



Connecting the Pieces

servicing families along the gulf coast for 15 years

Creating #Steps2Acceptance through Steps for Autism

Autism Pensacola is excited to be holding our sixth Steps for Autism event on Saturday, September 30, from 10:00 a.m. to noon at Blue Wahoos Stadium. Mark your calendar to join us at the Pensacola Blue Wahoos Stadium for walking, face painting, games, bounce houses, food, music, sensory friendly tents, Imagination Station, and more!



At this year's walk, we will be honoring our "Hometown Heroes," those who work tirelessly to keep our community safe. Honorary Chairs are Pensacola Police Sgt. Jimmy Donohoe and Escambia County Sheriff David Morgan.

Steps for Autism is a grassroots fundraising event. Local autism families, community members, and businesses create teams and raise funds through friendly competition to support API. Steps funds directly support the mission and programs of Autism Pensacola, including safety, quality of life, and awareness

initiatives in both Escambia and Santa Rosa counties.

Leading up to the event, we are recognizing businesses, organizations, and individuals who go above and beyond to support and accept those living with autism and making #Steps2Acceptance. Want to help us highlight a difference maker in the community? Use the hashtag #Steps2Acceptance on social media and share your story of acceptance and understanding.



Honorary chairs are Escambia County Sheriff David Morgan and Pensacola Police Sgt. Jimmy Donohoe.

Kids for Camp honors our Hometown Heroes

Teen and young adult campers at Kids for Camp honored local first responders at an invitation-only luncheon for Hometown Heroes. Professionals from law enforcement, emergency medical services, fire departments, military, and search and rescue groups attended the event and then toured camp.

Representatives from area first responders included Chief Deputy Chip Simmons from the Escambia County Sheriff's Office and Pensacola Police Chief Tommi Lyter. The professionals



PPD Chief Tommi Lyter Chief Deputy Chip Simmons

answered questions and ate lunch with more than 40 autistic camp participants. Program Director Jessica Lapen said the event is a valuable experience for the campers.

"I am so grateful to the first responders and others who came today," said Lapen. "This was a great way for our campers to meet people who help the community."

NASC Chaplain's Assistant Seaman Benjamin O'Connor said participating in the event was humbling.

"This is probably my favorite ongoing volunteer project," said O'Connor. "I come back every chance I can, because I feel the kids teach me how to be a better person."



Campers delivered goodies to the first responders at the Hometown Heroes luncheon.

Inside this issue

| | |
|---------------------|-----|
| Gala | 3 |
| Kids for Camp | 4-5 |
| CARD Corner | 6 |
| Calendar | 7 |

From the President's Pen



"What is Autism Pensacola? What do you do anyway?" In this year of rolling out our new logo and brand identity- I have gotten these questions a lot.

We are the Community Connector for autism. We are parents who "get" what you are going through. We don't have all the answers, but we will work with you to improve our community. As we've always said - We make a difference TOGETHER. It takes all of us working together to

change outcomes for our families and those living with autism.

At its core, API is a support group. We seek to offer support on both an individual and a collective level. If you have a great idea, please share it with us and see how we can work together to make changes in our community. We offer social activities where we strive to help everyone feel comfortable and welcome. We also promote the activities of other organizations who want to reach out to our families. All of this comes from passionate parents who want to make great things happen for our loved ones.

At API we strive to uphold high standards. We seek to be a high-quality not-for-profit organization, and we work to promote data-driven best practices for those with autism. We have focused on improving education in our area by promoting the use of ABA in our schools through Kids for Camp. For 11 years we have made a difference for more than 250 teachers and more than 270 campers—many of them returning year after year. Furthermore, we ensure that local first responders have access to

training on how to work with individuals with autism and provide tracking devices to help get autistic individuals who wander home faster. Workshops we offer provide information on a wide variety of topics.

Examples of our impact abound. Parents who call API for advice have said our guidance pointed them to something that made a difference in their family's life. Information we share on Facebook connects families to churches in the community who embrace their unique needs. Because of Autism Pensacola's impact in the community our autistic individuals are able to go sailing with Satori Foundation, attend the National Flight Academy, and successfully participate in many other community activities.

As I mentioned above, it takes all of us working together to make a difference in our community. This fall, I hope you will join us by becoming a member of API, volunteering if you can, and attending some of our events. Share with us your ideas for improving life for those with autism and let's make a difference. You are not alone—we are in this together.



API Mission Statement

We are hope, love, compassion and a voice of empowerment. As navigators, advocates, and educators, we demystify the autism diagnosis and connect those impacted by autism to a full circle of resources - from early diagnosis and education to support for the quality of life of adults - who then contribute back to our mission.

API Council

Joan Fitzsimmons, Council Chair
Jean Brown, Bobby Cochran, Wanda Cochran,
Holly Hoskamer, Rita Lung,
Katie Owens, Rocky Parra,
Sarah Peñaloza

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 office@autismpensacola.org for information on council needs.

API Staff

Susan Byram, President/CEO
Jessica Lapen, Program Director
Michelle Bussell, Executive Assistant
Shanan Chason, Office Assistant
Rebecca Aman, Business Manager
Jason O'Connell, Webmaster

2017 API Executive Committee

Becca Boles, Board Chair
Judy Burns, Secretary

Scott Remington, Vice Chairman
Stephen A. Burgess, Jr., Treasurer

Jodi Bell
Teri Levin
Candy McGuyre
Rocky Parra

John Peacock
Sergio Peñaloza
Bonnie Sferes
Joe Webb

Board of Directors

Dr. Leasha Barry
Logan Fink
Dr. Michelle Grier-Hall
Debbie Keremes
Ted Kirchharr
Kat Lea
Cate Merrill
Cecilia Nanni

Peg Nickelsen
Ryan O'Connell
Katie Price
Sue Straughn
Mallory Studer
Teri Szafran
Dr. Sharon Thompson

Past Chairs:

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

Great Friends Come Together at 14th Annual Gala

On April 27th, more than 300 friends and community leaders gathered for a fun-filled evening of awareness and giving. The theme at this year's gala was "You've Got a Friend in Me," and the spirit of friendship and generosity was celebrated throughout the night. Gala hosts were longtime friends Dr. Brett & Rocky Parra and Grover & Jill Robinson. And they recruited an amazing planning committee who had a passion for their community and supporting those living with autism in our area.

Through the kindness of our donors, more than \$190,000 was raised to support Autism Pensacola's work in the region. The gala is a massive undertaking, and it is made possible only through the dedication and hard work of volunteers, API staff and board members, and the local chefs who worked tirelessly to make this an unforgettable evening. Special thanks to Karen Baker Photography for documenting the night.

With a record 101 Paddle pledges, full financial support was

available for 20 campers this summer at Kids for Camp. Special thanks to our multiple Paddle Pledge donors: AppRiver, Bear Family Foundation, Jean & Bill Brown, Jim & Shirley Cronley, Florida Blue Foundation, and Quint & Rishy Studer.

And the evening was capped with the 2017 Autism Community Spirit award, given to Marty and Dennis Tackett. The Tacketts have donated a live auction item for many years, and are always looking for ways to support the mission of API. The Autism Community Spirit Award is given in honor of Sharon and Logan Fink, a couple who exemplify the heart of API.

API owes a debt of gratitude to the amazing sponsors and donors who enable us to continue our mission. Autism Pensacola is able to accomplish so much through the support of our community. Without you our work would not be possible. Thank you!

If you would like to get involved with next year's Gala email admin@autismpenacola.org.



The theme of "You've Got a Friend in Me" was reflected in the gala decor.



Gala guests celebrated friendship during the event.



The gala program cover art was created again by Micah Lapen, an autistic teen.

Platinum Sponsor

Studer Foundation

Gold Sponsors

The Bear Family Foundation, Inc.

Susan & Mike Byram

Clark Partington

Cox Communications

Escambia County Sheriff's Office

FSi Group

Gulf Power

Irby Engineering & Construction, Inc.

Pensacola News Journal

Sacred Heart Health System

Switzer Foundation

Silver Sponsors

Air Design Systems, Inc.

AppRiver

Baptist Health Care

Beggs & Lane

Tammy Bohannon

Cat Country

Edward Jones/John Peacock

Everwell Specialty Pharmacy

Hancock Bank

Jim & Norma Johnson

Lee Heating & Cooling

Levin Rinke Realty

Regions Bank

Jill & Grover Robinson

StuderGroup

West Florida Hospital

Wind Creek Casino & Hotel

Woodlands Medical Specialists

Course Sponsor

Sergio & Sarah Penalzoza



Gala Hosts Dr. Brett and Rocky Parra, and Jill and Grover Robinson.



API volunteers and staff enjoyed the celebration.



Katie Price and Debbie Keremes of the Sacred Heart Autism Center were guests at this year's event

Creating a Summer of Learning and Fun

Water days, trampolines, rock painting, and dancing - these are just some of the things that made Kids for Camp 2017 a summer to remember. This year, we welcomed 79 campers to participate in the 5-week summer learning lab, along with 52 staff members and 70 teen peers.

Across the surveys, feedback from both parents and staff has been very 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.

Camp was created to bridge the gap between school years. We focus on skill acquisition for each camper and intern and provide a unique place to develop social skills and create friendships.

Through community field trips and on-campus activities, kids

Pictured right, CLS intern and teacher have fun at the campus dance. Far right, "From My Heart to Yours" founder, Randy Moyses, taught our teens jewelry making. Below, Teen camper participated in an intro class at Pensacola ATA Martial Arts. Bottom left, As a part of the job experience this summer, teen campers volunteered at Manna Food Pantries. Bottom center, Camper and teen enjoy the park after lunch. Bottom right, Capstone campers enjoyed a fun water play day this summer.



and teens learn by having lots of fun.

Our community job partners this year for our teens and young adults included Publix on Ninth Avenue, The Bodacious Olive, Newk's on Bayou Boulevard, Sherwood Elementary, Ronald McDonald House, J's Bakery, and Manna Food Pantries.

The behind the scenes work that goes into making camp happen each year is because of parents who are passionate and give of their time and talent.

Thank you to Natalya Levada, Judy Knecht, Arlene Jordan, Margaret Jones, Lesley Leonard, Maricela Derreza, and Darleta and Glen Owen. And a special thanks to all those who chaperoned a field trip, help set up for Water Day, cleaned up after luncheons, captured memories on your camera, and so much more.



Kids for Camp 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.



What Parents Said:

"I loved the environment and the people. My son, my daughter who was a peer helper and myself were all welcomed with open arms. It was great to be a part of this community. We were hoping this would help prep my son to go back to school after a rough year of preschool. He has definitely gotten used to the routine and knows everyone's names, and made some friends. I loved that it was also fun for them with lots of different activities and experiences."

- Kaci Odem, parent of Holm camper

"Kenji's Fish House experience has been encouraging. My son demanded to go to camp for the opportunity to go there."

- Tim Herron, parent of CLS intern



"Our child needs a great deal of one on one attention and almost constant sensory activities. Camp was able to do that for him which made summer break that much more enjoyable all the way around."

- Rebekah Cox, parent of Capstone camper

"As with every year, Camp bridges the gap between the end of one school year and the beginning of the next as it relates to skills retention. In addition, Camp offers our kids an opportunity to enjoy a real summer camp experience; something you can't get in ESY services offered in public schools."

- Deb Stanwood, parent of Washington camper



Pictured above, making lifelong friends at camp. Top left, Lots of fun and games makes learning easy at camp. Top right, Rock painting for Pensacola Humane Society. Right center, The Symphony brought their Petting Zoo to Holm campus. Bottom right, Reno's Reptiles entertained the Holm campers with some creepy crawly visitors.



Thank you these organizations and businesses that helped make camp both fun and educational!

- TCBY
- The Bodacious Olive
- Cordova Lanes
- DJ Connection
- Donald Cline, photographer
- Escambia County Sheriff's Office
- The Fish House
- Five Flags Dance Academy
- Froman's Fun Inflatables
- J's Bakery
- Kona Ice
- Manna Food Pantries
- Naval Aviation Schools Command,
- Pensacola Naval Air Station
- Newk's on Bayou Boulevard
- Pensacola ATA Martial Arts
- Pensacola Fire Department
- Pensacola Police Department
- Pensacola Symphony Orchestra
- Publix on Ninth Avenue
- Reno's Reptiles
- Sherwood Elementary



CARD Corner

Sailing with Satori

In January 2016, the Satori Foundation, a local sailing organization, reached out to Autism Pensacola to connect and get individuals with autism sailing. API, in its partnerships with local resources, connected Satori to local FSU-CARD consultant Dr. Chrissy Ogilvie.

Based out of the Pensacola Yacht Club, the Satori Foundation focuses on bringing individuals with special needs and at-risk youth on weekly sails. Dr. Ogilvie has provided the foundation with consul-

tations and ongoing training for the captains and crew on how to best support those with ASD. She also attends each sail to further support the captains and crew. Since the partnership was formed, there have been 14 sailing trips that included autism families.

Dr. Ogilvie is now serving on the Satori Advisory Board, and her latest initiative presented to the Foundation is a teach-the-teacher sail day. The initiative will bring 15 education professionals to the Satori for a class on incorporating both sailing and STEM concepts into the classroom. The teachers will also get to enjoy a day on the water with Satori and be provided with lesson plans and props for their classrooms. Autism Pensacola is so grateful to the Satori Foundation and Dr. Ogilvie for bringing these opportunities to our community.

Hometown Heroes

Continued from page 1



CLS interns sit down for lunch with local law enforcement.



Search and Rescue professional were a part of the day's events.



Military personnel attended the luncheon at Kids for Camp

Inclusion at the NFA

At the end of last year, Autism Pensacola was approached by representatives from the National Flight Academy at Pensacola Naval Air Station. The group was expanding its reach into the community and looking for ways to include autistic individuals in their summer programs. The NFA had received funding to provide scholarships for these individuals to be able to participate.

API connected the NFA with Dr. Chrissy Ogilvie and a partnership has been formed to provide training and collaboration. Through the partnership, CARD and the NFA have worked to develop curriculum, and accommodations and modifications for including more individuals with autism.

In summer 2017, the NFA funded 12 students with ASD to attend a 5-day "deployment" (summer camp). Dr. Ogilvie observed the participants weekly and was available for on-the-spot consultation. In early July, she started working to develop 1-day "adventures" for individuals with ASD who are less conversational and that demonstrate the need for a modified environment. CARD is currently working to develop the curriculum, schedule, and activities. NFA is funding 36 5th-12th graders to attend 1-day adventures at the National Flight Academy this fall.

If you would like more information or to enroll your child, email Dr. Chrissy Ogilvie at christine.ogilvie@med.fsu.edu

Welcome to the CARD family

Earlier this year, FSU-CARD welcomed another full-time autism consultant to the Northwest Florida team. Rita Lung, M.Ed., brings years of experience furthering autism acceptance through family support and community education to the Pensacola community. Originally from California, she holds a Master's in Education with a concentration in Special Education and Early Childhood Development. She is also a graduate of the Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates (COPAA) Special Education Advocate Training program. Coming to CARD from the U.S. Navy's Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP), Ms. Lung brings to the team expertise in navigating the military lifestyle for families living with autism. We are excited for what Ms. Lung can bring to our community.



Rita Lung, M.Ed.

Calendar of Events

Check our web site often for additional events and details!

September

Sept 6. - Parent Empowerment Program- Four consecutive Wednesday mornings, beginning Sept. 6, 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. Pearl Nelson Child Development Center. To register: Early Steps families contact 850-416-6789. All others, contact the Autism Center at Sacred Heart: 850-416-5826 or 850-416-4681.

Sept. 7 – Family Care Council Area 1 Fall Workshop, 6-8 p.m. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. Presentations on Wills, Trusts, and Guardianship. Transformation Church, 3150 W. DeSoto St., Pensacola.

Sept. 9 - Special Needs Expo - 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., Vickrey Community Center, Pensacola. Admission is free. Sponsored by Greater Pensacola Parents Magazine.

Sept. 9 - Captains for Kids. Fun, free day of on the water events for kids with special needs and illnesses. Registration required. <http://www.captainsforkids.com/>

Sept. 11 - Project Lifesaver monthly battery change – 3:30 to 6:30 p.m., API office, 3916 N. 10th Avenue.

Sept. 15 - Grandparents of Autism Pensacola monthly meeting – 10 a.m., API office, 3916 N. 10th Avenue.

Sept. 16 - “Pensacola Art Show” by local autistic artist Joey Stallworth, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Downtown Pensacola Library, 239 N. Spring St.

Sept. 18 - What to do While You Wait - Greenhut auditorium, Sacred Heart Hospital. To register, <https://sacred-heart.org/childrenshospital/AutismCenter/> or call 850-416-4681.

Sept. 23 - Seastars Awareness Day, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., Pearl Nelson Child Development Center. There will be live music, food, and vendors who reach the special needs community.

Sept. 28 - API Council Meeting, 10 a.m., API office, 3916 N. 10th Avenue. Volunteer leadership group.

Sept. 29 – College Students Meet-Up, 6 p.m., FSU-CARD office, 5154 Bayou Blvd. Bring \$5 for pizza.

Sept. 30 - 6th Steps for Autism, 10 a.m. to noon, Pensacola Blue Wahoos Stadium. To get involved, go to autismpensacola.org/steps

October

Oct. 2 – PLS monthly battery change, 3:30 to 6:30 p.m., API office, 3916 N. 10th Avenue.

Oct. 7 - ABCs of ABA, 9 a.m., Sacred Heart Medical Park, 3754 Highway 90, Pace. To register, go to <https://sacred-heart.org/childrenshospital/AutismCenter/> or call 850-416-4681.

Oct. 26 - API Council Meeting, 10 a.m., API office, 3916 N. 10th Avenue. Volunteer leadership group.

Oct. 28 - API Annual Trunk or Treat – 1-3 p.m., Arc Gateway.

November

Nov. 6 - PLS monthly battery change, 3:30 to 6:30 p.m., API office, 3916 N. 10th Avenue.

Nov. 14 - What to do While You Wait Class, Nov. 14, Greenhut auditorium, Sacred Heart Hospital. To register, <https://sacred-heart.org/childrenshospital/AutismCenter/> or call 850-416-4681.

Nov. 30 - API Council Meeting, 10 a.m. Thursday, Nov. 30, API office, 3916 N. 10th Avenue. Volunteer leadership group.

December

Dec. 2 - ABCs of ABA, 9 a.m., Sacred Heart Medical Park, 3754 Highway 90, Pace. To register, go to <https://sacred-heart.org/childrenshospital/AutismCenter/> or call 850-416-4681.

Dec. 4 – PLS monthly battery change, 3:30 to 6:30 p.m., API office, 3916 N. 10th Avenue.

Safety Programs

Project Lifesaver is a program offered by Autism Pensacola, Inc., in partnership with Escambia Search and Rescue and the Pilot Club of Pensacola to individuals with any developmental disability who are at risk of wandering. The program features transmitter bracelets that emit a radio signal that search and rescue personnel can use to track and locate an individual who is missing.

COST: Bracelet available free of charge, depending on funds. Monthly maintenance fee of \$30 that covers cost of batteries and transmitter bands for the device. Financial assistance available based on income.

This program is available in both Escambia and Santa Rosa counties.

Take Me Home is a free program provided by the Pensacola Police Department that manages a database of

information on individuals with special needs, developmental or cognitive disability who may need assistance if they are found alone or have difficulty communicating.

The database includes a picture, disability information, physical description and emergency contact information for all registered individuals. If a person in the Take Me Home program is encountered alone by a police officer or is reported missing, the officer can access the database by the person’s name or physical description to locate their information. This is a free service offered to developmentally and cognitively disabled citizens in the Pensacola area.

For more information on the Take Me Home program, contact Sgt. Jimmy Donohoe of the Pensacola Police Department at (850) 436-5416 or via email at jdonohoe@cityofpensacola.com.

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

Newsletter designed
and printed by



**WHAT YOUR BUSINESS NEEDS,
WHEN YOU NEED IT!**

**www.fsigroup.net
850.479.0800**

**PRINTING • APPAREL
PROMOTIONAL ITEMS
DIRECT MAIL
MARKETING AIDS**

AUTISM
PENSACOLA



P. O. Box 30213
Pensacola, FL 32503-1213

JOIN US!

Steps
For
Autism



9.30.2017 ♦ Wahoos Stadium
AutismPensacola.org

#STEPS2ACCEPTANCE

Christmas Card packs



\$15 donation

Order online or in the API office

<http://autismpensacola.org/christmas-card-packs-now-available/>