# P.U.R.E. Empowerment Center teaches life skills for adults

P.U.R.E. Friendship Ministries and Project Empower of Northwest Florida have created a place for adults to learn life skills and social skills. The P.U.R.E. Empowerment Center opened this August at Marcus Pointe Baptist Church. The program includes courses in laundry, clothes organization, grooming, gardening, nutrition, and exercise.

For the past two years, P.U.R.E. Friendship has hosted monthly coffee socials that have grown in popularity. Destry LeBrun and Tara Potter of P.U.R.E. Friendship Ministries, along with Project Empower, saw the need to offer more for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Through the P.U.R.E. Empowerment Center, located at Marcus Pointe Baptist Church, coffee socials will now occur each Friday from 10 a.m. to noon. Participants may bring their lunch to enjoy during the coffee social. Following the coffee social, from noon to 1:30, a free arts and crafts activity will be provided. This time is also offered as a respite opportunity for

caregivers. The Exercise and Nutrition class is offered from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. each Friday for a nominal fee of \$5 per session.

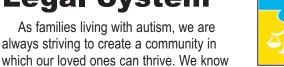
As of Oct. 6, the Empowerment Center is offering courses each Tuesday on Career Exploration (10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.), and Laundry, Grooming, and Organizational Skills for Job Maintenance (1 to 3:30 p.m.). There is a \$25 fee for each Tuesday course. Participants may bring their lunches.

Enrollment is required for the Tuesday classes. Questions? Call Tara Potter at (850) 686-9369 or email tara.potter.fl@gmail.com.

Life skills courses, continued on page 3

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# **Autism and the Legal System**





that interaction with law enforcement and the legal system may be a reality in our loved one's life. A 2007 Autism Society of America survey of individuals with autism and their families revealed that 35 percent of individuals with autism have been the victim of a crime. Thus, education and training are vital if individuals with autism are going to receive equal justice.

In an effort to educate the local legal community, as well as area parents, API is excited to bring to Pensacola Judge Kimberly S. Taylor (Retired). Judge Taylor, along with Sqt. Jimmy Donohoe of the

Autism and Legal System, continued on page 3

## **API's Annual Evening Meeting and Election** When? October 22

Time? 6 p.m. **Where? Pollak Training Center** Arc Gateway complex, 1000 E. Fairfield Dr., Pensacola RSVP: http://tinyurl.com/APloctmeeting Childcare provided, but reservations required by Oct. 19.

# **Community steps out** for Autism

More than 500 people turned out to "Walk in Hope" at the 4th annual Steps for Autism event September 19 at Washington High School. Presented by Cox

Communications, the day was filled with fun, food, and lots of laughter. Kids for Camp alum, Jack Grimley, sang the National Anthem, as the Washington High School ROTC



presented the colors. Then, Scott Knecht led us in the pledge of allegiance. The Steps chair family, the Penalozas, with Kazoo the Wahoos mascot and Digeez the Cox mascot, led the first lap. Our first lap song was "Beautiful Day," by U2. Throughout the day, DJ Nathan from Briton Audio Entertainment kept the party going. Our Emcee for the day was Wendi Summers from NewsRadio 1620.

Thirty-two teams represented during the daylong event. Sponsors and teams set up all around the track, encouraging participants to walk the track and check out the booths. The Good-to-Go food truck from Wind Creek Hospitality served up great food. Up2You Cupcakes provided delicious desserts.

Funds raised by Steps for Autism will be used to increase community awareness, improve safety, and provide quality-of-life programs for those living with autism in Escambia and Santa Rosa counties. 100% of the proceeds from this fun, family-friendly event stay in our local area.

Community steps out, continued on page 3

PAGE 2 Connecting the Pieces

### From the President's Pen



Susan Byram

Happy Fall! Here at API, we are reflecting on another wonderful summer at Kids for Camp Summer Learning Lab and enjoying the blessings of our community! Several events have now become traditions for those with special needs -- and they are offered by organizations/members of the community at large. Surfers gather throughout the summer to share the fun with kids with autism, boat captains offer cruises all across the Gulf Coast on Captains for Kids day and members of the

Knights of Columbus share the joy of fishing on a beautiful fall day.

All these events make me think we are making progress in our mission to build an accepting community! Think of these things the next time one person gives you an unkind look or comment when you are out with your child. For that one person, there are many others who do understand and support those with special needs!

Another example of this is our friendship with WSRE and PBS Kids Imagination Station. When several folks were wishing for a safe, contained place for their kids to play, Imagination Station reached out to API to host special needs play dates at their facility. Imagination Station is an indoor play space filled with all the wonderful PBS Kids character toys, books, and games. It is a great place for anyone to stop by any Monday, Wednesday, or Friday morning or during a home Blue Wahoos game. On the first Thursday of each month, from 1:30-4:30 pm, they welcome all special needs kids for a special play time. With school and therapy, it isn't easy to get there, but they are welcoming for anyone who can come by. Recently, Jill Hubbs, WSRE

Education Director, contacted me about videotaping a spot on Autism Pensacola for a project called American Graduate. Jill had the insight to see what we are doing at API as something that makes a difference for the education of those with autism. The spot was submitted to PBS and was selected to air nationally on Oct. 3 as part of a daylong event that promotes and celebrates those who work to improve educational outcomes. We are honored and grateful to have been chosen to be a part of this national recognition as Education Champions. WSRE deserves recognition as well for the creative thinking to recognize the importance of what we do. What a great reflection on our community!

As the air cools a bit, we also turn our thoughts to wrapping up another year at API, which means renewal of membership and our election of board members at our Annual Meeting. We've had our incredible Steps for Autism 2015 -- and I must thank the Penaloza family for their leadership in this year's event! Next will be a fun family picnic and then a Trunk-or-Treat event. We'll also host another Safety Training-this time with the legal community. Be sure to check out the calendar page and mark your planner!

I hope you will connect with Autism Pensacola sometime this fall. And, if you can, get involved as a volunteer. We need everyone reading this to serve as an 'Autism Pensacola Ambassador' and help us get the word out about who we are and what we do! We are here for you and for anyone who needs us. But it is together we make the biggest impact. I'm so grateful this fall for all those who are catching our message and working alongside us to improve life for those living with autism in this great community where we live!

#### **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 Penaloza, 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 for information on council needs.

#### **API Staff**

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

#### **2015 API Executive Committee**

John Peacock, Board Chair Becca Boles, Vice Chairman Peg Nickelsen, Secretary Bonnie Sferes. Treasurer

Cate Merrill
Scott Remington

#### **Board of Directors**

Dr. Leasha Barry
Jodi Bell
Stephen Burgess
Judy Burns
Logan Fink
Larry Hutcheson
Julian Irby
Ted Kirchharr
Kat Lea
Teri Levin

Cecilia Nanni
Tom Northrup
Dr. Brett Parra
Sergio Peñaloza
Sue Straughn
Dr. Sharon Thompson
Andrew Trommelen

Joe Webb Amy Wilson Tim Wyrosdick

Past Chairs: Quint Studer, Fred Donovan, Ted Kirchharr, Julian Irby Autism Pensacola PAGE 3

# **Steps** Continued from page 1

The winner of the 2010 E-ZGo TXT48 golfcart, sponsored by BuggyWorx, was Anna Tedder! Congratulations, Anna! And thank you to BuggyWorx for their support.

Thank you to the Washington High School administration and staff who made it possible for us to be on the track. And a special thank you to the many volunteers who gave of their time to make Steps for Autism 2015 a success, including the U.S. Navy, the Krewe du YaYas, CARD Social Skills group, Special Olympics, Washington High School cheerleaders and ROTC, Project SEARCH, ESAR, Pensacola Police Department, Pensacola Fire Department, and so many others!

The Penalozas and API President Susan Byram would like to thank the hard-working members of the Steps planning committee, without whom this event would not have been a success: Katie Owens, Holly Hoskamer, Rebecca Aman, Jessica Lapen, Brianne Rivera, Allee Brown, Jessica McCarthy, Wanda Cochran, Bobby Cochran, and Rita Lung.



Susan Byram with golf cart winner Anna Tedder and her son, Trey.

# Life skills courses Continued from page 1

P.U.R.E. Friendship Ministries exists to provide opportunities for inclusion and true fellowship for persons with disabilities, their families and supports, friends, and community members. The goal of this ministry is to build networks of individuals that allow both disabled and non-disabled persons to participate in everyday activities together.

Project Empower is a coalition for supporting persons with developmental disabilities. The coalition provides tools and training for individuals with disabilities and the community at large. The coalition actively connects those in the community who can help each other - our approach is solution-oriented, and designed to achieve complete community inclusion for all! Project Empower provides support, information, advocacy, and referral services. Advocacy, job search and placement, etc.

Project Empower meetings are held monthly on the third Tuesday from 11a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Central Time, at Marcus Pointe Baptist Church located at 6205 N. "W" Street, Building A, Door 4. You may also call in to (213) 416-1560 and use code 0607440. The next meeting is Oct. 20.



Team CLS represents in neon colors.



WHS cheerleaders lead the first lap for Steps for Autism 2015.

#### Autism and Legal Continued from page 1

Pensacola Police Department, will conduct a Q&A session with parents at API's annual evening meeting on Oct. 22. The following day, API will offer a morning training, led by Taylor,to local judges and lawyers.

Taylor was a Superior Court Judge in the 22nd Judicial District, Sixth Division of North Carolina for 20 years. The mother of a young man with autism, Taylor is chair of the Autism Society of America's Safe & Sound Task Force. And she was part of API's first Safety Conference in 2012. Judge Taylor is sought out for her legal expertise as it pertains to persons with autism and their families.

Sgt. Donohoe is the creator of the Take Me Home program. He is also sits on the Safe & Sound Task Force.

Safe & Sound, an initiative of the Autism Society of America - http://www.autism-society.org/living-with-autism/how-the-autism-society-can-help/safe-and-sound/

#### What is Take Me Home?

Take Me Home is a database developed by the Pensacola Police Department for people who may need special assistance if they are alone or in times of emergency. This kind of assistance may be required if the person is unable to speak or properly identify themselves, or if they become disoriented or act in a manner that could be misinterpreted by first responders. The system includes a current digital picture, demographic information and caregiver contacts. If a person in the Take Me Home system is encountered by a police officer, the officer can query the Take Me Home system, searching by name or by the person's physical description. Once the individual's Take Me Home record has been located the officer has the information at hand to appropriately assist the person.

PAGE 4 Connecting the Pieces

# Kids for Camp success celebrated



**Swimming time is Happy Time!** 



Smiling faces at Camp.



Camp is fun!



**Making Friends at Camp** 

"Mitch enjoyed going every day. The work experience was wonderful, varied experiences, small groups -Outstanding!"

Emily,parent of a CLS intern



Teen peers are the best.



A Holm camper enjoys his lion pillow that was made by the Washington campers.



Job shadowing at Publix



A young teen camper with his teacher.

"Imani's teachers did a really great job. They worked with her on using her words and now she is using up to 5 words meaningfully. It is so great to hear her request her food by name."

- Dhaima, second year camp parent

Autism Pensacola PAGE 5

# A heartfelt thanks to all who make it possible

This summer, Kids for Camp welcomed its biggest group – 83 kids, teens, and young adults. Across the surveys, feedback from both parents and staff was extremely positive. Parents reported their camper was safe, making progress, and having fun. Teachers reported they gained valuable skills that could be carried back into the classroom.

Thank you to our BCBA lead coaches, Jennifer Findley, and Laura Brumfield, for their tireless efforts in ensuring a successful experience for every child and teacher on our two campuses.

Community partners enhance the camp experience. Through grant funding from the Great Gulfcoast Arts Festival, camp was able to provide art experiences on both campuses. The Pensacola Symphony Orchestra stopped by with its "petting zoo." As in summers past, it was a huge success with all our campers. We also welcomed one of our Therapy Dog friends and his handler to camp. And we had volunteer support from NAS Pensacola. API staff member Brianne Rivera helped us connect with Chaplain Steven Schwarz, and he made sure there was a duty van full of volunteers each time we needed them. Big thanks to the staff at both



Therapy dog visits camp.

Washington High School and Holm Elementary for welcoming us onto their campuses.

Our new program this summer, CLS, was an opportunity to put into practice the community-minded mission of API. Parent input created CLS, which stands for Community Life Skills. Over the years, through surveys and face-to-face conversations, the parents of our oldest campers expressed the need for their young adults to be learning in the community.

This group of 12 young adults, led by Angie Frank and Jennifer Burgemeister.

longtime camp teachers, Angie Frank and Jennifer Burgemeister, went on 105 community outings during the five-week program. They participated in volunteer opportunities with Ronald McDonald House, The Bodacious Olive, The Fish House, Marcus Pointe Baptist Church, and FavorHouse.

At Kids for Camp, we rely on the leadership, creativity, and hard work of some dedicated parent volunteers. We could not create this camp without them. Jessica Lapen, Camp's program director, would like to thank Karen Baker, Washington lead volunteer, Nicole Stueve, Holm lead volunteer, Roxanne Clary, teen peer coordinator, Julia Cornish, camp photographer, Elizabeth Bockman, Special area volunteer, Maricela Diaz, Holm campus daily volunteer, and Arlene Jordan, Washington campus daily volunteer. We also had parent volunteers who worked in the API office during camp. Thank you to Dale Rickard and Margaret Jones for always being available to help out where needed.



#### **Mission Statement**

Autism Pensacola's Kids for Camp is a data-driven program using best-practice techniques, specifically Applied Behavior Analysis, to contribute to both the skill acquisition of the individuals with autism and the continuing education of the teachers, support staff, and college students who work with those with autism. API is committed to continuously improve the camp experience, thus remaining a model of quality and integrity to the community.



Petland field trip



Community outings are part of the camp experience.



Giving back to the community.

PAGE 6 Connecting the Pieces

# **CARD Corner: Social skills workshop fall schedule**

Girls' Day Out - For high-school age girls. The workshops focus on topics such as dating, hygiene, social media safety, problem solving, and dealing with emotions. All sessions are hosted at the Autism Center unless otherwise noted and take place from 10 a.m. to noon. Dates: 10/17 (Northpointe Retirement Community; 1-2:30 pm); 11/7; 11/21 (Cordova Mall); 12/5.

Gamer's Delight - For high-school age girls and boys. The workshops focus on topics such as team building skills, conflict resolution, executive functioning skills, initiating and maintaining conversations, and dealing with accepting "no." All sessions are hosted at the Autism Center unless otherwise noted and take place from 1 to 3 p.m.Dates: 10/17 (Northpointe Retirement Community; 1-2:30 PM); 11/7; 11/21; 12/5.

Making Sense of Middle School – For middle-school age boys and girls. The workshops focus on topics such as team building skills, conflict resolution, executive functioning skills, initiating and maintaining conversations, and accepting "no." This opportunity includes video modeling. All meetings are at the Sacred Heart Autism Center and take place from 6-7:30 p.m. Dates: 10/22; 11/5; 11/19; 12/5.

The Pensacola CARD office is working with Escambia County School District in developing social skills classes for middle school. CARD is currenty working with Ferry Pass Middle School and Bailey Middle School.

CARD is also working closely with Santa Rosa School District's

# **Become an API Member**

Autism Pensacola exists to improve life for all those living with autism in our community. We do this by serving as a connecting point for families and by seeking to improve educational outcomes across the area as well as increasing opportunities for inclusion of all ages throughout our community.

During 2015, Autism Pensacola, Inc. has been revamping its membership process. All members are now on the same renewal schedule. Membership will run October 1 to September 30 each year, with a membership drive during the month of September.

It's not too late! Won't you join us to help us make a difference?

#### Membership benefits:

- Discounted rates for social events
- Opportunity to apply for Kids for Camp
- · Ability to vote in annual Board election

#### **Membership rates:**

- Individual Membership \$20.00
- Family Membership -\$25.00
- · Business and Community Member \$50.00
- Business and Community Leader \$150.00

Autism Pensacola, Inc. would not be able to serve our community if it were not for our members. We are grateful to them for making a difference in the lives of those living with autism in our area.

Three ways to join: You can go online! Go to www.autismpensacola.org/join.html and click on the link at the top of the page. You can stop by the office! Office hours are Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. You can mail in your payment! Mail to API, P.O. Box 30213, Pensacola, FL 32503.

autism units at King Middle School, Milton High School, Avalon Middle School, and Bagdad Elementary on a consultation and training basis.

For more information about CARD, contact Chrissy Ogilvie, PhD, Autism Consultant, at 416-4495 or 850-324-6245. CARD is located at 5190 Bayou Blvd., Bldg #2, Seton Medical Office Park, Pensacola.

#### In Memoriam

# **API remembers two individuals with** autism who passed away this summer

Christy Minton, age 19, passed away Aug. 20, 2015. She was laid



to rest at Eastern Gate Cemetery on Aug. 29. Christy was a part of Kids for Camp's young adult program in both 2014 and 2015. She is remembered as a sunny young lady who loved to make people smile. Her friends in the Community Life Skills program, as well as many others who were part of Kids for Camp, will carry her memory in their hearts.

Christy with teen peer.

Aaron Wysoczynski, 13, passed away on July 7, 2015. He was laid to rest July 13, at Rose Lawn Cemetery. Aaron was another Kids for Camp alum. He was part of the Holm campus in 2009 and 2011. Aaron attended Gulf Breeze Middle School and loved Top Soccer, word-find puzzles, watching Phineas & Ferby, Baby Einstein, and Wheel of Fortune. His camp friends and teachers will miss seeing his beautiful smile.



Phineas and Ferb. one of Aaron's favorites.



There is still time to apply to The Arc Gateway, Inc. Program for Adult Learning and Support, PALS, http:/// at Pensacola State College. Call 850.484.1185 or online at www.arc-gateway.org/PALS

#### How to apply!

- 1. Complete Application
- 2. Gather School Records & Diploma
- 3. Gather One Professional Letter of Recommendation
- 4. Gather Two Personal Letters of Recommendation
- 5. Submit application packet, records and letters to PALS
- 6. Complete any required assessments
- 7. Attend Personal Interview

#### **Admission Criteria**

- Attended High School
   At least 18 years old
- Want to attend College
- · Eligible to receive services from APD or a child of a veteran living at home in Florida

Autism Pensacola PAGE 7

# **Calendar of Events**

# Check our website often for additional events and details!

#### **OCTOBER**

Oct. 10 – Fall Family Picnic, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., Bagdad Rec Center and Park, Bagdad. Food, games, bouncy castles.

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

**Oct. 17** – 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. – Respite at Marcus Pointe Baptist Church, 6205 North W Street. Register: (850) 501-7142.

**Oct. 19 –** Parent Empowerment Program class begins. Go to www.autismpensacola.org to sign up! Or call (850) 434-7171 for information.

**Oct. 20** – Project Empower, 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Marcus Pointe Baptist Church, 6205 N. "W" Street, Building A, Door 4. You may also call in to (213) 416-1560 and use code 0607440.

Oct. 22 - API's volunteer council meeting, 10 a.m., API office

**Oct. 22** – Annual evening meeting, "Autism and the Legal System" with special guest Judge Kim Taylor. 6-7:30 p.m., Pollak Training Center, Arc Gateway. Childcare will be provided, with pre-registration. http://tinyurl.com/APloctmeeting

Oct. 23 - API Evening Chat, 7:30 p.m., Books-A-Million

Oct. 31 – Trunk or Treat, 1-3 p.m., parking lot of the Pearl Nelson Center, Arc Gateway. To register, http://tinyurl.com/APItrunkortreat

#### **NOVEMBER**

**Nov. 5** – WSRE Play date at Imagination Station, 1:30-4:30 p.m.

**Nov. 7 –** Dad/Male Caregiver Chat – 10 a.m., Books-A-Million, 6235 N. Davis Highway.

**Nov. 13** – Escambia Spectrum Chat, 11 a.m., API office, 3916 N. 10th Avenue.

# P.U.R.E. EMPOWERMENT CENTER

GRAND OPENING!
OCTOBER 16, 2015
12:30- 3:30P
MARCUS POINTE BAPTIST

6205 N. "W" St., Pensacola, FL 32502 Building A, Door 4, Rm A117 – Revolution Room (Large Youth Room)

Exercise & Nutrition Class, Health Screenings, Giveaways, Food & Fun...

#### Living Healthy is a lot of fun!

In Partnership with Agency for Persons with Disabilities and United Way's Day of Caring.

Questions? Call Tara Potter – 850-686-9369 or email: tara.potter.fl@gmail.com











**Nov. 17** – Project Empower, 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Marcus Pointe Baptist Church, 6205 N. "W" Street, Building A, Door 4. You may also call in to (213) 416-1560 and use code 0607440.

**Nov. 20 –** 10 a.m. – Grandparents of Autism Pensacola meeting, API office.

**Nov. 21 –** 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. – Respite at Marcus Pointe Baptist Church, 6205 North W Street. Register: (850) 501-7142.

#### **DECEMBER**

Dec. 3 – 10 a.m. – Council meeting, API office.

**Dec. 5 –** 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. – Christmas visit with Santa, for families of all ages. First Presbyterian Church, 33 E. Gregory St., Pensacola. Check website for more details.

**Dec. 12 –** 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. – Bowling with Santa, for young teens and older. Oops Alley Pace. More details available online soon.

# **API & Partner Programs**

PPSP – Parent Partner Support Program: Becoming an effective advocate for your student with special needs is the purpose of PPSP. It is an individualized special education support program for families in Escambia and Santa Rosa counties. The program pairs families with a trained consultant who will offer support services. For more information, call the API office at (850) 434-7171 or contact Amy Lorton - iephelp@autismpensacola.org.

**PEP – Parent Empowerment Program:** Series of classes to train parents/caregivers on the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis. Classes include group training with a Board Certified Behavior Analyst; individual consultation with intern at the Sacred Heart Autism Center; two books by Pete Wright of "Wrightslaw"; access to web-based lectures on the IEP process; use of an iPad for your child during the class. For information, contact Susan at (850) 434-7171 or (850) 450-0656.

**P.U.R.E. Empowerment Center:** Tuesdays and Fridays beginning at 10 a.m., Marcus Pointe Baptist Church, 6205 North W St., Pensacola. Life skills courses and activities. For more information and to register, contact Tara Potter at tara.potter.fl@gmail.com.

**CARD - Center for Autism and Related Disabilities:** CARD is dedicated to providing individuals with autism or related disabilities, their families, and professionals who work with them, free consultation, resources, and educational support to build knowledge, confidence, infrastructure, and sustainability within the community. Please check the website http://autism.fsu.edu or call the office, 850-416-4495, for information. CARD is located at 5190 Bayou Blvd., Seton Medical Office Park, Building 2, Pensacola.

**Early Steps:** Provides free early intervention services to minimize developmental delay for children from birth to three years of age in Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa and Walton counties. For more information or to refer a child to Early Steps Program at Sacred Heart Children's Hospital, please call 850-416-7656 or 1-800-281-1845.

#### **API Contact Information**

To donate, pay dues, obtain membership forms or for other correspondence mail to address below or visit www.autismpensacola.org

Email: info@autismpensacola.org

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Connecting the Pieces
Autism Pensacola
serving families along the gulf coast
P. O. Box 30213
Pensacola, Florida 32503-1213

# Get Godial with usl



Find out about upcoming events, get connected with other parents, and join the



Check us out!

conversation!

# Trunk or Treat With API

API presents a safe, family-friendly event for special needs families of all ages!

Where?
Pearl Nelson Child
Development Center parking lot
When? Saturday, October 31

Time? 1 to 3 p.m.

Register at autismpensacola.org/whatsgoingon.html or call the office at (850) 434-7171