



# Connecting the Pieces

serving families along the gulf coast for 14 years

## Celebrating #Steps2Acceptance across the area



Susan Byram and API present Edward, TCBY employee, with a certificate of appreciation.

On Sept. 24, API will gather with the community for a fun, festive day celebrating the #Steps2Acceptance we are all taking to support those with autism. Mark your calendar to join us from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Wahoos Stadium for walking, face painting, games, bounce houses, food, music, sensory tents, Imagination Station, and awareness merchandise—just to scratch the surface of FUN!

Leading up to the event, we are recognizing business-

es, organizations, and individuals who go above and beyond to support and accept those living with autism. The idea all began with a story on Facebook from mom Samantha Cedotal about an employee at TCBY on Bayou Boulevard. A discontinued treat could have meant a meltdown for Samantha's son, Taiven, who had worked hard to earn his trip to the yogurt shop. But employee Edward Thomas recognized what it would mean to this child and his family if he went the extra mile. Instead of saying, "Sorry, we don't do that anymore," he found a way to help Taiven make another choice and, in turn, made a new friend. His story was featured on WEAR's "Angels in our Midst."



Sacred Heart Hospital's Emergency Room has gone above and beyond to become autism-friendly. Sarah Penalzoza found out *Steps for Autism, continued on page 3*

## Grant opportunity leads to new programs at area schools

Last fall, Autism Pensacola presented a grant opportunity to its 2015 Kids for Camp lead teachers. Six camp lead teachers wrote for and were awarded grants for programs that were implemented during the 2015-16 school year. In June, reports were received that detailed how the grants were used.

One of the grant recipients was Aileen Ilano, who is now the Capstone Academy-Pensacola principal. Her grant funds were used funds to create a sensory garden at Capstone. Aileen said, "The area was transformed from a rarely used space to a colorful place where the kids participated and enjoyed the outdoors together."

Another garden project was created by Kelly Walker and her students at Sims



Ms. Quick's math center additions were a big hit with her students.

Middle School. The garden was put together, piece by piece, by the students. They planted cucumbers, watermelon, carrots, and flowers. Kelly used the physical activity of creating a garden to teach social skills and academic skills. She said that when she taught the students about the need to give plants space to grow, she was able to tie that lesson back to how we each need our own personal space.

Alexis Quick, an inclusion teacher at Sherwood Elementary, enriched her class's math workshop time. Alexis says, "Our children love and need hands-on activities to help them truly engage in math, and that is



Math games, purchased with API grant money, enhanced Ms. Quick's center time.

### How to become a lead teacher

To be considered for a lead teacher position at camp, professionals must demonstrate excellence in best-practice techniques for working with individuals with autism.

what you gifted to us."

API is continuing this tradition in 2016 – All camp lead teachers will be receiving information soon about the grant opportunity!

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## From the President's Pen

The fall is always such an exciting time! As we wind down the hot summer, activities begin to build to take advantage of our wonderful fall weather. Captains for Kids, Miracle League, and Steps for Autism are all on the horizon, along with much more!

The Autism Pensacola Board and staff are all very excited about changes that are coming up this fall. As many of you know, we were chosen as idgroup's 4th annual 'Brand on Us' recipient. This was an extensive process that engaged many of our key stakeholders in strategic planning for the future of our organization. The next step is the creative part—a new logo and marketing materials that will help get the word out about Autism Pensacola. This is our final newsletter with the 'old' look! Look forward to our new logo and much more during the month of November.

In light of this great event, the board has decided to celebrate by moving our Annual Membership Drive to November. This means that your current membership will be extended to the end of 2016. We plan to offer incentives to join in late 2016 for the entire year of 2017 and this will be our plan going forward. Stay tuned for



**At this year's event, Susan Byram was honored for 10 years as director of API.**



**Susan Byram was all smiles as her son, David, led the Pledge of Allegiance at the Gala.**

more details about this exciting way to launch into next year! By the way, if you are a paid member of Autism Pensacola, watch for your ballot in the mail in early October. We always announce the results of our board election at our Annual meeting which is scheduled for October 18th. #Steps2Acceptance is our hashtag campaign for this year's Steps for Autism Walk coming up on September 24th. We have heard so many wonderful stories of people who are hearing our message of acceptance and taking the time to really see and understand individuals with autism. Please keep sharing these stories on social media with our hashtag! Thank you to everyone who has set up a team, joined a team or sponsored Steps for Autism. This annual event is celebrating five years this fall! Please plan to join us at the Wahoos Stadium for a fun day Sept. 24th. Let's show our community how much we love our 'kids'!

See you there! Remember, we are here for you, and together we make a difference!

*Susan Byram*

### API Council

Joan Fitzsimmons, Council Chair  
Rebecca Aman, Jean Brown, Bobby Cochran,  
Wanda Cochran, Holly Hoskamer, Kat Lea,  
Rita Lung, Katie Owens, Michael Owens,  
Rocky Parra, Autumn Weeks, Jonathan White,  
Sarah Peñaloza, Regina Williams

**API Council is a group of volunteers dedicated to making a difference. Everyone is welcome to attend council meetings and find their own place to serve. We have a variety of committees where you can make a difference. Email [info@autismpensacola.org](mailto:info@autismpensacola.org) for information on council needs.**

### API Staff

Susan Byram, President/CEO  
Jessica Lapen, Program Director  
Rebecca Aman, Bookkeeper  
Jason O'Connell, Webmaster  
Allee' Blay Brown, Office Support Staff

### 2016 API Executive Committee

Becca Boles, Board Chair	Jodi Bell
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Teri Levin	Joe Webb
Candy McGuyre	Amy Wilson
Cate Merrill	Tim Wyrosdick
Cecila Nanni	

### Past Chairs:

*Quint Studer, Fred Donovan, Ted Kirchharr, Julian Irby, John Peacock*



## Teens S.E.E. new opportunities with summer program

Eleven autistic individuals were able to participate in a pilot program in late July. Funded by the Department of Education through Vocational Rehabilitation, the Summer Employment Exploration (S.E.E.) class offered students the chance to develop vocational skills while exploring our community.

Interns visited Pensacola Beach to learn about the hospitality business, volunteered at Ronald McDonald House and Manna Food Pantries and helped set up the library at Sherwood Elementary. We are so grateful to all our partners who helped make this program possible and look forward to future programs.

**SEE program participants worked in the library at Sherwood Elementary.**



## Steps for Autism *continued from page 1*

first-hand when her son, Isaac, fell and broke his ankle. She said that from the EMTs to the physicians and nurses in the ER, everyone worked so well with her son. On Tuesday, Sept. 6, we will be presenting Sacred Heart with #Steps2Acceptance certificate.

The Pensacola Blue Wahoos are known as community leaders. Recently, they selected an autistic young adult to be a "Wahoo for a Day." Scott Knecht, is a recent Milton High graduate and a cancer survivor. On Aug. 25, he was invited to don a Wahoos uniform and sit with the team during a game. That evening, Susan Byram, President/CEO of API, along with members of her board, presented a #Steps2Acceptance certificate to the team.

The certificate recognizes both their recognition of Scott as the Wahoo for a Day and their ongoing efforts to hire individuals with autism. API is grateful for the longtime support of this great community institution.

All around the community, businesses and other organizations are reaching out and taking #Steps2Acceptance. We are grateful to Publix on Ninth Avenue, The Bodacious Olive, Ronald McDonald House, Manna Food Pantries, The Fish House, Marcus Pointe Baptist Church, and the Naval Aviation Schools Command, NAS Pensacola, for their efforts.

Please keep using the #Steps2Acceptance anytime you have a story of acceptance and understanding in our community.

We want to keep highlighting the difference makers wherever we see them!



### Wahoo for a Day Winner!

Congratulations to Scott Knecht, winner of the Wahoo for a Day contest. Scott was selected by the Pensacola Blue Wahoos from a number of submissions to enjoy this special honor. Many thanks to API friends John and Silvia Switzer; Quint and Rishy Studer; and the Wahoos for this opportunity.

## Start a team for Steps for Autism and spread #Steps2Acceptance

- Go to [autismpensacola.org/steps.html](http://autismpensacola.org/steps.html) and follow the steps to create a team
- Fundraising tips for your team
- Start an online T-shirt sale – Create your team T-shirt and encourage family and friends to purchase the shirt to support Steps! Some T-shirt fundraising sites include [Booster.com](http://Booster.com), [tfund.com](http://tfund.com), [tstacker.com](http://tstacker.com), [bonfirefunds.com](http://bonfirefunds.com)
- Pick up a coin canister at Autism Pensacola – then take it to your favorite business, place of worship, school and collect donations
- Puzzle Ribbon Sign sales - Go to [autismpensacola.org](http://autismpensacola.org) for details
- Bake Sale – Everyone loves baked goods!
- Brown Bag Lunch week – Encourage coworkers to bring their lunch from home for one week. Donate the money they would have spent to the team.
- Social Media Challenge – Make a challenge on social media to your friends and family.

## Sonshine Family Farms supports Autism Pensacola

A huge Thank You to Sonshine Family Farms for honoring Autism Pensacola this fall. Our puzzle piece logo will be a part of their fall corn maze! In addition, Sonshine Family Farms will donate 10% of all proceeds to API. We are so grateful and hope everyone will check out this fun family activity. Opening day is September 17th. More information is at <http://sonshinefamilyfarms.com/>





# Record Gala event funds biggest summer for Kids for Camp



On a beautiful late April evening (pictured on left), Autism Pensacola held the 13th Annual Connecting the Pieces Gala at Sanders Beach Community Center. Once again, Pensacola's finest chefs donated their time and talent to treat our guests to an evening of fun, celebrating acceptance of those with autism.

This year, a new format welcomed guests to a strolling 'cocktail dinner' where they enjoyed over 10 tasty offerings. Another fun treat was the excitement of six celebrity auctioneers who worked the crowd to raise much needed funds for API. Autistic individuals were highlighted through the night. Allen Fink treated us to a trombone solo for the National Anthem, and original artwork on our program was created by Micah Lapen.

Hosts Amie & Scott Remington and Justin & Kristin Beck were thrilled to exceed this year's financial goal. More than \$170,000 was raised which funded our largest summer learning lab ever. API is so grateful to all the many volunteers and donors who made this event possible.

Through the successful fundraising of the gala, API was able to run its 10th Kids for Camp Summer Learning Lab. This summer more than 90 autistic campers had the chance to learn and grow in this fun-filled environment.

Sixty staff members increased their skills, refining best-practice techniques for working with those with autism.

Thirty families received significant financial aid (discounted tuition of 75% or higher) because of the success of our gala.

What a difference our generous community makes! Thank you, Pensacola!



**Amy Remington, gala co-chair, with a Bubba Watson autographed driver that was auctioned at the event.**



**Autistic teen Allen Fink performed the National Anthem on trombone.**



**A trip to the Washington High pool is always a camp favorite.**



**CLS interns made lunch - and dessert - for Ronald McDonald House guests.**

*"Peggy Woy, lead teacher on the Holm campus, always has a positive demeanor and it shows that he loves her job. She can turn challenging behavior situations into a lighthearted situation. She would buy staff bagels, almost weekly, but she is not the type of person to even acknowledge that she did. Great and giving person."*  
**- Aileen, Holm camp parent**



**Petland always brings out the smiles.**



# Thank you to Kids for Camp Partners

- Broussard’s Bayou Grill & Cajun Market
- The Fish House
- Artist Ellen McGaughey
- Ronald McDonald House
- Escambia County School District
- Santa Rosa County School District
- Publix #1316 Ninth Avenue
- Manna Food Pantries
- Froman FUN Inflatables
- Ballet Pensacola
- Pensacola Symphony Orchestra
- Reno’s Reptiles
- Pensacola MESS Hall
- NAS Pensacola – Naval Aviation Schools Command



**Chef David Penniman - a longtime friend of API.**



**Campers enjoyed of bowling fun at Cordova Lanes, and kept cool with waterslides from Froman FUN.**



**Camp included teaching job skills in the real world**



**Campers work on individualized targets in the learning lab.**

**Gala Sponsors**

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Studer Charitable Giving Foundation

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**JTP teens gave back to the community at Manna Food Pantries.**

*“Christopher loved going to camp! His grin would grow bigger, the closer we got to Washington. He really enjoyed the social aspect of the teen peer volunteers, and especially enjoyed Ms. Keerstin and Ms. Meredith.”*

– Alisha, mom to teen camper

## CARD Corner

The greater Pensacola community is blessed to have two CARD consultants serving the needs of the community - Chrissy Ogilvie, Ph.D., and Cindy Golden, Ph.D.

### What's going on at CARD

Dr. Golden is partnering with a local elementary school to do a year of training and classroom consultations. A partnership with a local daycare serving Navy families has been developed. Teacher and parent trainings are being planned.

Dr. Ogilvie's social skills groups are growing and continuing for the fall.

- Making Sense of Middle School group meets Thursdays at the Pensacola CARD office. They have recently started using the PEERS (Program for the Education and Enrichment of Relational Skills) curriculum - <https://www.semel.ucla.edu/peers>
- The Girls Day Out group will be starting back up in late September and is open to high school students and young adult women. Plans have been made to meet with a local Mary Kay representative to talk about personal care. Following the meeting, the girls will be going on location for a photo shoot with a local photographer!
- Gamer's Delight is a popular group, open to high school age males and females. This group focuses on team-building and social interaction. Marcus Pointe Baptist Church has been a generous partner and has opened its doors to this growing group. The group meets every other Saturday from 1 to 3 p.m.

• Serving the entire community, an adult social group has been established and will continue this fall. The group is for those ages 18 and older. Some activities planned include bowling, pizza/game nights, and other trips out into the community. Plans are also in the works for a trip to FANdom in November!

• Parents of adult children with autism have formed a group that is being facilitated by CARD. The group meets once a month in the Autism Pensacola office.

CARD's lending library recently received a generous donation of books by local community friend Ann Grandin, who is also a member of API's Grandparents group. New resources are also being added to help explain autism to young children, as well as books to assist in developing executive functioning skills.

For more information about CARD's services and how to join one of the social groups, contact 850-416-4495 or email [Christine.ogilvie@med.fsu.edu](mailto:Christine.ogilvie@med.fsu.edu) or [cindy.golden@med.fsu.edu](mailto:cindy.golden@med.fsu.edu).

### CARD Can...

- Provide short term consultation to address specific autism related issues as appropriate for home, school, community or work places upon request.
- Provide consultation for developing visual supports (schedules, social stories, etc.) for registered CARD clients.
- Provide support and technical assistance for a client's specific needs, such as attending team meetings involving members such as the teacher, parent, therapists, and employer.
- Work with local businesses to expand their customer base and provide opportunities to employ individuals with autism.
- Provide training for families, teachers, caregivers and clients related to autism and other related providers, community organizations and employers.
- Provide a free library with books on autism, communication, behavior, educational issues and more. You may check out as many as two books for 30 days at a time.
- Provide an electronic newsletter listing upcoming events and trainings in the area. If you would like to be added to our email list, send an e-mail to [autism@med.fsu.edu](mailto:autism@med.fsu.edu).
- Offer a website which describes upcoming trainings, conferences and provides current resources and information. We are also on Facebook (FSU Center for Autism and Related Disabilities) and TWITTER (AutismFSU).

## Protecting autistic individual in interactions with law

In August, Pensacola Police Sgt. Jimmy Donohoe, in partnership with API, presented an informational training on autism to 54 Escambia County Sheriff's deputies, bailiffs, and school resource officers. Training our first-responders to recognize behaviors that may be associated with an autistic individual will hopefully improve interactions and outcomes.

Another layer of protection for those on the spectrum comes from the Florida legislature. In April, the legislature passed The Wes Kleinert Fair Interview Act. The act does two things:

- 1) Outlines a system for voluntary identification for people with developmental disabilities (this portion of the law goes into effect October 1, 2016)
- 2) States that an effort must be made to have professionals with expertise in autism be present at all interviews involving individuals diagnosed with autism or autism spectrum disorders (this portion of the law went into effect July 1, 2016).

### To read the new legislation, go to:

<https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2016/0936/BillText/er/PDF>

The Arc, in response to Florida's legislation, published an editorial with suggestions to strengthen the new law. Read the article here: <http://blog.thearc.org/2016/04/11/new-florida-law-seeks-protection-people-idd-questioned-law-enforcement-positive-step-needs-improvement/>

## United Way grant funds PURE Empowerment Exercise Class

We are so excited to continue our partnership with PURE Empowerment through a grant from United Way. These funds will support exercise and nutrition classes offered each Friday as part of a full day of events that include a coffee social and arts & crafts as well. All abilities are welcome. The class focuses on the needs of the individual and improving their health & independence. For more information, go to [www.purefriendship.org/](http://www.purefriendship.org/) or call 850-479-8337.



# Calendar of Events

Check our web site often for additional events and details!

## SEPTEMBER

**Sept. 6** – What to do While You Wait, 6 to 7 p.m., Greenhut auditorium. A resource meeting for those who are waiting on ABA services. Presented by the Sacred Heart Autism Center. RSVP by calling (850) 416-4681 or email [Katie.price@shhpens.org](mailto:Katie.price@shhpens.org). Free event.

**Sept. 9** – Escambia Spectrum Chat, 11 a.m., API office, 3916 N. 10th Avenue. Bring your own lunch and chat with other parents and caregivers.

**Sept. 10** – Men's Caregiver Chat, 9 a.m., Books-A-Million.

**Sept. 10** – WSRE's Imagination Station play date, 10 a.m. to noon, Community Maritime Park, downtown Pensacola.

**Sept. 16** – Grandparents of Autism Pensacola (GAP) chat, 10 a.m. API office.

**Sept. 17 – 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.** – Respite at Marcus Pointe Baptist Church, 6205 North W Street. Register: (850) 375-4790.

**Sept. 22** – API's volunteer council meeting, 10 a.m., API office

**Sept. 24** – Steps for Autism – 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., Pensacola Blue Wahoos stadium. Fundraising event – day of fun for families. WSRE's Imagination Station will be open.

**Sept. 29** – Understanding the IEP process – 6 to 7:30 p.m., J.E. Hall Center, Room 160. Presented by Escambia County School District. Speaker: Amy Scott Lorton, Special Education Consultant & Advocate.

## OCTOBER

**Oct. 8** – ABC's of ABA, 9 a.m. to noon, presented by Sacred Heart Autism Center. Lecture Hall, Sacred Heart Hospital.

**Oct. 8** – Fall Family Picnic, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., Bagdad Rec Center and Park, Bagdad. Food, games, bouncy castles.

**Oct. 14** – Escambia Spectrum Chat, 11 a.m., API office, 3916 N. 10th Avenue. Bring your own lunch and chat with other parents and caregivers.

**Oct. 15** – WSRE's Imagination Station play date, 10 a.m. to noon, Community Maritime Park, downtown Pensacola.

**Oct. 15 – 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.** – Respite at Marcus Pointe Baptist Church.

**Oct. 20**– Annual evening meeting, 6 p.m., Pollak Training Center, Arc Gateway, 1000 E. Fairfield Dr.

**Oct. 21** – Grandparents of Autism Pensacola (GAP) chat, 10 a.m., API office.

**Oct. 27** – API's volunteer council meeting, 10 a.m., API office

**Oct. 29** – Trunk or Treat, 1-3 p.m., parking lot of the Pearl Nelson Center, Arc Gateway. If you're interested in participating as a "trunk," please email [programs@autismpensacola.org](mailto:programs@autismpensacola.org).

## NOVEMBER

**Nov. 5** – WSRE's Imagination Station play date, 10 a.m. to noon, Community Maritime Park, downtown Pensacola.

**Nov. 11** – Escambia Spectrum Chat, 11 a.m., API office, 3916 N. 10th Avenue. Bring your own lunch and chat with other parents and caregivers.

**Nov. 18** – Grandparents of Autism Pensacola (GAP) chat, 10 a.m., API office.

**Nov. 19** – 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. – Respite at Marcus Pointe Baptist Church.

## DECEMBER

**Dec. 1** – API's volunteer council meeting, 10 a.m., API office

**Dec. 3** – 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. – Christmas visit with Santa, for families of all ages. Location TBA.

**Dec. 10** – 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. – Bowling with Santa, for young teens and older. Location TBA.

## Imagination Station playdate moves to a new day, time

API, in partnership with WSRE's Imagination Station staff invite parents and kids of all ages to enjoy the downtown Pensacola educational venue at a new time and day. Beginning this month, a Special Needs play date will be offered on a Saturday. This is in an effort to avoid scheduling conflicts during the week with school and therapies.

Mark your calendars for these upcoming play dates

- Sept. 10, 10 a.m. to noon
- Sept. 24, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. – during Steps for Autism!
- Oct. 15, 10 a.m. to noon
- Nov. 5, 10 a.m. to noon

The WSRE Imagination Station gives children and parents fun, hands-on learning experiences utilizing the latest learning tools, programs and materials offered by WSRE and PBS, with a strong focus on

early literacy and the use of educational digital technologies. The Imagination Station serves as a one-stop resource for all things WSRE and PBS Kids.

Activities generally target preschoolers and younger, but anyone is welcome on the Saturday play dates. Parent supervision is required at the events.

This community-based educational project and venue is made possible by a partnership between Pensacola State College, WSRE, and local philanthropists and Blue Wahoos owners Quint and Rishy Studer.

Location: Pensacola Bayfront Stadium in downtown Pensacola, 351 W. Cedar Street, Pensacola, Florida 32502 (go south on Reus St. off of Main St. and you will end up at the front door of our location)



Kids and adults love the activities of the Imagination Station

## API Contact Information

To donate, pay dues, obtain membership forms or for other correspondence  
**mail to address below or visit [www.autismpensacola.org](http://www.autismpensacola.org)**

Email: [info@autismpensacola.org](mailto:info@autismpensacola.org)

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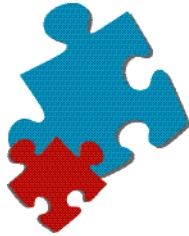


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*Connecting the Pieces*  
**Autism Pensacola**

serving families along the gulf coast

P. O. Box 30213

Pensacola, Florida 32503-1213



**When? Oct. 29, 1 to 3 p.m.**

**Where? Arc Gateway,  
Pearl Nelson Center parking lot**

**Interested in helping out? Email  
[programs@autismpensacola.org](mailto:programs@autismpensacola.org)**

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steps.html](http://www.autismpensacola.org/steps.html) to order online