



AANE Impact Report December 2018

Thank you for supporting AANE with your annual contribution. Through the generosity of donors like you, AANE has been able to launch new, innovative, and needed initiatives that better serve our community.

If you have questions or would like to learn more about this exciting time at AANE, please contact Erica Remi, Director of Development: erica.remi@aane.org or 617-393-3824 x47.

Recently Launched Initiatives

For All Community Members

- **National Presence.** Our online support groups, webinars, phone and email and Skype consultations, and easy-to-navigate and search-engine-optimized website have enabled us to extend our national reach. Our intended expansion to New York City and Long Island (below) will help us grow our physical presence beyond the New England region.

For Adults on the Autism Spectrum and Family Members

- **Online support groups.** Last year we piloted an online support group for parents, enabling us to serve parents outside the Greater Boston area. The support group was well-received and we have expanded the number of online support groups we now offer. New groups include: adults on the autism spectrum, adult women on the autism spectrum, and Spanish-speaking parents.
- **Spanish-speaking services.** We hired a Director of Programs for the Latino Community to reach out to Spanish-speaking communities in Greater Boston. Our new Director launched a Facebook Group, which now has over 100 members, and she fields phone, email, and in-person consultations and parent coaching sessions in Spanish.
- **Advocacy.** With the help of a board member and our community partners, we have been lobbying for legislative change at the state level. Our current focus is on shaping adult services, and ensuring funding is available. We are conducting a survey to understand the greatest needs as reported by adults and their family members.
- **High School Transition.** High school graduation can be a particularly challenging transition to navigate. This year we held a workshop with Susan Woods to help students and parents learn about accommodations and disability rights in college. We continue to offer private coaching with Jane Thierfeld Brown, Ed.D. to prepare high school students for college. And in the spring, we will again offer our annual “college panel”, designed for

parents and prospective students, where current college students on the autism spectrum share their personal college experience and answer questions.

For Adults on the Autism Spectrum

- **LifeNet.** Since we opened our doors in 1996, countless parents have asked us, “What will happen to my child when I can no longer care for them?” We designed LifeNet -- a case management service to support adults on the spectrum in living independently -- to specifically address this question. The pilot program will launch in January 2019 and provide about 20 clients varying levels of support to help them live independently.
- **Intensive Coaching for Adults.** Built through a partnership with DDS, which already funds our LifeMAP coaching service for adults, we have expanded this service to pilot intensive coaching for four young adults who are living at home and unable to get out of their house due to anxiety and depression. This program enables us to work innovatively with each individual to develop an individualized program that will assist them with their particular challenges. Although we have a six-month contract as an extension of our current LifeMAP contract, we envision that this will evolve into a separate program within our organization.
- **Innovative Adult Programs.** AANE continually seeks opportunities to help adults in our community reach their fullest potential, including employment support and creative arts.
 - **Employment Seminar:** an interactive 10-week course with an experiential curriculum for currently employed adults on the Asperger/autism spectrum who want to improve their workplace social and communication skills.
 - **Google Group for employment opportunities:** we are about to launch a Google Group for adults on the autism spectrum to learn about employment opportunities. Open to any adult on the autism spectrum seeking employment, the group allows AANE to immediately share information about autism-friendly employers and job opportunities that frequently come across our desks.
 - **Group Music Lessons:** through a partnership with Berklee School of Music, we have been able to offer group music lessons for adults on the autism spectrum. This is not just an opportunity to hone an interest in learning a musical instrument, but also an opportunity to form and build social bonds with peers.
 - **Puppet Showplace Theater:** through a partnership with the Puppet Showplace Theater in Brookline, MA, we are offering a creative outlet for adults to work with full-size puppets and produce a show that would be suitable for a teenage and adult audience (contrary to the popular belief that puppets are only for kids).

For Family Members

- **Parents of Newly Diagnosed Children:** We brought back a workshop specifically designed for parents of newly diagnosed children and offer this workshop several times throughout the year. The workshop focuses on answering the question “Now what?” and is an opportunity for parents to meet other parents in the same situation. In 2019, we will add a support group for parents of newly diagnosed children. Through these programs,

we hope to connect with parents early in their learning cycle and help them access the support, education, resources, and community they need.

- **Parent Consultations.** The volume of our free consultations to parents remains high; our phones do not stop ringing. A generous donation from a community family enabled us to eliminate the backlog of inquiries (which at its height was several weeks long) by hiring a new staff member who can respond to Spanish-speaking clients and funding the implementation of an online scheduling platform. Scheduling automation has resulted in a decrease of the amount of time needed to schedule an appointment, meaning clients get to speak to an AANE staff member who understands faster than ever before.
- **Extended family support (grandparents and siblings).** We continue to offer a bi-weekly grandparents group in Watertown and are launching a Facebook group for grandparents. In October of this year, a panel of four adult siblings (three neurotypicals, one on the autism spectrum) shared their first-hand experience living in a neurodiverse family with other families in our community.

For Professionals

- **Neurology Matters in Couples Therapy.** Housed under the Peter M. Friedman Neurodiverse Couples Institute, this comprehensive online training course teaches therapists how to work effectively with neurodiverse couples. To our knowledge, this is the only training of its kind anywhere in the world. In addition to this new training course, we have continued to serve neurodiverse couples through consultations, coaching sessions, and in-person social events.
- **Professional Development for Educators.** In partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, AANE offers three professional development institutes to educators who wish to be certified in autism education. Additionally, we have started to partner with some town and city school districts to offer LifeMAP coaching services to high school students preparing for college transition.

Upcoming Initiatives

Acquiring AHA

Asperger Syndrome & High Functioning Autism Association (AHA) is a 30-year-old nonprofit with a like-minded mission to AANE's and offices on Long Island and in Manhattan. AANE and AHA are now assessing the legal, financial, personnel, and programmatic structures of the two organizations with the intention of having AANE acquire AHA in January 2019. Acquiring AHA will enable us to serve AHA's existing population in the NYC region, grow the number of people currently accessing AHA's services, and bring additional innovative, needed services -- tested and used successfully by AANE -- to Manhattan and Long Island.

We estimate the cost of acquiring AHA to be \$300,000. AHA is self-supported through its programs, and we expect to be able to grow its operations without limiting AANE.

New Constituent Relationship Management System

After extensive research and assessment, AANE has identified a new Constituent Relationship Management (CRM) system to help us communicate more effectively with our community members. The CRM we identified (Blackbaud Raiser's Edge NXT) has the flexibility to accommodate our needs as we grow and fully professionalize our development, marketing, and communication efforts.

We estimate the cost to implement and maintain the CRM in Year 1 to be \$85,000.

Evaluation with SOAR Management Consulting Group

We are partnering with SOAR Management Consulting Group (www.soarmcg.org) to look closely at our programs and determine the impact they are making on our clients. SOAR mobilizes adults age 55 and over to contribute their skills and experience to help strengthen and expand the capacity of local nonprofit and public organizations. Not only will this project help us better understand our program outcomes, it will also better position us to request funding from savvy philanthropists who want to know how their investment is affecting positive change. The service from SOAR Management Consulting Group is offered at no charge to AANE.