

Autism Society San Diego
Annual Report 2020
Delivered: January 28, 2021

The mission of Autism Society San Diego is to improve the lives of all affected by autism. This mission includes public awareness, education, advocacy and research related to autism. Through our mission we strive to fully include autistic people as participating members of their community.

Each year the annual meeting affords us an opportunity to “look back” on the past year and reflect upon the accomplishments and achievements made by Autism Society San Diego. In 2020, we were forced to cancel or change many of our existing programs as well as inspired to create new ones in response to the covid 19 pandemic. We continued to provide support to the local autism community here in San Diego, as part of our mission as the oldest affiliate of the Autism Society of America, transferring our support groups to a virtual format and working to provide new online opportunities for the community. It is due to the dedication and commitment of our board members and members of our community that we were able to accomplish as much as we did in such a challenging year. The success of our organization lies within the grassroots efforts of our all-volunteer board and our community members working together. There is no price tag we can attach to the value of your impact on the autism community.

When the board convened last January, we set out a strategic plan for the year in an effort to maintain a close relationship with autistic people and their families as well as the needs of our greater community. We focused on several major areas and it is my pleasure to share with you tonight a summary of some of our accomplishments.

GOAL: To insure meaningful participation and self-determination for individuals and their families through programs and opportunities available in San Diego county.

We began the year offering seven different monthly information and support meetings, including: Autism through the Lifespan in partnership with the San Diego Unified School District, North County San Diego, East County San Diego, Spanish Language, Autistic Adult Social Group, Adult Information and Support, and Coffee Talk. Once in person meetings became impossible to hold, we continued to offer Coffee Talk, East County, North County, and Adult Information and Support virtually. Collectively, these meetings provided both formal and informal opportunities and presentations of information by numerous professionals, self advocates, and parents. Each of these groups was chaired by members of the board and volunteers who worked tirelessly to provide meaningful speakers and topics, in addition to more informal support. Board members also provided their professional expertise to these groups as speakers.

We again began the year providing free, monthly family pool and gymnastics events at two locations: Aqua Pros Swim School in central San Diego and Magdalena Ecke YMCA Gymnastics Center in Carlsbad. These popular programs were attended by an average of 250 adults and children in January and February. For many attendees, this is their first opportunity to connect with the local autism community and successfully participate in a community activity, and we look forward to the day when we can bring these vital programs back to our community.

We continued to support recreation programs benefiting our children and their families. This was the 19th year of our extremely popular Camp I CAN-Camp Including Children with Autism Now—summer day camp for children and teens. While we had to drastically change the format due to public health guidelines, our participants overwhelmingly still wanted this option to be available for their families. We offered this program in partnership with the Toby Wells YMCA and Ecke YMCA for 3 weeks in July and August, with reduced attendance numbers and a shortened day to allow for intensive cleaning protocols. Total attendance in 2020 was 34 campers. Our organization provided 2 families with scholarships for this program.

We provided 27 swim lesson scholarships to Autism Society San Diego members for the Pool PALS swim lesson program. This program was a collaborative program with Aqua Pros Swim School.

We developed Autism's Got Talent, a new online talent competition, as a way of providing a platform for the many talented autistic individuals in our community to share their talents and to provide a positive experience for both our contestants and our community, whose votes decided our top three contestants as well as our winners. This event was both a very successful fundraiser and also provided a great opportunity for our contestants to get exposure, develop new skills and learn self confidence. We look forward to an even bigger event this year in 2021.

GOAL: To be the primary source of current, accurate and relevant information to the San Diego community through professional and informal communication and contact. Provide increased awareness, advocacy and communication related to autism.

We provide a website with current information about our organization and related events and information. We produce a monthly e-newsletter with distribution of over 6000. We maintain an active social media presence, with a strong Facebook following, Twitter presence, and Instagram following. Through these outlets, as well as our meetup.com page, we provided information about autism and all of our events and supports to over 8500 people.

We have a dedicated office space with a paid office administrator who provides daily information and support to both our board and community at large. This enables us to provide regular, consistent assistance to the many inquiries received from throughout San Diego and beyond. We receive and respond to an average of 25 phone calls per week and 250 emails per week.

We are members of the Autism Society of California and maintain active representation on their board.

We undergo an audit each year to remain a non-profit in good financial standing. Our accountants, Sonnenberg and Company, deemed the "financial position of the chapter, as of December 2020, in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America."

We continued to actively pursue grants from a variety of sources, including: Toby Wells/Mission Valley YMCA and Ecke YMCA, the Foundation for Developmental Disabilities, the Stauffer Fund, and many others. Grants are an important part of how we fund our major programs such as our camp programs.

We maintained our participation in the United Way and the Combined Federal Campaign, which are important funding sources for our organization. We are thankful for all who contribute to our organization through their payroll donations and to our board members for their donations.

We continued to participate in the Amazon Smile online fundraising platform, and have been the beneficiary of many online Facebook fundraisers in 2020. We accepted multiple donations of used cars. We also receive numerous donations of money and in-kind services throughout the year.

We participated in #GivingTuesday, the online day of giving held the Tuesday after Black Friday. This year, we raised a new record of over \$20,000. We also raised over \$4500 in our year end giving campaign.

GOAL: To support continued research and education focused on improving quality of life for individuals across the autism spectrum and their families.

We provided scholarship funding for local graduate students studying the field of autism through our Bernard Rimland Memorial Research Grants.

The Stauffer Fund Grant is used to provide funding for persons working with and caring for individuals with autism to attend trainings and conferences to further their skills and knowledge. We provide \$250 scholarships for persons caring for and working with persons with autism to further their knowledge and training.

As we look forward to our 2021 Board Year, we have many exciting things planned. We will hold our first ever Autism's Got Talent Live! at Del Mar Fairgrounds in April, and look forward to our second annual Autism's Got Talent this summer. We are continuing to grow and expand as an organization and look forward to developing these events as well as other new services to meet the needs of our constituents.

Thank you all so much for your continued support of Autism Society San Diego and the local autism community here in San Diego. It is thanks to our wonderful supportive community that we are able to accomplish so much in our effort to improve the lives of all affected by autism. It has been a great honor to serve as president to the board and I am grateful to each and every one of you who have made this such a fulfilling and fun experience.

Amy Munera

President

Autism Society San Diego

"Improving the Lives of All Affected by Autism"

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