



LEAGUE SCHOOL news

VOLUME 5 / ISSUE 4 | NOVEMBER 2024

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TOPIC SPOTLIGHT

Annual Conference Plans Expand Scope & Impact

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**SPECIAL
EDUCATION**



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This year's annual conference hosted by League School for Autism is branching out to include topics and presentations from private special education schools and autistic self-advocates, as well as the traditional public school special education programs. We've named the conference the Massachusetts Special Education Summit to encompass the vast region, trending topics, and broad student population of statewide special education programs. The theme of this inaugural Summit is *Collaborative Solutions to Current Issues* and will focus on providing tangible, applicable strategies for special educators.

conveniently located for anyone traveling from locations north and west of Boston. The venue includes meeting rooms that can accommodate more attendees per breakout session, enabling our conference audience to expand over time.

massachusetts
SPECIAL EDUCATION
— SUMMIT —



We are currently seeking proposals on: social emotional learning and trauma informed education; promoting equity and access; transition to adulthood, vocational development, or secondary education preparation; engaging collaborative approaches like student voice and self-advocacy; innovative instructional approaches and universal design; and innovation in educational leadership. We look forward to telling you more about this evolving event.

The MA Special Education Summit is scheduled for Friday, March 7, 2025 at the Sheraton Boston Needham Hotel in Needham, located just off of Interstate 95/Route 128 and near Route 9 and the Mass Turnpike (90). The new space is larger with elevated decor and is more

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SPECIAL EDUCATION
— SUMMIT —
Collaborative Solutions to Current Issues

Friday, March 7, 2025
8:30 AM - 3:30 PM
Sheraton Boston Needham Hotel
100 Cabot Street, Needham



EMPOWERING EVENTS

An Evening to Remember at Night of Champions

What a night it was! On Thursday, September 19th, the League School Night of Champions ended the evening as a tremendous success. From the autistic singers and honorees to the Live Auction and Empowerment Drive, it was an evening of memorable moments, great fun, and incredible support. Some highlights of the night included a Boston music mashup performed by the Doug Flutie Jr Foundation for Autism's Spectrum of Sound Choir, our enthusiastic auctioneer, Harrison Stebbins, and the moving story of Jake's Journey told by his parents, Marie Sloan and Ron Goodman.

We would like to express our deep gratitude to our Sponsors who made

the evening possible and to our guests and donors who attended and/or donated generously. Last, but not least, a special thanks to our entire committee, event volunteers, vendors, suppliers, League School Culinary Coach, Marie Canesi, and her students, and Horticultural Coach, Selena Zubrowski, and her students for the delicious cookies and beautiful floral arrangements at each table.

The evening generated nearly \$170,000 of gross revenue for our Autism Empowerment Fund, which closes the growing financial gap between tuition and the actual cost of reaching our students' vision of the future. It was an exceptional evening and we can hardly wait until next year to have that much fun again!

2025 League Event Lineup

League School for Autism has already been planning an unforgettable lineup of 2025 events. We'll kick things off with a newly reimagined annual conference, the Massachusetts Special Education Summit, scheduled for March. Plus, we've got new dates for your favorite recurring events. Check out the line-up below:

- **MA SPECIAL EDUCATION SUMMIT**, Friday, March 7th, Sheraton Boston Needham Hotel
- **FAMILY FUN RUN + 5K**, Saturday, April 26th, League School for Autism
- **FORE AUTISM GOLF CLASSIC**, Monday, June 9th, Franklin Country Club
- **FALMOUTH ROAD RACE**, Sunday, August 17th, Downtown Falmouth
- **NIGHT OF CHAMPIONS**, Friday, September 26th, Sheraton Four Points Norwood





SCHOOL HAPPENINGS

Summer Fun Day, Fall Harvest Trunk or Treat, & VIP Visits

League School for Autism students had a busy Fall starting with Summer Fun Day on August 15th. The event theme was League School Olympics and included a dunk tank, ice cream truck, police/fire/EMT staff and vehicles, hot dogs, tattoos, games, arts and crafts, and Rebel (Walpole's Community Resource Dog). Current students, their families, and alumni enjoyed the festivities.

The Vocational Program team of horticultural students were also busy harvesting Fall crops of flowers, fruits, and vegetables using land provided by the Norfolk Aggie High School located in Walpole. Students learned about planting, maintaining, and harvesting a wide range of plants. They love the outdoor time, enjoying connectivity with nature, and

watching the fruits of their labor grow and evolve. Some students also collaborated with Lifeworks, an adult service provider, and the Wrentham Landscape Committee to create a new memorial garden in the Wrentham Town Common.

Trunk or Treat is always a big hit at League School. Students explored wildly decorated trunks and enjoyed candy galore while showing off their favorite costumes. Equally as fun were the Halloween day festivities that included cookie decorating, trick or treating throughout the building, plus dance and pizza party.

VIP visits with students included the Penny Candy Store, Paws for Comfort, Walpole Dental Associates, and Sunflower Meadows Equestrian.

New Gear at Hawk's Nest

Shop for new League Gear at <https://leagueschool.org/school-happenings/league-gear/>



Student Empowered Gifts & Merchandise from League School



Check out the newest League School apparel at the Hawk's Nest store:

- sweatshirts
- long sleeve tees
- jackets

Visit our Shopify store under League Gear on our website.

- easy ordering
- ship-to or pick-up
- fulfilled by students





LETTERS FROM LARRY

Tackling Neurodivergent Employment Challenges

Did you know the unemployment rate for neurodivergent adults is estimated to be 30-40%? Of that group, adults with autism have an unemployment rate of nearly 85-90%. Once able to secure a job, neurodivergent individuals can face many challenges in the workplace, including bias and prejudice, sensory overload, and issues with managing workload.

In 2023, after identifying that finding and keeping a job was difficult for many of our students and adult alumni, I began collaborating with industry contacts and organizations to develop the Neurodiversity Employment Partnership (NEP). Our purpose is to bring awareness to neurodivergent employment issues, offer stories and examples of successful outcomes, and connect employers and employees with one another. Our first NEP Workshop was held in April 2024 and included an array of speakers, resources, and attendees. A second workshop is

being planned for April 2025 during Autism Empowerment Month.

Neurodiversity in employment is a smart business decision, and we are always looking for more employers willing to explore having an inclusive workforce. For job providers, the positive impacts on organizational culture are vast, including a more effective and productive workforce with increased loyalty and retention. For job seekers, increased self-confidence and independence are gained from meaningful work that contributes to the community.

In the coming months, I'll share more information about this important partnership, its member network, and the vital resources NEP intends to share throughout New England to increase employment opportunities for neurodivergent adults and foster inclusivity in the workplace. Stay tuned.

Larry Sauer, CEO,
League School for Autism

Welcome New Staff

Give a warm welcome to our newest employees hired since August.

- Robert Brown, Head Teacher
- Emily Cataldo, Teacher Assistant
- Matthew Cinelli, Director of Facilities
- Kayla Crowley, Teacher Assistant
- Paola Delgado-Rivera, Teacher Assist.
- Jackson Etienne, Direct Support
- Hannah Goldman, Teacher Assistant
- Tatyana Gomes, Direct Support
- Dorothee Guirand, Direct Support
- Savannah Howland, Teacher Assistant
- K.D. Kerrigan, Teacher Assistant
- Stephen Lenane, Clinician
- Shawn Lerby, Direct Support
- Michael Mansaray, Teacher Assistant
- Victor Monteiro, ELC Program Mgr
- Sandi Morales Valdez, Teacher Assist.
- Martha Ogbebor, Direct Support
- Julia Robinson, Head Teacher
- Kelly Rosario, Direct Support
- Michelle Silver, Teacher Assistant
- Kate Stafford, SLP
- Interns: Kailey Bisbee, Kaitlyn DaCosta, and Emily Waden

EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH

SEP/OCT



ANNA CIALLELLA
School - Foundations Float

SEP



MAME DIALLO
Residential - Direct Support

OCT



JOCELYN MIRANDA
Residential - Direct Support



Standards for Accreditation

STAFF SPOTLIGHT - NCASES TEAM

Preparing for the NCASES Accreditation Process

In the fall of 2023, the League School embarked on an ambitious journey to pursue an accreditation that goes beyond the essential licenses required by the Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE) and the Department of Early Education and Care (DEEC). This decision initiated a thorough process of internal discovery and reflection concerning both our school and residential programs. This optional accreditation process from the National Commission for the Accreditation of Special Education Services (NCASES) was uniquely developed to address private special education programs.

For the past nine months, over 20 dedicated members of our League School community have engaged in a collaborative effort to produce a comprehensive self-study of our program. This initiative was led by our leadership team, which aimed to meticulously evaluate every aspect of our offerings. The accreditation process was structured around 50 rigorous standards, each designed to assess our practices, processes, and policies, all of which required concrete evidence of compliance. We carefully documented our adherence to these standards, demonstrating our commitment to aligning with established policies through a detailed review of our practices. The culmination of this extensive process is a three-day onsite evaluation conducted by four external surveyors from around the country, all of whom are seasoned experts in the field of special education. During their visit, we have the opportunity to showcase our incredible students, dedicated

and passionate staff, and our welcoming facility.

This accreditation initiative has given us a valuable opportunity to reflect deeply on and critically assess our service delivery in several key areas, including educational and residential service delivery, financial management, vocational programming, communication, and curriculum development. Throughout this reflective process, we identified specific areas for improvement and have taken proactive measures to align our practices more closely with the best available practices in the field. By evaluating and refining our service delivery, we are committed to continuously enhancing the quality and effectiveness of the support we provide to our students and their families. For this, we owe immense gratitude to Stephanie Steen, League School's Director of Clinical & Quality Assurance, and the entire NCASES Team! Thank you for your dedicated efforts.



Falmouth Road Race Team Finishes Strong

In August, our #TeamLeague runners and supporters for the Asics Falmouth Road Race 2024 surpassed a goal of \$25,000 for our Autism Empowerment Fund! Runners and fundraisers included A. David Lawn Care, Drew Cantrell, Sean Cusack, Patrick Fuller, Travis Hauge, Ryan Hall, Tim & Patrick McCabe, Patrick Powers, Alexis Tosca, Emma Tosca, Lindsay Wagner, Jack Wheeler, Kim Whitecross, Will Vazquez, and Ila Zollo. A special thank you went to our #TeamLeague Sponsors, Olyn Roofing and Middlesex Savings Bank.



CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION

League School staff attended the Kennedy Krieger 2024 Neurodiversity in the Workplace conference held in Washington, DC with Director of Neurodiversity & Inclusion, Lindsay Wagner, and Michael John Carley, presenting informative sessions. Additionally, League School Occupational Therapists attended the combined Rhode Island and Massachusetts Occupational Therapy Association's annual conference in Norwood on November 1st, while training and admissions staff participated in the MA Administrators for Special Education conference in Worcester. Making an impact!



STUDENT STORIES - SANJAY S.

A Hardworking Young Man of Many Talents and Trades

League School for Autism student, Sanjay, is a curious, funny, and hard-working young man. He has participated in both on-campus jobs and community jobs with great success. When working at Walpole High School cafeteria, Sanjay greets fellow coworkers with an upbeat salutation and a smile. There, Sanjay preps breakfast foods for Walpole High students, as well as picks up all designated lunches for League School students, sorting them into individual classroom bins and delivering them throughout our school building in a timely fashion.

Sanjay also works at Winslow Farm Animal Sanctuary, one of his favorite community work sites. His role at Winslow is to count and sort donated cans and bottles before cashing them in at the local redemption center. The proceeds of the redeemed cans go toward the purchase of food for the animals at the farm.

When at League School, Sanjay participates in the gardening and landscaping program where he has learned a variety of skills, including, planting, plant care, and harvesting. Sanjay has learned about the science behind composting, "helpful bugs" in horticulture, and has assisted in building a greenhouse at the Norfolk Agricultural High School.

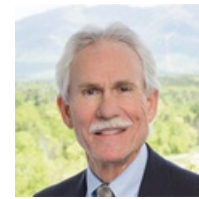
Sanjay has shown himself to be an exceptionally flexible worker who is willing to sub in on short notice at a variety of work sites. He works well with all peers and all staff members in the vocational department. Staff have reported that one of Sanjay's best qualities is his positive and upbeat personality.

Congratulations to Sanjay on his hard work and success with mastering many different jobs in many different environments. -- a legendary student representing League School..



BOARD UPDATE

James V. Major Joins Our BOD



Let's hear a round of applause for James V. Major, who recently transitioned from the League School Board of Ambassadors to our Board of Directors.

Jim was the Executive Director of our trade organization, the Massachusetts Association of C766 Approved Private Schools (MAAPS) from 1989 to 2019. Prior to his position at MAAPS, Jim was the Executive Director of the United Cerebral Palsy of Metro Boston for 10 years. Prior to that, he worked at the Massachusetts Office for Children (OFC) for four years in various capacities. Jim has a master's degree in Social Work from Boston University and was a Certified Association Executive with the American Society of Association Executives. Welcome to the Board of Directors, Jim!

Welcome