**HOLYOKE AUTISM PROGRAM NEWS**

*Monthly Happenings!*

**June's Shining Star: Michael Cadigan!!**

I would like to introduce June’s Shining Star, Michael Cadigan!! Michael is 6th grade student in Ms. Lentes’ room at Donahue School, & one of the shining stars of his classroom! Michael is a happy & friendly guy, who loves to learn. He just made honor roll for his second time this year! One of his favorite things to do during down time is look up new places on Google Earth. Michael is always a willing participant in classroom activities, such as cooking & has become very interested in trying new foods!

Michael agreed to take a few minutes away from his busy schedule of learning & hanging out with his classmates to answer a few questions about his school experience:

1. **What is your favorite subject at school?**
   *I like Reading.*

2. **What do you think is the hardest thing about school?**
   *ELA-Writing*

3. **What are your favorite things to do?**
   *I love to play Minecraft at home!*

4. **What are you looking forward to this summer?**
   *I am going to Ocean City!*

5. **Who is your hero?**
   *Police officers-I want to be a police officer.*

Thanks for taking the time to talk to us, Michael! And congratulations on being this month’s Shining Star!!!!
STUDENT OF THE MONTH

June's Shining Star: Michael Cadigan!!

(Michael with his teacher, Mrs. Lentes)
June's Feature Classroom: Mrs. Xavier's Kindergarten Classroom! I would like to introduce our Featured Classroom of the Month: Mrs. Xavier’s kindergarten classroom at Lawrence Elementary School! Mrs. Xavier is a first year teacher, who is new to Holyoke Public Schools this year. Mrs. Xavier runs an integrated teaching model. Her classroom has a large focus on fostering communication, independence, literacy, math, play, and social skills. She incorporates a wide variety of visual supports and accommodations to allow ALL of her learners to fully access the curriculum. Mrs. Xavier is a team player & a role model for her students and fellow colleagues. Her students are all very hard workers, and they love to come to school!!

Mrs. Xavier was kind enough to answer some interview questions, to share more about her school day.

1. **Tell us five words to describe your classroom.**
   Energetic, exciting, friendly, enthusiastic and always, always, always an adventure!!

2. **What is the most unique thing about your classroom?**
   I have little friends with all sorts of abilities and needs, but I also have some of the most supportive and accepting children I have ever known in my room! My classroom is unique in the way I have watched my students grow to understand and help one another.

3. **What type of strategies do you think work best in your classroom?**
   One thing I have learned this year working with students who have autism is that while there are some baseline similarities the supports that work for each child vary a bunch! Overall, I find that the S'cool Moves movement breaks help all my students, but for one of my little friends with autism the dots and squeezes are absolute miracles when it comes to helping him regulate his emotions. For another, it is the rules ring and the visual schedule he has. Part of the adventure when working with all of my students is figuring out what makes them tick not only as learners but as people!

4. **What is the most exciting part of your school week?**
   There truly are so many parts of my week that I look forward to. There is something special about the morning, though. The first minutes when I go to greet my students in the cafeteria after breakfast are awesome! They are so excited to see each other and to see me and be in school! It makes me feel like I have done something right this year if they are so happy to be in school every morning.
5. Can you share with us a success story in your teaching?
This is my first ever year of teaching, and I have a classroom with a drastic variety of needs and abilities so I am extremely proud that every single one of my students has made progress for their level and many of them will be on grade level when they leave my room! But my biggest success story lies outside of the academic realm and it comes every single time I see one of my students stop what they’re doing to be a caring friend to another child!

6. What do you hope for your students when they graduate from kindergarten?
SO many things! I hope they feel more equipped as problem solvers and critical thinkers. I hope they are confident in their abilities and in themselves. I hope they remember that everyone has hard days and that we need to be especially kind and thoughtful to our friends on those days. And I hope they remember that they always have me in their corner!!

Thank you for taking the time to share your classroom with us, Mrs. Xavier!

(some of the visual strategies that Mrs. Xavier incorporates into her classroom)
FEATURED EVENTS

4/2/2016: Autism Awareness Day!! McMahon Elementary School staff and students, in true McMahon style, ROCKED the BLUE on April 2nd, for the kickoff of Autism Awareness Month!!

4/15/2016: 26th Annual Community Resources Conference with Temple Grandin! On Friday April 15th 2016, several of our HPS teaching staff and families ventured over to Chez Josef in Agawam to attend the 26th Annual Autism Conference by Community Resources for People with Autism (Easthampton). Here is one of our amazing ABA teachers, Tammy Fitzell-what an honor to meet Temple Grandin!!
FEATURED EVENTS

4/28/2016 Autism Resource Night at McMahon School! On Thursday, April 28th, over 100 parents, students, & staff came together to attend our 4th Annual HPS Autism Resource Night. No better place to host the event, but McMahon School, which is our pioneer school for Autism Awareness in the district. Fourteen vendors from a wide variety of local community organizations showed up to provide valuable information & resources to families. Our warmest appreciation to all who came out to support this wonderful program!
UPCOMING EVENTS

June 15th 6pm: Read to Rover Event!
Read to Rover is an event for children with autism, brought to you by Chicopee’s Light It Up Blue and the Chicopee Public Library. Come and read to trained pediatric therapy dogs, Stanley and Sadie—this program is made possible by K9 for Kids. Call (413) 594-1800 x4 to RSVP for a time slot!

Date: Wednesday 6/15/16 6pm
Location: Chicopee Public Library 449 Front Street in Chicopee
Who: Children & Families!
RSVP HERE: (413) 594-1800 x4

June 18th 9am-12pm: Super Hero Sensory Friendly Fun!
Get ready for a SUPER day of fantastic sensory-friendly, superhero fun courtesy of The Miracle League of CT. Meet amazing superheroes and join the fun by wearing your favorite superhero costume. Families will enjoy tons of sensory-friendly kids’ activities, arts & crafts, and LIVE gallery science demonstrations. For more information, please contact Brit Montmeat at (860) 520-2112

Date: Saturday 6/18/16 9am-12pm
Location: Connecticut Science Center 250 Columbus Blvd Hartford CT
Who: Children & Families!
RSVP HERE: Brit Montmeat at (860) 520-2112

June 23rd 6pm-8pm: AANE Pizza & Game Night!
Join other post-high school adults who get together to meet new friends while enjoying pizza and board games of your choice. For cost of attendance and to RSVP, please contact Stephanie at stephanie.birkdale@aane.org.

Date: Thursday 6/23/16 6pm-8pm
Location: Multicultural Community Services (MCS) 260 Westfield Road in Holyoke
Who: Young adults!
RSVP HERE: Stephanie Birkdale at stephanie.birkdale@aane.org
UPCOMING EVENTS

**June 26th 9am-2pm: We Rock the Spectrum 5K!**
Have you heard about the Fall opening of the We Rock the Spectrum Gym in Springfield???
This amazing facility is a gym for all kids of all abilities!! They will offer sensory-based & adapted recreational & therapeutic equipment, social skills groups, & much much more!! Sarah Reilly, a local mom, has been working hard to fundraise & help get this gym open & ready for the Western Mass community!

The We Rock the Spectrum Star Wars 5K walk & family fun day is an upcoming event that will help prepare for the opening of this gym!! The 5K and walk will be a morning dash through scenic Stanley Park in Westfield, MA. This Star-Wars themed fun run/walk will have a special shortened course just for kids & accompanying adults. Star Wars characters meet & greets and prizes for the best costumes & participant ribbons for children. Activities, food, games, vendors, & fun for all.

**Date:** Sunday 6/26/16 9am-2pm  
**Location:** Stanley Park 400 Western Ave in Westfield, MA  
**Who:** Children & Adults of all abilities! Show up in your Star Wars gear or in play clothes ready for fun! **RSVP HERE:** [https://www.runreg.com/wrts5k](https://www.runreg.com/wrts5k)  

**August 17th: Aspergers’ 101 6pm-8pm**
This free training is intended to introduce families and care-takers to Asperger’s Syndrome. Characteristics and strategies to help individuals are discussed, as well as some of the social difficulties that people with Asperger’s experience. The training will also provide an opportunity to meet other parents of children and young adults with Asperger’s. We encourage friends, family members, and support persons to attend this valuable training. Please RSVP to Iris Scott at iris.scott@theassociationinc.org or (413) 529-2428 x115.

**Date:** Wednesday 8/17/16 6pm-8pm  
**Location:** CRPA Main Office 116 Pleasant Street Suite 366 Easthampton (Eastworks Building)  
**Who:** Families of interest!  
**RSVP HERE:** Iris Scott at iris.scott@theassociationinc.org or (413) 529-2428 x115.
UPCOMING EVENTS

August 27th: Community Resources Annual Family Picnic!

Join Community Resources for People with Autism for their annual picnic at Stanley Park! BBQ, games, connections with other families, & more!

**Date:** Saturday 8/27/16 11am-2pm  
**Location:** Stanley Park 400 Western Ave in Westfield, MA  
**Who:** Children & Families-all are welcome!  
**RSVP:** Contact Iris at iris.scott@theassociationinc.org

Holyoke Autism Family Nights: A Spectrum of Fun!

Stay tuned in the Fall for information regarding our next events!! Thanks to all of our family & helpers who attended our events at Metcalf this year!! Next year, these events will be expanded to occur at other schools around the district.

Sensory Friendly Movie Days at Hadley Cinemark!!

Does your child love movies, but has difficulty feeling comfortable at a movie theater? Head on down to the Cinemark Theaters in Hadley for their monthly Sensory Friendly Movie event!! All ages are welcome to enjoy this special viewing that takes place during the last Sunday of every month; first show of the day. During this viewing, they turn the lights up, the sound low, and allow you to be yourselves. Get up, move around, dance, make some noise, and enjoy the movie in this friendly & judgement free atmosphere. Feel free to bring your whole family :)

We will post when we have January’s movie event, but it is typically the last Sunday of every month, first show of the day. Call the movie theater the week prior for exact timing at (413) 587-4237  
Cinemark At Hampshire Mall 367 Russell Street Hadley (Next to the mall)
UPCOMING SUPPORT GROUPS

Mom’s Night Out: Support Group at JERICHO!

Moms of people with different abilities are invited to bring their problems, triumphs and their need to laugh to Mom’s Night Out. Jericho will supply drinks and refreshments. Participants are welcome to bring something to share.

**Date & Time:** The last Thursday of every month

**Location:** JERICHO 537 Northampton Street Holyoke, MA

For specific meeting time & room location, please contact Linda Lapointe at (413) 538-7450 or lindal@jerichobeca.org

Grupo de Apoyo Para Padres Que Tengan Hijos Con Autismo!

**Dia y Hora:** El 2\textsuperscript{ndo} martes de cada mes 11:00am-1:00pm

Scan 360 11 Wilbraham Road Springfield, MA

(el centro de informacion para las familias en el segundo piso)

Por favor responda a Gaby Santiago (413) 529-2428 x112 o gaby.santiago@theassociationinc.org

CRPA Holyoke Support Group

This support group is open to all family members of children and young adults with autism. The group is designed for parents and other caregivers to come together for support and to share information.

**Date & Time:** 2\textsuperscript{nd} Wednesday of every month from 5:30-7:30

**Location:** MCS 260 Westfield Road in Holyoke

For more information, please email Linda Wynne at wynne92@aol.com.
UPCOMING SUPPORT GROUPS

Parent/Professional Advocacy League

A group for empowering families through transition planning

**Date & Time:** 2\(^{nd}\) & 4\(^{th}\) Wednesday of every month

For more information about location & times, please [www.ppal.net](http://www.ppal.net) or email eszela@ppal.net

Rainbow Support Group of Western Massachusetts

Support & info for families or individuals with intellectual disabilities who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or those who are questioning.

**Location:** Western Mass Training Consortium 187 High Street Suite 202 Holyoke

For more information about dates & times, please contact Tammy Nothe-Hebert at (413) 536-2401 x3036