

CASD CHAT E-Newsletter

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CASD Chat June 2024: Celebrating Neurodiverse and/or Gender-Diverse Visual Artists



VisAbility Art Lab offers a supportive studio environment for artists, including neurodiverse individuals and gender-diverse individuals to create art and develop their skills. Integrated into the Rockville non-profit organization VisArts, the program provides resources like studio space, art supplies, workshops, and mentorship, fostering career development and self-advocacy. Since its inception in 2015, it has grown from four to over 30 participants, promoting camaraderie, accountability, and professional growth. Lab artists have opportunities for exhibitions, peer feedback, and have earned over \$22,500 from art sales. Additionally, they've garnered recognition for their work, including features in the Prime Video series "As We See It" and participation in mural design projects.

I had the pleasure of visiting the VisAbility Lab and speaking with some of the artists. The art lab has a lively atmosphere, full of colorful artwork on display and available for purchase and busy with artists focused on their individual work.

Justin Valenti was creating a vibrant fluid art painting when I arrived. He shared that his favorite part of coming to the VisAbility Lab is the community that the studio provides. He has made lasting friendships with other lab artists, and enjoys his time spent socializing with them

both in and outside of the studio. Justin has tried a broad range of art forms including fused glass, ceramics, and digital art and has been able to utilize art as a means to express his feelings and emotions. Justin is engaged in the community as a self-advocate for autistic people with People on the Go and he is one of the drummers in a band called Neurodiversity. Justin also graduated from The Arc



Justin Valenti, Nighttime Campfire, 2023, Fluid Painting on Canvas, 16x20

Maryland's Partners in Policymaking program in 2019, and participated in job training with project SEARCH, leading to his position at NIH where he uses his graphic design skills. He has been coming to VisAbility Lab for years, and still prioritizes making art at the lab on his weekly day off.

Jared Max has been creating art since he was four and has experience in animation and digital art among many other art modalities. He has recently been creating a series with ink on paper called "The Gemorphs" where he is exploring different colors with crisp lines. He showed me multiple pictures in this series, all thoughtfully named and memorizing to look at with intricate details and incredible



Jared Max-Opallomorph2-2024-Ink on Paper-9x11

precision. Jared encourages other autistic and neurodivergent artists to keep trying different art forms until you find something that works for you.

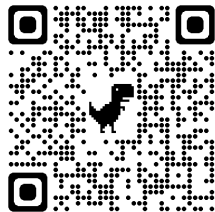
Maven Kahn was skeptical when she first discovered the VisAbility Lab online nearly 10 years ago. As a transgender and neurodiverse person, Maven had a history of negative experiences with harmful institutions that discriminated against her and tried to squeeze her into a box. Not deterred, Maven decided to apply to the VisAbility Lab

program and immediately felt this space was different. When asked about this, she shared “society has a tendency to talk down to neurodivergent people and talk to them like kids, but VisAbility Lab gives people actual opportunities to get art into a professional setting.” Maven has participated in multiple art shows including a solo exhibit at the VisArts Common Grounds Gallery. Maven is also now an employee at VisArts, where she teaches classes on how to upcycle alternative clothing.



Maven Kahn, *Sun Setting on a Distant World*, 2019, Acrylic on Canvas, 16x20

You can read more about the VisAbility Art Lab, explore joining the program, check out accessible art classes, and view and purchase [here](#).



If you have feedback or suggestions, please scan the QR code or **CLICK HERE** to complete the survey! Thank you!

This article was developed by Sarah Buonanno, LCSW-C, LICSW with the assistance of CASD research coordinators, Andrea Lopez, B.S., Laura Campos, B.A., and Hannah Behar, B.S.

2024 Calendar of Events

Pathfinders for Autism and Child’s Heart Yoga

Pathfinders for Autism and Child’s Heart Yoga are teaming up for a series of FREE yoga classes to provide a much needed mental health break for everyone. It is free virtual, all ages, family friendly yoga class taught by Bridget Strama of Child’s Heart Yoga.

Link to register: <https://pathfindersforautism.org/tgif-yoga/>

Location: Zoom

Date: Friday, June 14, 2024 at 4:30 pm

***Note:** Continues into July and August



Special Needs Undergraduate Swim Lessons (SNUGS)

SNUGS at Georgetown University is a student organization offering free, one-on-one swim lessons to children with disabilities in the Washington, D.C. community, but families do not need to live in DC. Additional information is available [here](#).

Interested participants can contact the current SNUGS student president, Makenzie Thomas with questions at mst82@georgetown.edu.

Parent/Child Journey

Every Monday at 1:00pm EST

Join other parents and Dr. Dan for a participant-led discussion. Different themes are selected by the group each week. Share experiences and ideas. Support each other. Brainstorm solutions. You are not alone.

Dr. Shapiro is offering new courses for parents of different age groups on a wide range of topics (for a fee). More information on various programs can be found on his website: <http://www.parentchildjourney.com/>

Ivymount Spring Educational & Therapeutic Programs

Register: Click [HERE](#) to learn more about the educational and therapeutic programs. Ivymount has also developed a resource guide with information on various community programs: [Outreach Resource Guide 2024 Now Available - Ivymount Organization](#)

Ivymount's individual and group programs are designed for Neurodivergent individuals and their families and are provided by our expert teachers and therapists. With defined goals and objectives, Ivymount provides Unstuck & On Target! executive function groups, Applied Unstuck executive function groups, Self-Advocacy Programs, Friendship and Conversation Programs, and Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy and Tutoring across various ages.

Questions? Email outreach@ivymount.org

Partners in Policymaking

Where: In Person & Virtual Events

When: January 2024 - September 2024

Take your advocacy to new heights through Partners in Policymaking®! Maryland's year-long program prepares adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), parents, and family members of children and adults with IDD to be effective advocates at the local, state, and federal levels. Through 12 sessions, Partners in Policymaking® participants will learn about

systems change: creating, working towards, and achieving a vision of shared values about people with disabilities. Partners graduates often become lifelong and long-term agents of change in the community. Partners in Policymaking® is free for participants due to the incredible financial support of the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council, with each spot in the program valued at over \$6,000. Applications for the 2023-24 Partners class are now open! Be sure to apply by October 16th at noon to participate in the upcoming class.

To apply and read more, [click here](#).

DC Peer Programs for Neurodivergent Youth & Adults

DC Peers is a community organization that offers social meetups, learning workshops, and a welcoming community to neurodiverse groups of teens and adults. Our neurodiverse staff have a lot of personal and lived experience with autism, ADHD, and other neurological differences, and we understand and embrace neurodivergent ways of being in the world. In our groups, folks can be themselves and connect – outside of clinics and therapeutic settings.

Register [here](#) for the following programs:

- Social Meetups
 - middle school, art, games, dungeons and dragons, teens discord and adult meetups
- Support Groups and Facilitated Discussions
 - Teen and adult neurodiversity, women and non-binary persons support, and parent circle
- Neurodiversity Workshops
- Social Strategies Workshops

Participate in Research

Unstuck & On Target High School Project

There is an exciting new research project from Children's National Hospital and we are looking to partner with local high schools in the DC Metro area!

Unstuck & On Target: High School Curriculum

Understanding Your Thinking Style & Getting What You Need

Flexible Thinking, Self-Advocacy, Neurodiversity, Managing Mismatches

Tools to Keep You On Target

Time Management, Handling Stress, Motivation, Reminder Systems

Tools for Working With Others

Relationship Builders, How & When to Compromise

Planning Your Goal and Putting Your Plan Into Action

SMART Goal Setting, Seeing the Big Picture & Important Details, Recognizing Planning Dangers, Making & Trying Out Your Plan A/B/C

In partnership with educators, autistic youth, and their families, autism experts from Children's National Hospital have developed an upward extension of the

school-based *Unstuck and On Target!* curriculum for **diploma-track, autistic high school students needing executive function and socio-emotional support**. This research-based curriculum is designed to be taught at school and targets transition-readiness skills such as self-advocacy, flexible problem-solving, time management, and independent goal-setting and planning skills.

We have received funding from the National Institutes of Mental Health to evaluate the (free) curriculum on a larger scale, and **we are looking for schools to partner with**. Once we receive approval from the school district, we will provide participating schools with free training, materials, and ongoing support for school staff to teach *Unstuck* at local schools.

If you are a teacher or parent and are interested in hearing more about how to bring *Unstuck* to your high school or school district, please contact Hannah Behar at hbehar@childrensnational.org.

Praise from Parents & Teens



ASD Research Study

Are you and your child interested in learning about the brain? Is your child 7-17 years old? Are they on the Autism Spectrum? The George Washington University and George Mason University team would like to invite you and your children to play child-friendly computer games while tracking their brain function. The team pays \$20/per hour for participation!



Paid Research Study for Kids 7-17. Earn up to \$120 for participation!

Interested? Contact:

- andilab@gwu.edu

Or click [here](#) to visit the website!

Daily Living Skills Study

The purpose of this research study is to gain insight into what daily living skills are important to you, and what is the best way to write questions about daily living skills for a new questionnaire.

We are recruiting 18-30 year olds

If you are interested in participating, please contact Jamie Kleiner:

- Email: dailylivingskills@chop.edu

ASD Research Study - DSCN Lab

Dr. Elizabeth Redcay at the University of Maryland, College Park and her team are studying behavioral and brain responses in children and adolescents on the autism spectrum during social interactions. Participation involves virtual visits, in-person visits, and longitudinal virtual follow ups over the course of about two years. Families can earn up to \$100 for their time.



We are recruiting 11-14 year olds with an autism diagnosis.

If you are interested in participating, please contact Kayla Pereira:

- Email: marylandbrainstudy@umd.edu

Unstuck & On Target Resources



A resource for **TEACHERS!**

- Free, asynchronous, online educator training
- First 600 to finish get 3.5 free CE credits!

Unstuck Elementary is a Tier 2 executive functioning curriculum

- Planning
- Transitioning
- Following directions

Click here

"One student had three meltdowns per day, and Unstuck reduced her outbursts to two a quarter."



A resource for **PARENTS!**

Free, online supports for preventing overload, compromising and staying motivated

Created by parents, educators, and experts

- 15 3-5 min videos
- 5 also in Spanish
- Tip sheets

Click here

"The videos made me feel less alone, and hopeful that there are more things I can try to help [my child]."

¡Feliz Mes de la Herencia Hispana!

Explora nuestros recursos en Español:

- Videos en Español
- Manual para padres en Español

Haga clic aquí

Unstuck Elementary es un plan de estudios de la función ejecutiva de Tier 2 para estudiantes neurodivergentes

A continuación: Todos los videos traducidos al Español Grabación de seminarios web en Español para implementadores

"Un estudiante tuvo tres crisis por día y Unstuck redujo sus arrebatos a dos por trimestre".

Un recurso para PADRES

- Apoyos gratuitos en línea para padres de niños con dificultades para manejar las emociones, concentrarse, hacer planes y más

Creado por padres, educadores y expertos.

- 5 videos de 3-5 minutos en español
- Hojas de consejos

Haga clic aquí

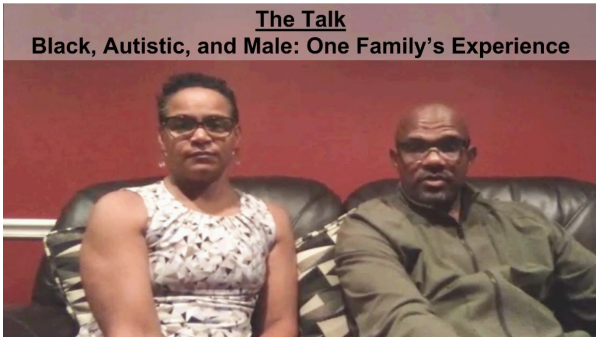
"Los videos me hicieron sentir menos solo... y con la esperanza de que hay más cosas que puedo intentar para ayudar [a mi hijo]."

The *Unstuck* author team has created short videos to help parents of children with executive functioning difficulties. Please click the playlists below to view the videos in both English and Spanish! **We have added new videos to address feedback from parents. Please click on our playlist to view our new 3-part video series on "troubleshooting."**



Playlist of all videos

Recursos para padres



Click here for the video

The Talk—Black, Autistic, and Male: One Family's Experience
 We would like to share an interview with a family of a college-bound autistic young adult and an accompanying reflection by Tawara Goode, Director of the National Center for Cultural Competence and Director of the Georgetown University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities.

Additional Resources

Social Thinking Free Resources

For over 25 years **Social Thinking** has been a guiding resource for schools,

clinics, and families around the world, and they're here for you, too! Their Free Stuff Portal is filled to the brim with teaching ideas and resources to foster the development of students' social competencies. Discover free support strategies to use with your students, clients and children.

[Click here](#) to view Hundreds of Free Resources

Ivymount Outreach Resource Guide

[Ivymount Community Outreach](#) partners with service providers to bring families a helpful one-stop spot for information. The Outreach Resource Guide 2023 is an online tool with information on 70 plus diverse organizations that provide specialized services. The Guide includes provider descriptions and links that help you easily navigate to meaningful supports.

[Click here](#) to view the Ivymount Outreach Resource Guide

Arc Maryland, "Together We're Better"

The Arc Maryland, with its statewide partners, provides a school inclusion program called ["Together We're Better" \(TWB\)](#). The objective of the program is to raise awareness of the value and importance of inclusion of students with disabilities. The program involves a 4-way partnership with the Maryland State Department of Education, the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council, the Maryland Department of Disabilities, and The Arc Maryland. [Visit the website here](#) to see the different components to the program, broken up for elementary, middle, & high school students.

DC Autism Collaborative

The [DC Autism Collaborative](#) (DC-AC) has developed several resources for parents of young children and professionals (including health providers, early childhood educators, and community leaders) on topics related to autism spectrum disorder (ASD). All materials have been, or are in the processes of being, translated into both Spanish and Amharic. These resources can be downloaded as PDFs, though we encourage you to [visit the website here](#) as we plan to update these regularly.

Pathfinders for Autism

Pathfinders provides a list of programs for all ages including video group for spouses/partners of adults with Asperger's; Transitioning services and Job skills; Baby and Family Navigator programs, and new this month, Autism from the Autistic Perspective and free Pediatric Occupational Therapy Screening

xMinds

A collaborative partnership of parents, educators, and service providers working together to improve the educational experience and outcomes for autistic students in Pre-K–12 education in Montgomery County, MD. Free resources in English and Spanish!

<https://xminds.org/>

MCTransitions

MCTransitions is a grassroots listserv for adults with disabilities, families and professionals advocating for adults with mild to significant disabilities as they transition from school age entitlements in Maryland to young adulthood and beyond. Purpose is to share information, provide each other support, and work to improve services and outcomes for adults with disabilities in the State of Maryland.

<https://groups.io/g/MCTransitions>

20+ free resources available to view anytime, anywhere!

Enjoy these [information-packed free webinars](#) on your own or make them a powerful group learning event with your colleagues, friends, and family members. Topics include:

- Working/learning in groups
- Face-to-face communication
- Social anxiety
- Executive functions
- Children's stress
- Self-regulation
- Individual webinars on 10 core Social Thinking Vocabulary

Hosted by Social Thinking

Supporting Mental Well-being

Yetta Myrick, Executive Director/President of [DC Autism Parents \(DCAP\)](#) and CDC's Act Early Ambassador to the District of Columbia has multiple resources to share with families to support mental well-being.

[Tips to Help Parents Keep Calm Every Day](#)

Additional Resources

Advocacy Resources

[Autistic Self Advocacy Network-Navigating College: A Handbook on Self Advocacy](#)

Resources on Anti-Racism

[Spectrum Support's Social Stories on Racism](#)

[ASAN's What is Police Violence?: A Plain Language Booklet](#)

[@TheMorganCruise Worksheets for Black Children](#)

COVID-19 Safety Resources

[Behavioral Directions LLC's Safety Teaching Protocol](#)

COVID-19 National and Local Government Resources

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

[World Health Organization](#)

[DC Department of Health](#)

[Maryland Department of Health](#)

[Virginia Department of Health](#)

[U.S Department of Education's Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\) Part C Dispute Resolution Procedures](#)

[U.S Department of Education's Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\) Part B Dispute Resolution Procedures](#)

[Visit Children's National Hospital COVID-19 Resources](#)

Children's National Hospital, Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders | 15245 Shady Grove Road, Suite 350 | Rockville, MD 20850 US

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