



All Aboard for Kids Newsletter

FALL 2022 EDITION



Summer Program Recap

Discover all of the fun activities and learning our campers did during our summer programs

Where They Are Now

Meet Allison Robinson, a former All Aboard for Kids intern who excels in all things data

Your Support Matters

Learn how you can be an integral part of creating amazing summer camp experiences for autistic youth



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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Lisa McCarty



Welcome to fall, friends!

Every year brings exciting new challenges and incredible opportunities for us, and 2022 was no exception!

Our “little summer program” has grown from serving nine kids for two weeks our first summer in 2016, to serving 31 area children this summer. This steady growth is inspiring and has enabled us to increase the scope of participants we can serve and expand our offerings. In our spring newsletter, I talked about looking to the future and figuring out “what’s next” for our emerging adults with autism. Our vision statement continues to be our guide:

To equip autistic youth with the necessary resources to thrive in the world they live in today while preparing them for the world they will inherit tomorrow.

This summer was the first year for our “Express” classroom, dedicated to those participants requiring consistent 1:1 support. Due to their specific support needs, these children are all too often left out of other enrichment programs. It has been so rewarding to see

them finding success and fun at All Aboard for Kids! Also new this year was an afternoon Workplace Readiness/Adult Readiness pilot program for our older teens. This was a big step for us and a big success! We’re passionate about preparing these young adults to contribute in meaningful ways, both through pre-employment opportunities and community engagement, and we’re excited about the future of this new program!

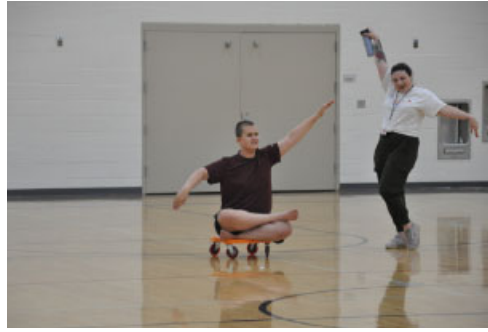
My sincere thanks goes out to all the families, friends, community members, and organizations who believe in our vision and continue to provide support and encouragement to All Aboard for Kids. Our programs are making a difference and the future is bright! Thank you for partnering with us!

Lisa McCarty
President, All Aboard for Kids

Who Are We?

All Aboard for Kids is a Central Iowa-based non-profit committed to providing opportunities and resources that support families and individuals living with autism spectrum disorder. Our mission is to promote growth in all areas of development for autistic youth through dynamic and engaging learning experiences.

Summer Program Recap



EXPRESS ROOM

New this summer, with the support of a grant from Story County Community Foundation (SCCF), we were able to provide a classroom dedicated to serving children intensely affected by autism, with a history of severe social-emotional or behavioral needs.

These children needed individualized approaches, additional support, and

guidance in order to successfully participate in our summer programming.

A key component to the success of our project was recruiting a lead teacher and support staff with the passion to serve and the skills to meet the needs of these unique children. All of our participants completed all four weeks of programming this

summer. This is a huge success, for both the kids and their families/caregivers!

SCCF funding also allowed our campers to interact one-on-one with CanPlay, art therapist Dr. Nicole Randick, Story County Conservation, and Ames Public Library's Bookmobile. It was wonderful to see these kids so engaged and having fun!

WORKPLACE READINESS PROGRAM

Adolescent training programs for teens with autism or related developmental disabilities can help make employment much more likely when the child "ages out" of the educational system at 21, but this type of pre-employment summer opportunity is not readily available for autistic teens in the Ames community.

This summer, All Aboard for Kids introduced a new afternoon

Workplace Readiness/Adult Readiness program. In partnership with other experienced leaders in the autism community, as well as local businesses, we created a program centered on functional life and pre-employment skills for teens who are quickly moving toward adulthood.

Classroom work around career exploration, self-advocacy, financial management, and social skills, as

well as hands-on activities at area businesses was included.

Space to host our program was donated by First National Bank and the Ames Chamber of Commerce, and participant scholarships and programming costs were covered by grants from 100 Women Who Care Ames and C21 Signature Real Estate. We are grateful to these community partners for helping us launch this much-needed program!



Special Guest Highlights

A big thank you to our amazing special guests

Our special guests help create a dynamic and engaging environment for our summer program kids by providing exciting, fun-filled activities and learning experiences.

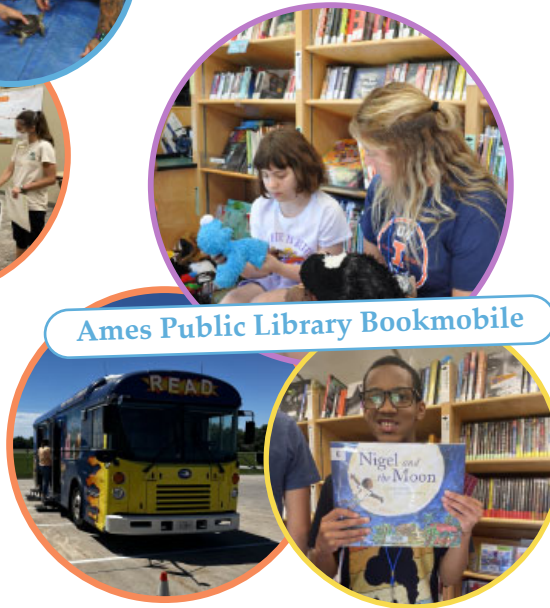
Story County Conservation



Art Therapy with Dr. Nicole Randick



Ames Public Library Bookmobile



Kathy Vince Yoga



Can Play Adaptive Sports



ISU FLEx Program



Meet the Board

The All Aboard for Kids Board of Directors is comprised of dedicated and passionate leaders in the Ames and Gilbert communities. This group invests much of its time and energy working toward helping children on the autism spectrum grow and, ultimately, thrive.



Kate Reynolds
Member

Hometown | Ames, IA

Current Role | Director of ChildServe
in Ames, IA

Education | B.S. Exercise Science,
Truman State University
Doctorate of Physical
Therapy, Des Moines University

Q: What have been some highlights of your board service? What have you enjoyed most?

A: Seeing the growth of the program and going from just an idea to a fully functional camp!

Q: What have been your biggest challenges?

A: Making critical decisions on new programs, changes to programs, and the effects of Covid-19.

Q: What are your hopes for AAFK?

A: Moving toward a year-long program that can benefit young adults moving toward adulthood.

Q: If you could offer some advice for incoming board members and leadership, what would it be?

A: Harness your passion for kids and don't be quiet on your ideas – you never know what seed might grow into an amazing idea.

Autism FAQs

What is autism?

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a complex, lifelong developmental condition that typically appears during early childhood and can impact a person's social skills, communication, relationships, and self-regulation.

The autism experience is different for everyone. It is defined by a certain set of behaviors and is often referred to as a "spectrum condition" that affects people differently and to varying degrees.

What causes autism?

There is currently no known single cause of autism. There has been misinformation about the cause of autism. It is not caused by vaccines or due to parenting style or nutrition.

Almost 42%

OF YOUNG ADULTS WHO EXPERIENCE AUTISM NEVER WORKED FOR PAY DURING THEIR EARLY 20S.

What is it like to live with autism spectrum disorder?

Autism impacts an individual throughout their lifespan. However, research shows that early diagnosis can lead to improved quality of life. Most individuals with autism do make progress over the course of their lifespan. This progress is enhanced with effective intervention and support.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to address the needs and goals set for all individuals with autism.

More than 66%

OF YOUNG ADULTS ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM ARE UNEMPLOYED AND ARE NOT ENGAGED IN HIGHER EDUCATION 2 YEARS AFTER EXITING HIGH SCHOOL.

Visit www.autismsociety.org to deepen your understanding of autism and the autism community.



Thank you to 100 Women Who Care of Ames for your incredibly generous donation of \$5,200 to support our adult readiness program, Full Steam Ahead!

Save the Date!

October 27, 2022 | 4:30-6:30 p.m.
Malloween and Trunk or Treat
North Grand Mall | Ames, IA

We are always interested in learning more about opportunities to connect with Story County families affected by autism at resource fairs and other community events. Please send any ideas you may have to info@allaboardforkids.com!

Where Are They Now?



Meet
**Allison
Robinson**

Allison Robinson joined All Aboard for Kids as an Educational Associate during the Summer 2019 program after attending a trivia night fundraiser earlier that spring.

Where do you live/work now?

I live in Ames, Iowa and I work on the data science team at Meyocks, an advertising agency for agriculture, food, health and mentor brands. My day-to-day includes working with multiple different clients to provide data-driven insights and help them make better decisions.

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

During my time at All Aboard for Kids, I learned I have a passion for working with the youth in my community, specifically those who have been

impacted by autism. Our participants are truly authentic and they are so fun to be around! They inspire me to be my whole self every day. Ever since I started with All Aboard for Kids, I have been looking for ways to stay connected.

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

All Aboard for Kids taught me the importance of data when trying to make a real impact and encouraged me to continue working in the field of data analytics. Additionally, I loved my time at All Aboard

for Kids so much that I haven't left since. While I can't be around during the day anymore, I am still involved throughout the year with all things data. I never would've pictured my career could lead me to such exciting and meaningful opportunities!

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

All Aboard for Kids provides a safe and engaging space for participants to make friends while also learning key skills that will stick with them for a lifetime.



For those who have been impacted by autism or other developmental disabilities, having the chance to come to a summer program where each and every participant is met with the support they need is such a special experience. Being able to partner with local organizations also helps spread the joy to the wider community and provides new ways for everyone to get involved. It really is the whole package!



Your generosity creates amazing opportunities for kids with autism.

We are so thankful for our incredibly generous community that surrounds us with so much support! It's because of you we are able to provide amazing summer learning experiences each year for autistic youth in and around Ames. The words from a Summer 2022 camp participant's parent sums up what your financial support can do for these kids and their families:



All Aboard for Kids was able to engage our son better than any other educational environment. We are THRILLED! He wanted to come and participate at camp, which we have never been able to say before. I wish you had year-round opportunities. All Aboard for Kids is AMAZING!



Every dollar helps us equip autistic youth with the necessary resources to thrive in the world they live in today, while preparing them for the world they will inherit tomorrow. There are three easy ways you can pledge your support for our Summer 2023 programming:

1

Give by phone or text message

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.



2

Give through Amazon Smile

Go to **smile.amazon.com** on your web browser and select **All Aboard for Kids** as your charity. Shop like you would normally to donate part of your purchase. Make sure your link is smile.amazon.com at checkout! In 2021, Amazon Smile donations totaled over \$400! Every cent counts!



3

Give on our website

Visit **allboardforkids.com** and scroll to the bottom of the page. You can create a one-time donation or set up a monthly donation via credit card, bank account, or through Google Pay.

