



All Aboard for Kids 2023 Annual Report



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President's Report



“Our family’s lived experience makes it very clear where the gaps are in our community for autistic teens moving into adulthood.”

All Aboard for Kids grew from an idea and a need that my husband, Mike, and I had for our own boys. Our family was a lot younger then, and we had so much to learn about navigating the challenges of autism. (We’re still learning today!)

In those early days, our vision for All Aboard for Kids was simply a fun summer program with opportunities for kids like ours, to help families like ours survive summer.

Now, 7 years later, those little boys who inspired this program are 19, 17, and 15, and our family’s lived experience makes it very clear where the gaps are in our community for autistic teens moving into adulthood. Our boys have grown and changed so much, and through the generous support of our community, so has All Aboard for Kids!

2023 Highlights

- A new location for our summer program
 - Ames Middle School - such a great fit for our program!
- Record Enrollment
 - 35 youth across our programs, serving 29 different families

- Official launch of Future Focus
 - Expanded service includes pre-employment and adult-readiness training
- Introducing our very first full-time employee!
 - As our Program Coordinator, Molly will help us to ensure excellence within our programs

We look back with gratitude at how far All Aboard for Kids has come and know that getting here has been a shared undertaking.

As we continue this journey, your support remains invaluable to us. I am excited to share with you a little more about our programs, our leadership, and the impact AAFK is having on the lives of autistic youth in our community.

Thank you for being a part of our story, and here's to a future filled with hope, progress, and brighter tomorrows.

With sincere appreciation,

Lisa McCarty
President, All Aboard for Kids

About Us

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to promote growth in all areas of development for autistic youth through dynamic and engaging learning experiences.

Our organization fosters broad greater central Iowa support for the children and families who are impacted by autism spectrum disorders and other related developmental disabilities.

WHAT WE DO

All Aboard for Kids offers unique summer day camp programs for all students, with special focus on autistic students entering 6th-12th grade.

For four weeks in the summer, All Aboard for Kids runs two programs: S.T.E.A.M. Academy and Future Focus.



Our Leadership

Board of Directors



Lisa McCarty
Co-Founder /
President



Mike McCarty
Co-Founder /
Treasurer



Missy Sanow
Secretary



Lisa Schuelka
Vice President



Connie Hargrave
Director



Jennifer LaRosa
Director



Kelly Polich
Director



Judi Eyles
Director



Rozanne Warder
Director



Beth Wessel-Kroeschell
Director

Advisory



Liz Beck
Consultant / Board Advisor

Administration



Molly Logsdon
Program Coordinator



Kari McClure
Camp Coordinator



Allison Flynn
IMPACT Coordinator

Community Partners

Adventures in Social
Development
Ames Community School District
Ames Parks and Recreation
Ames Public Library
Cabin Coffee
Children & Families of Iowa
Crumble Cookies
Dr. Nicole Randick, Art Therapist

ISU Engineering
Kathy Vince Yoga
Nevada Camelot Theater
Nevada Police Department
Papa Johns
Pizza Pit
Revelation Fitness
Salvation Army Food Pantry
Story County Conservation

Our Programs

S.T.E.A.M. Academy

S.T.E.A.M. Academy is our morning program, with a curriculum centered around science, technology, engineering, the arts, and mathematics. We have a wide variety of activities that encourage skills like creativity, teamwork, communication, and understanding among all our campers.

Our S.T.E.A.M. Academy program has two classroom options: Classic and EXPRESS. Our Classic classrooms are inclusive and open to all youth entering 6th - 12th grade. Starting in 2022, we also began to offer an EXPRESS classroom, which provides individualized support and a lower stimulus environment.

“If it takes a village to raise a child, it takes two villages to raise an autistic child. All Aboard for Kids is our second village.”

- Amra, EXPRESS parent

Future Focus

Future Focus is our afternoon session, a workplace readiness/adult readiness program designed to support autistic teens ages 14 to young adult. We are thrilled to be able to offer this program for a second year after a successful pilot in 2022.

We work with leaders in the Autism community and local partners to provide hands-on activities at area businesses. We also work in the classroom on key skills for workplace success, career exploration, interview skills, and resume writing. In 2023, participants volunteered at Papa Johns, Miracle League Park, Salvation Army Food Pantry, and the Ames Public Library.

“She came home with a smile on her face...she said she finally felt like she fit in, and she had never felt that anywhere else before.”

- Kendra, S.T.E.A.M. parent

Our Surveys

Participant Surveys

We strive to provide our participants with enriching programs that enhance skills needed for success in life. At the end of each week-long program session, participants fill out a survey with the help of our program staff. The survey consists of yes/no and open text questions that ask about friendships, learning new skills, and advocating for themselves. The Future Focus survey also asks questions about feeling prepared for adulthood and options after high school.

Staff Surveys

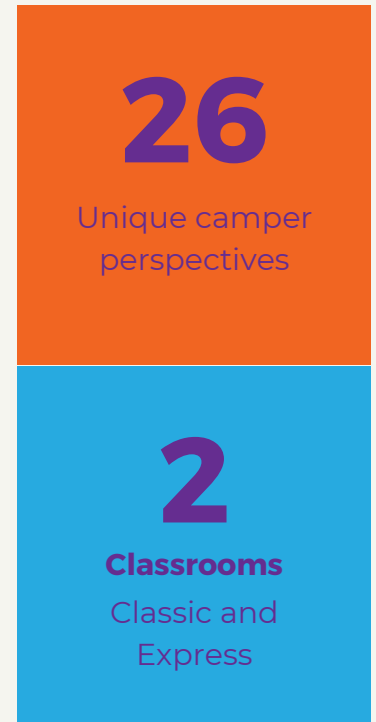
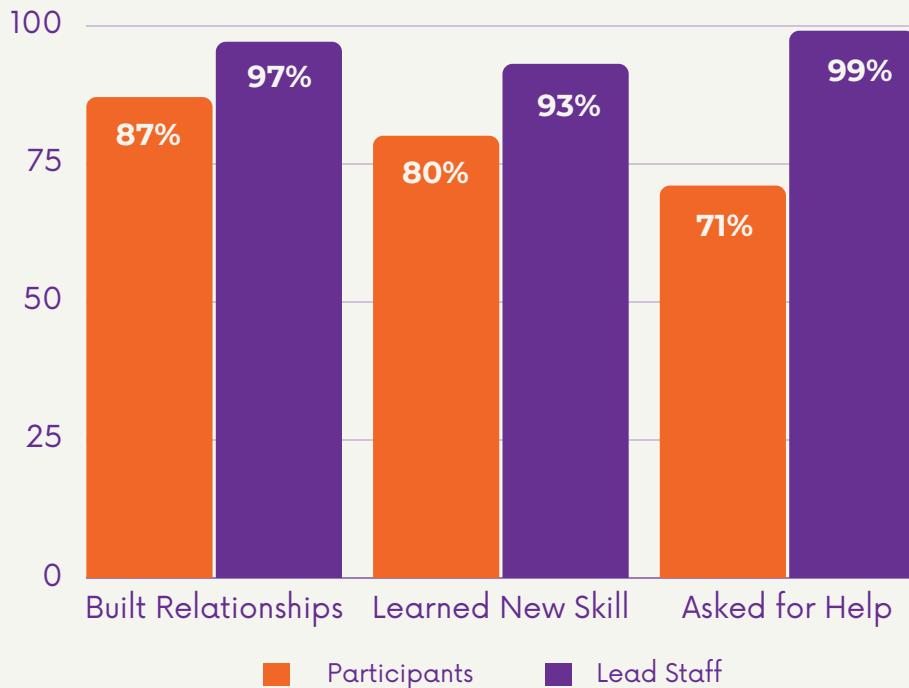
In addition to our participant surveys, we ask our lead staff to fill out a similar survey for each participant. The staff survey asks if they have observed the participant using the same skills from the participant survey. This allows us identify gaps between the participant and staff responses. We also ask staff to recall their time with each participant in a few sentences. This shows evidence of participant's successes and tells the story behind the surveys.



S.T.E.A.M. Academy

2023 SURVEY RESULTS

The chart below compares the percentage of students who reported building relationships, learning new skills, and asking for help vs. the percent of students that lead staff observed using those skills.



TAKEAWAYS

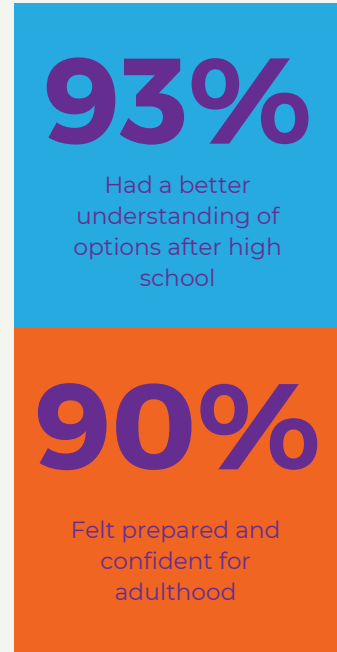
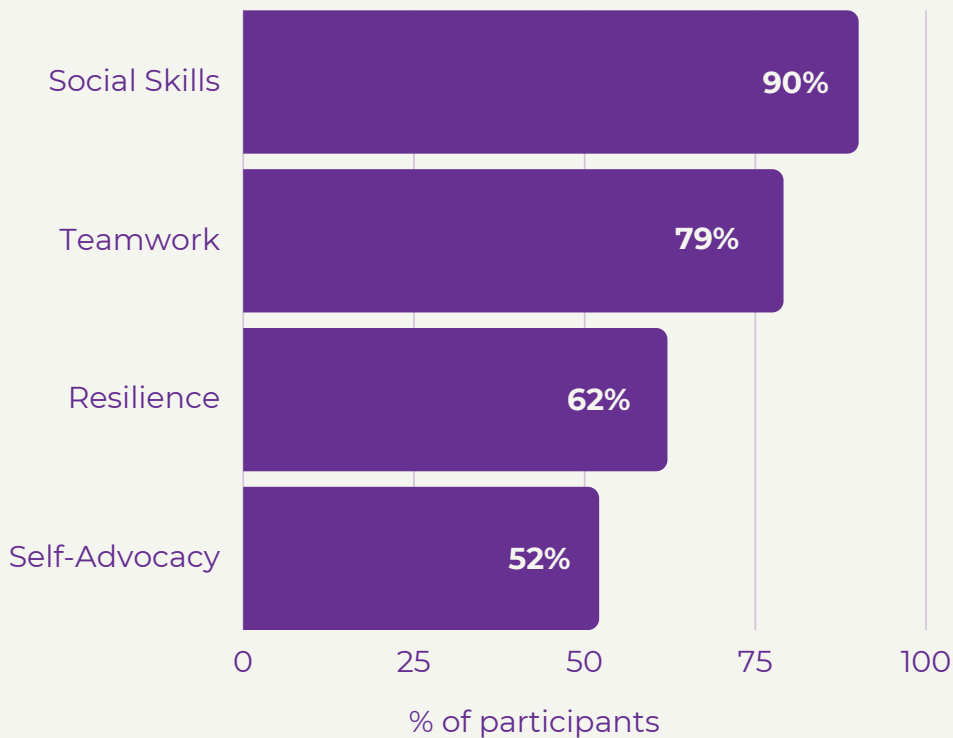
80% or more of participants are reporting successful outcomes in two of our three focus areas - building relationships and learning skills . We are seeing even stronger results from our lead staff surveys. Lead staff observed 92% of participants showing progress in all three of our focus areas this year. For the upcoming year, we plan to review our participant surveys, making sure they use language that is easy for the participants to understand. We expect this to help close the gap between the participant and staff survey percentages.

We are seeing growth in our focus area of self-advocacy. 71% of participants reported asking for help with something they needed, up from 56% in 2022. Additionally, 99% of our participants were observed using self-advocacy skills by our lead staff. We will be exploring new ways to identify self-advocacy behaviors in our participant surveys next year.

Future Focus

2023 SURVEY RESULTS

The chart below shows the percentage of participants who reported strengthening key skills needed in the workplace.



TAKEAWAYS

We are seeing immediate success in our new adult readiness survey questions. After our pilot program in 2022, we expanded our participant survey to include two new questions about feeling prepared for adulthood and options after high school. As highlighted above, we are seeing strong results for these questions already. In the coming year, we will expand on these questions to better understand what aspects of the curriculum are driving these results.

96% of participants said that they learned or strengthened a new skill. And we are seeing results from our lead staff surveys that are consistent with this. Self-advocacy was the skill with the largest gap, with only 52% of participants reporting growth while lead staff observed 100% of participants demonstrating this skill. Along with S.T.E.A.M Academy, we will be exploring new ways to identify self-advocacy behaviors in our Future Focus surveys next year.

Stories of Success



Friendship

"One of my highlights was when one student wrote some "songs" and recruited two peers to help him sing them to the class. I loved the initiative he took to share his thoughts/music with the class in this way! I also loved that the peers were willing to jump in and help him sing, even though there really wasn't a "tune". To me, this was a beautiful example of how comfortable the students felt at camp and with one another to put themselves "out there" in front of peers and teachers. The response from other peers and teachers was great also, they received a hearty applause!"

Skill Building

"He used amazing critical thinking and reasoning skills in our STEM activities this week. The EAs and myself were blown away by his designs and abilities."

"She has become a strong leader in our classroom . . . She has terrific ideas and plays an active role in our learning. Her shy voice is gone this week as she has become strong and confident with our room."

Advocacy

"He has been a strong advocate for himself this week. He actively knows when and how to request breaks, ask for snacks, and follow up on the schedule."

"I am astounded by his advocacy this week. He is very clear in getting his needs met, and this will serve him well in and outside of camp."

2023 Summer Staff

Lead Teachers:

Monica Jansen - EXPRESS
Anna Eppert - S.T.E.A.M. Academy
Sydney Jamison - S.T.E.A.M. Academy
Jenifer Kallio - S.T.E.A.M. Academy
Eric Pagel - Future Focus

Educational Associates:

Tess Abamo
Julie Bergeson
Lauren Byers
Clara Dee
Bernadette Goodwin
Tina Johnson
Carla Murphy
Michele Myers
Jaiden Porter
Sarah Salazar
Bryce Schott
Amanda Segebart
Soo-Hee Shin
Molly Statton

Kelli Williams
Emma Yenger

Assistant EA:
Elizabeth Sanow

Where Are They Now?

Spotlight on Abby Crimmins

In 2016, Abby jumped in and helped us launch AAFK! We caught up with her to see where she is today and how her time at All Aboard for Kids impacted her life.



Where do you live and work now?

I am a speech-language pathologist and the clinical training coordinator for the Speech Pathology Department at the Munroe Meyer Institute at the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha, NE.

How did working with AAFK influence your career goals?

I was already planning on obtaining my master's degree in speech pathology when I worked at AAFK, however it further fueled my passion for working with people with disabilities and finding ways for them and their families to have the most meaningful life experiences possible. Plus, it's hard not to be constantly inspired by the love, care, and passion constantly exuded by Lisa and her amazing family.



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

I remember when Lisa first brought up the idea of bringing an inclusive summer camp experience for kiddos with autism to the Ames area. She showed me a news article about parents who established a similar camp concept consisting of kids with autism and typically developing peers that focused on social skill development, structured learning, and just kids being kids.

I could see the twinkle in her when she told me she wanted to start something like that in the Ames area and I knew it would be a success.

I had the privilege of working at AAFK in its first two years and was able to watch it reach out and give the support that so many families in the community needed. It provided innovative, fun, and fulfilling summer programs that can help their kids just be kids, all while learning new ways to socialize with their peers.

I also loved to see how peer models would go above and beyond in helping their fellow campers navigate through unique challenges, and learn and grow together.

What did you learn about the autism community from your time at All Aboard for Kids?

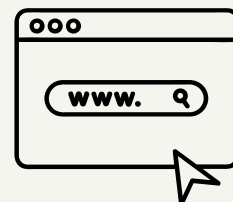
The autism community is incredibly supportive of one another. They look out for each other's best interests and are there to lend a hand, a shoulder, or a special skill set to anyone in need. Parents and siblings of kids with autism, in particular, are some of the most patient, kind, and selfless people I've ever had the pleasure of working with.

Ways to Give

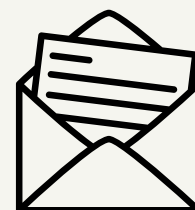
Text **AAFK** to **44-321** OR scan the QR code with your cell phone's Camera app for quick and easy access to our GiveLively donation page.



Visit our website at **allboardforkids.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.



Thank You to Our Sponsors!

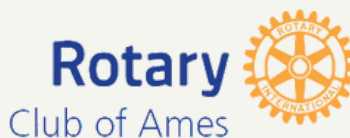


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