

## October 2015 Table of Contents

Director's Welcome  
Announcements  
Trainings.....2  
MALT News.....3  
Family Focus.....4  
Tony's Summer Camp... 5

**The Maine Autism Institute for Education and Research** (MAIER) is a partnership between the University of Maine College of Education and Human Development and the Maine Department of Education.

MAIER is dedicated to building state-wide capacity to improve outcomes for individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

- Leadership
- Training
- Professional Development
- Technical Assistance
- Consultation
- Research

### Save the Date

- Professional Development
- October 23, 2015 Brunswick Hotel, Brunswick
  - November 9, 2015 Bowdoin College, Brunswick
  - December 7, 2015 Jeff's Catering, Brewer

### FMI on MAIER Professional Development series, see our website.

- Tuesday Nov. 10, 6-7:30pm *Maine Parent Guide to ASD* Celebration at the Buchanan Alumni House, University of Maine campus
- Sunday Dec. 6, 4:30-6pm *My Day to Play* at the Maine Discovery Museum, Bangor

## Director's Welcome

Welcome to the fall semester. The Maine Autism Institute for Education and Research is a partnership with UMaine and the Maine Department of Education. MAIER was established at UMaine in 2014 to build statewide capacity to improve outcomes for individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) through leadership, training, professional development, collaboration, and research.

MAIER offers advanced course work in autism spectrum disorders; conducted research, evaluation; provided community services including professional development, training, consultation and technical assistance; and, disseminated relevant current information related to our work to individuals with disabilities, families, professionals, and the community-at-large. Please enjoy! Send us feedback at [maineautisminstitute@maine.edu](mailto:maineautisminstitute@maine.edu)

Best regards,  
*Deborah L. Rooks-Ellis*, Ph.D.  
Director, Maine Autism Institute for Education and Research

## Announcements

### Join our celebration!

Join us to celebrate the launch and distribution of MAIER's *Maine Parent Guide to Autism Spectrum Disorders* on **Tuesday, November 10<sup>th</sup> from 6-7:30pm** at the Buchanan Alumni House, 160 College Ave, University of Maine, Orono. Families, professionals and interested community members are all welcome! Please **RSVP** to [maineautisminstitute@maine.edu](mailto:maineautisminstitute@maine.edu) by October 29th if you plan to attend. Print copies of the handbook will be available upon request.

### Maine Parent Guide to Autism Spectrum Disorders

We are happy to announce that MAIER's *Maine Parent Guide to Autism Spectrum Disorders* is now available online for families and others interested in learning more about autism and how to access educational and social services in Maine. This three-volume set is the product of a year-long collaboration of a group of dedicated Maine parents and the Maine Autism Institute for Education and Research. This project was made possible by the financial support of the Maine Department of Education, Office of Special Services.

Our goal was to develop a parent-friendly guide, a "roadmap" of sorts, to assist families as they navigate the autism journey. In three booklets, the

*(Continued on page 2)*

# Trainings

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual MAIER Professional Development Series

Tiered to support the needs of educators and their various levels of knowledge and understanding about autism, 12 professional development opportunities are planned for the 2015-2016 school year. Topics include Functional Thinking, ASD and AAC, Social Thinking, and more! Please visit our website [umaine.edu/autisminstitute/trainings/](http://umaine.edu/autisminstitute/trainings/) for more information and to register using the [online link](#).

Contact Lisa Daniel for registration assistance: 581-2492.

## National Experts on Autism and Literacy to Provide Training and Support to Maine Educators

Nationally recognized experts on literacy and ASD, Dr. Christi Carnahan and Dr. Pam Williamson, will conduct a two-day workshop to discuss the literacy needs of your students with autism spectrum disorder. The two-days will focus on instructional approaches to meet these learners' needs. In a fast paced, engaging format, participants will learn about the factors that influence reading and writing across the autism spectrum, develop a framework for thinking about literacy instruction, and be introduced to specific strategies for meeting these learners' needs. The first day is set for October 5, with the follow-up planned in May 2016. Visit our online MAIER Events calendar [umaine.edu/autisminstitute/events/](http://umaine.edu/autisminstitute/events/) for more information.

In addition to this 2-day professional development opportunity, Drs. Carnahan and Williamson will be providing five days of advanced training to the 2012-2013 and 2014-2015 MALT members. Register your MALT team members by contacting Deborah today!

## PECS Training

MAIER has partnered with Pyramid Educational Consultants to offer the Picture Exchange Communication System Level 1 training. The training will take place on the UMaine Orono campus, November 16 and 17. Registration is required through Pyramid. Visit our website for more information under the Events Calendar [umaine.edu/autisminstitute/events/](http://umaine.edu/autisminstitute/events/). Contact 888-732-7462 to register.

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*(Parent Guide: Continued from page 1)*

*Parent Guide* leads families from the initial question of “Does my child have autism?” to steps for obtaining needed assessments, connecting with educational and social services, and finding resources based on their needs. It includes an in-depth description of early childhood and special education services in Maine, a guide for transitioning from high school to adult services, and a Resource Guide that includes contact information for many services and supports across the state.

The *Maine Parent Guide to Autism Spectrum Disorders* is enriched with personal stories, reflections, and suggestions from our parent group, lending a personal touch that reflects their experiences and knowledge gained from their own journeys. Family photos capture the joys and challenges of raising a child with ASD. We are indebted to these dedicated leaders of our Maine Family Partnership for the time, effort, patience, and perseverance that made this project a success.

You can download copies of the *Maine Parent Guide to Autism Spectrum Disorders* from our website: [umaine.edu/autisminstitute/resources/](http://umaine.edu/autisminstitute/resources/) or contact us for print copies, which will be available soon. If your agency or organization would like to receive multiple copies for distribution, contact us by phone (207-581-2352) or email us ([maineautisminstitute@maine.edu](mailto:maineautisminstitute@maine.edu)) to discuss your request.

We invite families, professionals, and interested others to join us for our celebration of the completion of the Parent Handbook on Tuesday, November 10<sup>th</sup> from 6-7:30pm at the Buchanan Alumni House, 160 College Ave, University of Maine, Orono. Please **RSVP** by October 29<sup>th</sup> by email to [maineautisminstitute@maine.edu](mailto:maineautisminstitute@maine.edu) or by calling 207-581-2352 if you plan to attend.

# Maine Autism Leadership Team (MALT) News

## Congratulations to our new Maine Autism Leader Teams!

Recently the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released statistics stating that 1 in 68 children are being diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Each year this incidence rate increases, as does the complexity of these children. As a result, schools are stretched to educate and support children in an effective way.

In response to this need MAIER invited applications for school districts and agencies to receive advanced training in evidence-based practices for working with individuals with autism. 14 teams were selected to participate as Maine Autism Leader Teams, joining the existing 28 teams.

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In response to this need MAIER invited applications for school districts and agencies to receive advanced training in evidence-based practices for working with individuals with autism. 15 teams were selected to participate as Maine Autism Leader Teams, joining the existing 28 teams. Teams will receive six days of training (three two-day training sessions) with coaching and mentoring opportunities provided between training sessions. Team members include general and special educators, related services staff, and general and special education administrators.

The overall goals of the training are to:

- Build local capacity to establish and implement proactive and positive programming with fidelity for children with ASD,
- Build regional and state experts, trainers and supports for Maine's educators working with students with ASD,
- Foster the development of observational skills for working with children with autism spectrum disorder,
- Provide current information about the diverse range of individuals who exhibit characteristics associated with ASD,
- Ensure that Maine teachers and paraprofessionals are appropriately and adequately prepared to work with children with ASD, and
- Provide participants with sufficient current and evidence-based information that enables them to share materials with others in their district and to conduct training at the local, regional and/or state level.

To date, 28 teams have been trained in the previous three years. An outgrowth of this team training has been the creation and ongoing support of an autism leadership network across the state. Over 200 autism leaders are employed by agencies and school districts across the state to promote sustainability and to scale up efforts.

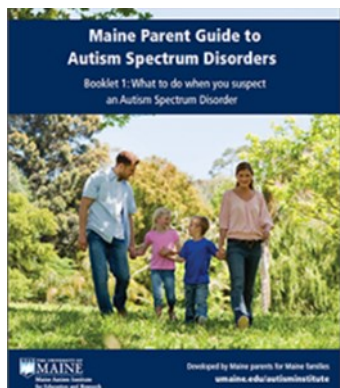
Join MAIER in congratulating these new Maine Autism Leader Teams!

RSU 14	MSAD 31	Lisbon Schools
RSU 21	CDS Downeast	Sanford
RSU 3	Living Innovations	Wiscasset School Department
RSU 18		York Schools
RSU 2		
AOS 96		

Training begins at the end of September! Visit our website [umaine.edu/autisminstitute/](http://umaine.edu/autisminstitute/) and the MALT Map [umaine.edu/autisminstitute/malt-map/](http://umaine.edu/autisminstitute/malt-map/) to find a team in your area or to ask about the opportunity.

# Family Focus

Happy fall to families and friends of the Maine Autism Institute for Education and Research. In this issue we celebrate those parents who worked with us in developing our new *Maine Parent Guide to ASD*, share resources to help you get back into your fall routines, and share news of upcoming family events.



As the new school year begins for families, the Maine Family Partnership is celebrating the release of our *Maine Parent Guide to Autism Spectrum Disorders* (see announcement in this issue). This year-long project could not have been possible without the dedication of a group of parents who came together to advise us in the development of the guide, to share their stories, photos, and suggestions, and to help write and edit the content. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Susan Abbiati, Felicia Kasprzak, Kathleen Leopold, Niki Sheafe, Karen Grotton Pelletier, April Poulsen, Laurie Robichaud, & Roy Ulrickson, III. The handbook is a reflection of their dedication and desire to help families across the state of Maine. Join us as we celebrate the launching and distribution of the *Maine Parent Guide to Autism Spectrum Disorders* on Tuesday, November 10th from 6-7:30pm at the Buchanan

Alumni House at 160 College Ave at the University of Maine, Orono, Maine. Please **RSVP** to [maineautisminstitute@maine.edu](mailto:maineautisminstitute@maine.edu) by October 29th if you plan to attend.

As our memories of summer fade and we return to our fall routines, we would like to share how one MFP teen spent his summer expanding his horizons. Tony Abbiati, 16-year-old son of Susan and Joseph Abbiati, spent time learning important job skills and developing his self-confidence at Camp CARD in southern Maine. Susan shares Tony's excitement as she captures his experience in her own words in the accompanying article below.

Getting back into the fall routines of school days, after-school activities, and new schedules can be daunting for any family, and when your family includes a child or teen with ASD, the challenges can be complex. Check out these resources for tips on making the transition back to school a little easier.

- Indiana Resource Center: Preparing for the School Year : [iic.indiana.edu/index.php?pageId=3568](http://iic.indiana.edu/index.php?pageId=3568)
- Pathfinders for Autism: Back to School Tips : [pathfindersforautism.org/articles/view/back-to-school-tips](http://pathfindersforautism.org/articles/view/back-to-school-tips)
- Autism Consortium: Back to school tips: [autismconsortium.org/blog/detail/back-to-school-tips-for-you-and-your-child](http://autismconsortium.org/blog/detail/back-to-school-tips-for-you-and-your-child)

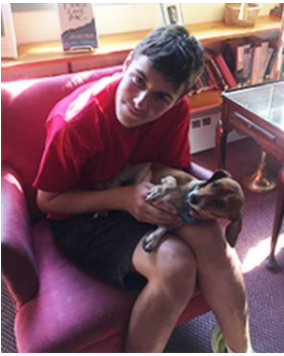
The Maine Family Partnership is in the early stages of planning our family events for the coming year, including a fall "My Day to Play" event in partnership with the Maine Discovery Museum in Bangor on December 6<sup>th</sup> from 4:30- 6pm. Contact us if you would like to help host a family event in your area. We are open to new ideas to support family connections and work together to raise awareness and knowledge about ASD in your communities. Check our website for event updates in the coming weeks.

We look forward to seeing the MFP grow, so if you know families who may not be on our mailing list, please invite them to contact us. MFP families receive news, event announcements, and other items of interest throughout the year. We would love to hear about your family as well, and learn about your issues of concern or your ideas for projects or events. Send us your family photos to enrich our webpages- we'd love to share them with the MAIER MFP community! Contact Donna Doherty by email ([donna.doherty@maine.edu](mailto:donna.doherty@maine.edu)) or phone (207-581-2468) for more information, or visit our website: [umaine.edu/autisminstitute/maine-family-partnership](http://umaine.edu/autisminstitute/maine-family-partnership)

Hope to hear from you! Donna Doherty, Director, Maine Family Partnership

# Tony's Summer at Camp CARDNE

by Susan Abbiati



My son Tony, who is now 16 years old, has attended camp CARD (Center for Autism and Related Disorders) in York, Maine for the last two years. Tony has Asperger's Syndrome, which makes other summer camps too challenging for him.

As an older camper at Camp CARD, Tony goes on work sites each day and learns new job skills; but more importantly, he learns what it takes to have a job. All of the teens that are in this program get paid \$10.00 a day. He has learned so much about himself while at camp CARD and has grown in many ways.

Tony now looks forward to going to camp each day and refers to it as "going to work." He has learned the correlation between working and earning money for it, and takes each new job seriously. He has learned patience and tolerance with himself and with others, and he has gained a lot of self-confidence. Tony recalls, "My favorite part of going to Camp CARD was learning how to interact with lots of different people, and learning how to do various jobs in the community."

Camp CARD is small and has a ratio of about seven or eight campers to at least three adults. It is a safe place to learn the all-important social skills and to develop personal relationships. Tony really enjoys this camp and will forever benefit from all that he learns there. For teens interested in Camp CARD, Tony offers this advice, "Get ready to make friends with your co-workers, your counselors, and Belle the dog."



Maine Autism Institute for Education and Research  
5766 Shibles Hall, Room 303  
Orono, Maine 04469  
Phone: 207.581.2352 | Fax: 207.581-9510  
Email: [maineautisminstitute@maine.edu](mailto:maineautisminstitute@maine.edu)

Website: [umaine.edu/autisminstitute/](http://umaine.edu/autisminstitute/)