In May of 2018 Terri Hansen, The Arc of Whatcom County’s Inclusion Advocate, did not feel safe navigating the parking lot of the Walgreens on Sunset Dr. in Bellingham in her wheelchair. Terri took action and reached out to the store manager, Nick Chahley, to address accessibility and safety concerns in the Walgreens parking lot. The two met and took a tour of the parking lot and nearby routes available to pedestrians trying to access the store.

The first safety concern Terri pointed out was a lack of visibility for cars entering the parking lot, making it difficult for pedestrians to safely cross to the store. The problem was the awkward barrier in the street parallel to the store’s entrance, permitting cars to enter the lot from the wrong direction. A second concern was that the store’s ramps and sidewalks were restrictive for people using mobility devices. The paths were narrow, including several obstacles customers needed to navigate in order to access the store.

Nick was very willing to provide solutions to these safety issues with what resources he had. He proposed that the crosswalk signs be repainted to allow for a safer entrance to the parking lot. This allowed people who are visually impaired or using mobility devices to locate the safest entrance and for drivers entering the lot to clearly recognize pedestrians. To create wider pathways for people using mobility devices, Nick made plans to insert concrete barriers to prevent vehicles from encroaching into the path, allowing more room for users to navigate to the store.

Nick was so receptive to Terri’s concerns that he invited her inside the store to advise him on internal accessibility concerns. The inside proved to be very accessible, with wide, clearly marked aisles and non-intrusive end caps. The proposed outside improvements were set to take several months but were completed in less than one. While not all safety and accessibility concerns could be addressed due to lack of control over city property, Nick took what actions he could to improve the situation.

Terri tries to work with other stores but says that “not all managers have been as open to change” as Nick. Being a disability consultant is important to Terri. She is “able to fix problems for others. People don’t realize what individuals with disabilities need until they have a consultant or advocate” like her. Teri is excited to continue to work with Nick and other companies to create more accessible and safe environments for all people.
What is autism acceptance? Autism acceptance means embracing and valuing autistic people as autistic people instead of being afraid of us, having low expectations, or trying to find a way to make us not autistic.

Why should I accept autistic people? The Americans With Disabilities Act says “disability is a natural part of the human experience.” Autism is a natural part of the human experience, and autistic people are members of our community, citizens, friends, family members, and fellow humans. Accepting autistic people is about honoring human diversity and making sure that everyone is included, valued, and contributing in our society.

Why should I care about autism acceptance? 1 in 88 people are autistic. You probably know an autistic person. Autism acceptance means you want us around.

What does acceptance look like? At its heart, autism acceptance is about accepting autistic people, instead of being afraid of us, having low expectations, or trying to find a way to make us not autistic.

Acceptance might look like:
• inclusive education
• helping your child learn to use their AAC (Augmentative and alternative communication device)
• fighting stigma and stereotypes about autism and autistic people
• hiring an autistic person to work for you at the same wage as a comparable non-autistic person
• snapping your fingers instead of clapping for applause so your coworker isn’t hurt by the noise
• making sure autistic people are included and respected in your community and that your community is accessible to us.

Acceptance is not passive tolerance. Acceptance is an action.

Doesn’t acceptance mean no therapies, no education, no intervention, just letting my kid stay where they are forever? Isn’t acceptance passive? No! Acceptance is not passive. Acceptance is an action. Acceptance means doing everything you can so that your autistic child will grow up into the best autistic adult they can be, supporting your autistic friends in a world that is not designed for us, and working to make our world a better, more inclusive, safer place for autistic people of all ages and abilities.

How to be an Ally:
• Don’t say degrading things about autism, or say that autism is a disease that need to be cured. Autism is part of who we are, not an “epidemic.”
• Understand that feelings or interactions you may find normal might be distressing or overstimulating to an autistic person. Respect our boundaries when we set them, even if those boundaries are unusual.
• Repetitive movements or “stimming” can be very important for autistic people. Respect stimming, and don’t attempt to stop it.
• Don’t use functioning labels (high functioning, low functioning). There are many aspects to functioning, and how we function can vary day by day.
• Don’t use slurs like “idiot,” “retard,” or “crip.” These are often used to bully and degrade people with disabilities.
• Respect bodily autonomy. Disability does not entitle you to touch anyone without consent, be abusive or “aversive,” or otherwise control someone’s body.
• Honor different communication styles. Some autistic people use assistive and adaptive technology to communicate (like typing, or AAC apps). This communication is just as valid as verbal communication.

Resources:
www.autisticadvocacy.org
www.autismacceptancemonth.org
Upcoming Parent Support Meetings

Are you a parent, grandparent or caretaker of a child with special needs? Would you like to connect with others on a similar journey to share resources, ideas, and support? Join us for our confidential support meetings.

**April Parent Support Meeting**
**Topic: Assistive Technology**
Monday, April 8, 7 - 8:30pm
The Arc of Whatcom County 2602 McLeod Rd., Bellingham
*Child supervision is available to those who RSVP by Friday, April 5.

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**Sensory Processing Disorder Panel & Networking Workshop**

6 - 8pm, Monday April 29
St. Luke’s Health Education Center
3333 Squalicum Parkway
This workshop will offer a panel discussion of professionals who will share their experience and insights on Sensory Processing Disorder.

Panelists:
Susan McNutt, OTR/L
Missy Bartell, SLP
Mary Jo Durborow, Parent
Elieen Coan, OT

Focus of this workshop will include:
- Strategies for understanding sensory signals
- Helpful tips for managing outbursts
- Ways to coach others working with your child
- Resources for additional information and supports

No childcare provided, adults only please.
Please contact Parent to Parent with any questions.
Our office can be reached at (360) 715-0170 ext 302 p2p@

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**Adult Caregiver/Parent Social**

6:30-8:30pm
Monday, April 22
Aslan Depot
1322 N State St, Bellingham

The Adult Caregiver/Parent Social is for people who are in the role of caring for adult loved ones (ages 16 and up) with a developmental delay or disability. Aslan Depot has a wide variety of local beverages on tap. Parent to Parent will be bringing some light snacks to share. This is a casual meetup, arrive anytime. No RSVP required.

For Sign Language and Spanish Interpretation, please contact us 2 weeks prior to meeting. To request interpreting services or to RSVP for child supervision, contact us at p2p@arcwhatcom.org or (360) 715-0170 ext 302
Community Events

Infant and Early Childhood Conference
Wednesday - Friday, May 1-3
Great Tacoma Convention Center

This gathering will feature more than 125 sessions with a blend of local, regional, and national speakers. This training opportunity provides evidence-based workshops and networking opportunities for families and providers.

Parent Scholarships are available!
Please register at www.ieccwa.org The parent scholarship information can be found in Section 3.

Unity Club at Western Washington University
6-7pm, Academic West, Room 205
WWU Campus
Thursday, April 11 Game Night
Thursday, April 25 Ice Cream & Art
The WWU Unity Club is an opportunity to expand connection with Western and meet new people. Contact Chloe Rosenfield at 206-909-6801 or rosenfc@wwu.edu

17th Annual April Brews Day
Support Max Higbee Center
6:30pm, Saturday, April 27
Depot Market Square, Bellingham

For info call 360-746-9841, email mhc.eventplanner@gmail.com or visit http://www.maxhigbee.org/

Kaleidoscope Play and Learn Groups
Kaleidoscope Play and Learn groups help families prepare their children ages birth to age 5 for success in school and life. This program supports family members at free weekly facilitated play groups. Parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, older siblings, other caregivers and family members are welcome to join!

For the more information and the Play and Learn schedule, visit https://www.ccanorthwest.org/kpl/

What Do We Know:
Autism Screening, Diagnosis, & Supporting Young Children & Families
2:00pm – 3:30pm, Wednesday, April 10
Presenter: Dr. Hedda Meadan
Children can be diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder as early as 18 months, but delays in social and communication skills and other signs can appear earlier in life. This webinar will cover the prevalence of autism in the US and common red flags. The screening and diagnosis process of young children with autism will also be discussed. Strategies for partnering with and supporting families through this process will be shared.
To register for this free webinar go to https://militaryfamilieslearningnetwork.org/event/30358/
Free RIGHT RESPONSE™ Training for Parents!

RIGHT RESPONSE™ is designed for anyone who might encounter an individual with a behavioral escalation. The 5-hour Primer Workshop focuses on preparation and management of oneself for success when needing to de-escalate an individual or avoid their potentially dangerous behavior. Attendees in this workshop will learn the cycle of risk management and response. This process includes Prevention Strategies, De-escalation Techniques, and Postvention Learning. The 6-hour Elements+ Training includes additional insight and strategies on triggers and ‘Proactive Environments’, Physical Intervention, Self-Protection Skills, and Postvention Teaching and Critical Debrief.

Primer (5 hours)  
April 20, 10am– 3:30pm  
WECU Education Center  
5659 Barrett Road, Ferndale

Elements+ (6 hours)  
May 18, 2019 9am – 4pm  
WECU Education Center  
5659 Barrett Road, Ferndale

Primer is a 5 CE Training and Elements+ is a 6 CE Training. Enrollment in the Elements+ Course requires completion of Primer. Please use the event registration links for the trainings:

Part 1 - https://whatcomrightresponse1.eventbrite.com  
Part 2 - https://whatcomrightresponse2.eventbrite.com

Event registration may be full but please get on the Waitlist on EventBrite, priority will be given to parents.

Brought to You By:  
DDA Region 2 Training & Technical Assistance  
DDA Roads to Community Living  
The Arc of Whatcom County - Parent to Parent & Parent Coalition  
FACES Northwest

Questions? Email ddaR2TA@dshs.wa.gov or call 206.568.5686

Self-Advocacy Meeting
4:30-6:30pm, Thursday, April 4  
Topic: Community Living  
4:30-6:30pm, Thursday, May 2  
The Arc’s Dan Godwin  
Community Center  
2602 McLeod Road, Bellingham

For more information about our Self Advocacy program, contact SelfAdvocacy@arcwhatcom.org or (360) 715-0170, ext 304.

My Way Matinee:  
Sensory-Friendly Films  
10:30am  
2nd and 4th Saturday of every month  
Barkley Village  
3005 Cinema Pl, Bellingham,  
Get the movie theatre experience, but with lower sound and brighter lights.  
https://www.regmovies.com/promotions/my-way-matinee

S.P.I.N. Dance  
6 - 8pm, Monday, April 15  
6 - 8pm, Monday, May 20  
Bellingham Senior Center  
315 Halleck St.  
At the SPIN Dances, you can always count on lively music provided by local bands or DJ’s, a healthy snack at intermission, and FANTASTIC company!  
Call (360) 778-7000 or visit http://www.maxhigbee.org/spin-dances.html
Help Support our 2019 Buddy Walk Fundraising Goal!

The 2019 Buddy Walk will mark the 16th year of Buddy Walk® in Whatcom County! The event is a highlight for the Down syndrome Outreach community, bringing together members, friends and family to walk and celebrate with each other. The annual Buddy Walk® in Whatcom county has grown over the years from a grass-roots event with a handful of families to a ‘full-on’ celebration with live music, activities, games and the 1-mile walk through Bellingham’s downtown streets. Last year, over 450 community members participated! Down syndrome Outreach reaches over 90 individuals & families in our community with direct support and services, accessing support meetings, receiving information and education through our lending library, and connecting and networking with other parents.

We receive limited funding for these direct services and rely on donations and sponsorships through the year to hold the Buddy Walk and other events. DsO is an exceptional program of support, inclusion and acceptance that is truly unique. This year we are asking the community and local businesses to join with us in supporting the Buddy Walk. The Down syndrome Outreach Advisory Board has set a goal of $12,000 committed sponsorships and donations by May 31 to ensure that we can host the event this year.

Donations can be made at https://www.classy.org/campaign/2019-whatcom-county-buddy-walk/c226445

Please contact Down syndrome Outreach at dso@arcwhatcom.org or 360-715-0170 ext 304

You’re Invited to the Down syndrome Outreach Spring Fling!

Sunday, May 5th, 12-3pm
Fairhaven Park Pavilion Bellingham, WA

This is a chance to connect with families in our local Down syndrome community, visit with friends, and enjoy a lovely afternoon, rain or shine! There will be activities and crafts, a potluck lunch, the fantastic playground and a Toy & Book Exchange. This year, DsO will be providing food for the event. Families are still welcome to bring a potluck dish if they would like. If you are interested in helping with the event or have questions, please contact DsO@arcwhatcom.org or (360) 715-0170, ext. 304

This event is in an accessible location. For sign language interpreter service, assistive listening devices, or communication material in any alternative format, please call 10 days in advance: (360) 715-0170.

Co-Sponsored by Bellingham Parks and Recreation
The Parent Coalition

The Arc of Whatcom County provides leadership support for individuals with developmental disabilities and their parents/guardians. The goal of the Parent Coalition is to enable persons with developmental disabilities and their parents/guardians to become effective and involved in accessing services.

The Parent Coalition newsletter is published monthly by:

The Arc of Whatcom County
Dan Godwin Community Center
2602 McLeod Road
Bellingham, WA 98225
(360) 715-0170
www.arcwhatcom.org

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10am-1pm Monday - Thursday

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Emily Shiels, President;
Susan Larson, Vice President;
Dale Whipple, Secretary;
Michelle Karaffa, Barbara Roxas
Jen Thistle, Whitney Kiewit

Stay Connected

Online Community Calendar:
Visit The Arc’s website at www.arcwhatcom.org and click on Events.

Facebook:
Visit our FB page: www.facebook.com/ArcWhatcom for the latest information and events.

E-alerts:
The Parent Coalition emails updates on legislation, workshops and upcoming activities. To sign up, visit www.arcwhatcom.org or email parentcoalition@arcwhatcom.org.

Summarizing

Spring/Summer Camps

Some local camp options that are not designed for kids with special needs but have a reputation for being inclusive:
- Ray of Hope https://www.reboundfamilies.com/programs-1/
- Camp Kirby http://www.campfiresamish.org/
- Bellingham Parks and Rec can also offer inclusion support for their programs check out their leisure guide for more info: https://bpr.uberflip.com/i/1066307-winter-leisure-guide-2019/11.

Local camps geared older kids with special needs (14 and up):
- Lion’s Camp Horizon https://lionscamphorizon.org/
- Max Higbee Center http://www.maxhigbee.org/

Regional options:
- Jill’s house does weekend adventure programs: http://www.jillshouse.org/puget-sound/?fbclid=IwAR1oo9nGfDckK6YljOuwwQK3hNODUv8dWpqk8M_LP-3rGCXpEe9V3hhfO0.
- Camp Korey in Mt. Vernon does themed camps for different diagnoses and also some weekends for the whole family https://campkorey.org/.

Getting enrolled with DDA can help to fund many of these programs.

FACES (a therapeutic recreational day camp for children and young adults with autism) is full for this year, and the deadline for applications for next year is November 1st.

Center for Children with Special Needs Camp Directory

- Lists over 80 summer camps and programs for children, youth and young adults with behavioral conditions, learning and developmental disabilities, medical conditions, and physical disabilities across Washington
- Search the online directory by camp type, specific condition, and region.
https://cshcn.org/resources-contacts/summer-camp-directory/

Due to a loss of state funding, the Center for Children with Special Needs closed its doors in 2018. This directory lists camps that were offered in summer 2018. This directory does not include individual camp information including dates for summer 2019. You will need to visit the individual camp websites for specific information.

The Parent Coalition is funded by grants from the Developmental Disabilities Program of Whatcom County, the United Way and your generous donations.
Special Family Camp
May 25 – May 27, Camp Sealth
All grades & ages welcome!

Special Family Camp is designed for kids and adults with special needs and their entire families to enjoy a camp experience in an inclusive, supportive environment.

For pricing, registration, and more information, call (206) 461-8550 or visit https://campfireseattle.org/year-round-camp-events/family-camps/special-family-camp/

Congratulations Evan Kaptinski and the rest of his soccer team for winning the bronze medal at the 2019 World Games!

The Filling Station gives back 10% of its food sales every Tuesday to a local non-profit. On January 29th, they supported The Arc of Whatcom County. We would like to thank The Filling Station for their continuing support, and all of the community members who came out that day.

Event Calendar

April

4 Thursday, 4:30 - 6:30pm
Self Advocacy Meeting
see page 5 for more details
Topic: Community Living

8 Monday, 7 - 8:30pm
Parent Support Meeting
Topic: Assistive Technology
see page 3 for more details

13 Saturday, 5:30pm
FACES Northwest Auction

15 Monday, 6 - 8pm
SPIN DANCE
Theme: Crazy Hat Night
see page 5 for more details

18 Thursday, 7 - 8:30pm
Autism 204: Perspectives on Psychiatric Treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorder

22 Monday, 6:30 - 8:30pm
Adult Caregiver/Parent Social
see page 3 for more details

24 Wednesday, 5:30 - 6:30pm
Arc of Whatcom County’s Board of Directors Meeting

27 Saturday, 6:30pm
April Brews Day
Fundraiser to Support Max Higbee Center
see page 4 for more details

29 Monday 6 - 8pm
Sensory Processing Disorder Workshop
see page 3 for more details

May

1- 3, Monday - Wednesday
Infant & Early Childhood Conference
see page 4 for more details

2 Thursday, 4:30 - 6:30pm
Self Advocacy Meeting
Topic: tbd

5 Sunday noon - 3pm
Down syndrome Outreach’s Spring Fling
see page 6 for more details

13 Monday, 7 - 8:30pm
Parent Support Meeting
Topic: Parenting your Special Needs Child
Fisher Elementary, Lynden

16 Thursday, 7 - 8:30pm
Autism 205: Gender Diversity and Autism: Exploring Identity, Healthcare and Advocacy

19 Sunday, 5 - 9pm
Parent to Parent’s Helping Parent’s Night Out

20 Monday, 6 - 8pm
SPIN DANCE
Theme: 80’s Night
For more information, call (360) 733-1828

20 Monday, 4:30 – 6:00pm
Developmental Disabilities Advisory Board Meeting
St. Luke’s Health Education Center
3333 Squalicum Parkway

Our full community events calendar can be found at arcwhatcom.org/wp/events/