

# #ConnecttheSpectrum



AutismOklahoma helps individuals and their families overcome the isolation and lack of friendships that contribute to low self-confidence, lack of independence, and challenging socialization issues. Since 2002, AutismOklahoma has successfully assisted in improving quality of life outcomes through unique programs that connect families, create opportunities for inspiring and engaging autistic individuals, and help communities recognize, understand, and honor neurodiversity.

## WHAT WE DO

We help individuals and families Connect to Life, Belong to Life, and Fulfill Their Life. Through 85 free or nearly free programs, we directly touch and improve the quality of life of 4,500 autistic individuals and their family members each year.

Our value-centered approach provides a combination of programs that

- Help families connect and thrive
- Create unique experiences for individuals with autism to connect, gain confidence and engage with others through their interests. We value everyone as a person who has unique gifts to share.
- Partner with the community to honor and embrace differences to help become part of the solution.

## OUR IMPACT RESULTS

Fostering friendships. Sharing interests. Exploring careers. Engaging with a team. Catching dreams. Creating futures. These come naturally for most people. But, if you have autism, these outcomes don't come easily or naturally. We impact these outcomes every day.

## MISSION

Investing together to grow, learn, and serve the families of Oklahoma affected by autism. Through a holistic approach, we create opportunities for families, children, teens and adults to have more happiness, joy and a higher quality of life, for life.

## VISION

Bringing hope and empowerment as we help Oklahoma become more autism-friendly and aware.

# WHAT IS AUTISM?

A group of related brain-based disorders that usually appear before the age of three. The cause of autism is not known. Research is exploring genetic and environmental factors that may impact a developing fetal brain. There is no cure for Autism. What does autism look like? Everyone is different. There's a famous saying in the autism world, "If you've met one person with autism, you've met one person with autism."

## THE NEED

- The CDC estimates that one in 44 children are diagnosed with autism, and 40% are non-speaking.
- Nearly two-thirds of children with autism between the ages of 6 and 15 have been bullied.
- Nearly 28 percent of 8-year-olds with autism have self-injurious behaviors. Head banging, arm biting and skin scratching are among the most common.
- Families are often excluded because of behavioral challenges and lack of understanding.
- Nearly 50% of 25-year-olds with autism have never held a paying job, despite having the skill sets and expertise to excel in the workplace.
- A staggering 50-75% of the 5.6 million autistic adults in the U.S. are unemployed or underemployed.
- Suicide is a leading cause of premature death for autistic individuals.. Autistic people are six times more likely to attempt death by suicide – and up to seven times more likely to die by suicide – compared to those who are not autistic.



## PREVALENCE OF AUTISM

The Centers for Disease Control reports 1 in 36 children and 1 in 45 adults are autistic. The number of children diagnosed with autism is greater than AIDS, cancer, and diabetes combined. It's not uncommon for families to have more than one child with autism.

# WHAT WE DO & HOW WE DO IT

## HOW WE SUPPORT INDIVIDUALS

We help people with autism connect through their passions and reach potentials. We provide connection opportunities to help discover and recognize talents. We also have programs to expand friendships through meet-ups, social activities and personal growth programs.

We believe in the power of INTERESTS!



## HOW WE SUPPORT FAMILIES

We create connections for families. Connections promote resource sharing, problem solving and produce outcomes of hope and optimism about the future.

Families can also try new things through safe and supportive free family events. Since safety is a big issue for many families, our life-saving safety programs help families protect their loved ones for peace of mind.

## HOW WE SUPPORT COMMUNITIES

We help Oklahoma communities learn to Think Differently by bringing them together to join our mission for quality of life for life.

We align with restaurants, movie theaters, recreational event centers, church partners, and more, who enable participants to access and enjoy community services while being who they are. The annual PieceWalk is Oklahoma's largest annual autism outreach event. We help and support businesses, civic partners, and potential employers to understand autism, embrace differences, and become part of the solution.



# PROGRAMS

## ART

Using art as a way to communicate, Swanky, Duets, Little Swanky, and Bee's Knees are art programs that include weekly classes, summer camps and culminate in an annual Art Show and Exhibit.

## FRIEND MEETUPS

Groups of teens, young adults and adults meet monthly to develop and build friendships while teaching the nuances of social interactions which are often troublesome for those with autism.

## FREE FAMILY EVENTS

We host swim parties, ice cream socials, bounce houses, game and karaoke nights. We want families to enjoy a higher quality of life, have hope and fun as a family, and to build success upon success. Providing these opportunities allows them to have them all.

## PIECE OF MIND

Specialized swim programs, building fences, and granting GPS tracking systems, door locks, and pool alarms are a few of the ways we grant peace of mind to families whose child's safety is at risk.

## CONNECTION CIRCLES

Connection Circles are either virtual resource sharing through community-based Facebook groups or in-person groups that identify and meet the needs of families in their community.

## FILM MAKING

Invisible Layers Productions meets weekly to teach all aspects of creative and commercial film making to post-high school young adults. Their films have won top awards throughout Oklahoma and California.



# FIND US IN THE COMMUNITY

## THE PIECEWALK

The PieceWalk is Oklahoma's largest autism event and unifying autism voice. Held annually in OKC and Tulsa with 8,000+ participants, the event includes a Resource Fair and special Kids Zone. Teams form, recruit members, hold community and Facebook events, and raise funds. The PieceWalk is AutismOklahoma's largest source of revenue.

## ART SHOWS AND EXHIBITS

Duets and the Big Swanky Art Show highlight the talents and works of artists with and without autism. Pieces are displayed and originals, prints and gallery guides are sold to the public. Artists are on hand to discuss their pieces and sign their works.

## APRIL, AUTISM ADVOCACY MONTH

On and around April 2, World Autism Day, a variety of community-based advocacy, education and outreach events are held, including Autism Awareness Day at the Oklahoma State Capitol, where autism self-advocates showcase their areas of talent and expertise.

## PGA KORN FERRY COMPLIANCE SOLUTIONS CHAMPIONSHIP

AutismOklahoma is the Charity Beneficiary of the tournament. The first of the five-year event will be played June 19 through 25, 2023, at the Jimmie Austin Golf Club at The University of Oklahoma in Norman, Oklahoma.

## GREEN TEA PARTY

Through song, dance, poetry, art and, sometimes their silence, each girl has gained the confidence to stand before the audience and share with them their hopes, dreams and talents. Lunch and a red-carpet runway walk features their beauty, inside and out.

## MAYOR'S 9-PIN

Bowling Centers and bowlers from across the state compete to bring the Oklahoma Mayor's Cup back to their hometown Mayor. You don't need an average to bowl and this is not a handicapped event. All are welcome to come out and participate.

## DRIVE FORE AUTISM

Our annual OKC and Tulsa golf tournaments include a day of fun, with lunch, prizes, contests, and proceeds help fund our programs.

# CONTACT AND ASSETS

## MEDIA CONTACT

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## WEBSITES

[AutismOklahoma.org](http://AutismOklahoma.org)

[PieceWalk.org](http://PieceWalk.org)

## STORY IDEAS

- Creating Filmmakers with Autism
- One PieceWalk Two Cities
- Interest + Opportunity = MAGIC
- How We Leverage 800+ Volunteers to Provide 85 Programs
- Dreamcatchers: Life Is Your Program
- Life-Saving Piece of Mind Program
- Autism Advocacy Month is April
- #ConnectTheSpectrum
- Social Groups Expand Horizons
- Quality of Life, For Life

## IMAGE AND VIDEO LIBRARY INCLUDES (CLICK FOR LINK)

AutismOklahoma and Program Logos

20 Success Stories

Art Pieces, Art Programs, Art Shows

Drive Fore Autism

Family and Social Events

Invisible Layers Productions Reel

PieceWalk Photos

Program and Event Videos and B-Roll

## SOCIAL MEDIA

