

The Ohio State University Nisonger Center

A University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities

ASPIRATIONS

MISSION

STATEMENT Aspirations equips adults and teens on the Autism Spectrum and their caregivers to meaningfully engage with others and their communities through recreational and educational opportunities, social skills training, and friendship building.

PERSONS

SERVED Young adults and teens on the autism spectrum, ages 13-30+.

STAFF

Michael Valentino, MSW, LSW-Program Manager | Tracey Manz- Project Manager, Lead Parent Facilitator | Graduate social work and psychology trainees.

SERVICES

Group sessions focus on issues of friendship, responsibility, work, and independence. Participants are guided in discussions about vocational planning, teamwork, self-awareness, and understanding others. The program helps participants build self-confidence, learn from one another and establish skills leading to more positive work and social relationships.

12-WEEK SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAM: Three groups of 6-8 members meet once a week for 12 weeks. The Teens, Young Adult, and Parent groups meet on Tuesday 6:30pm to 8:00pm. There is a \$800.00 charge for the twelve-week program.

REUNIONS: Past and current participants are invited to enjoy a social gathering on the second Tuesday of each month .

FAMILY SUPPORT GROUP: The twelve-week program and Reunion events have parallel sessions for family members providing resource information and validation. These programs also maintain parent and peer mentors who provide friendship and guidance. Our family support component is almost exclusively family- driven and parent-facilitated.

LOCATION: All Aspirations groups meet at Nisonger Center.

Women of Aspirations (WoA): Young adult females on the autism spectrum meet monthly every 2nd Sunday.

Men of Aspirations: Young adult males on the autism spectrum meet every 3rd Sunday.

Quarterly Social and Leisure Activities: Quarterly family-stye events that include our Spring Fling, Summer Picnic, Fall Festival and Holiday Party.

RESEARCH: A professional article regarding the program and outcome data from a research project appeared in the journal, *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, Summer 2007. A follow-up article was published in January 2011. Continued research is in the works.

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