

Dear Autism Community,

The ASA-Greater Phoenix Chapter is inviting representatives of all autism support groups (parents, fathers, grandparents, teens/adults on the spectrum, etc.) in greater Phoenix to a friendly meeting to discuss how we could work together more closely and effectively.

We believe that we all share the same goal of helping children and adults on the spectrum to have the highest quality of life with the most independence possible. Individually, all of our groups are doing important work to accomplish that. If we work together more closely, and combine efforts in some cases, we should be able to accomplish even more.

For example, we would like to discuss some of the following ideas on collaborations:

- 1) social events, like picnics, swim parties, art shows, movies, etc.
- 2) coordinate a database of people interested in small social groups
- 3) coordinate speakers for meetings and conferences
- 4) lobbying the state legislature
- 5) other ideas you may have.

Also, over the last five years, as the population of Arizona has grown, there has been an increased need for more support groups. Our chapter has been proud to provide assistance to several parent/adult groups, and we would like to provide more.

Specifically, we would like to invite all parent/adult support groups in Arizona to consider becoming affiliated with the national Autism Society of America to any degree they would like. Possible options include:

- 1) Affiliate - be an official affiliate of ASA, and collaborate on providing information on one-another's websites/newsletters/meetings/activities/conferences.
- 2) Support group - Any parent/adult support group could choose to become a formal part of a local ASA chapter, and receive support from the chapter (financial, staff, insurance, etc.), and be involved in chapter activities if they wish.
- 3) New ASA chapter - Any parent/adult support group could form its own chapter. There are currently ASA chapters in Pima County, greater Phoenix, and (most recently) Flagstaff. The ASA-Greater Phoenix chapter was pleased to partially help the formation of the Flagstaff chapter, and would be pleased to support the formation of other chapters in greater Phoenix or in Arizona.

The only requirement that national ASA requires of its support groups and chapters is that they follow their Options policy of providing members with information on all the treatment options available, and not focusing on only 1 type of treatment.

Our goal is simple - to help parents/adults have a local group for support, to provide financial/staff/other support if desired, and to give everyone a stronger voice at both the State and National level. If your group is interested in these ideas, we welcome you to join our informal, open discussion. Also, we invite you to share this invitation with any other support groups (including parents/adults thinking about forming a new group).

The meeting will be on Sunday, Sept 16, 2-4 pm at the Coco's restaurant in north Scottsdale, at Paradise Valley Mall - 4514 E. Cactus Road, Phoenix, AZ 85032. Appetizers and drinks will be provided. We hope you can join us for a fun and productive discussion!

Sincerely,

Jim Adams, President, Autism Society of America, Greater Phoenix Chapter