

# Autism is a life-long journey AuSM walks with you How can you help?

Dear partner in autism support,

**Autism is a life-long journey, and the Autism Society of Minnesota wants to walk beside you every step of the way.**

At this time of year, it is common to think of the things for which we are thankful. At AuSM, that includes the many individuals who provide financial support to ensure our continued growth and strength. This past year we reached a milestone: 40 years of service to the Minnesota autism community. While we're proud of this accomplishment, we know that it's just the beginning.

As we look to the future, we are building a broader array of services to provide support through all phases of life on the autism spectrum. **While strengthening our programs for youth and educators, we've also branched out to include programming to address the unique issues that adults with autism face, including employment, dating and relationships and independent life skills.**

We also work constantly to fill gaps in current services. Knowing that everyone in our community needs to be aware of autism and how to support families, we have created resources for first responders. Our Emergency Preparedness project includes classes for training first responders how to interact with individuals on the spectrum, an app based on the 5 Point Scale that eases communication in times of crisis, as well as a kit to prepare families living with autism for any kind of emergency. Look inside this letter to find more innovative solutions we have developed this year; often in partnership with other Minnesota service organizations.

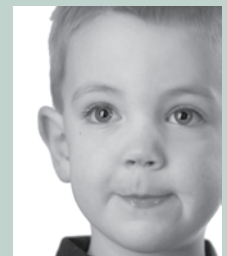
New programs and services are always exciting, but one of the most amazing things about AuSM is how we continue to provide the core services families living with autism need. Our Discovery Series and Skillshops continue to guide parents and professionals through their life-long journey of autism. **This information and the tools these classes provide move the autism community in Minnesota beyond coping and into flourishing.**

**Your support of AuSM makes all of this possible.** If you have made a gift to AuSM in the past, thank you. I ask that you support us again this year, increasing the amount of your gift if at all possible. If you have not been a donor, I hope you will consider making a gift this year. Inside you'll find a list of the many ways you can support AuSM.

Our new life-long membership is the perfect way to support families throughout their life span. **Make your gift online during Give to the Max Day, November 16** and push us to the top of Minnesota's small nonprofits. It's the perfect way to maximize your gift.

I invite you to read further to find out more about our recent accomplishments, what we're working on now and messages from an AuSM caregiver and donor. We hope their stories inspire you. They certainly inspire us, just as your support keeps vital services alive for Minnesota families living with autism.

Sincerely,  
**Sherrie Kenny**  
Executive Director/CEO



Part of the printing of this appeal  
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**ausm**  
autism society of minnesota

# Autism... it's what we do



**Collaborate...** No one can do it alone. AuSM partners with many local agencies so that we can effectively serve the MN autism community. This year's grants included: Employment Services with MN Governor's Council and Vocational Rehabilitation, Emergency Preparedness with first responders and Department of Human Services, IEP instructional design with MN Department of Education. Many other organizations are our partners in providing ongoing workshops, classes and awareness events to promote an inclusive environment for families living with autism. Autism Awareness Events are hosted throughout the year by amazing community partners who bring resources, awareness and hope directly into their neighborhoods. Their work directly supports AuSM's mission. **Thank you to all our donors, fundraisers, volunteers and supporters.** Your dedication and funds keep us going, literally.

**Advocate...** AuSM works hard to ensure that individuals with autism and their families are represented in government agencies. This year we saw the licenses for educational training in autism become a reality and took your voice to the MN legislature while they debated laws that directly impacted special education and funding for critical support services for individuals with disabilities. Our presence on numerous committees and task forces brings your perspective directly to those who need to hear it.

**Educate...** We are committed to bringing the best national, international and local speakers, presenting the freshest topics, into our community. We hosted six workshops, impacted 19,866 individuals with autism through the 16th annual Minnesota Autism Conference, brought 28 local experts to teach classes through our Skillshop series and guided 50 caregivers through the unique journey of parenting a child on the spectrum through our Discovery Series. We have over 1500 Facebook fans and 6,000 monthly visits to our web site.

Details on our Employment Initiative: February 17, 2011 saw the inaugural Autism & Employment Forum with 1,600 in attendance hosted by AuSM, Governors Council DD, VRS. Cofounding sponsors 3M, Best Buy, Cargill presented their journey to hiring and retaining those affected by autism. Keynote speaker Temple Grandin shared her employment journey and the challenges/opportunities in today's environment. 2012 event is being scheduled for October at 3M (more to come). AuSM offers: ASD 101 and customized workshops; videos (developed with 3M) on interviewing, acclimation, accommodation; book designed for employers on the gifts and talents those with ASD bring to a workplace setting; and an e-learning tool (in development with Best Buy) on scenarios that help educate and advocate for those with ASD already in the workplace to sustain employment.

**Support...** It's the direct service to families and individuals with autism that keep us going. We fielded over 4,000 requests for information. Through a new consultant program, we helped 10 families incorporate social skills throughout their day: school, home and community. We've added new staff to our Mental Health Clinic which serves 792, and every day we take calls from parents, professionals and individuals with autism seeking advice, resources and help. We are there, and we provide autism-specific support without an agenda.

## What we're working on...

Workshops with Kari Dunn Buron and Sheila Merzer, new web site launch inspired by our work at the Nerderly's Overnight Website Challenge, Steps of Hope walk on March 4, Minnesota Autism Conference held April 25 - 28, AuSM Summer Camps, Eagle's Nest Social Skills Groups (new offering for young adults), Discovery Series (new offering for adults on the spectrum), Professional Series, partnership with the Guthrie theater and an Emergency Preparedness kit for families living with autism.

For the full  
2011 Annual  
Report visit  
[www.ausm.org](http://www.ausm.org)  
you'll be  
amazed by  
all we do!

# A Caregiver's Perspective...

by Lorie Archambault

We were stunned, a diagnosis of Asperger Syndrome. With no prior knowledge of autism, we started on our journey to help Dennis the best we could. But then we found the Autism Society of Minnesota (AuSM) online. Navigating our way through the system we made an investment that benefits us still, five and a half years later. We became members of AuSM and started accessing all their programs and services.

After his first Eagle's Nest Social Skills group, Dennis was excited to return. This was the first place Dennis had gone where he was completely accepted for who he was. He was having fun - no taunting or bullying - just having fun with a purpose.

This experience continues today. Through repetition and exercises at Eagles Nest and AuSM camps, Dennis has practiced the social skills and coping mechanisms that he needs in his day-to-day activities. In his younger years, the activities, games and discussions helped Dennis understand what made him unique, the positive reinforcement and low pressure of the sessions helped him accept his diagnosis and his different abilities. Progressing through the carefully crafted programs, he has been able to learn age appropriate social behaviors and self-advocacy. With confidence, now in his teen years, he is learning how to hang out with his friends: bowling, eating out, roller-skating.

When Dennis was in second grade, his quirks and odd behaviors seemed to be alienating his classmates. Using his

self-advocacy skills from Eagles Nest and a DVD on autism from the AuSM lending library, Dennis did a presentation to his classmates on his disability. This inspired a significant change in how Dennis's peers treated him. In fact, this success prompted Dennis to do presentations for the next several years. Watching these presentations gives a clear message: Dennis is proud of who he is. This pride comes from the skills, awareness and support he's received through AuSM's programs.

We came to AuSM with little understanding of autism, and what we could do to help Dennis. We discovered a treasure of resources for us as well in their Discovery Series and Skillshops. Classes that focus on the topics parents need to know to fully support their family living with autism. Parent support has also included a knowledgeable staff, a parent advocate, connecting with other families dealing with similar issues, monthly support groups, an extensive library of resources and connections to other resources within our community including opportunities for continual education with the annual Minnesota Autism Conference.

We know AuSM will be with us on the journey as Dennis transitions from adolescence into a confident young man of tomorrow.

**Become a life-long member...**  
**Visit [www.ausm.org](http://www.ausm.org) for details**

**give** TO THE MAX **DAY** NOV. 16

**giveMN.org**

## Give to your max!

Make your donation really count. On Thursday, November 16, GiveMN is hosting their third annual Give to the Max Day! Help us place in the small nonprofit leader board competition. The top 10 nonprofits get incredible cash prizes.

First place is \$15,000!

**So make your donation on November 16, 2011** through our GiveMN.org page and put AuSM first amongst Minnesota's great nonprofits. Discover your max.

Watch your inbox for details on how to have the maximum impact on Give to the Max Day!

# Why I Give to AuSM...

by Larry Moody

The Autism Society of Minnesota (AuSM) has had a profound impact on my life and in a very positive way. That is why I choose to spend my time, effort and money in support of AuSM. Dr. Barbara Luskin (Director of AuSM's Mental Health Services) recognized a talent in me that I did not, and she has encouraged me to advocate for autism in ways few others are able. AuSM has given me avenues to do that advocacy.

Autism spectrum disorder is not my enemy. It is my friend. When one side of life's balance scale tips downward, the other side tips upward. When we are presented with life's challenges, we are also presented with opportunities. My life has in some respects been very difficult, and in others very easy; a reflection of my "splinter skills," or being exceptionally good at some things and equally poor at others. And all for very different reasons than I thought for most of my life.

I lived most of my life feeling like I was always struggling on the fringe of society, never quite fitting in, and never quite understanding why I didn't. I was shy. I was gifted. I was a slow learner. I was brilliant. I was irritating. I was odd. I was creative. I was a loner, a misfit. What

I really was, was undiagnosed until age 55. Once I had that diagnosis, a whole new understanding of who I am and my unique gifts inspired me to explore different aspects of myself.

I now have a fresh perspective on my world, why I am the way I am. Some would say that I was given a lemon of a life because of Asperger Syndrome. If that is so, then I struggled to learn how to make lemonade! And my lemonade turned out to be quite exceptional.

AuSM continues to support me, so I continue to support AuSM. AuSM works quietly in the background supporting all of us in myriad ways we are seldom aware of. Through educating professionals, teachers and employers on the latest strategies and research. Through giving a voice to the needs of those living with autism in the Minnesota legislature and through support groups and workshops that give us the tools to succeed. Since joining AuSM's Board of Directors, I get to see much of the inner workings of AuSM, and I like what I see. Our vision, AuSM's vision, of the future is bright.

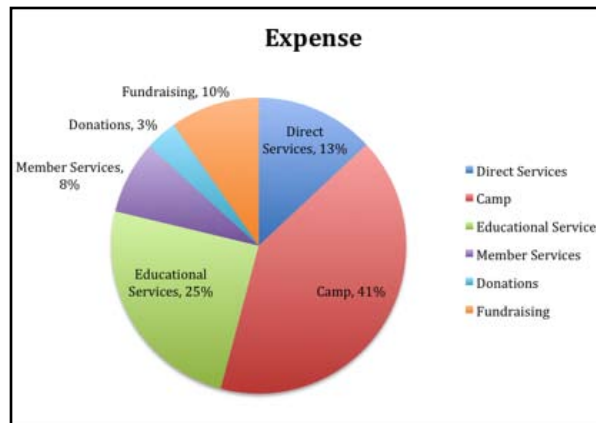
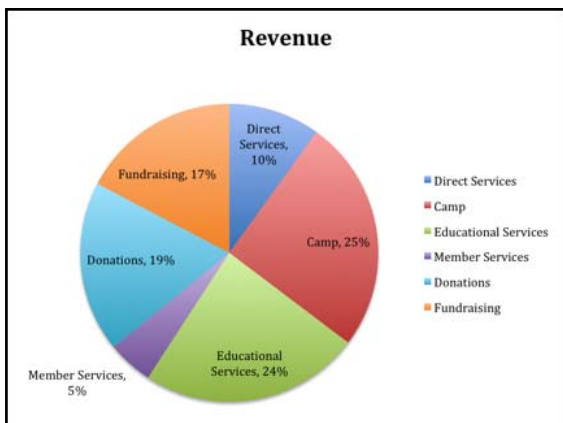
I hope you'll join me in helping AuSM create a more loving, understanding and accepting world for those living with autism, beginning right here in Minnesota.

## Our Donors...

Larry Moody  
Sea Foam Sales Company  
Jeremy Soukup  
Ron & Kathy Colby  
Louis Hill  
Linda Ireland  
Sue Gilman  
Barbara & Mitch Luskin  
Daniel & Chris Mahai  
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Fraternal Order of Eagles  
National Assoc. of Railway  
Business Women  
Karen Miller-Hartje  
United Health Group

## 2010 program revenue and expenses

As a nonprofit we keep our costs in check, maximizing all funds to support programs and services.



for a full list visit  
[www.ausm.org](http://www.ausm.org)

# So Many Ways to Help...

Join Minnesota's online giving party! **November 16, 2011 is Give to the Max Day!** GiveMN.org, a nonprofit that gives other organizations the tools to raise funds online, has developed great incentives for you to give to the max for your favorite nonprofit - AuSM! Cash prizes go to the 10 small nonprofits getting the most donations on Give to the Max Day. Plus every hour there is a golden ticket winner: one randomly selected donor wins \$1,000 for their charity of choice. Be part of the largest online giving event, ever!

Autism is a life-long journey. Never lose touch with AuSM. Sign up for a **life-long membership** and you'll never have to fill out another form or have a gap in your member benefits. Go to [www.ausm.org](http://www.ausm.org) to sign up or complete the form below. Because everything in life should be this easy.

**Donation doesn't mean just money.** Many supporters of AuSM give us their time, talents, ideas and material goods. Volunteer at Steps of Hope, organize a team to raise funds, serve on our board of directors, or fulfill one of our wish list items. There are so many ways you can help families living with autism. Have a great idea? Share it with us.

**Make AuSM the beneficiary of your will or trust.** Want to honor a loved one who was passionate about AuSM? Collect funds and donate them in their name. Contact us at [info@ausm.org](mailto:info@ausm.org) for details.

Visit our "ways to help" page for more options!



Every step is progress at the annual Steps of Hope walk. **Walk with us... March 4, 2012!**

Write us in during your workplace giving campaign sponsored by the United Way!

## Give to your max

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Keep me connected. Join the AuSM email list.

I am a:  Parent  Educator  Professional  
 Individual w/ASD  Employer

## What's your max?

- Life-Long Membership (\$75/year) automatic renewal (credit card only)
- Yearly Membership (\$75/year)
- Scholarship for family in need (\$500)
- Donation for \$ \_\_\_\_\_

## Payment

Credit Card:  VISA  MC  Discover

Card # \_\_\_\_\_

VCode (on back of card) \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Check (Payable to AuSM) Check # \_\_\_\_\_

All donations are tax deductible. We value your support!

**Complete this form and mail or fax it along with your payment to:**

**ausm**  
autism society of minnesota

2380 Wycliff Street  
Suite 102  
St. Paul, MN 55114  
651.647.1083

**Save ALL online donations for  
Nov. 16, 2011 and max out your gift!**

[www.ausm.org](http://www.ausm.org)

# Autism is a life-long journey

Shouldn't your relationship with AuSM be?  
Become a life-long member

AuSM is excited to announce our new life-long member campaign. Just like AuSM serves individuals with autism across their lifespan, our members now have the option to support us for a lifetime. Simply check the "life-long member" option on the donation form, and we'll do all the work when your membership comes up for renewal. No more forms, nothing to remember. And you can rest easy knowing that your membership keeps you connected to AuSM's vibrant community, supports the crucial programs and services you rely on and brings your voice into the AuSM conversation.

Traditional memberships are for one year. Life-long memberships get automatically renewed on your membership anniversary date. Credit card is the only payment form accepted for life-long memberships at this time. New member? Be sure to enroll through our GiveMN.org page on November 16, 2011 to maximize your dollars!

**Because some things in life should just be easy...**

Complete the form on the back to start your life-long membership today!

**Give to the Max Day: November 16, 2011  
Details inside!**

**Give to your max for AuSM!**

Change service requested

**www.ausm.org**

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autism society of minnesota

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