

# Social for Adults with Autism and their Caregivers



**HOSTED BY THE CHAPMAN ABILITY  
PROJECT, CHAPMAN'S COMMUNICATION  
SCIENCES AND DISORDERS PROGRAM, AND  
GRANDPARENTS AUTISM NETWORK (GAN)**

# Learning Objectives



- At the end of this presentation you will be able to identify:
- Why there is a need for social events for adults with autism.
- The benefits of a social event for adults with autism.
- The benefits to caregivers when given respite and resources.

# What is it?



The purpose of this event for the adults with autism is to foster social interaction within a safe environment, and to provide caregivers with resources and respite.

- This event was held at three different campuses during the 2014-2015 school year
  - Cal State Fullerton (10/12/2014)
  - UCI (2/8/2015)
  - Chapman (4/26/2015)

# Who hosted?



- Chapman's event was hosted by GAN, and the College of Educational Studies' Chapman Ability Project (Dr. Jeanne Anne Carriere and School Psychology graduate student Jared Izumi) in collaboration with Communication Sciences and Disorder graduate students, Monica Lind and Amanda Lopez, as part of their Graduate Capstone Project.

# Who attended?



- Adults (16 years and older) with autism and their caregivers and family attended the event. There were 65 guests and 75 caregivers with over 85 volunteers.
- Each adult (guest) was paired with a volunteer (if requested) to help guide them through the day.
- Caregivers were free to join the events or to relax out on a patio where they were provided with resources, a quiet space, focus groups, and an opportunity to “ask an expert”.

# What happened at the event?



- The event included:
  - People Bingo, an opportunity for guests to interact and get to know each other
  - Entertainment (Acapella, Magician)
  - Activities (Photobooth, Art, Games, Dancing)
  - Interest Group Discussions
  - Raffle Prizes
  - A quiet space
  - Refreshments

# Why is there a need?



- Research by Dr. Marsha Mailick Seltzer, director of the Waisman Center and a professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison focused on adults with autism and positive life outcomes in the "longest running longitudinal research on autism spectrum disorders during adolescence, adulthood and midlife."
- Her paper found that "meaningful relationships and experience an overall and consistent improvement in the quality of life of our adult children with autism requires that we demand what they deserve: intervention programs that don't suddenly stop because they have surpassed the "qualifying" age and are expected to fend for themselves."

# Benefits of the event



- An evaluation was passed out at the end of the event, the results are as follows:
- Guests 78% felt that they benefitted from the event, 77% enjoyed the activities, 76% would attend again.
  - ✦ These percentages reflect 37/65 guests. Informal discussions were conducted by walking around and talking to guests, they responded that they were enjoying themselves and having fun! Many attendees exchanged contact information.
- Caregivers
  - ✦ Caregivers remarked that it was very emotional seeing their children engaged with others socially. They appreciated the focus groups, and found other parents to connect with.



# What made this event successful?



- Organization!
- The success of this event was largely due to collaboration between the Communication Sciences and Disorders and School Psychology graduate programs, the use of graduate-level volunteers, a small but engaging amount of activities for guests and caregivers, and distinctly separate areas for each activity. The separation of activities allowed for excellent sound isolation.

# References



- Woodman AC, Smith LE, Greenberg JS, Mailick MR. (2014) [Change in Autism Symptoms and Maladaptive Behaviors in Adolescence and Adulthood: The Role of Positive Family Processes. Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders. In Press.](#)