FEATURED KEYNOTE SESSION
“ILLUMINATING INSIGHTS ON AUTISM, FROM A LIFE WITH ASPERGER'S”

About the Presenter: John Elder Robison grew up with Asperger's, at a time when the diagnosis didn't exist, and with no inkling of how to pass for normal. (He was finally diagnosed at age forty.) In his compulsively readable, bestselling memoir, Look Me In the Eye, Robison recounts his incredible life, with illuminating insight. The brother of Augusten Burroughs (Robison appears in many of his books), he captures the irreducible strangeness of the human mind and the irrepressible strength of the human spirit -- and provides us a fresh perspective on autism.

About the Session: Robison will discuss how he overcame enormous odds to lead a fulfilling life: from an anti-social child to a husband and a father now running a multi-million dollar car specialty shop. Though his life is unique -- he's designed guitars for KISS and toys for Milton Bradley -- it's equally rich with clues to both spotting autism in children and harnessing the best from those already diagnosed. Robison reminds us that people "on the spectrum" can develop throughout their lives, and that it's never too late to hope for or expect change.

WORKSHOPS: Session A

A1. AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPTIONS FOR ADULTS WITH AUTISM
Presenters: Roy Diamond, President, Autism Living & Working; Diana T. Myers, President, Diana T. Myers & Associates; David Gates, Esq., Policy Director & Senior Attorney, PA Health Law Project
Description: The panelists will describe the range of specific housing options in Pennsylvania, both existing and emerging, for adults with autism, including: Shared Housing, Intentional Communities, Licensed Facilities, joint homeownership, rental/ownership through Self Directed Support Corporations, leasing co-ops, and HUD Section 811 housing.
Objectives: This program is designed to help you . . .
  1. Gain knowledge of various innovative housing models for persons with ASD.
  2. Identify potential partners for developing housing.
  3. Understand how such housing is financed and sustained.
  4. Begin the development of your own housing model.

A2. I Want a Career, Not a Job: Living, Learning, Earning
Presenters: Joseph N. Gousie, Sr., Director of Non Traditional Services, Elwyn; Maleita Olson, LSW, Private Practice
Description: A Career is a holistic approach to employment that emphasizes the importance of the whole life of the person and the interdependence of its parts including living, learning, and earning. Failure at employment for people with Asperger Syndrome often relates to socialization and interpersonal communication challenges with co-workers more than other factors. This workshop will begin to assist individuals and their supporters how to discern and then market their unique skills and talents to potential employers to achieve the best match possible. In addition, we will explore ways to improve the social, communication and relationship skills needed for job success through various resources that already exist and those that can easily be created.
Objectives: This program is designed to help you . . .
1. Become aware of and take ownership of your skills and talents.
2. Encourage you to seek not just a job, but a career.
3. Understand the importance of managing interpersonal relationships in the workplace.
4. Market your skills and talents to potential employers.
5. Explore where to go to get assistance to achieve career goals.

A3. Partnering to Advance Quality of Life for Adults with ASD
Presenter: Jean Ruttenberg, Exec. Dir., Center for Autism
Description: This workshop examines the belief structure, planning and partnership that are necessary to achieve the important goal of continued growth and improvement of the quality of life for the individual with autism and their family. The presentation will provide an overview of the beliefs concerning adult growth, development of a planning process, appropriate assessment, and comprehensive partnerships with family, staff, medical team, providers and community. Case history examples will be used to inform the discussion.

Objectives: This program is designed to help you . . .
1. Recognize three or more approaches to the assessment of an adult with autism.
2. Distinguish partners that will need to be involved in the planning process.
3. Identify and discuss important environmental supports.
4. Explore triage-thinking process when dealing with adults with multiple/complex/competing needs.
5. Discuss the importance of working with families in conjunction with working with the adult with autism.
6. Discuss training and data collection that matches the resources and skills of family members and provider staff.

A4. COMPASS: A Specialized Support Program for Undergrads with Asperger Syndrome
Presenters from Fairleigh Dickinson University: Stefanie Ulrich, PhD, Dir., Ctr. for Psychological Svces.; Kathleen Davis, PhD, Assist. Professor, School of Psychology; Dorota Novitskie, Caroline Beischer, Matthew Smith, Melissa Conway (doctoral candidates)
Description: Presenters will discuss lessons learned from the COMPASS Program, a comprehensive support program that provides individually tailored, comprehensive, academic and social support for college students with Asperger Syndrome (AS). Utilizing interactive activities, presenters will address challenges related to college transition, development of self-advocacy skills in a college environment, and promotion of developmentally appropriate communication between these students and their parents.

Objectives: This program is designed to help you . . .
1. Explore the key elements of COMPASS’s college level academic support including self-advocacy, disability declaration, academic supports and accommodations, accountability, and an increase in executive functioning skills.
2. Learn about the development of a social skills group that focuses on improving communication and interpersonal relationships through instruction and in vivo techniques.
3. Learn about helping parents find the delicate balance between assisting their children with the tasks associated with the college experience and supporting their children’s own attempts at independence and self-advocacy; the role of developmentally appropriate parent-child communication will be covered.
4. Learn about the challenges of establishing a campus-based comprehensive support group, as well as ways to anticipate and mitigate those challenges.
5. Learn more about the service and research gaps related to the support of young adults with Asperger’s Syndrome pursuing college education.

A5. Rational Use of Medications for Adults with ASD: An Update
Presenter: Anthony L. Rostain, MD, MA, Medical Dir., Adult Dev. Disorders Section, Dept. of Psychiatry, Penn School of Medicine

A6. A SOCIAL SKILLS SEMINAR: LEARNING, IMPLEMENTING, EXPERIENCING
Presenters: Carol Moog, PhD, Clinical Dir., Social Learning Disorders Program, Dept. of Psychiatry, Penn School of Medicine; Parin Patel, MS, Doctoral Student, Chestnut Hill College
Description: This workshop will present an overview and interactive experience of the Social Skills Seminar, originally designed by Mary Riggs Cohen, PhD, at the University of Pennsylvania to help adults with Asperger Syndrome and other social learning disorders communicate more effectively and develop meaningful interpersonal relationships. Participants will be invited to try role-playing and other theatre-based activities used in the seminar.
Objectives: This program is designed to help you . . .
1. Recognize evolutionary and human developmental roots of social behavior.
2. Learn the basic building blocks of non-verbal communication.
3. Describe the necessary components of successful conversation.
4. Practice theatre-based activities geared to develop social skills.
5. Observe and analyze effective and ineffective communication.

WORKSHOPS: Session B

B1. Autism in Adulthood; A Model for Assessment and Support Planning
Presenters from Keystone Autism Svces.: Edward Toyer, PhD, Dir. of Clinical Svces., and Anne Seals, MSW, LSW, Behavioral Health Specialist
Description: Through a presentation of the Pennsylvania Adult Community Autism Program (ACAP), this presentation will describe the characteristics of adults with autism in terms of symptom expression, areas of greatest support need, and general demographic information. A model for psychosocial, behavioral and needs assessment will be discussed and implications for support planning will be discussed
Objectives: This program is designed to help you . . .
1. List the primary symptoms / challenges for adults with ASD who are living independently or semi-independently
2. List the primary support needs for this group of adults with ASD.
3. Describe a process for individualized intake assessment and support planning.
4. Describe how Functional Behavior Assessment compliments this process.
5. Describe the eligibility requirements and application process for the services currently available to adults with ASD in Pennsylvania.

B2. Succeeding in the Workforce: A Professional Development Model
Presenters from SPIN Inc.: Judy Dotzman, MEd, Corp. Officer, Professional Development; Pat Wray, Dir., Community Integrated Employment
Description: This workshop will present a strengths-based professional development model to support young adults with autism to be successfully employed within the competitive job market. Specific areas of focus will be on portfolio development, job seeking strategies, effective communication, professionalism, including work ethic, collaboration, and customer service, and workplace health and safety.
Objectives: This program is designed to help you . . .
1. Gain a greater awareness of the opportunities for inclusive employment.
2. Identify the skills and competencies needed to gain employment.
3. Identify the skills and competencies needed to retain a position in the workplace.
4. Identify the supports necessary to minimize potential obstacles to success that may emerge from the core deficits of autism.
5. Raise awareness regarding effective models for successful employment of persons with autism.

B3. The Next Generation: Supporting People to Lead their Own Lives
Presenters: Marian Frattarola-Saulino and other panelists TBD
Description: Participate in this interactive session designed to share information about how Values Into Action (VIA) is attempting to move beyond ‘providing service’ to working in partnership with people to achieve truly personalized supports. VIA’s mission is to provide assistance, guidance and support to people with disabilities and their families so they maximize opportunities to direct their services and supports, to meet their needs and realize their dreams.
Objectives: This program is designed to help you . . .
1. Become more aware of options that allow and enable self-direction and control of resources.
2. Learn more about self directed services.
3. Interact with people who are directing their services.
4. Learn about personal assistance, what it is and what it is not.
5. Live the life of your choosing with support from your family, friends and community.

B4. A Woman’s Experience: Gender Issues Impacting Women with Asperger Syndrome
Presenter: Dena L. Gassner, MSW, Dir., Center for Understanding
Description: Successful “Aspergerians” achieve individually defined success by moving through three states of transparency: One-Way Glass, Opaque, and Translucence. When an individual gets “stuck” along the journey, the outcome suffers. Learn how to achieve the final transparency, one of authenticity and shamelessness.
Objectives: This program is designed to help you . . .

1. Identify the various stages of managing AS.
2. Identify where you are a loved one/ self-advocate could be “stuck”.
3. Identify strategies to move through the stages.
4. Recognize the barriers outside the individual that stand in the way.
5. Develop an individualized definition of “success” and “happiness” and a plan for achieving your personal goals.

B5. Let’s Get Practical: Transition to What?
Presenter: Holly Kofsky, Parent & Advocate; Beth Eagen, Parent & Advocate
Description: Until age 21, children are entitled to education and services. This entitlement ends when young adults leave school. Families are often on their own to understand, research and apply for services and funding streams to support employment, meaningful activities, housing and transportation. This workshop is meant to help participants know what to look for and where to begin the journey.

Objectives: This program is designed to help you . . .

1. Identify the different stages of the transition process and the challenges involved with transitioning to the adult service system.
2. Understand how to apply for services via Pennsylvania’s Consolidated Waiver, PFDS (Person/Family Directed Support) Waiver, OBRA (Omnibus Reconciliation Act) Waiver, Autism Waiver and the ACAP (Adult Community Autism Program).
3. Utilize staff interviews to identify staff that may meet the needs of the individual.
4. Utilize service provider interviews to identify the best provider for an individual.
5. Understand what happens during the waiting period for adult service programs.

B6. Demysticizing Benefits and Services for Adults with ASD
Presenters from Hinkle Fingles & Prior, Attorneys at Law: Ira Fingles, Esq, & Hillary D. Freeman, Esq.
Description: This workshop will explore services and benefits available to adults with autism spectrum disorders. Eligibility criteria, procedures, and pitfalls will be reviewed with respect to securing housing, employment supports, adult education, medical benefits, and financial entitlements to allow individuals on the autism spectrum to live lives characterized by security, self-sufficiency, and personal success.

Objectives: This program is designed to help you . . .

1. Understand the eligibility criteria for services and benefits that are available to adults on the autism spectrum, including SSI, Social Security, Medicaid/Medical Assistance, Medicare, MH/MR, and Office of Vocational Rehabilitation services.
2. Understand Medicaid waivers, including the Consolidated Waiver, the Autism Waiver, and the Person and Family Directed Services (P/FDS) Waiver and why they are important.
3. Learn how to secure and maximize services and benefits from the aforementioned agencies.
4. Understand individuals’ rights to appeal adverse determinations regarding eligibility or service delivery.
5. Learn how to ensure that services from the aforementioned agencies are available on a timely basis.

WORKSHOPS: Session C

C1. Relationship and Sexuality Education for Adolescents with ASD
Description: Adolescence is a difficult time; however the unique challenges presented by the physical, emotional and developmental changes experienced by teenagers on the spectrum can overwhelm students, teachers, and families. The collaboration between a school district, teachers, parents and a disability sexuality educator has provided specialized lessons and materials to support the development of healthy relationships and reduce the risk of sexual abuse that is an important part of the transition into adulthood.
Objectives: This program is designed to help you . . .

1. Understand, address, and present possible solutions to the unique challenges of educating people on the spectrum about complex, romantic, and sexual relationships as they transition into adulthood.
2. Understand how relationship and sexuality education can reduce the risk of sexual abuse, and/or problematic sexual behavior that can result in contact with the criminal justice system.
3. Address the complex relationship and sexuality issues presented by adolescents on the spectrum.
4. Develop a successful collaboration between school district administration, teachers and families with respect to sexuality education.
5. Implement a relationship and sexuality education program in your school.

C2. How to Survive in the Nuerotypical World
Presenter: Jason Zervoudakes, Self Advocate, GRASP Member
Description: This workshop, designed for the individual with HFA, will give an overview of how to survive in a changeable world where spectrumites are in the minority. Through the presenter’s personal experiences, it will provide some basic tools and strategies so they can successfully survive and thrive in the nuerotypical world.

Objectives: This program is designed to help you . . .

1. Make an honest self-assessment.
2. Develop a good plan to navigate through life.
3. Handle the problems and changes that occur in life.
4. Face social challenges.
5. Expand your comfort zone and learn how to take risks.

C3. Internet Use and ASD: Perils, Pitfalls, and Prevention Strategies
Presenters: Annie Steinberg, MD, Clinical Assoc. Professor, Psychiatry/Pediatrics, Penn School of Medicine; Mary Riggs Cohen, PhD, Clinical Assoc. Professor, Social Learning Disorders Program, Penn School of Medicine, & Autism Spectrum Resource Consulting
Description: We will cover internet addiction for individuals with AS and current research demonstrating its link to depression in adolescents. We will address the dangers of some social networking sites as well as the predisposition to viewing and collecting child pornography images for some individuals with AS due to social isolation, emotional immaturity, restricted and repetitive pattern of behaviors, and impairment in understanding other’s intentions and mental states.

Objectives: This program is designed to help you . . .

1. Explain the developmental perspective of precursors of Internet usage.
2. Discuss the legal and psychiatric aspects of Internet hazards for ASD.
3. Demonstrate knowledge of prevention strategies.

C4. Supporting Families Through the Transition Years
Presenters from Devereux’s Center for Autism Research & Education Services (CARES): Todd Harris, PhD, Dir. of Autism Svces.; Brandee El Attar, MS, Transition Grant Mgr.; Cathleen Albertson, MA, BCBA, Clinical Coordinator
Description: This session highlights practices that we have employed to support and partner with our families as their children go through the transition years toward adulthood. Program components highlighted will include futures planning practices; family education activities; and the results of a structured survey completed by families across the region. The session will also include a parent presenter.

Objectives: This program is designed to help you . . .

1. Better understand family opinions regarding transition services and supports.
2. Better understand what parents know and do not know about the transition process.
3. Learn more about futures planning processes.
4. Learn more about a structured parent education program and outcome data.
5. Hear directly from a parent who has a son in the transition phase.
C5. Surviving and Thriving: Essential Ingredients for Social Success in College

*Presenters from Chestnut Hill College: Kate Altman, MS, Therapist/Doctoral Student & Katherine K. Dahlsgaard, PhD, Assist. Professor of Psychology; also, Timothy Wilson, College Student, Millersville Univ.*

**Description:** College is a great opportunity for those with an ASD to experience increased social success and self-esteem. This workshop will present results from a research project involving interviews with over a dozen young adults on the spectrum who are currently surviving and thriving at college. Presenters will describe the specific preparations, activities, and attitudes that these individuals reported as essential to their success.

**Objectives:** This program is designed to help you . . .

1. Predict the unique social needs of college students with ASD.
2. Prepare students with ASDs to succeed in college socially.
3. Assist college students with ASDs in becoming more socially self-ware and better self-advocates.

C6. Demysticizing Benefits and Services for Adults with ASD

*Presenters from Hinkle Fingles & Prior, Attorneys at Law: Ira Fingles, Esq., & Hillary D. Freeman, Esq. (Note: This is a repeat of Session B6.)*