

Asperger Works
Putting autism to work

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Asperger Works **Dinner** *of Hope*



Thinking
Outside The Box

PROGRAM SCHEDULE
Registration and Cocktail Hour
(6:00 – 7:00 PM)

Opening Remarks Daniel Kimmel, Master of Ceremonies
Welcome Message Daniel Rajczyk, AWorks President
Speaker Daniel Rivera, Mayor of Lawrence
Speaker James Fiorentini, Mayor of Haverhill

Awards Presentation

The Brian Noble Award State Senator Barbara L'Italien
The Community Service Award Northeast Independent Living Program
The Asperger Works Award Dusya Lyubovskaya

Dinner

Speaker Richard Rodriguez, Disability Activist & AWorks Advisory Board Member
Keynote Address U.S. Congresswoman Niki Tsongas
Introduction of AWorks Members Daniel Kimmel

Entertainment

Magic Show Stephanie Beach Magic Show
Door-prizes & 50/50 Sahar Alhamdan, Nathan Hughes, Announcement Sama Alhamdan

Dancing

Dinner Committee Members

Sahar Alhamdan, Sean Bardoo, Andrew DeCarlo, Nathan Hughes, Adam Rajczyk, Daniel Rajczyk, Eva Rajczyk, Lisa Rajczyk, Richard Rodriguez, Thomas Wood

Cover artwork by Douglas Perry

ASPERGER'S SYNDROME

Message from our Executive Director

Daniel R. Rajczyk



Welcome to our **Second Annual Dinner of Hope**. Our theme this year is, "Thinking Outside the Box." Many of you may be wondering what does that mean. It is our hope that in the coming year

employers will begin to think outside the box when it comes to hiring people on the Autism Spectrum.

Today there is much awareness of Autistic people living amongst us. Many schools provide wonderful services to Autistic children, services that did not exist when I was a child. However, employment opportunities have not increased much for those of us with Asperger's Syndrome or high-functioning Autism. Statistically, we have the distinction of having the highest unemployment and underemployment rate in the entire disability community.

Why? It is difficult to say. Many of us have problems with social skills. Some of us have sensory issues. Others of us have difficulties coping with stress and anxiety and lash out or have meltdowns. We cannot be quantified like people with other types of disability, so employers expectations of us are either too high (think Einstein) or too low. But all of us are different with our own quirks and it is important to accept us just the way we are.

So we are asking employers to look past our idiosyncrasies and accept us just the way we are. Think outside the box and know that they will not regret hiring us. We are great workers - loyal, honest, hard-working.

Thank you all for coming! We appreciate your support and your belief in us. We will not disappoint your trust in the coming months and years.

Asperger's Syndrome is an autism spectrum disorder that is characterized by significant difficulties in social interaction and nonverbal communication, along with restricted and repetitive patterns of behavior and interests. It differs from other Autism Spectrum Disorders by its preservation of information processing, conceptual resources, perceptual skill, and language learning. Although children properly diagnosed improve as they mature into adulthood, their difficulties with communication and social skills often continue to persist.

Aspies often fail to pick up on social cues and have difficulty reading other people's body language. Many dislike changes in routines.

Asperger's manifests itself differently with each individual. No two Aspies, as

they refer to themselves, are the same, making diagnosis difficult. Some have spatial deficits often manifested by invading other people's space. Some have heightened sensitivity and become over-stimulated by loud noises, lights, or strong tastes or textures.

On the plus side, adults with Asperger's have the tendency to pay close attention to detail and to focus on their interests that can result in success in higher education and careers (if given the chance). Although Aspies are often associated with careers in technology, there are a number of historical figures thought to have had Asperger's including, physicist Albert Einstein, composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, biologist Marie Curie, statesman and U.S. president Thomas Jefferson, physicist and mathematician Isaac Newton, author Jane Austin, director Alfred Hitchcock, author and poet Hans Christian Andersen, naturalist Charles Darwin, puppeteer Jim Hanson of Kermit the Frog fame, cartoonist Charles Schulz of *Peanuts* fame, composer Ludwig Van Beethoven, and inventor Thomas Edison. Comic Dan Aykroyd has recently revealed that he has Asperger's and Tourette's Syndromes. Singer Susan Boyle, a Scottish singer who blew away the competition on *Britain's Got Talent Show* in 2009, found out that she has

Asperger's in 2012 at the age of 51. Many believe that entrepreneur, software guru, and former chairman of Microsoft, Bill Gates, also has Asperger's.

Asperger Works Connection

Although the people above prove that those with Asperger's Syndrome could live successful lives, a large percentage are not so lucky. According to the CDC, 80 to 90 percent of adults with Asperger's are either unemployed or under-employed and are unable to support themselves. They rely on their families and the state for their livelihood.

Contrary to claims by some politicians and lay people, Aspies hate being thought of as "takers." Their goal is to find jobs that reflect their talents and education – jobs that will allow them to live independent, productive lives. It is this that Asperger Works was formed to facilitate through employer education and client job-skills preparation.



HONOREES

The Brian Noble Award

State Senator Barbara L'Italien



Through the ***Brian Noble Award***, State Senator Barbara L'Italien is being recognized by Asperger Works for her strong advocacy

on behalf of the disabled and elderly communities of Massachusetts.

Senator L'Italien was born in Passaic, NJ but was educated in Andover Public Schools and is a graduate of Merrimack College. Prior to becoming the State Senator from the 2nd Essex and Middlesex Districts, she was a member of the MA House of Representatives, 18th Essex District (2003 – 2011) and the director of government affairs for the MA treasury department (2011 – 2015).

Ms. L'Italien is married to Kevin Hall and they have four children: Rudy, 26; Alexandra, 24; Samantha, 22; and Andrew, 18.

Ms. L'Italien has been serving as Chair of the Autism Commission since November of 2010. She founded the Commission in order to better deliver services to everyone with Autism Spectrum Disorders. Over the years, she has worked to protect children on the Spectrum from bullying, to require training for teachers on "augmentative" communication; to create an Autism Division within the Department of Developmental Services; and to pass legislation establishing an Autism Federal Medicaid Waiver.

Additionally, she was able to get bipartisan support for a bill that passed unanimously granting comprehensive autism medical insurance coverage, including adults who had been diagnosed as Autistic prior to their eighteenth birthday.

The Senator has been tireless in her support of our fledgling organization and has been one of our greatest advocates and cheerleaders.

The Asperger Works Award

Dusya Lyubovskaya



The ***Asperger Works Award*** is given to Dusya Lyubovskaya by Asperger Works in recognition of her staunch advocacy work on behalf of the

Autistic community, and indeed the entire disabled community.

Dusya is a Boston native who has dedicated her life to helping others. She is a Personal Care Attendant (PCA) and a Home Health Aid (HHA) and works primarily with the disabled and the elderly (sixty-five and over). As if her dedication to these endeavors were not enough, she also finds time to be an American Red Cross Ambassador, be involved with Toastmasters, and advocate for those who she feels have been ignored by society for a long time: people with Autism and other disabilities.