

KIDS CAN CHRONICLES

www.kidswithautismcan.org

So Long 2014, It's Been Fun!

2014 brought our 5th year of It's All Fun and ... Our ongoing series of events which allow kids and young adults with ASD every possible opportunity we can create for them, to succeed in social situations. We provide a large variety of events because we know every event will not work for every member of our group. We hope you chose the events that you believe will work for your family, we also encourage you to try events that might not work perfectly for your family. These are chances for your family to spread their wings in a safe and adaptive environment. We can control some environments more than others. Sometimes that means you only stay 15 minutes, but you have tried new things, that is what needs to happen. Sometimes when you leave you might feel like it has been great and other times maybe not so great, autism is filled with challenges even if we try to put it in the best possible scenario. We hope you will always get enough good from an event that you want to try again. In most cases, we are right there with you and if you need our help to watch a sibling or provide other support we are happy to do that. In some cases, like sporting events when we cannot always have seating together, although we try our best, we try to be sure you have our phone numbers. During these events, phone numbers are not just for emergencies, we want to support you as you work through new experiences. I know at one event a family had some challenges and we were running the 50/50 raffle so they told another parent but not us.

Recent Events



Winter 2015

Volume 5, Issue 1

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Coming Events! It's All Fun and...

Phoenix Theatre

January 24th



In the Works

Details to follow soon!

AZ on the Rocks

CrackerJax

Yoga



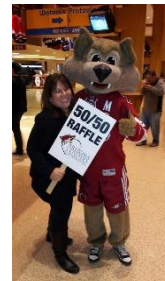
Please try to reach us right then and there. Some things we cannot control, but others we can help with, if we know when they are happening. If you cannot reach out to us at the event. Please get in touch with us later. We always want to be making things better and we are far from perfect!

The second half of 2014 brought some fun events. A family picnic, with great opportunities for families to enjoy each other's company. Geoff the Physical Fitness Trainer was there to share some physical activities just for fun. It was a little warm, ok it was still hot, after all it is AZ but there was lots of shade and plenty of goodies to eat and friends to be made. The Polar Express generously donated 50 tickets to our organization again this year allowing more families to travel to the "North Pole". We enjoyed a Suns game in November, our seats were more divided than usual so we will work on bringing our families closer to one area next time. We hosted, what has become a yearly event, at MacDonald Ranch. The day was filled with pony rides, a petting zoo, a bonfire with S'mores and so very many smiles!

So we say good bye to a great year and move excitedly into 2015 and all of the adventures it will hold!

"FUN"draising and Grants

Our amazing families came through for us again. Some were supporters, others were families who attend events and we had several students from Explorer Middle School, National Junior Honor Society. They all worked hard to help us fundraise at two raffles held in the same week! Thanks to both the Arizona Coyotes and the Phoenix Suns for choosing us as participants in their 50/50 raffle fundraisers this past November. Between the two raffles Kids with Autism Can earned almost \$4000 in two nights.



We are thrilled that Kendra Scott Jewelry has offered us another fund raising opportunity with their store at Scottsdale Quarter. We are looking at dates in April. When you start to think about spring birthdays, Mother's Day and Graduation remember you will have a great opportunity for beautiful purchases that will benefit our organization. Details will follow.



Again, we wish to thank CVS Caremark, Arizona Diamondback Charities, and John C. Lincoln Gives for generous grants that helped us provide more events in 2014. They have provided awesome social opportunities for our families.

On A Personal Note

Autism – Letting Go

It's funny, for me, I can only write this part of the newsletter when I am "inspired". Otherwise I think I might feel too much of the reality of life with autism. My youngest son woke up this morning singing, "this is gonna be the best day of my li-i-ife"; you probably know the song. Some people seem to be blessed with more optimism than others. I do have to say, I also believe to some extent, it is a learned skill. This is all personal experience with no medical basis, but I know I used to worry about every little thing. When Nicholas was born after a long complicated pregnancy and delivery, I looked at him and thought he had girl hands and I wondered if he would get teased. Really, 19 years ago I thought that mattered, not the teasing that does matter, but the fact that his hands were shaped like my grandmas. Was I shallow or young or just a worried new mom? I don't know, but what I do know is that time and life can give you perspective.

This fall I sent Nicholas (for those of you who are new to this newsletter, he is our 18 year old son with ASD) off to Arizona State University, Tempe Campus. My kiddo and 74,000 other students who don't know his story. 74,000 people who have potential be kind or horrible to him! Professors who may or may not know or care about autism. People who have more interest in protecting his "privacy" than helping us to help him succeed. By the way, we are his legal guardians, but he has been granted voting and driving rights, a fairly uncommon situation and for the most part we had great support from the teachers and we tried to keep our contact to a minimum. We are shooting for independence.

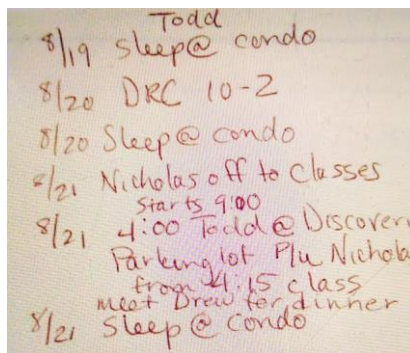
Once again, Paige his older sister plays an important role in his life, they share a condo part-time, off campus which allows us as a family, more access to Nicholas. Todd, my husband, would spend at least one night a week with them, so we could give Nicholas the homework help he needed and so Paige wasn't constantly "on duty". Paige continues to work with him on life skills and navigating campus, we also hired another student at ASU as a respite and habilitation worker, who "hangs out" with him on campus and works on social skills and safety issues. I have to say over all it has been a positive experience but I would like to share what the beginning looked like as we prepared for his Freshman year.

In summer, we slowly continued transitioning, sleeping at the condo occasionally. Starting to learn simple food items to prepare. More basic cleaning, walking the campus with Paige, not a great thing to have to do in August in AZ. Finding places where he would have classes and out of the way quieter places, where he could hang out and not be overwhelmed. You know my line, baby steps. One of the things I find most challenging about autism is that things are not taught and then the person makes reasonable assumptions about how the teachings relate to things that are similar, but that each situations needs to be taught as its own piece of information. Very few things are inferred, making it difficult to know if he actually has the needed information.

It was time for classes to start. They were all moved in and I was reasonably terrified, so I stood by the door for much longer than necessary and waved good bye. Nicholas was on the sofa with Paige, he looked up and said, "What? What are you waiting for?" That was my sign, I needed to go. We had cell phones, I could call him if I needed to know he was ok, right? Wrong! I had the kiddo who was worried his phone would go off in class and he would get in trouble so he just left it off the whole time he was on campus. That caused me some panic. Remember this is the kiddo who, when I ask him to put something in his duffle bag, sometimes he still needs a visual cue. If I think too much about it all I feel pretty sure, I would live every day in a panic but we currently see he is growing and learning and we need to let him grow and we need to let him go. He cooked his pork chops by himself this semester. Don't misunderstand, he has high anxiety that we are still trying to manage and if you ask him if he likes school he tells everyone the exact same thing, he has too much work to do, but if you ask him if he would rather do something else he says no and he seems to enjoy campus and his classes. He is in a Shakespeare group, an extra in a movie and has 16 credits so for now we will take it. Friends still seem to be a challenge but hopefully that will happen when the time is right. He has plenty of good people in his life that he can count on.

The first week of school, we planned for people to meet him before and after each class to help him navigate his way around campus. By day three he looked at his sister and said, "Why do you keep following me?" Again, there was our sign and short of any place out of the ordinary, he gets to classes in a timely fashion and without much trouble. If there is a new place he needs to be, he can either try to use a campus map or we can also load it in his phone. We do use the Disability Resource Center, to help with test taking and notes. His books are converted to pdf's and loaded onto his iPad so they are read out loud to him (Kurzweil software) and he uses a LiveScribe smart pen (records lectures and office hour meetings). Some of these tools can be used long before college.

Overall, I think he is doing well, there is no doubt he does not look like a "typical student", but I have to say by college age, I am not sure what a typical student looks like. To my knowledge, he has only been lost once but Paige decided not to tell me until he was found. Thank goodness for cell phones. We know most kiddos with autism are still not attending college, but it is important to know it is possible and we want to provide you with hope. No promises or guarantees but a reason to not give up, a reason to look for all that is amazing in your kiddo! Nicholas was diagnosed with moderate to severe autism with mild mental retardation. The road is long and there is a crazy amount of work to do but no matter how hard some days are, there is hope. College also doesn't always mean success; that is just Nicholas' current path. Every person goes their own direction and success is based on what works for a family not a college degree. Embracing each little goodie that life offers might be my definition of success. My line for 2015 is, I wish you a Perfectly Imperfect New Year!



Apps You'll Appreciate

Currently we have been working on the best way to keep students well organized. Here are some suggestions that our college kids like:

- iStudiez Pro: basically a digital planner. You can set up reminders for tests and assignments, as well as putting in teachers contact information
- SimpleMind+ : bubble map (yes, like the ones you do in first grade). Simple yet effective. Great for essays
- Do!: a digital to do list
- abcNotes: digital sticky notes
- EasyBib: God's gift to students. Scan the bar code and it will give you the MLA citation for the works cited page

Bagels and Brainstorming

On Monday, January 12th 10:30 A.M, we will start back up with Bagels and Brainstorming. This is an opportunity for sharing ideas, keeping our business in order and enjoying some time with a few other moms. Dads are welcome too. Feel free to join us at the Murwin's House. Email Katie at KTMurwin@gmail.com for more information.

Life begins at the end of your comfort zone.
Neale Donald Walsch

Going to the Zoo, Zoo, Zoo

One of our families has made a generous offer. They have an amazing zoo pass that allows them to bring multiple guests as long as they attend with the family who holds the pass. I thought, how cool, it gives a few of our families a chance to meet up and enjoy some time at the awesome Phoenix Zoo at no additional cost. You can text or call James Ray 602-785-8429 to consider possible dates and times. Please say you saw the information in the Kids with Autism Can newsletter.

Family Play Directory

One of our very clever moms has a fun idea! It would give families and kiddos opportunities to meet up one on one or in small groups. She will be directly in charge of this project so all emails should go to her at KatieMobley71@yahoo.com. We want to support her in getting this set up and we think many of our families would find it a great tool. Katie is planning a directory of families who want to set up individual playtimes.

The directory will include: Parents First Name and Last Initial, Kids First Name/s and Age/s: (with ASD) and their Interests, Siblings Name/s and Age/s and their Interests, Zip Code and Email and/or Phone #.

You will only be on this list if you choose to! By contacting Katie Mobley, with your information, you accept any and all liability for these times. Since these won't be Kids with Autism Can events and we will not be on the premises, we are not asking for a liability waiver.

The Awesome Underestimated Crockpot!

Our life is complicated, and I like anything that make it easier! I think a Crockpot is one of those tools. I have a fancy schmancy one that will brown in the same pan it cooks in. I love that, but if yours doesn't you can brown meat on the stove or not brown it at all although sometimes that leaves you with gray meat. Yikes. I am going to give you a recipe for a bone in pork roast but you could use a bone out loin roast, whole turkey breast or a beef roast. Bone out will usually give you meat that ends up a bit drier and not quite as flavorful and bone out is usually less work but more money. So those are all personal preferences.

Southwest Pulled Pork

1 5-7 lb. bone in pork roast

1 can Rotel or other brand of diced tomatoes with green chilies, salsa would probably work well too but I think it would be a bit spicier

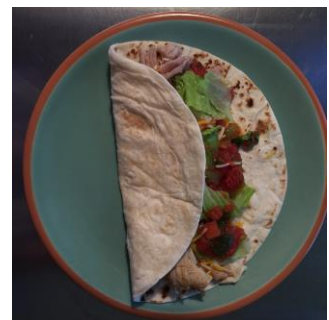
1 can of green chilies (optional)

1-2 tsp. cumin

Brown the roast, in a small amount of butter and olive oil. I brown all sides to sear in the juices. Then cover with tomatoes and cumin. Cook in a slow cooker on low for about 7-8 hours or until the meat falls apart, when pulled with a fork.

This is a great way to make meat and have it available for a few days. You can use it on tortillas, with rice and a favorite sauce, with BBQ sauce for pulled pork sandwiches or other cold sandwiches or salads.

We just shred it and keep it in the fridge so the kids have easy healthy food they can grab when they get hungry. My son also takes it cold for lunch since he doesn't really like lunch meat.



Join us on:



What's Next? – Welcome 2015

We are excited to be partnering with PHX Theatre on January 24, at 11 a.m. for a performance of “The Magic Books”. The experience is a step up from last year’s show. Last year, we were able to use a gymnasium at La Casa de Cristo Lutheran Church, the kids did an amazing job and so we have decided to take the opportunity to move it up a notch and go to an actual theatre with a stage and rows of seats. The show is exclusively for our group so no need to worry about disturbing the families around you, we are all in the same boat and the theatre understands that this is a special group of kiddos. We have plenty of seats still available please join us! Go to http://kidswithautismcan.org/be-informed/events/?event_id=60 to sign up for this event and watch for others soon to follow. We would love to have you there with us. We are also working on plans for upcoming months but nothing is definite just yet. We have emails out to CrackerJax, AZ on the Rocks, US Airways about Marvel Universe Live and we are still looking at how to best create some opportunities to offer cooking, yoga and movement classes. Some events just require more time than others to work out the details. We would also like some suggestions for other things you know are coming up in the area. There are cost and liability restrictions but we are always willing to check into things when people send ideas. If you know of places where you might have an “in” we are interested in new things to try. I would love to have access to a restaurant for an evening to give the kids opportunities to eat out and parents would not have to stress. That was always a nerve racking experience for us when Nicholas was young and we would love to find a way to combine the special environment we try to create with a typical restaurant setting. Typical families go out to eat as a part of regular family life. We would like to bring that opportunity to our families but it would require planning and some additional funding. Please let us know if you have suggestions or contacts. Other activities will soon be posted!

Need a Little Help?

A shout out to Boys Team Charity for helping us at so many events each year. They also provided us with a number of gift cards a while back and we have been able to help several families, we have a few cards left and we understand needs don’t end just because the holidays are over. If we can provide a small amount of help to a couple of families who need it we would be thrilled to do that! Please contact us directly. We have a few grocery and other gift cards still available. Other than a name and address you don’t need to share any more details than you are comfortable sharing but this is purely on an honor system so as always only request them if you really need them. We will do our best to help out each request but it depends on how many people respond in the next week or so.

Kids with Autism Can regularly updates their website. Please check back frequently for events and new information. Take time to dive into the stories and perhaps share some of yours.

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