, and thus recommend identity-first language (“autistic”).

Functioning Language
AuSM recommends avoiding the terms “low-functioning” and “high-functioning” and “mild/severe” autism. Someone who can hold down a job may struggle in other areas of their life. Alternatively, someone who uses a communication device may require no personal support. Additionally, someone’s ability to function can depend on context: the environment, the supports in place, their emotional state, and their level of stress. People’s abilities will change over time, whereas labels tend to be static.

Neurodiversity
“Neurodiversity” refers to the fact that human brains have a range of differences as part of the normal variation in the human population. Many autistics subscribe to the neurodiversity movement, which suggests that this is a strength of humanity. Someone whose brain falls outside the norm might be called neurodivergent.

AuSM Bookstore
Select items from the AuSM Bookstore will be available for purchase online. Visit the Summit page at www.ausm.org to browse the bookstore listings and order through the online form. Orders will be available for pickup or shipping.
Session Checklist

Use this list to help plan which sessions you’d like to watch during the Summit.

9-10 a.m. Keynote Presentation: Our Life Purpose Is to Create the Community of the Future
Meghana and Chetan Junnuru

10:15-11:15 a.m. Breakout Session 1
- Creating Social Spaces Autistically
- Living as an African American with Autism
- Pits and Peaks of Neurodivergence at Work

11:30-12:30 p.m. Breakout Session 2
- Living Your Best Life During a Pandemic
- Gender, Attraction, And Autism: Demystifying LGBTAs+ For ASD Individuals
- Alternative and Augmentative Communication for Meltdowns and Beyond

1:30-2:30 p.m. Breakout Session 3
- Intersectional Inclusion
- The Importance of Self-Advocacy for Aging Autistic People
- A Practical Guide to Voting

2:45-3:45 p.m. Interactive Sessions
- Qi Gong
- Knitting
- Song Circle
- Emergency Preparedness
- Just One

4-5 p.m. Flappy Hour

Session Tracks
Each of the breakout sessions falls into three tracks to help you find topics of interest. These tracks were created with the feedback and insight of the autism community to meet their needs.

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<th>Complex and Overlapping Identities</th>
<th>Practical Tools</th>
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Code of Conduct
AuSM does not tolerate harassment at its events. Harassment includes, but is not limited to, offensive verbal comments related to gender, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, religion, sexual images in public spaces, deliberate intimidation, stalking, following, harassing photography or recording, sustained disruption of talks or other events, inappropriate physical contact, and unwelcome sexual attention. Participants violating these rules may be asked to leave from the virtual event without a refund at the discretion of AuSM.

Expectations for Successful Participation
- When pursuing an ongoing social or professional connection, please offer the other person your contact information instead of asking for theirs.
- Please do not carry on private conversations during educational sessions.
- The autism community is a diverse group. At times debate can and will occur; please remain professional and mature.