



all aboard for kids

NEWSLETTER VOL. 4



Hello friends!

As this summer season unfolds, I've been reflecting about opportunity and how fundamental it is to a meaningful, rewarding life. Opportunity to *try*. Opportunity to *learn*. Opportunity to *connect*. Achievements are wonderful but they can only happen as a result of opportunity. **Opportunity enables achievement.** We believe that autistic kids - like all kids - deserve opportunities to *try*, *learn*, & *connect*. Seven years ago, we saw the lack of opportunity for autistic youth in our community and launched All Aboard for Kids to fill that need.

Today we remain passionate about creating these opportunities and I continue to be very encouraged and inspired by our steady growth. Our success has inspired others as well. Dr. Julious Lawson, Superintendent of Ames Schools, who shares our vision and supports our mission, has reserved space for our summer programs at the Ames Middle School.

We're excited about this partnership and the world of opportunities ahead for the children and families we serve!

I'd like to extend my sincerest gratitude to our donors for their continued support. These contributions bring life to our vision for this program! Over the past months, I've had the opportunity to share this vision and our story with several local philanthropic organizations and am incredibly humbled by the generous and supportive responses I've received. We look forward to growing these partnerships to help autistic youth flourish and succeed!!

Bring on Summer 2023!

Lisa McCarty
President, All Aboard for Kids

WHO WE ARE

All Aboard for Kids is a central Iowa-based non-profit organization committed to providing opportunities and resources that support families and individuals living with autism spectrum disorder.

I N T R O D U C I N G . . .



Future Focus is our new afternoon session targeting workplace readiness/adult readiness training for autistic teens. In partnership with other experienced leaders in the Autism community and local businesses, program activities focus on functional life and pre-employment skills for teens who are quickly moving toward adulthood.

Classroom work covers a variety of soft skills essential for workplace success, such as teamwork, problem-solving, and effective communication. In addition, we spend time on career exploration, interview skills and resume writing. Hands-on activities at area businesses will also be included.



Eric Pagel FUTURE FOCUS COORDINATOR

Eric will be our chief coordinator for Future Focus this summer! During the school year, Eric works at Grandwood Education Center as a special education transition/vocational coordinator. He works with a couple of the AAFK students in his full-time job and wanted to extend his reach to a new group. Eric is looking forward to being part of an amazing team and impacting the lives of young people who are nearing the transition to adulthood.

MEET OUR TEACHERS



Monica Jansen
LEAD TEACHER, EXPRESS

Monica is the Lead Teacher for the Express classroom. During the school year, she is a special education teacher at Grandwood Education Center. Her hobbies include running, walking, exercising, bike riding, watching TV, reading, and spending time with her cats.

She is looking forward to returning to AAFK, seeing how it has grown since last summer, and meeting new individuals. One of her favorite parts of last summer was being able to teach and do what she knows in a new setting. She said it was also great to meet new staff, new students, and learn new things.



Anna Eppert
LEAD TEACHER, STEAM

Anna is the lead teacher for the 6th through 8th grade STEAM academy room. This is her first year with AAFK! During the school year she works at Grandwood Education Center as a paraeducator and will be stepping into a teaching position this next school year.

Anna is looking forward to the new adventure, including her time this summer with AAFK. When she's not working, Anna loves reading, being outside, and hanging out with friends. A fun fact about her is that she is a mother of three and a grandmother to three! This summer Anna can't wait to try new things and get out of her comfort zone.



Sydney Jamison
LEAD TEACHER, STEAM

Sydney is the lead teacher for our 9th through 12th grade STEAM academy room. She got involved with AAFK through her cooperating teacher while student teaching, who knew Lisa and got her connected. Some of Sydney's hobbies include playing volleyball and golfing. This summer, she can't wait to see the campers again and meet

some for the first time! She is excited to see their unique talents and abilities shine through each of the activities we have planned!

2023 LEADERSHIP

BOARD MEMBERS



LISA MCCARTY
co-founder, president



MIKE MCCARTY
co-founder, interim
treasurer



LISA SCHUELKA
executive director



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member

NEW LEADERSHIP



KARI MCCLURE — program director

Regardless of the field of work I'm in, my heart is passionate about helping others. I have worked with children from coordinating a dance program for at risk girls to being a childcare supervisor at church. I enjoy engaging with children and families to connect them to the resources that will support them and allow their gifts and talents to shine!



MOLLY LOGSDON — assistant program director

I recently graduated from Iowa State University with a degree in Human Development and Family Studies, a minor in Psychology, and a passion for helping others. I have had 5 years of experience with ASD and love being able to support those on the spectrum through my work!

COLLABORATIVE PROGRAMMING

We are excited to connect with many community partners this summer to provide programming for both STEAM Academy and Future Focus!



Art Therapy with Dr. Nicole Randick

Dr. Nicole Randick, a professionally licensed art therapist, will work with our participants in art therapy. Dr. Randick describes art therapy as being designed to "foster a safe and non-judgemental environment that elicits creative self-expression and the promotion of positive emotional health and wellbeing."

Revelation Fitness

Roni Harless will engage participants in personalized, adaptive physical exercise and education skills twice a week!



WiSE Women in Engineering

WiSE is a program from Iowa State that will be engaging with our students in a variety of STEM-based hands-on activities and crafts!



Story County Conservation

Story County Conservation is bringing nature education to camp yet again! We love partnering with SCC in order to give participants the opportunity to explore nature in a safe and supported environment.



Adventures in Social Development

Adventures in Social Development creates programming that combines the excitement of acting with the practice of learning social skills! Participants will engage with one another in skits that teach them necessary life skills.

Kathy Vince Fitness

Kathy Vince Fitness will bring her fitness expertise to assist camp participants in learning yoga moves and relaxation exercises.



Ames Public Library Bookmobile

Ames Public Library comes to camp! The Bookmobile brings the best of learning right to us with a van full of books for participants to read. Each classroom will get time to browse for their favorite literature!

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Matt DeVos and Sarah Brangoccio

Matt and Sarah are 2 of the earliest members of the All Aboard for Kids team. Matt was up for a challenge and helped us launch our program its first year (2016), and Sarah joined us the following summer. Both were attending ISU at the time and providing respite care to the McCarty family. Matt and Sarah first worked as educational associates before moving into Lead Teacher roles for All Aboard for Kids.



Fun fact: Matt and Sarah are engaged to be married, with a summer 2023 wedding planned!

What was something that you learned, either about yourself or about the autism community from your time at All Aboard for Kids?

Matt: Being involved with All Aboard for Kids showed me the power of inclusion and how important it is creating opportunities for all students. Finding unique ways to bring out each of the kids' strengths and learning about their personal interests was a highlight of my time with All Aboard for Kids.

How did working with All Aboard for Kids influence your career goals?

Sarah: All Aboard for Kids allowed me to fine tune my passion for teaching. I want a career where I can support all students in an inclusive environment. I now have the skills to differentiate my teaching to support individual needs and interests. All Aboard for Kids gave me skills that don't come from a textbook, and I'm able to use those skills to create a welcoming and individualized environment for my current classroom.

How do you think All Aboard for Kids benefits the community?

Sarah: All Aboard for Kids gives kids with autism a chance to experience summer camps that support them where they're at. It also provides neurotypical students a chance to learn inclusion in the classroom. Without All Aboard for Kids, opportunities like adventure, learning, life skills, and social skills might not exist during the summer for kids with autism. All Aboard for Kids creates a safe space for ALL students where they can thrive in a supportive and fun environment.

S P O N S O R S



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LEARN MORE ABOUT AAFK

WEBSITE: allaboardforkids.com

INSTAGRAM: [@allaboardforkids](https://www.instagram.com/allaboardforkids)

FACEBOOK: [facebook.com/allaboardforkids](https://www.facebook.com/allaboardforkids)

EMAIL: info@allaboardforkids.com

HOW TO GIVE

All Aboard for Kids provides invaluable programming for children on the autism spectrum that prevents them from losing essential skills over the summer.



Many of our participants come to camp on the benefit of a scholarship. Without donations from generous people like you, these students would never have been able to experience the joys of attending a summer camp such as ours.

WAYS TO DONATE

Text **AAFK** to **44-321** OR scan the QR code with your cell phone's Camera app for quick and easy access to our GiveLively donation page.



Visit our website at **allaboardforkids.com/donate** to make your donation. One-time and monthly options are available - every cent is appreciated!

Send a check! Make the check payable to *All Aboard for Kids* and send it to 525 Kellogg Ave. #2284, Ames, IA, 50010.

