

Fall 2026 Programs

ausm
autism society of minnesota

Autism Society



Welcome

The Autism Society of Minnesota (AuSM) is excited to share our 2026-2027 Fall Programs Guide with you. Packed full of workshops, classes, events, and information on therapy, advocacy, and community impact, this resource has something for everyone. Whether you're an autistic adult, a caregiver, an educator, or an ally, check out the many ways AuSM can support you.

In this guide, you will find all our offerings for the season, from education to camp experiences, mental health services to advocacy opportunities. We have many ways to come together, including the 2026 Autistic Community Summit, the 2027 Minnesota Autism Conference, and fun events like our Jigsaw Puzzle Competition.

As always, everything we do is grounded in a neurodiversity-affirming approach, led by autistic voices and lived experience. We continue to cultivate connection, inclusion, and autistic joy, so that everyone in the autism community can thrive and live fully.

Thank You Premier Partners

Join these companies in making a difference in the lives of autistic individuals and families in Minnesota.

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pics Partners in Community Supports

If you are interested in becoming an AuSM Premier Partner, please contact **Kelly Ulrick at 651.647.1083, email kulrick@ausm.org,** or **visit ausm.org/premier-partners.**

Table of Contents

5 Get Involved

8 Education

18 50 Years of Summer Camp

20 Expanding Culturally Responsive Supports

24 Advocacy

30 Community & Events

36 Therapy & Support

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Special thanks to Allegra Downtown St. Paul, the official print sponsor of AuSM's Fall Programs Guide 2026.

Get Involved



Our work at AuSM would not exist without you. There are so many ways you can connect, support, and get involved. Whether you choose to donate, fundraise with friends, become a member, volunteer your time, or simply stay informed through our mailing list, every action helps strengthen our mission to support autistic individuals and families.

Donate

Invest in our community and collective well-being. Every dollar goes to supporting resources for individuals and families affected by autism in Minnesota

Fundraise

Increase your impact by fundraising on behalf of AuSM. Whether you're raising funds as part of Steps for Autism, our Jigsaw Puzzle Competition, or your own inspiration (like your birthday!) you are raising vital resources and awareness. Plus, you can earn fun prizes.

Become a Member

AuSM membership connects you to a common community that acts without judgment, nurtures potential, advances knowledge, and builds awareness. Your membership will also get you discounts to all of our workshops and classes.

Volunteer

Give the gift of time through volunteer opportunities connected to acceptance and fundraising events, special office projects, and more.

Join the Mailing List

Sign up to receive AuSM's twice-monthly e-newsletter, or join mailing lists tailored for your interests to learn about upcoming events, resources, and services.

Visit ausm.org for more information

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Education

AuSM is Minnesota's First Autism Resource® for learning more about autism. We offer educational opportunities throughout the year, including training, workshops, conferences, professional development opportunities, certification, and consulting services.

Huge thanks to Best Care, our Workshop Season Sponsor.

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Scan to learn more and sign up for our workshop offerings

ausm.org/workshops

Workshops

Throughout the year, AuSM offers virtual workshops that dive into real-world topics affecting autistic individuals and the people who support them. Whether you're a family member, educator, professional, or an autistic adult yourself, you'll find sessions led by knowledgeable presenters who bring insight, empathy, and lived experience.

Cost per Workshop **$59.99**

Member Price **$49.99**

Scholarship Price **$39.99**

A Realist's Guide to Employment Supports

Sep. 10, 9-11:30 a.m.
Presented by: Abbie Wells-Herzog, Cole Sorensen, and Sarah Arentson
Sponsored by: Looking Forward Life Coaching



While various employment policies and programs in Minnesota have experienced cuts and shifts, autistic and disabled adults will always continue to seek opportunity, security, and purpose through work. In this session, career autism specialist and AuSM board leader Abbie Wells-Herzog will be joined by Cole Sorensen from Dept. of Human Services (DHS) and Sarah Arentson from Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS). Together they will help participants understand the lay of the land in 2026, clarifying updates and misinformation related to Minnesota's employment services.



Making Gen Ed Work for More Kids with IEPs

Date: Oct. 8, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.
Presented by: Mash Makhlyagina
Presented in Partnership with

Autism Society Wisconsin

Sponsored by Autism Sibs Universe and Partners in Community Supports (PICS)

AUTISM SIBS UNIVERSE

We have more students struggling in general education than ever while supports for teachers are tighter than ever. How do we sustainably include more students with disabilities in general education? How do we do it in a way that benefits ALL students? Is there a way to plan lessons, respond to needs, and feel less overwhelmed? Yes! Let's talk about how to do this realistically.

pics Partners in Community Supports

Back by popular demand: Mash Makhlynagina!

As a Ukrainian immigrant, identified ESOL kid, and undiagnosed neurodivergent student, school was clearly not made for Mash Makhlyagina's brain as a kid. After earning their Master's in Teaching, they became a Special Education teacher and quickly began coaching other teachers on key pedagogy missing from most teachers' preparation programs regarding disability and neurodiversity. They have worked with neurodivergent students from over 40 different countries ages 4-19 and have supported families in over 1000 IEP, 504, and Evaluation meetings across the United States. Today they are proud to be an openly autistic/ ADHD special education educator and advocate fighting for what students deserve.



Rest, Stim, Repeat: Strategies for Fighting Burnout

Date: Nov. 12,
9 a.m.-11:30 a.m.
Presented by: Dayna Nelson
Sponsored by Autism Sibs Universe

AUTISM SIBS UNIVERSE

This session is a practical and restorative training designed to help you create meaningful moments of recovery and authenticity — for yourself, your clients, or your loved ones. Through guided reflection and hands-on strategies, this session explores how rest, sensory engagement, and self-expression can reduce the effects of masking and burnout.

Just Talk to Me: Setting and Respecting Boundaries Within Relationships



Date: Dec. 3, 9 a.m.-12 p.m.
Presented by: Kendrick Hogue
Sponsored by: Partners in Community Supports (PICS)

pics Partners in Community Supports

The foundations of relationships – things like mutual trust, kindness, and respect – can be more complicated than they sound. It can be difficult to know how to set boundaries and communicate your needs, and it can be just as difficult to understand the needs and boundaries of others. This workshop will discuss the challenges of communication within various relationship structures (romantic, platonic, familial, and sexual), ways to express your needs, and understand the needs of others through a neurodivergent lens.

Sensory Friendly Visits

This monthly series provides a welcoming and accessible environment for individuals, families, and children who have sensory sensitivities. Experience our Minnesota Journeys gallery, temporary exhibits, the Touch & See Lab, and a brief planetarium show—all with lowered lighting, quieter sounds, and fewer visitors. Any member of the public who can benefit from this environment is welcome to attend this event.

Find dates, additional resources and more at: **z.umn.edu/bell-sensory**

bell museum

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Training

By learning more about the neurodiversity of individuals with autism, you are taking proactive steps toward acceptance and inclusion. AuSM's education team will provide you with strategies to help you understand the needs of individuals with autism, allowing you to offer a positive, supportive environment for this growing population. AuSM's team of education specialists provide you with customized trainings that offer strategies to help make your environment positive, inclusive, and supportive for neurodiverse individuals.

Common topics include:

- Accessibility and Inclusion
- Understanding Autism
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Workplace
- Sensory-Friendly Environments and Events
- Understanding Behavior and Positive Supports

For any questions about our trainings, please contact education@ausm.org

Understanding Autism

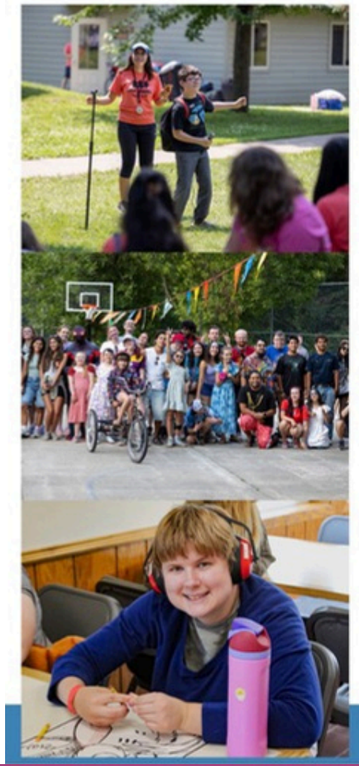


Ready to truly understand autism—and support autistic people with confidence and compassion? Understanding Autism is a free, one-hour session that will give you the essential tools to recognize, respect, and support autistic experiences. Whether you're a parent, caregiver, professional, or exploring your own identity, this class will help you shift from confusion to clarity with a neurodiversity-affirming mindset. Every session includes time for your questions, so you'll get personalized insights to help you take the next step—whatever that may be.

Upcoming Dates:

September 14, 2026; 6-7 p.m.
October 12, 2026; 10-11 a.m.
November 9, 2026; 12-1 p.m.
December 14, 2026; 6-7 p.m.

Location: Held Virtually
All sessions are free
Choose the date and time that works for you. All sessions include the same great content—just one hour and totally free.
Learn more at ausm.org/understanding-autism



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- *2e*
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Celebrating 50 Years!

AuSM first began our inclusive Summer Camps 50 years ago. Since then, the program has grown to serve 250 individuals each summer, spanning two locations and offering options for campers with varying support needs.

Tailored for autistic youth and adults, AuSM Summer Camp is a place for autistic individuals to be wholly accepted, supported, and immersed in the joy of exploring nature, recreation, and friendship.

Parents and caregivers can rest assured knowing that their campers are being cared for by highly-trained, experienced staff, while campers make memories that last a lifetime.

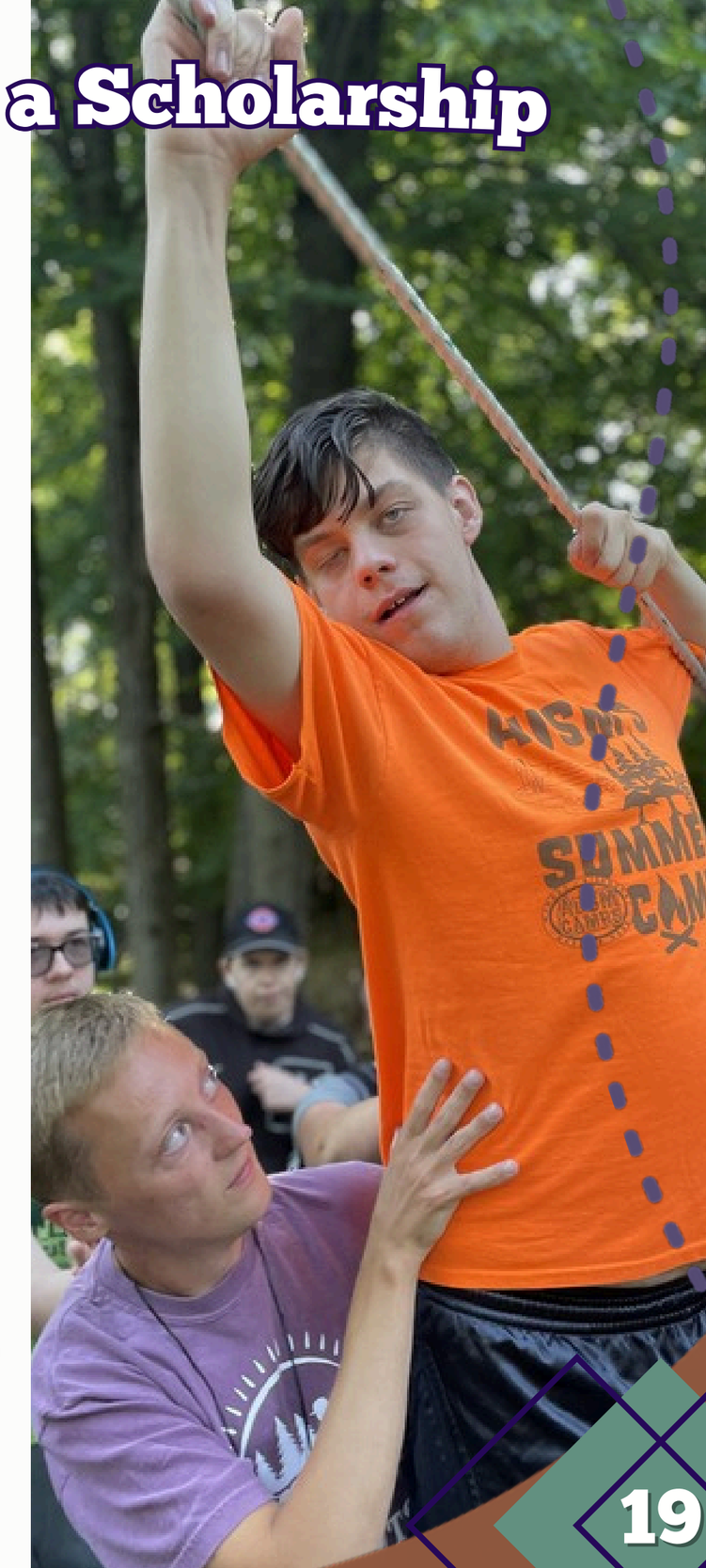
Next summer AuSM will once again run sessions of Camp Hand in Hand and Camp Discovery. The Camp Lottery begins January 1, 2027.

Looking for guidance on using a waiver to pay for camp? **Contact camp@ausm.org for more information.**

Gift a Scholarship

It takes $50,000 in scholarship funds each year to ensure that every camper can fully access AuSM's incredible camp resources. AuSM's summer camp brings a sense of connection, lifelong memories, and lasting friendships to individuals and families impacted by autism across Minnesota. Contribute to our Camp Scholarship Fund today to ensure that everyone has access to the incredible experience of AuSM Summer Camp:

ausm.org/support-camp





Expanding Culturally Responsive Supports

We are honored to continue our work expanding culturally responsive supports for Black parents and caregivers of children with disabilities through funding from the Minnesota Department of Human Services' (DHS) Connecting Families Grant. Over the past few years, AuSM has received support from DHS to create and improve resources for autistic families who experience additional barriers to services and supports related to their culture or first language. This work has also focused on reducing cultural barriers for families with autistic children. This work is designed to strengthen community connections, improve access to resources, elevate parent leadership, and create spaces where families feel seen, heard, and supported.

We continue to offer a Support Group specific to Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) members of our community. This fall, we are also launching a workshop series focused on increasing Black parents' access to relevant information, strengthening confidence in navigating disability services and systems, and providing culturally responsive education that reflects the experiences and priorities of Black families.

ROOTED Workshops



ROOTED: Conversations Centering Black Families and Autism brings Black parents and caregivers together for honest conversations, shared learning, and meaningful connection. Led by Black parents, professionals, and community voices, each session offers a welcoming space to explore topics that reflect the unique intersection of race, culture, and disability. Families can expect practical strategies, culturally relevant information, and opportunities to connect with others who understand their experiences.

Join us online for any or all of the four workshops. Topics will vary throughout the series and may include advocacy, education, navigating schools and healthcare, family well-being, identity, building community, and other priorities identified by participants.

Dates:

- September 23, 2026
- November 18, 2026
- February 24, 2027
- April 28, 2027

All workshops are **6:00 - 7:30 p.m.**
Each workshop is **free** to attend.

RSVP for the free workshops series at ausm.org/rooted

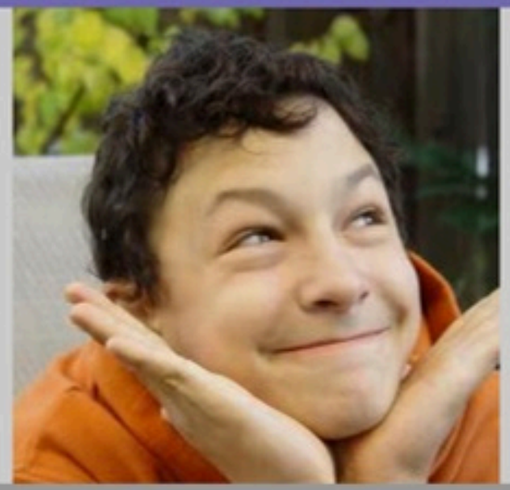
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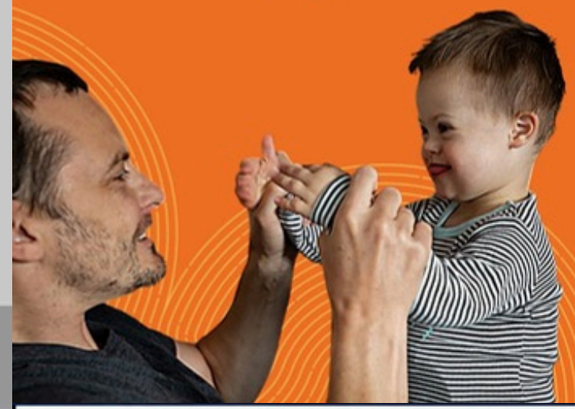
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- 245D In Home Waivered Services
- Basic Homemaking
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Advocacy

Advocacy continues to be a core element of AuSM's mission. While individuals with disabilities are facing more challenges, we are working hard with our allies to ensure that autistic individuals and families can speak up for their rights. We remained committed to amplifying the voices of autistic individuals, families, and professionals at the Capitol.

Minnesotans With Disabilities Act

Our biggest win in the spring of 2026 was the passage of the Minnesotans with Disabilities Act. After a relentless effort from disability advocates, allies, and activists who fought to have their voices heard, allied Representatives brought Bill SF3210 to the House floor. In an 88-42 vote, the House officially passed Bill SF3210, the Minnesotans with Disabilities Act. The Senate then passed the amended bill and sent it to Governor Walz's desk, where he signed it into law on May 18, 2026.

This victory is monumental for the disability community. It means that if these laws are threatened on the federal level, Minnesota has codified and protected the rights of disabled people in this state. This protection ensures that individuals will be able to request access to accommodations in a collaborative manner in a school, workplace, or any public setting.

Vote on November 3!



This fall Minnesotans have the opportunity to elect public representatives across local, state, and federal levels. Your vote matters! Make a plan to vote in the general election on or before Tuesday, November 3. You can mail in your ballot or vote early at one of the early voting locations. If you haven't registered to vote, you can complete a same-day registration in Minnesota.

As you research your candidates, find out where they stand on disability issues that affect our community. Some questions to ask:

- Where do you stand on Medicaid programs for disabled people?
- What is your view on Special Education?
- What would you like to see the state do to improve the lives of people with disabilities?

To look up your polling place, go to: **pollfinder.sos.mn.gov**

Enter your address and the website will generate additional information including who is on your ballot, website links for candidates on your ballot for campaign information, and your precinct/district information.

Autism & LGBTQ+ Identity



We know that attention to gender identity and sexual diversity in our resources for autistic individuals is essential. Research suggests that autistic individuals are more likely to identify as LGBTQ+, and are 6-8 times more likely to be transgender or gender non-conforming than the neurotypical population. At AuSM, we attend to this intersectional identity in a number of ways.

Pride Escape Space



For nearly a decade, AuSM has been supporting accessibility at Twin Cities Pride by providing the Escape Space, a sensory-friendly space in the midst of the Pride Festival in Loring Park. This year, with support from PFund, we're spreading sensory-friendly accommodations to Pride celebrations across the state. In August, we brought the Escape Space to the Range Iron Pride Festival, ensuring that rural and out-state members of our community could celebrate their full authentic selves.

Improving Access in Medical Care

This fall we're helping to bridge the gap between the medical industry and autistic needs by creating social stories for patients accessing gender-affirming care. These social stories can help improve patients' access, experiences, and outcomes when accessing medical care.

Partner

Partner with AuSM to connect your business or organization with Minnesota's autism community.

Partner

AuSM Premier Partnerships are sponsorship opportunities that are ideal for organizations interested in supporting and reaching Minnesota's autism community throughout the year in many ways.

Sponsor

Gain visibility at one of our four major events throughout the year. Show your support for the autism community of Minnesota while making valuable connections and getting direct face time with individuals and families who are most interested.

Advertise

Reach thousands of households across the state, either by advertising in our digital newsletter or placing an ad in one of our three printed programs each year.

Bundle and Save

When you join AuSM at multiple events, you'll save $100 and get free advertising in AuSM's e-newsletter.

To connect, contact Kelly Ulrick at kulrick@ausm.org or visit ausm.org/partner



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Music therapy uses engaging music activities to help individuals reach meaningful, non-musical goals.



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Reach for Resources

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www.onecircle.care/autism-services

info@onecircle.care
www.onecircle.care

952-600-5566

Many Minnesota families caring for a loved one with autism may qualify for in-home support through CFSS and 245D.

Just starting to explore support options? **We can help.**

Whether you're just beginning your search or ready for services, we'll help you understand:

- Available in-home support services
- CFSS and 245D eligibility
- How services fit your family's needs

Start the conversation before you need to make a decision.

Circle of Life Home Care • CFSS • 245D • Homemaking • **Honoring those we serve.**

Community and Events

As one of our most important commitments, community-building takes many forms. From one-on-one mentorships and small social events to larger events and conferences, connecting with our community is essential.

Coffee Club

Coffee Club is a space where autistic and neurodiverse adults connect with each other, foster friendships, and build community while enjoying a favorite beverage and/or snack. Adults are welcome to bring items that make them feel comfortable, can stay as long as they'd like, stim, and parallel play. While it's free to participate in AuSM Coffee Club, we ask that participants purchase something from our venue.

Dogwood Coffee 2700 University Ave W, Suite 100
St. Paul, MN 55114

Every second Tuesday of the month, 3-5 p.m.
Register at ausm.org/coffeeclub

Support Groups

AuSM provides a variety of support groups to meet the needs of our community. Support groups offer those affected by autism the opportunity to share problems, solutions, joy, and sorrows with one another.
All groups are held virtually via Zoom.

- Women's Support Group:
  - first Thursday of each month, 6:30-8:00 p.m.
- LGBTQIA+ Support Group:
  - second Thursday of each month, 6:30-8:00 p.m.
- Family Members of Adults on the Spectrum:
  - third Thursday of each month, 6:30-8:00 pm.
- Black Parents of Children with Autism:
  - third Thursday of each month, 12-1 p.m.
- Independent Adults with ASD:
  - fourth Thursday of each month, 6:30-8:00 p.m.

Register at ausm.org/supportgroups

Autism Mentorship Program

AuSM is pleased to announce that we are bringing the Autism Mentorship Program (AMP) under our roof. Piloted with support from AuSM in 2019, AMP has since grown to serve autistic youth and adults in the seven-county metro area.
AMP pairs autistic youth ages 14 – 22 with autistic adult mentors who meet online once a week from October to April, offering opportunities for participants to build meaningful connections with one another.
Designed by autistic adults and allies to support autistic youth, AMP provides a supportive environment for both mentors and mentees to openly be themselves.
The vision is two-fold:
1) to offer autistic youth emotional support, a sense of identity and belonging, and assistance developing their strengths and advocating for their needs, and
2) to invite autistic adults to serve as role models and leaders in their community, share their unique insights and experiences, and empower autistic youth to gain confidence and thrive.

Interested in knowing more? Sign up to get newsletters about AMP, including notifications about when to apply to become a mentor or mentee at ausm.org/amp.





Jigsaw Competition

Presented by
BEST CARE
YOUR CARE. YOUR WAY.

Join us for AuSM's 9th annual Jigsaw Puzzle Competition on Saturday, October 3. We're back, both in person at the iconic Huntington Bank Rotunda at Mall of America® and virtually over Zoom.

This exciting competition brings together puzzle lovers of all ages and skill levels for a day of teamwork, strategy, and spirited community connection.

Not only can you win glory by being the first to complete your puzzle, but you can also win prizes by fundraising.

Register to compete or to fundraise at ausm.org/puzzle2026

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GAMES by James & Air Traffic
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Autistic Community Summit

November 7, 2026

Claim your spot at the Autistic Community Summit on November 7, 2026 at the Inver Hills Community College. Created and led by autistic people, the Autistic Community Summit is a day built for us—by us. This gathering offers a safe space to share experiences, build connections, and explore topics important to the autistic community. The event features speakers, workshops, and opportunities to celebrate and empower autistic voices.

Learn more at ausm.org/summit

Minnesota Autism Conference

April 14-16 , 2027

Save the Date for the 33rd annual Minnesota Autism Conference on April 14-16, 2027. This 3-day event features keynote speakers and breakout sessions led by experts—including autistic voices—designed for autistics, caregivers, educators, and professionals. It's a place to learn, connect, and find community no matter where you are on your autism journey.

We are pleased to announce that we'll be back in person at the Doubletree by Hilton Minneapolis Airport Hotel with virtual options.

Learn more at ausm.org/conference

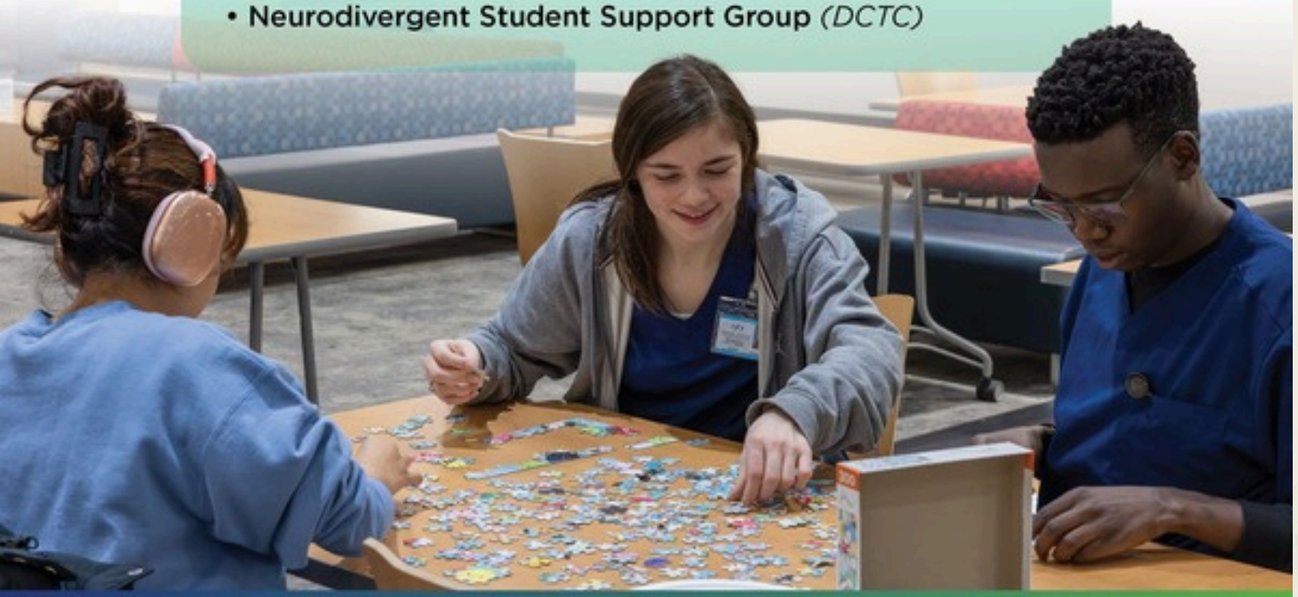
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Explore 100+ programs while discovering supports and opportunities designed to help neurodivergent students succeed.

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- Disability-focused student clubs
- Neuro-affirming mental health resources and assessments
- Neurodivergent faculty and staff representation
- Neurodivergent Student Support Group *(DCTC)*



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A Camp Built Just for Your Family

Confidence Learning Center isn't simply an inclusive destination–it's a place intentionally created for individuals of all ages with developmental and cognitive disabilities and the families who love them.

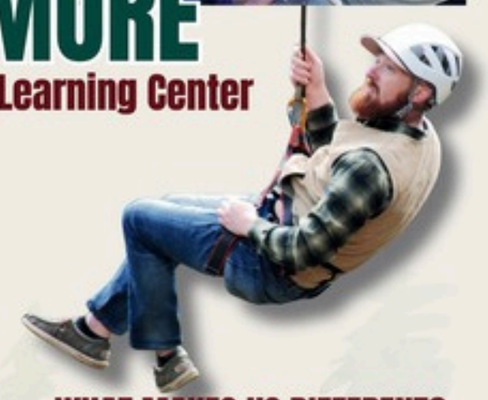
Every trail, activity, cabin, and program has been thoughtfully designed so everyone can participate, explore, and belong. Backed by experienced, compassionate staff, we create an environment where families can focus on what matters most: spending time together.

Whether your perfect getaway includes outdoor adventures, quiet mornings by the lake, evenings around a campfire, or simply a place where everyone feels comfortable and supported, you'll find it here.

Family Vacations Shouldn't Feel Like Work

Planning a trip when a loved one has a developmental or cognitive disability often comes with extra questions, extra planning, and extra stress.

At Camp Confidence, your family doesn't have to adapt to camp–camp is designed for your family. That means more time discovering new adventures, sharing meaningful moments, and enjoying a getaway where everyone truly belon



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- Family camp rates as low as $50 per day.
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- Outdoor adventures adapted for every ability
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Adventure, Confidence, and Access

FOR ALL

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Counseling Services:

- Individual therapy
- Marriage, couples, and family therapy
- Psychoeducation
- Second opinions on autism evaluations
- Trauma therapy
- Onsite consultations for high-intensity challenges when staff or family need additional support

Therapy

At AuSM, our counseling team provides compassionate, affirming therapy for autistic individuals of all ages. With more than 80 years of combined experience, our highly trained therapists are dedicated to helping clients understand their diagnosis, embrace their strengths, and develop strategies to navigate challenges. We meet you where you are—without judgment or preconceptions—supporting growth at your own pace in a safe, respectful environment.

AuSM's clinic is both neurodiversity-affirming and LGBTQIA-friendly, with many neurodivergent therapists on staff. We are proud to lead in providing adult mental health services for autistic clients. Our therapists offer a variety of evidence-based approaches including EMDR, ACT, and CBT, and hold a wide range of professional licensures (LMFT, PhD, MA, MS, MSW, and more). Our team works alongside you to create an individualized plan focused on your unique needs and goals.

Learn more about our therapists and services at www.ausm.org/therapy.

To set up an appointment, please fill out the intake form at ausm.org/therapy.

Professional Networking Group

If you're a professional who works with autistic clients – or are working towards your licensure so you can – AuSM's Counseling and Consulting team has a resource to help you connect with other autism-focused therapists. AuSM's Professional Networking Group offers a chance for therapists to meet with other professionals who see clients with autism to ask questions, share cases, and build peer-to-peer relationships.

Upcoming Dates

(all held 12-1 p.m. virtually)

- October 8, 2026
- November 12, 2026
- December 10, 2026

Find additional dates at ausm.org/networking



AuSM is a Neurodiversity-Affirming Clinic

Neurodiversity refers to the fact that human beings have a wide variety of minds, sensory systems, and ways of processing the world. AuSM embraces this diversity: we won't try to change your mind to fit a particular mold. We'll work with your needs and your unique mind to create personalized goals and supports that are right for you.

We acknowledge that there are challenges and difficulties created both by the world we live in and by lack of accessibility. Autism is a disability, and we know that it isn't easy to be autistic. Our goal is to support the navigation of the world with these differences in mind and to acknowledge that everyone is worthy and brings value to the world.

AUTISM SIBS UNIVERSE

NEWLY OPENED THIS YEAR

ASU Phoenix: A Sensory-Friendly, Person-Centered Bridge to Community Life

Autism SIBS Universe (ASU) is a person-centered, trauma-informed community shaped by people with lived disability experience. That lived experience helps guide how supports, spaces, and activities are designed and adapted around each person's strengths, needs, interests, culture, and goals.

Our adaptable model meets individuals where they thrive - at home, at the ASU Phoenix space, or out in the community. Individuals can move between these settings with their staff based on their needs, goals, energy, and comfort level.

- **Sensory-conscious experiences**
- **Culture, connection & belonging**
- **A gentle bridge to community**
- **Person-centered supports**
- **9,000 square feet of open, creative space**

Autism SIBS Universe I Plymouth, Minnesota Contact: info@asu-living.org



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Amplify Autistic Voices

At AuSM, advocacy is a key part of our mission. With your support, we bring the voices of autistic people and families to the Minnesota State Legislature and ensure that those most affected by autism help shape the laws and policies that matter to them.

From pushing to protect Medicaid to bolstering the rights of people with disabilities, you are a vital part of making Minnesota a place where autistic individuals and families can thrive.

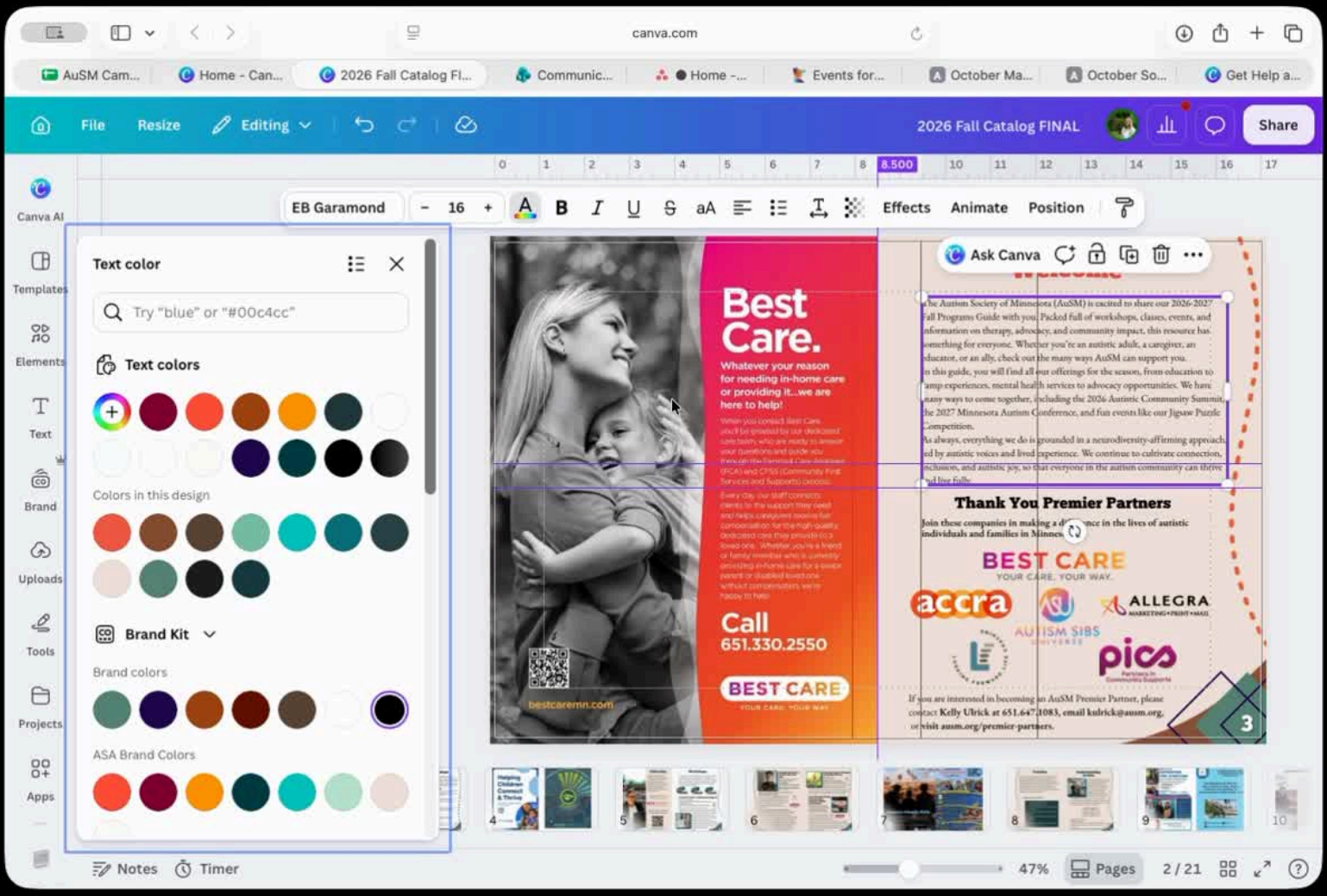
Make a gift today to fight for a nonpartisan disability-justice agenda and work with lawmakers to build a state where everyone affected by autism is heard and supported.

Support Advocacy

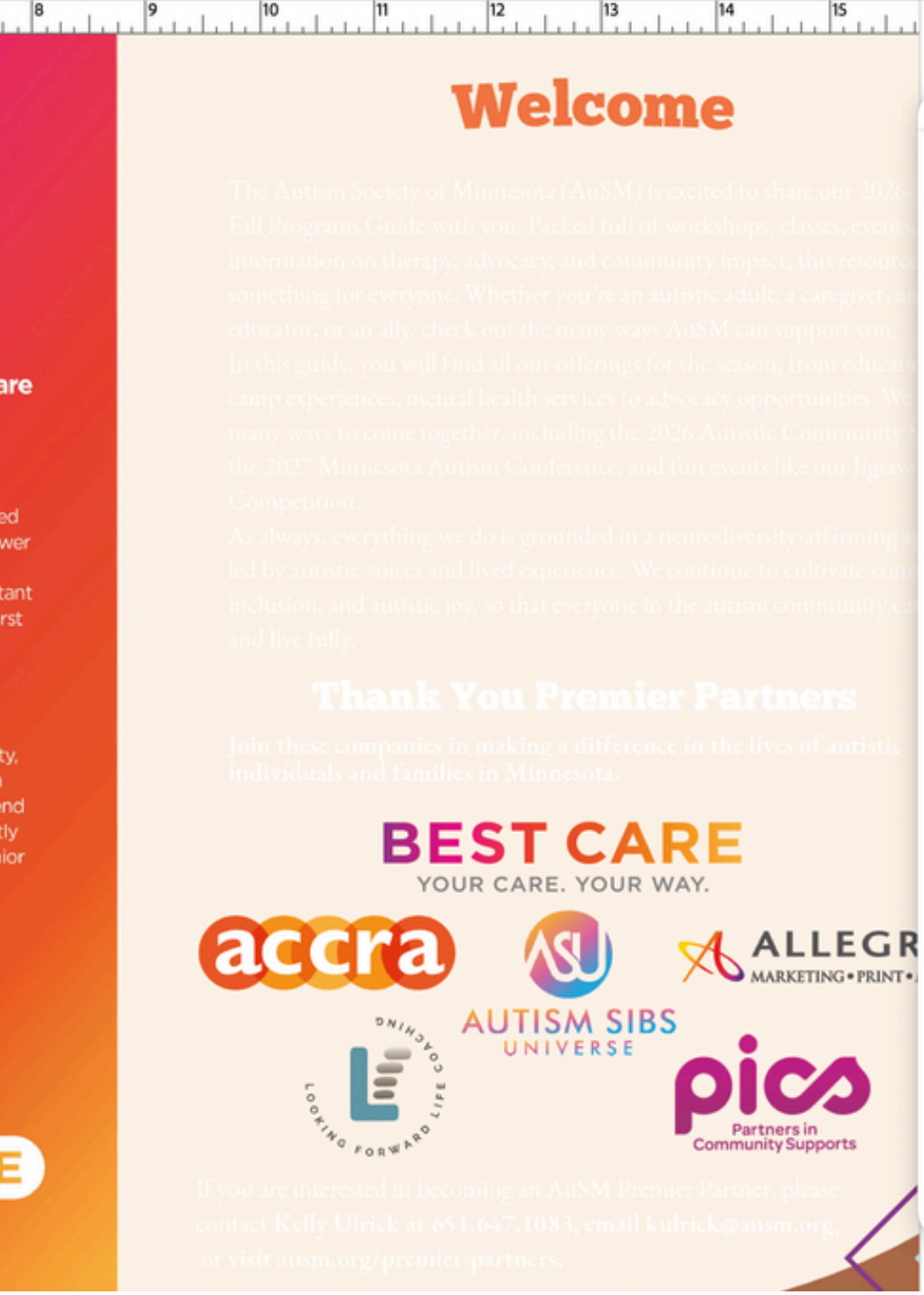
We know our community is strongest when every voice is heard and valued. Donate now to support autistic advocacy:

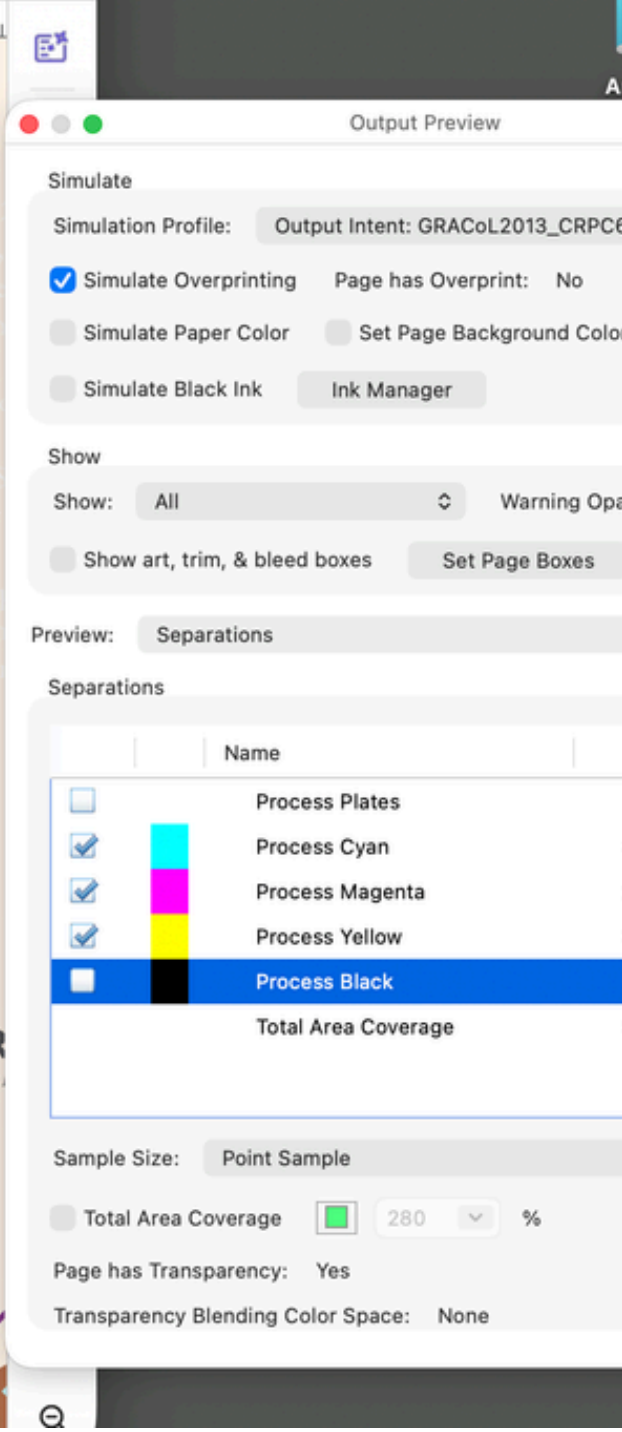
- **$20 - Pay for email campaign resources to protect Medicaid**
- **$50 - Cover an hour of education on disability rights and self-advocacy**
- **$150 - Fund a day of advocacy work at the MN State Capitol**
- **$250 - Support the campaign to abolish subminimum wages for people with disabilities in Minnesota**

Visit www.ausm.org/donate


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Welcome
The Autism Society of Minnesota (AuSM) is excited to share our 2026
Fall Programs Guide with you. Packed full of workshops, classes, events
information on therapy, advocacy, and community impact, this resourc
something for everyone. Whether you're an autistic adult, a caregiver, a
educator, or an ally, check out the many ways AuSM can support you.
In this guide, you will find all our offerings for the season, from educati
camp experiences, mental health services to advocacy opportunities. We
many ways to come together, including the 2026 Autistic Community
the 2027 Minnesota Autism Conference, and fun events like our Jigsaw
Competition.
As always, everything we do is grounded in a neurodiversity-affirming
led by autistic voices and lived experience. We continue to cultivate com
inclusion, and autistic joy, so that everyone in the autism community ca
and live fully.
Thank You Premier Partners
Join these companies in making a difference in the lives of autistic
individuals and families in Minnesota.
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contact Kelly Ulrick at 651.647.1083, email kulrick@ausm.org,
or visit ausm.org/premier-partners.


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