

Connect the Spectrum

autism OKLAHOMA



AutismOklahoma has been helping individuals and families build meaningful connections since 2002. Through creative and inspiring programs, we break down barriers of isolation and foster friendships, boosting confidence and promoting independence. Our mission is to improve quality of life—for life, by creating inclusive opportunities where autistic individuals thrive, families find support and communities embrace and celebrate neurodiversity!

What We Do

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

Fostering friendships, sharing interests, exploring careers, engaging with a team, catching dreams and 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 and Creating opportunities for those on the autism spectrum to find community connections and live meaningful, joyful lives.

Vision

Our big dream is quality of life, for life, for every individual in Oklahoma on the autism spectrum.

What is Autism?

A developmental disability caused by differences in the brain 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 Center for Disease Control estimates that 1 in 36 children is 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 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.

"I feel like I basically belong here...
I'm basically making my own
destiny in this place."
- Tylyn (AutismOklahoma Participant)

What We Do & How We Do it

How We Support Individuals

We help people with autism connect through their passions and reach their potential. We provide connection opportunities to help discover and recognize talents. We also have transformative 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 Families

We help Oklahoma communities learn to [Connect The Spectrum](#) 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 AutismOklahoma Walk is Oklahoma's largest annual autism outreach event. We help and support businesses, civic partners and potential employers to understand autism, embrace differences and celebrate the beauty uniqueness can bring!



**"I think [AutismOklahoma is] special because some schools don't have a lot of kids with autism, so it's nice for people with autism outside of school to get to know each other."
- Jocelyn (AutismOklahoma Participant)**

Programs

Art

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

Friend Meetups

Groups of teens, young adults and adults meet monthly at our Mix & Mingle and Teen2Teen programs 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, games 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 allow them to have them all.

Peace 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.

Filmmaking

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 AutismOklahoma Walk

The AutismOklahoma Walk 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 a special Kids Zone. Teams form, recruit members, hold community and Facebook Events and raise funds. The AutismOklahoma Walk is AutismOklahoma's largest source of revenue.

Art Shows and Exhibits

The Duets Art Show highlights the talent and work 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 is 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 honored to be the Charity Beneficiary of the PGA Korn Ferry Compliance Solutions Championship. In 2024, we proudly kicked off the event as one of our participants delivered the first hit, symbolizing community and inclusion. This partnership helps empower individuals on the autism spectrum through creative programs and meaningful connections.

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.

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

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Websites

AutismOklahoma.org
AutismOklahomaWalk.org
SpectrumMarket.org

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
- AutismOklahoma Walk Photos
- Program and Event Videos and B-Roll

Story Ideas

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

Social Media Links

facebook.com/autismoklahoma
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Youtube.com/@autismoklahoma
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