



# Incorporating Inclusion as a Model for Self-Advocacy

Nancy Alar  
Judy Endow  
Jane Pribek



# Autism Society of Wisconsin



July 2008



## AUesome Social Group

### The Idea

Madison, Wisconsin ASA chapter  
Panel discussion with 4 teens on the spectrum in 1997  
How to maintain their connection?  
Provide social opportunity for others  
Respect those on the spectrum



## AUesome Social Group

### The Event

Monthly social activity starts March 1997  
Do something fun and/or educational  
- sensitivity to sensory issues  
- friendship opportunities  
- accepting atmosphere – be yourself  
- panel member parents volunteer  
- How much work could it be?



## AUesome Social Group

### Our Growth


1997 = 4 members; 2001 = 60 members;  
2008 = 158 members  
Computer is key to success: data base, mailing labels, e-mail, web-site  
AUesome Social Group name  
Parents connect on the side  
Newsletter 2 months at a time  
\$5,000 Grant in 2000  
Volunteers and neuro-typical peer models



## AUesome Social Group

### Our Growth

Recurring activities: juggling show, video game night, swimming  
“What Happened Last” activity summary  
Opportunities for panel participation  
Survey members and validate mailing list annually  
13 scrap books of pictures  
Falling in love with this population  
Creativity and lots of FUN!!



**AUSome Social Group**

**Next Steps**

- Activities showcase job/career possibilities
- Publicize important/relevant opportunities
- Tips for running Social Group (handout)
- Expand web site
- Add spectrum adults & aspie support group
- Plan for continuity and funding
- ASW (Wisconsin) Conference Autism Strand

**ASW Conference  
Autism Strand**

**The Idea**

Autism Society of Wisconsin  
Annual Conference

Inspiration from AUSome Social  
Group and MAAP Conference

Vision of participation, respect,  
acceptance, accommodation,  
sharing, learning, companionship,  
fun and statewide opportunity

Autism Strand proposal in April 2002



**ASW Conference  
Autism Strand**

**The Event**

Two days of fun and educational  
activities at ASW 2002 Conference


Planning team of 2 & volunteers

Special schedule for Autism Strand

Panel of Experts & Talent Show

Hospitality room with video games, art, fun things and food

How much work could it be?



**ASW Conference  
Autism Strand**

**Our Growth**


Steady increase in participation  
12 people in 2002 to  
107 people in 2007  
(9% of conference attendees)

Computerized data base utilized

Grant to offset cost for attendees

2 breakouts per time slot, adding speakers on the spectrum

Autism Strand schedule included with conference




**ASW Conference  
Autism Strand**

**Our Growth**

Expanded over time to include:

- pizza supper social event
- art show
- favorite things display
- yearly art mural
- quiet room

Neuro-typical invited to respectfully observe and learn




**ASW Conference  
Autism Strand**

**Next Steps**

Dedicate one of the two  
Autism Strand breakouts  
sessions per time slot  
to adult issues

Encourage and support  
participation of self-advocates





## ASW Across the Lifespan

### The Idea

Desire to make our state conference more welcoming to all adults on the spectrum, including those adults who type to talk and those adults who live independently

(two under-served groups of adults as identified by ASW Self-Advocacy Committee)



## ASW Across the Lifespan

### The 2008 Event

First Town Hall meeting for adults on the spectrum facilitated

Self-Advocacy Strand replaced with Across the Lifespan Strand and Youth Strand

Across the Lifespan Strand based on principles of inclusion



## Three Principles of Inclusion

- The power of language
- Inclusion = Support  
not simply a shared experience
- Support that is  
“only as special as necessary”



## The power of language

Where do the people with Autism go?

Is it really necessary to make that distinction?



## The power of language

2006 Breakout Session Strands:


Educator's Strand  
Family Strand  
Professional Strand  
Eclectic Strand  
Autism Strand



## The power of language

2007 Breakout Session Strands:

Self-Advocacy Strand  
Education Strand  
Home/Community Strand  
Intervention Strand  
Eclectic Strand



## The power of language


2008 Breakout Session Strands:

- Education Strand
- Home/Community Strand
- Intervention Strand
- Across the Life Span Strand
- Youth Strand
- Eclectic Strand



## Inclusion = Support

and not simply  
a shared experience



## Inclusion = Support

Foreshadow what is new at the 2008 conference

- article in Fall 2007 newsletter
- welcome letter sent 3 weeks prior to conference

Personal welcome at the conference

- same welcome letter w/Hospitality Rm highlighted
- tour offered

SHOW rather than TELL answers to questions

## Support that is


## "only as special

## as necessary"



## "only as special as necessary"

- One registration form for all
- Across the Lifespan breakouts in same physical location as other breakouts rather than in Youth area
- Removable paper clip on name tags
- Identifying registration area as place to ask questions/seek assistance
- Have familiar person at registration area to SHOW answers to questions




## ASW Across the Lifespan

### Our Growth

- Follow up article in newsletter reporting on Town Hall meeting
- Participants to receive email on regular basis throughout the year, inviting further input and discussion



## **ASW Across the Lifespan**

### **Next Steps**

Supporting involvement of others on the spectrum in planning future events

Creating opportunities for people on the spectrum to serve in a wider range of roles in ASW

Possible Fall event

## **Autism Society of Wisconsin**



<http://www.asw4autism.org>

