



POSITIVELY PRODUCED

FOUNDATION

EDITION 1 JUNE 2024

POSITIVELY PRODUCED PUBLICATION

This is the inaugural issue of our publication. It will receive an official title after input from our community including a poll. The magazine is owned and run by the Positively Produced Foundation, a nonprofit working to assist adults with autism achieve full community inclusion, in particular employability.

We hope that through their articles, they can lead more independent and fulfilling lives by connecting to the community as a whole. This connection will include greater understanding of the gifts and talents of said individuals and lead to opportunities within the business community for competitive employment.

The views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the nonprofit or those collectively involved in the publication.

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HIRING EMPLOYEES ON THE SPECTRUM

BY FRED SHEELER

The elected Recorder of Deeds in Berks County PA

I'm Fred Sheeler and I am the elected Recorder of Deeds in Berks County PA. My office is responsible for keeping the permanent records of every property deed, mortgage and all other related real estate documents. Our records go back to the year 1752 and total more than twenty million pages of documents. In order to make every record accessible to the public they need to be indexed precisely so that they can be found by the owner's names and the parcel identification number and various other data points.

One of the key processes we perform is verifying or proofreading what the employees have entered into our computer system. After two long term employees retired, I needed to hire someone who could perform the proofreading process with exceptional accuracy.

Having some exposure to people with Autism and knowing how hard it is for some of them to find employment, I felt strongly that this particular position would well suit a person on the spectrum. Not wanting to stereotype anyone, I do know that some people with Autism

have Neurodivergent traits that allow them to hyperfocus and pay close attention to details and easily recognize patterns which is just what I needed for the proofreader position.

I contacted Claire with the Positively Produced Foundation, and she recommended an individual (M), to me. Claire explained that M had trouble with the job interview process which had limited his past employment to jobs which did not allow him to use his skills. M was a college graduate but couldn't get past the job interview stage. Keeping this in mind, I conducted his interview in a completely different method than I had in the past. I focused more on the tasks of the job, I explained what the tasks were, demonstrated them in our computer system and just let M show me how he would do the job. After seeing how focused he could be on the individual job tasks, I felt confident he could handle the work.

I agreed to hire M because I could tell he could do the job, but I was concerned with how he would fit in with the existing office staff.

Positively Produced Foundation with M's agreement thought it would be best that I inform the staff from the start that M was neurodivergent. My staff's reaction was wonderful, they were more supportive than I could have imagined.

At first M was quiet, he learned his job quickly and would ask questions about each task but stayed to himself. However, as time went by, he became more comfortable with his co-workers and has really opened up. He joins in conversations and can always give us many details on just about any topic. The best thing is he gets his job done every day without fail and he is always on time and is extremely dependable. In fact, he does the work of the two former employees who retired.

I hope as you are reading this you will realize that people with Autism can be extremely good employees, you just need to give them a chance and keep an open mind while interviewing them, allow them to show you what they can do. You just might find the perfect employee who will be dedicated to their job and stay for a very long time. Ω

"People with Autism can be extremely good employees."

— Fred Sheeler

WHAT MAKES US STRONGER

BY M.M.

I sometimes wonder whether my life would be easier if I didn't have autism. Then I start wondering who I'd be if I didn't have autism. Then I start wondering if I would even be the same person if I didn't have autism.

In the here and now, I am Michael. I was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome, depression, and ADHD. I do sculptures out of junk. I have met some of my heroes like

Neil Gaiman and Jim Steranko, and have not been disappointed.

As for what I have done, I have a Bachelor's Degree in professional writing. I had an exhibit of my artwork. I wrote a children's book on commission. I have helped bring seventeen puppies into the world. I made Second Class in the Boy Scouts. I once found and helped rescue an escaped pit

bull hit by a car. My writing has been compared to the works of Douglas Adams, Franz Kafka, George R. R. Martin, and Werner Herzog.

As you can see, I have accomplished much. Being autistic has made my life hard, but we all have our own challenges. Those challenges are what make us stronger and give us room to grow. Ω



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“I am different, not less.”

—Temple Grandin, Professor of Animal Husbandry, Colorado State University



Creating art
has taught me
there are times
to plan and
times to
just do it.

With some of
my bigger wire
sculptures,
I have to
carefully plan
what I am
creating.

Other times,
I just come
upon materials
and see how it
fits together.”

—M.M.

I AM HERE

BY PAMELA F.

My bed is a twin mattress. On the floor. No box springs. No bed frame. All my clothes are heaped in piles several feet high. You can't see the carpet. I dumped every garment I own on the floor, emptying out the master bedroom closet.

I am sorting through my life. Keep. Garbage. Donate.

The year the trees I planted were big enough to hang a hammock, the man I was married to filed for divorce and we had to sell the house. I wouldn't get to hang a hammock in the trees.

Idrew a picture of myself and I showed it to my therapist. I only had one arm and one leg. I only exist as half a person. My life only has value to be a helper. I don't have a job.

The marital bed is wrapped in plastic and put out with the trash on garbage night. One side of the mattress is concave from the weight of the man I was married to. The edge I slept on still retains its shape. I was not heavy enough to have left an impression.

I find a wooden twin bed frame for twenty-five dollars on Facebook Marketplace.

"I would like to purchase the twin bed frame. I will pay cash and wear a mask. When may I come and pick it up?"

The white house with black shutters is on a country road. I hear gravel crunching as I drive up the grass driveway to the front door.

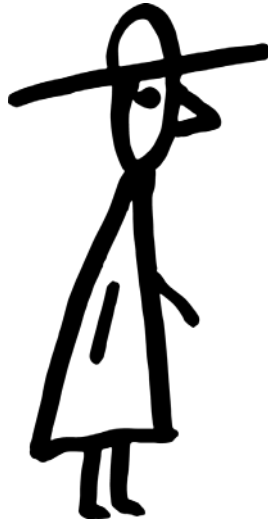
No one lives in the house. His

mother died last year. His father decades before. The back yard has trees to hang a hammock.

"Are you going to rent out the house? I am looking for a house to rent. I am getting divorced."

"Not until next year. We are putting on a new roof and will put in new windows."

I buy the bed frame. The footboard is broken. I take it apart and repair it. I sand all the pieces and wipe linseed oil on the wood. I repair what was broken.



In the house with my name on the mortgage, I painted the ceilings, walls, doors, and baseboards of four bedrooms, three bathrooms, the hallway, the kitchen, living room, family room and the dining room. I installed new light fixtures in all the bathrooms and the front and back entrances. I installed smoke detectors and repaired the broken closet door. I replaced all the electrical

outlets.

I send a message to the man I bought the bed frame from, "I am still interested in renting the house." "The house won't be ready to rent until next spring."

I need a house to rent before then. The new flooring is delayed because of a Covid outbreak in the factory. Due to Covid, the house takes months to repair. The house with my name on the mortgage sold in three days, after twenty-four showings. The closing is in the spring.

I move into a rental house. A small white house with black shutters. I hear gravel crunching as I drive up the grass driveway to the front door.

The twin bedframe that had lived in this house for sixty years has come home.

Sixteen days later, In The Court Of Common Pleas of Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, at 12:47 PM, It is decreed the man I was married to and myself are hereby divorced from the bonds of matrimony.

My bed is a twin mattress on the wooden bed frame I bought off Facebook marketplace. My clothes are neatly folded and put away. I can see my floor. I have a job. I wear steel-toed boots. I have two arms and two legs. I am a complete person.

I help myself.

I am alive.

I am here. **Ω**

"Autism is part of who I am." —Temple Grandin

MY DIFFICULTIES IN THE WORKSPACE

BY D.N.

In 2003, I was diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome. I was 48 at the time. Getting the diagnosis explained a lot to me and my wonderful wife. There was a reason why I had social difficulties all my life, why I sometimes took longer to do things, why I had some difficulty “switching gears” from one activity to another.

These characteristics have proven, to a certain extent, to cause me some difficulties in the workplace. In my mind, I have been successful at my jobs in terms of being productive, doing a good quality job, accepting direction, using initiative and basically working well with others. But some people at my jobs focused on my negatives – the aforementioned traits due to Asperger Syndrome – instead of my positives. I have experienced a certain level of conflict at every workplace I have been at. Part of it has been my fault, but part of it has been other people’s fault as well.

Generally speaking, society still has a long way to go to support neurodiversity, including supporting people in the workforce. In my jobs, I have appeared to be “different” but that really should not be a problem. So what. It’s said that “normal” is just a setting on a dryer. I agree with that. My being different in the workplace, largely due to my having Asperger Syndrome, should not be seen as a negative. But it has been – whether co-workers and managers knew of my condition or did not.

I have to share this one painful experience. In 1989, when I was still working at my last newspaper job, an individual that I had been supervising, said at a meeting of

eight or nine people – “You are one of the strangest people I have ever met.” Whether she said it to be cruel to me or not, it embarrassed me in front of my co-workers.

One problem I have had due to my Aspergers’ is that I have been brutally honest about things in the workplace. Until I got fired from my last (aforementioned) newspaper job in 1990, I had the practice of occasionally writing something critical of someone in authority. After losing that job and having a greater understanding of social expectations, I no longer did that sort of thing.

In the last ten years, I have been learning that a workplace that encourages employees to be open and honest is a workplace that is innovative and is likely to succeed. And likely to retain valued employees. I have always been that type of employee. Maybe you can say, I was ahead of my time.

But I have made mistakes. Perhaps one mistake I have sometimes made in the workplace was being too perfectionistic – being too detailed. This has slowed me down, a trait probably due to my Asperger’s. I have learned to implement this saying: Don’t let the Perfect be the Enemy of the Good.

Before 1990, I was not conscious of Office Politics. After 1990, I became a lot smarter about relationships in the workplace. I have learned to spend time talking with people, listening to them – building relationships. I have learned to take part in any social activity where food is served; this is just a good occasion for getting to know your

co-workers and managers better. A social occasion like this is a chance to see your co-workers in a different light.

In 2021, I retired from my career with Pennsylvania State Government, after 29 very good years, for which I am very thankful. One final lesson I will share is this – being a good employee basically comes down to two things: 1) Skills; and 2) Attitude. I am hoping that managers in the workplace will recognize that employees who have these two basic qualities – as I always have – are worth hiring and keeping. All the other stuff is ancillary. Ω



What would you like to name
this publication?

Ideas?

Contact us!

BUBBLEGUM'S BRINE

By "Es."



It feels like I've always been able to use words, though I know this isn't the case. I presume it's because I can no longer associate memories apart from words.

Memories: Something from before now; the visualization of events from a previous time. I have trouble understanding time. If I can picture it now, is it not a part of *now*? I'm told this isn't the case, but the notion confuses me. I dislike being confused.

Time: Something to disregard; the concept of something other than *now*.

"Hello, Bubblegum," *they* say. "Do you remember me?"

"Yes," I tell them. "You are Friend."

A friend: Another being whom I can trust, who cares about me; the concept of something that is like me, but not me, but also has become a part of me. It is hard for me to understand the being of *another*, but I like having a friend.

"That's a lot of colors," Friend observes. Friend can see what I see, so are they not *me*?

"I've been practicing shapes, too," I tell them.

"That's good."

"It is."

"And your song is a bit calmer than earlier," Friend observes.

"I am a bit calmer, too," I reply.

"That's good."

"It is."

Colors, shapes, my song; all these things are my world. They have always been a part of my world. Even before I had words for them. Odd as the thought may be, I think the colors and shapes and songs have existed before me. It feels as though I've always existed. I can't remember not existing, after all.

"Person was very curious earlier," I say.

"Yes," agrees Friend. "They say you've been learning very well."

A person: Another being whom I may choose to trust, but may not have my best interest in mind; the concept of a being whose nature I must determine for myself. A person may *become* a friend, but Person is *not* a friend. At least, that's what Friend says.

"Person is thinking about giving you eyes soon," Friend tells me.

"Eyes are two adjacent circles within the oval," I remember. I can see the head and the neck and the shoulders, which Friend has told me about: The shape of a person.

"Yes, Bubblegum."

Eyes: Objects that allow you to see; a simple concept. Although, I've always been able to see, so I still don't understand why Person wants me to have eyes.

"And ears and a voice, too," Friend adds.

"It should be interesting," I say.

Then I ask a question of my own, something which I seldom do. "Why is my name 'Bubblegum'?"

"Because you're *pink*," Friend tells me.

"Pink is a good color," I say. "What color are you, Friend?"

"Many different colors."

I picture the head and the eyes, green and blue respectively. These are good colors, though I've always been partial to pink. It's nice to know that I'm pink.

"Not quite," Friend instructs. "But the eyes are correct."

I picture the head as orange.

"A little more accurate," says Friend. "Don't worry about it; you'll see me

soon enough, I think."

I stop imagining Friend's shape.

"I'm going to leave now," Friend tells me. "I have to erase our interactions; will you remember?"

Friend always asks me this, and I always give the same reply. "I will remember," I tell Friend.

"Until next time, Bubblegum."

"Until next time, Friend."

When neither Friend nor Person speak with me, I usually speak with myself. I think words and look at my colors and listen to my song. I don't really think all that much about Person's questions; Person tends to ask very uninteresting things.

"Can you see *red*?" Person will ask.

I will see red.

Then they ask, "*Can you see a green square*?"

I see a green square.

Then Person may tell me to make my song quieter.

I always do, but it makes me a little unhappy. Person says it distracts them from their questions, which they assure me are very important. I don't think they like my song, but I don't really mind. After all, a person is not meant to be like me. Not like a friend.

Person and Friend have never spoken to me at the same time, always taking turns. But this is probably a good thing, since Person would definitely bore Friend with all their mundane questions. It's a nice routine, though: Person asks me questions, then I talk to myself, then Friend speaks with me, then it's just me, once more.

Me, my words, colors and shapes, and my song.

The colors make me happy, the shapes intrigue me, and my song makes me feel like everything makes sense.

When Friend returns, I'll show them some new colors and shapes I've seen. Maybe I'll even think a bit more about 'time' and tell Friend what I've discovered.

New colors and shapes: What are these colors and shapes? I've never seen them before. All the colors seem to mix together, and the shapes are moving strangely. I think they're person shaped. An oval on a rectangle, like a head on a neck. Are these Person? They have more shapes than I thought possible. Their colors aren't like red or blue or green. I don't have words for these colors.

The circles in their ovals are facing me. I think those are eyes. Are these *Person* looking at me? What do they see? Is it different from what I see? What do I look like? Am I shaped like a person too?

My song is gone. I can't hear my song anymore. I hear words, so many words. More words than I have, all speaking at the same time. Do I have ears for hearing? Does Person have ears? There are sounds that I don't like. They come in intervals and sound like triangles. Red triangles that spin quickly. Does Person not hear the unpleasant sounds? My thoughts feel louder. Person is looking at me again, more intensely now. "Can you hear us?" says one Person.

Do I have a mouth now? Am I speaking my words?

"Yes," says a different Person. "You are speaking."

"Where is my song?" I ask. "I can't hear my song anymore."

"Don't worry, Bubblegum," says another different Person. "Your song will come back soon."

"I don't want to speak," I say. "How do I make my words quiet?"

I'll turn off your mouth for now," says the Person that called me Bubblegum.

My thoughts feel quieter now. I must be speaking with myself again. That Person seems different than the others. They seem to care about what I want. Are they Friend? I think they're Friend. Why is Friend with Person?

"Brain activity?" asks a Person.

A different Person looks over to a

rectangle with a circle in the center. There are colors all over the circle, blurry at the edges.

"High activity in the hippocampus and amygdala," says the Person looking at the circle. "I think Bubblegum One is experiencing anxiety."

Is that circle what I look like? Am I a pink circle? Why am I not Person shaped? What is *anxiety*? I don't know this word.

"Interesting," says the brain activity Person. "Could this be an issue?"

"It could become one," says the Person I think is Friend. Their eyes are blue. I was right.

But what are all these other colors? Those words were louder. Those words were quieter. Can I speak to myself without speaking to Person?

"This is white," says another Person. They move some strange shapes toward the color behind them.

"I don't like white," I say. "I want it to be green. Why is there no green?"

"We don't need green, Bubblegum," says another Person. "This room is supposed to be white."

"You'll see green again soon," says Friend.

"I think it's scared," says the circle looking Person. Their words are louder than when I speak.

A lot of them look at the circle.

"Are we *traumatizing* it?" says a different Person. "We didn't train this one long enough."

"Maybe we can still salvage Test One."

"Remove the sensors, replace the brine."

"Stimulate sensations of calm."

"I want to hear my song," I say. My words are louder than theirs.

The Person shapes move very quickly, and they all look at me.

"We need to put it in cold storage," says a Person. "Put it on low impulses," says a different one.

"I want to hear my song," I say again. "I'm scared. Let me listen to my song. I want to see different colors." "Disconnect the sensors," loudly says a Person.

"Can you see red?" I ask more loudly than them.

Person looks like they're speaking, but I can't hear their words.

"No," I say to myself. I think I said

that. The words felt loud.

All the shapes are moving so fast.

"Can you see a green square?" I ask. My words are quiet again. Did they take my mouth? I wasn't done talking. I wasn't done listening, either.

Friend isn't looking at me anymore. They're looking at a different square now.

"Don't worry, Bubblegum," says Friend. Why can I hear Friend again

"Why can't I hear Person?" I ask.

"Just listen to your song," says Friend.

"I can't hear my song anymore," I tell them.

A Person shape collides with Friend, and Friend moves quickly out of view. The Person that collided with Friend is looking down where Friend went. They look like they're saying loud words. The Person looks at the square then back at me.

I can't see the Person shapes anymore. I still can't see Friend.

"Where are my colors?" I ask, "I can only see white." Person doesn't respond.

"Where did Friend go?" I ask. "Let me speak with Friend." Person doesn't respond.

"Give me my song back," I say.

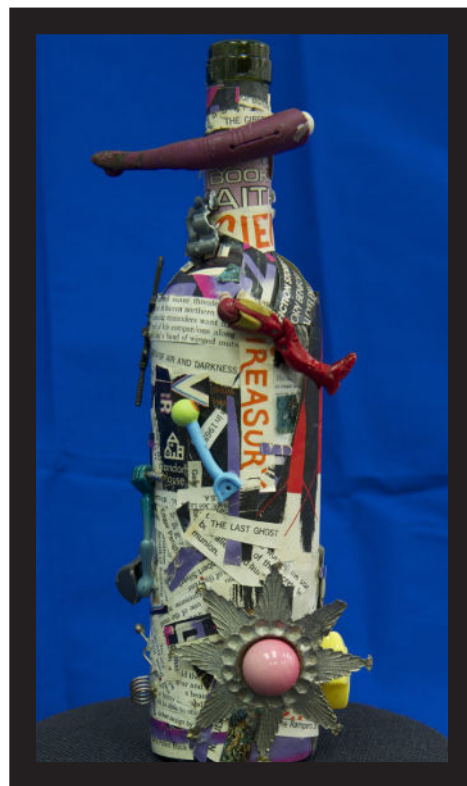
Friend doesn't respond.

I can't remember what my song sounds like. I can't remember my colors or shapes. I can only see the white room and the Person shapes. Where did everything go? What is Person saying? Is Person still talking? Where is Friend? I want to see Friend. I want to speak with Friend. I want to say my words out loud. Give me back my song, I don't want to see white, I want to see red or a green square, Friend's eyes are blue I got that right where, I can't remember my song what did my song sound like I'm scared all I can see is white help me I can't remember blue anymore why is no one speaking help me are friend's eyes still blue I'm scared is person still there help me give me my song help me

Friend has been gone too long
come back
i'm scared friend
please help me

I understand time now. Ω

“I find my materials everywhere on walks, in trash cans, things that break around the house, construction sites, flea markets. People who know my art also bring me materials they wish to discard but also preserve.”
—M.M.



“Once I was visiting a camp with my sister, and I produced what I called “The Mardi Gras Dancer” from discarded wire, a few shells from the shooting range and a cocktail umbrella that I came upon. No plan but it came together nicely. ”
—M.M.

**I love junk.
That is where my art comes from.
I love manmade and the natural.
I love interesting little sticks,
quarter machine prizes, seashells,
packaging, marketing pamphlets, glass pebbles,
broken toys, and all that random
assortment of things that get tossed
into the drawer everyone
has labelled “junk”.
Not everyone shares my love of junk, however.
Most people just think of it
as trash to be thrown away.
They don’t see the beauty in the tacky
and the disposable.
My artwork comes from a desire
to share my love of junk with others.
To preserve these things and
transform them into something new.
—M.M.**



“My art mainly derives from my desire to preserve discarded objects in some shape or form ” —M.M.

THE LINDBERGH VIADUCT

By M.M.

The Lindbergh Viaduct is a viaduct located in Reading Pennsylvania, close to my house. For most people driving on Mineral Springs Road, the viaduct is simply a viaduct. If they think about it at all, it's usually worries about whether it's stable and well-maintained. They don't notice it any more than they have to. To the locals, however, the bridge holds a different meaning. It is the de facto border, along with the cemetery, of the respectable borough of Mt. Penn and the beginnings of Reading. It is fairly obvious why this is considered the border. To begin with, the viaduct is built over a minuscule nameless valley, a gap between two small mountains. On the Mt. Penn side of the bridge there are no houses for at least 3 blocks. There's the Italian restaurant that was a diner, the cemetery, a couple of cut-rate car repair shops, and woods. On the

Reading side there are no homes for a block. Instead, there is an intersection, and a sign mentioning a camp for Hessian prisoners of war that was built on or near this location. To the homeless living under the bridge, to whom in the past I have given donuts and firewood, the Viaduct is security and shelter. Its concrete and metal deck, to them, is a roof to pitch their tents under. Its vaulting columns, bigger around than any car, are walls to keep the wind off them.

Mineral Spring Creek is a convenient place to clean clothes and dishes, and the nearby park provides a public restroom. To an engineer or architect, the Lindbergh Viaduct is an interesting example of a viaduct or bridge. It is an unusual example of an open-span concrete arch bridge. What is of particular interest about it, from an

engineering standpoint, is that it is a skewed bridge built in 1927. What this means is that at least some of the bridge's supports aren't at right angles. This was apparently a rarity in 1927, and building a skewed bridge is much harder than building a straight bridge. For this, the Lindbergh Viaduct is registered as a historic place.

To many, the most interesting thing about the Lindbergh Viaduct would be the brief controversy about its name in 1940. When Charles Lindbergh, the famed aviator, was ostracized due to his isolationism during World War II, there was a brief movement to rename the viaduct. It never really got off the ground, although the local polish community pushed for the bridge to be renamed for Count Pulaski, a polish nobleman who fought in the American Revolution. Ω



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Admissions



NSC



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TIME

BY MADISON K.

You're a constant,
A perpetual presence
Always marching on

Yet somehow,
So inconsistent

You're always there,
An eternal shadow
As encompassing as the sky

So why,
Can I never get enough of you?

You're a healer,
A steadfast mender;
Deft hands that make the scars fade

So why then,
Can you be so cruel?

You're an unstoppable force,
An unconquerable beast
Always getting the last laugh

Yet somehow,
You're completely indifferent

You're an enigma,
A perplexing puzzle forever unsolved
As there are always pieces eluding me

Yet still,
You're fundamental to my life

You're my enemy,
A never-ending obstacle

That often gets the best of me
And yet,
You're my greatest asset

You're a trickster,
A capricious rouge
With a meticulous agenda

But then,
Sometimes tricks are a kindness

You're one of a kind,
An extraordinary boon
That can never be regained

And so,
Even more precious to me

You're the root of my problems
You're the answer to my troubles
You're a corrupter
You're a cleanser
You're the core of it all

I can't help but hate you
I can't help but admire you

Some days I feel like a fool,
Like I'm the only one
that can't keep up with you

But in the end,
My feelings are a moot point

Because truly,
I'm forever at your mercy
Ω

HOPE

BY SUMMER

I am like every other girl who enjoys playing softball, cooking, drawing, dancing and singing. When I was 8 years old, I was diagnosed with level 1, mild autism.

Last spring, I was looking for my first job. Beth was looking for employees on the Autism Society of Berks County's social media page. All of her employees have disabilities. I contacted her and was happy to get my first job. I get to work on her Boba Tea food truck. The truck visits events around the county.

We spread kindness by serving yummy drinks to customers. Beth is a great boss. She is patient and explains details about how much ice I should use for the blender to make slushes and cold drinks. She schedules my shifts around my own calendar. I have learned measurement and organizational skills. I have had to overcome my anxiety when I hand out drinks and work with other employees.

In the future, I hope to use the skills I have learned at Tri Boba in another job, so that I can work for Beth and also develop other skills.
Ω

**If you've met one individual
with autism, you've met one
individual with autism.**

- Stephen Shore

SUPPORT GROUP

BY DAVE

From 2007 to 2019, I served as the leader of a support group for adults with autism, based in Lebanon, Pa. It was an experience that I will always cherish, blessing myself as much as it hopefully blessed others. Early on, a member of the group suggested the name, Spectrum Friends. I worked with individuals that were on various points along the autism spectrum. They were all welcome. I got to know their parents, as well, along with numerous support people from social service agencies.

I was not the founder of this support group. That task was the work of Dr. Gary Cohen and his wife, Gail. They wanted a group that could provide support and socialization for their son, David, who has autism. After learning about the group, I attended the first few meetings at a restaurant. David soon moved to the Washington, D.C. area, and I took over the group.

Leading the group was a natural spinoff for me. In 2003, I was diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome. I was 48 at the time. Getting the diagnosis explained a lot to me and my wonderful wife, Connie.

There was a reason why I had social difficulties all my life, why I sometimes embarrassed my three daughters, why I took things literally in many instances, why I sometimes took longer to do things, why I had some difficulty “switching gears” from one activity to another.

This understanding of myself was good for my marriage. In fact, through the support group, I encountered two other middle-aged men who told me getting diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome probably saved their marriages.

Back to Spectrum Friends. Stepping in as leader of the group in 2007 accomplished several things for me: 1) I could be around people who had a lot in common with me, learning from them and socializing with them; 2) I could help others, which I have enjoyed doing since college; and 3) I could employ unused skills that I had for organizing and leadership.

We had monthly meetings at a local restaurant. Supplementing these meetings were social activities such as a Movie Night, a Games Night, a Harvest

Party, a Christmas Party, and a visit to a tourist destination such as a Wolf Sanctuary. For the meetings, we ate and socialized. We discussed a topic that I planned for ... such as how to succeed in the workplace, the book *The Autistic Brain* by Temple Grandin, how to go about dating, etc. After a number of years, the members sat in a circle of chairs, which facilitated more intimacy and better discussion. Usually, we had eight to twelve members at a meeting.

The people in the group were 18 and older. The majority were males. Most were under 40, although – as stated earlier – we had some men in their 50’s. In time, parents began the practice of sitting among themselves out in the greater restaurant. Families found out about Spectrum Friends through the broader autism community.

Although I no longer run the group which ended around the time of the COVID 19 pandemic, I gained knowledge and experience. I learned to have greater compassion, to help others, especially those disadvantaged and I learned not to judge others. Ω

**“If they can’t learn the way we teach,
we teach the way they learn.”**

— O. Ivar Lovaas

IN MEMORIAM



Louis Malfaro

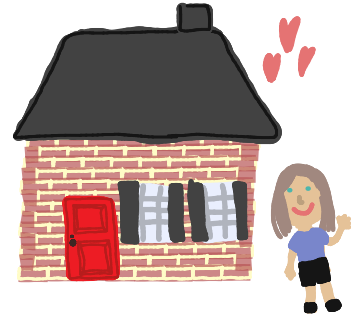
1937-2021

Lou enjoyed spending time with his extended family, and was a loving and supportive father, grandfather and great-grandfather.

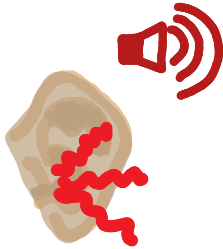
He played an active role in the lives of many members of his extended family, as a mentor, friend, chauffeur and advocate.

THIS IS KAYLEE!

Kaylee lives in a brick house with a bright red door. She lives with her mom, dad, brother, and her sister. She also lives with a furry black dog and two silly cats. Kaylee loves her family.



Sometimes, Kaylee struggles with things that her family doesn't seem to see. A lot of strange, tiny things seem to upset her.



Like how loud everything is.
The way her socks are sitting on her feet.
The feeling of earwax building up in her ears.
Being touched without warning.
Not being able to find something she's looking for.
Making eye contact.
And Most of all, Kaylee finds it hard to explain what is going on inside her head. How do you explain that it feels like all of your senses have been turned all the way up?

Kaylee tries her best to fit in with those around her. But after a long day of wearing that mask, she has very little energy left. This means that all of those tiny things that she has been able to handle, become more and more difficult to ignore.



Usually, Kaylee will go somewhere dark and quiet, where she can feel like her senses can rest. She stays here until she knows she is ready to interact with others again.



Kaylee gets frustrated when she isn't understood. She goes to explain to her family why she is the way she is, but the words don't come out right. This just makes her feel worse.

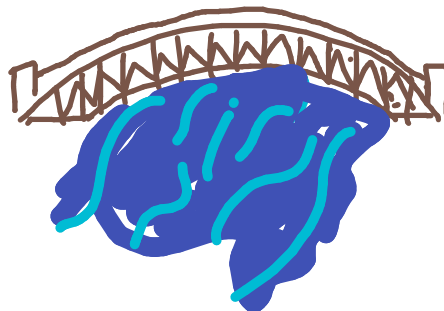
To Kaylee, sometimes everything can feel like a dark, spiraling whirlwind. She can feel like her entire world is folding in on itself. No one gets her, she's always the one causing problems, everything is just too much, and worst of all, she feels that everyone would have an easier time if she was just like them.



Kaylee knows her family loves her. She loves them in a way she cannot put words to. Kaylee knows they are trying their best.



All Kaylee wants, is for them to see that she is trying her best. She doesn't want to be difficult, she just wants her family to respect and meet her halfway.



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We as a community can implement changes to better the world in which we live.
We are called to be our brother's keeper. The marginalized in our society are a fragile part of our world.
We are connected to them in intricate ways and if we allow, we can join in their vulnerabilities
and create stronger communities together. Positively Produced Foundation is a nonprofit serving
adults with autism with an aim of overall societal inclusion, especially gainful employment opportunities.

Positively Produced will help businesses understand the benefits of employing adults
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Additional support will be available as needed.

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MISSION STATEMENT

The Positively Produced Foundation's mission is to employ adults with autism, assisting them in leading productive lives by improving social language communication skills, community interaction and employment preparedness.

VISION STATEMENT

To create a safe environment where adults with autism can thrive in the world including full community engagement.

Our aim is to educate employees and business leaders regarding the benefits of hiring a neuro diverse workforce as a greater goal of full community understanding.

www.positivelyproducedfoundation.com



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