National Autism Association

Love needs no words

Impact & Advances

2019

A 501(c)3 Charity Organization
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The National Autism Association is a nonprofit organization focused on addressing urgent issues that families and individuals in the autism community often face, including wandering/elopement, suicidality, bullying, restraint/seclusion, abuse, mistreatment, and discrimination. Our mission is to respond to the most urgent needs of the autism community, providing real help and hope so that all affected can reach their full potential.

We accomplish our mission by:

**ADVOCACY**
Advocating for federal policy and resources that address the most urgent needs of the autism community.

**EDUCATION**
Providing education & training to families, first responders, and service professionals throughout the U.S.

**DIRECT TOOLS**
Conducting and promoting research that uncovers and addresses the most critical challenges families and individuals face.

**RESEARCH**
Providing direct, tangible tools to families and schools in all 50 states.

**THOUGHTFUL AWARENESS**
Creating awareness that promotes understanding, compassion and respect for individuals with autism.

**HOPE**
Providing inspiration and empowerment through positive messaging, story-sharing and support.

Programs & Initiatives
At the National Autism Association, we provide critical tools and federal advocacy that positively impacts families and individuals in the autism community. Our mission continued in 2019 by providing meaningful awareness, education, help and support to individuals, families and professionals across the U.S.
Nearly half of children with autism wander from safe settings and about a third of reported cases end in death or need for medical attention. To help prevent further fatalities in our community, NAA created the Big Red Safety Box Program in 2011. The program provides lifesaving tools and education to families and schools throughout the country. Thanks to ongoing support, sponsorships, grants and private donations, over 55,000 families and schools have been able to receive this critical resource at no charge, including 5000 additional boxes and teacher toolkits in 2019. However, there are still hundreds of thousands of families still in need of these safety tools.

Each box includes a caregiver checklist, family wandering emergency plan, first-responder profile form, wandering quick tips, sample IEP letter, student profile form, emotion identification cards, two GE wireless door/window alarms with batteries, one RoadID bracelet or shoe tag, five stop sign visual prompts for doors and windows, two safety alert window clings for car or home windows, one red safety alert wristband and a Child ID Kit from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

Our safety programs were made possible in 2019 through the generosity of American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, Vivint Gives Back, Alex and Ani, and in-kind donations from RoadID, Jasco Products Company and the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children.
In 2018, NAA shipped over 5000 Big Red Safety Boxes to children and adults with autism. This lifesaving box is provided free to families throughout the United States, and contains critical tools to help prevent wandering-related emergencies.

Communication is not only a basic right, it’s often the first line of self-defense. Yet, each person with autism has different communication skills. Some people can speak well. Others can’t speak at all or only very little. About 40% of children with autism do not talk at all, according to the Centers for Disease Control. Far too often, individuals with autism who are nonverbal or minimally verbal are left without a way to communicate basic wants or needs. This can lead to certain safety risks for those who may leave a safe place to seek out special topics or places without their caregiver, or if they’re experiencing medical issues or mistreatment. Communication also helps ease anxiety and frustration, promote independence, and provides building blocks for a variety of skillsets.

Many families across the country are unable to attain a device for use in the home, which is why NAA’s Give A Voice Program is essential for many in our community. Our program provides a comprehensive communication package to nonverbal and minimally verbal children. Twenty families received packages in 2019. NAA also continued to educate families across the U.S. on how to obtain communication technology through their child’s school. This program was made possible in 2019 through the generosity of Alex and Ani, GreaterGood.org, and Avatalker AAC.
Since 2005, NAA’s National Autism Conference has brought together renowned doctors, therapists, and subject matter experts within the autism community. Along with cutting-edge talks and practical guidance, the conference is known for its warm and supportive environment for fellow parents and friends.
Held in Philadelphia, NAA’s 2019 National Autism Conference brought together some of the world’s leading experts in autism while giving attendees a chance to learn, connect, and relax.

Speakers presented for two days on a variety of topics like the Power of Acceptance and Positivity, Seizures, Social Cognition, Pandas & PANS, Rapid Prompting Method (RPM), Mitochondrial Disorders, Mast Cell Issues, Life Skills, Cannabis For Autism and more.

NAC 2019 featured dynamic keynotes from Soma Mukhopadhyay and Chris Ulmer.
It is our ongoing goal to educate every person about autism through thoughtful messaging and awareness building. In doing this, we believe mindsets shift away from negative assumptions that can lead to mistreatment...and into loving compassion, respect and acceptance.
At NAA, we believe it takes more than just simple awareness to cultivate change, which is why we strive to provide thoughtful messaging with simple reasoning, facts, stories, and reminders that work to drive a deeper understanding into the world of autism. Our Autism Atrium Program allows us to deliver this messaging and education to families and service professionals throughout the country, along with ongoing reminders, positivity, and inspiration. In 2019, nearly 20,000 families and agencies were directly served by the Autism Atrium Program with resources and educational materials reaching an additional 2M people through NAA’s website and social media channels.

Providing Simple Tools 24/7

To promote safety and well being in our community, NAA works to provide free tools that families can easily download and use that same day. These tools range from free emergency forms and tips to DIY cutouts. Although simple, these ready-made resources are impactful for families facing everyday challenges and often long waiting lists in their local communities.

Promoting Understanding & Hope

Respectful treatment often begins with understanding, and at NAA, we take this very seriously. It is our ongoing goal to educate every person about autism through thoughtful messaging and awareness building. In doing this, we believe mindsets shift away from negative assumptions that can lead to mistreatment and into loving compassion, respect and acceptance. Our team also believes in continuing to encourage families and caregivers to stay educated, motivated and hopeful. To help with this, we created Milestone Monday, a day of sharing positive stories and celebrating victories, large and small.
Providing Criminal Justice Training

In 2019, NAA provided training to close to 700 criminal justice professionals, which covered the signs of autism, missing-person response, prevention, and tips for interaction. In addition, our team continued to provide agencies with our extensive library of resources, toolkits, and educational handouts for caregivers.

Offering Free Toolkits to Families

NAA continued to provide free downloadable toolkits in 2019, along with our safety series brochure suite. In addition, families were given access to NAA’s live webinars and archives featuring guest presenters and experts on a range of topics.

Providing Updates & Case Data

Each year, NAA provides agencies with research and case data on autism-related wandering and missing person reports, as well as ongoing intake notifications to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. This year, we also worked with partner organizations to secure appropriated funding for the enacted Kevin’s & Avonte’s Law, which provides grants to law enforcement agencies and other organizations in an effort to combat wandering incidents & fatalities.
As a parent-run organization, hope is at the center of everything we do for the 1 in 59 families affected by autism. It drives us to initiate important national conversations, to push for better solutions, to strengthen our families and community, and to provide real tools and assistance that can be immediately felt on the ground.
In 2019, NAA welcomed Kerry Magro as its National Outreach Liaison and the newest member of its Board of Directors. As a long-time self-advocate, Kerry brings a strong voice of hope, positivity, and progress to the NAA community and beyond.
2018 Income

Retail Partners/Sponsors $ 243,946
Major Gifts, Grants, Other $ 147,899
Donated Goods $ 6,000

Total $ 397,845

2018 Expenses

Programs $ 345,800
Management & General $ 68,841
Fundraising $ 15,960

Total $ 430,601

Net Assets for 2018 $ 358,867

Net of Income $ 397,845 - $ 430,601 = $ 32,756

Net of Expenses $ 345,800 + $ 68,841 + $ 15,960 = $ 430,601

Net Assets for 2018 = $ 358,867

NAA 2018 Income

- Partners/Sponsors 61%
- In-Kind Donations 2%
- Major Gifts/Grants 37%

NAA 2018 Expenses

- Programs 80%
- Management & General 16%
- Fundraising 4%
You may have noticed a theme throughout our Impact Report this year. That theme is love, a most versatile word. Many of us use that word countless times a day without even thinking about it. We love our children, our family and friends, we love our favorite dessert, or to binge-watch a great show over the weekend, and of course we click that “love” button on social media posts more often than we might care to admit.

But in the pages of this report, we’re diving a little deeper into what love has come to mean for us since the National Autism Association was founded. Love has always been the driving force behind everything we do. As a parent-founded organization, love is the foundation we were built on in 2003 and that foundation stands as strong as ever thanks to each of you through your ongoing support of NAA’s programs.

So for every time you’ve shared our resources with families who need them, made a donation, started an online fundraising campaign, raised your voice to help pass important legislation, and hit that love button on one of our social media accounts, thank you! Thank you for sharing the love!

With hope,

Wendy Fournier

THANK YOU!