

## AUTISM SOCIETY MANITOBA

Dear Parent, Caregiver or Friend,

The attached letter and document package will introduce you to Autism Society Manitoba and the support and services that we offer.

Autism Society Manitoba (ASM) is a non profit organization that was founded over 30 years ago by a group of parents who at that time decided to organize a support network for parents and caregivers of children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). This includes classic Autism, Asperger's Syndrome, PDD-NOS and others. Today our membership includes parents, caregivers, grandparents, extended family, education, community support staff and others.

ASM does not promote or endorse one method of intervention over another. We exist to provide support to all regardless of what path a family or individual may take. What we do offer is the opportunity to share, teach, assist and support families and individuals with up to date information, how to navigate the system and how to advocate. We offer various social opportunities throughout the year for families to come together, meet other parents who share a common bond, a child with an ASD diagnosis. The particular name of a diagnosis may be different but many of the day to day issues are similar. We encourage families and caregivers to explore options available to them and make the choice that best suits their child and family situation.

We have members all across Manitoba and our organization is growing. ASM does not rely on government or other public agency funding. The programs and services we offer are funded through membership dollars, memorial donations and fundraising events. A volunteer Board of Directors meets throughout the year to ensure that the mission statement is followed, membership needs are supported and to organize various activities and support programs. There are two young adults with an ASD diagnosis on the board to ensure that we have the opportunity to learn from and offer supports and services that the adult ASD population may require. Their input is invaluable and they bring forth many issues and ideas that are sometimes overlooked or not thought of because of the focus on younger children. We are also members of Autism Society Canada and have representation on their board.

Please find attached a number of documents that will inform you of the supports and services we offer our members. All families of children that are recently diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder receive a complimentary one year membership to our organization. All you need to do is fill out the attached form and send it to our office at the address below. We encourage extended family to join as well, it is an easy way to keep educated and informed on what is happening in the Autism Community.

Your membership entitles you to workshops, social skill, peer support, parent support and other groups that we run from time to time. We hold family events, publish a newsletter four times a year, offer advocacy assistance and help to navigate the sometimes confusing path we must travel.

Rural Manitoba families and support networks benefit from the monthly Telehealth sessions we hold on the second Wednesday of each month, October through June. Various topics are discussed in a live interactive session as we remotely connect to over 25 rural Telehealth sites. These sessions are free of charge and offer families living outside Winnipeg the opportunity to become better informed and educated on various issues, everything from toilet training tips to adult supports and services.

We also offer a parent mentor program where we match your family with another family who has a child with a similar diagnosis as your child and this allows you to draw on their expertise. This program is optional but we find that many families wish to connect with someone on a one to one basis at first.

We welcome everyone who has a connection with an individual diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder whether it be Asperger's Syndrome, Classic Autism, PDD-NOS or another diagnosis.

If you would like more information on our services, please feel free to contact me.

Sandra McKay  
Executive Director  
Autism Society Manitoba