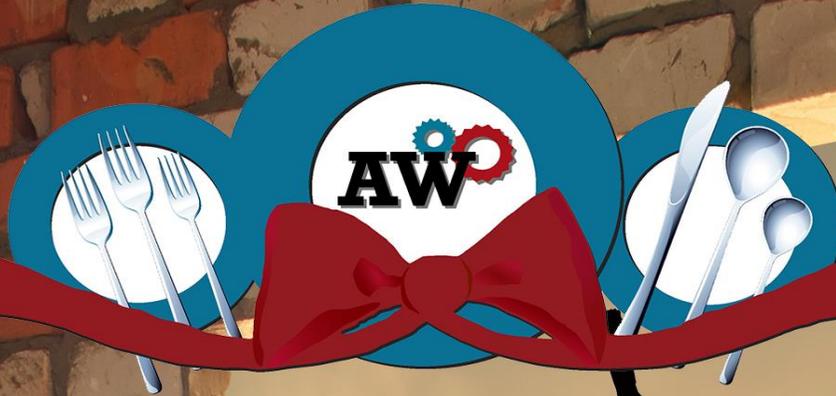


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# Dinner of Hope

*The Untapped Expertise  
America Needs*

April 13, 2019

## PROGRAM SCHEDULE

*Registration and Cocktails*

*6:00 PM – 7:00 PM*

Opening Remarks	Tim Coco, Master of Ceremonies
Welcome Message	Daniel Rajczyk, Executive Director
<i>DINNER</i>	
Keynote Address	State Senator Diana DiZoglio

### *AWARDS PRESENTATION*

The Bryan Noble Awarded Presented by State Rep. Andy Vargas	Shain Neumeier, Esq.
The Community Service Award Presented by Former State Rep. Juana Matias	The Arc of Gr. Haverhill-Newburyport
The Asperger Works Award Presented by State Rep. Christina Minicucci	Thomas “Woody” Wood

### *ENTERTAINMENT*

Magic Show	Stephanie Beach Magic
Live Music	Flash Drive
Silent Auction	KBK Sports
Raffles, 50/50	Members of the AWorks Team

### *DANCING*

#### DINNER COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Eva Rajczyk, Event Coordinator  
Marion Donahue, Rachel McMeen, Karen Merrill, The Rajczyk Family

*Cover artwork by Xiao Jingjing, Zhao Helen, & Han Taixing  
under the guidance of Eva Rajczyk*

## ASPERGER'S SYNDROME & ASPERGER WORKS

**Message from our Executive Director,  
Daniel R. Rajczyk**



Welcome to our **Fourth Annual Dinner of Hope**. Our theme this year is "*Aspies – the Untapped Resource America Needs.*" Many of you may be wondering what that means. It is our hope that in the coming year employers will begin to realize that qualified adult individuals with Asperger's Syndrome could be valuable assets to their businesses.

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

Why? It is difficult to say. One problem may be that most of us look like everyone else. Our disabilities are varied and often hidden and become obvious only with certain interactions. Most 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 disabilities, 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 not judge us by our oddities. Many of us are indeed the untapped experts that America needs. And employers willing to hire us would soon

discover that they made the right choice. We are great workers - loyal, honest to a fault, hard-working. All we need is a chance.

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 (AS)** is a developmental disorder characterized by significant difficulties in social interaction and nonverbal communication along with restricted and repetitive patterns of behavior and interests. It is a milder form of autism spectrum disorder (ASD), with most Aspies having average or above average IQs. It differs from other ASDs in that most Aspies have relatively normal language skills and intelligence. Although not required for diagnosis, physical clumsiness and unusual use of language may also be common. For boys, signs usually begin before the age of two. Diagnosing girls is much more difficult since girls tend to be very social at an early age. It is not until their preteen years that it may be noticed that something was amiss. There is no cure for Asperger's and it lasts for a person's entire life.

The exact cause of Asperger's is unknown. It is believed that it is probably partly inherited, but the underlying genetics have not been determined conclusively as the diagnosis of Asperger's in the United States was not available prior to the 1980s. Environmental factors are also believed to play a role.

In 2013, the diagnosis of Asperger's was removed from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), and people with these symptoms are now included within Autism Spectrum Disorders, a broad range that

includes autism and pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS). It remains within the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) as of 2019, but only as a subtype of Autism Spectrum Disorders. 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 another person's space. Some have heightened sensitivity and become over-stimulated by loud noises, lights, or strong tastes, smells, 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 Austen, director Alfred Hitchcock, author and poet Hans Christian Andersen, naturalist Charles Darwin, puppeteer Jim Hanson of Kermit the Frog and Sesame Street 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. Recently, rapper Eminem revealed the he, too, is an Aspie. In her Netflix special, Amy Schumer publicized that her husband was just

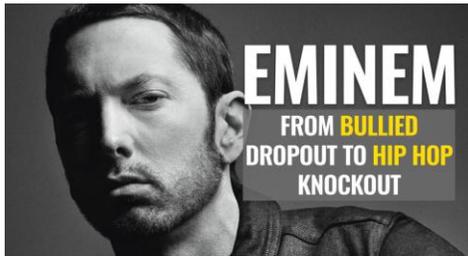
recently diagnosed with Asperger's. Many believe that entrepreneur, software guru, and former chairman of Microsoft, Bill Gates, also has Asperger's.

### **Asperger Works Connection**

Although the people mentioned above prove that those with Asperger's Syndrome could live successful lives, a large percentage are not so lucky. According to the latest reports from various sources, 70 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.

Although there are many organizations that help people with high-functioning autism or Asperger's, the truth is that today the only organization in the Merrimack Valley whose *sole* mission is to help adult Aspies with employment issues is Asperger Works. There are members of the Board and Advisory who are either Aspies themselves or who have Aspie family members. It is important to us that people who join our organization have a vested interest in our mission to help adults with AS lead productive lives through gainful employment. We also hope to educate employers about the positive side of hiring people with Asperger's Syndrome.

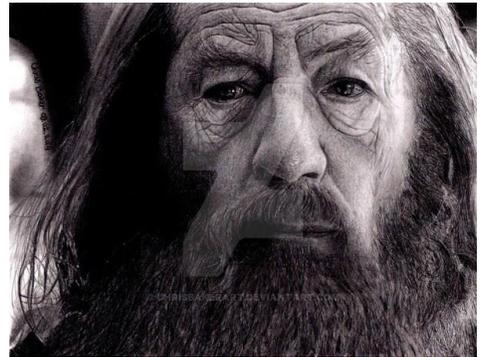


*"Guess I got a way with words, I could  
get away with murder  
Ever heard of Aspergers'?"  
It's a rare condition  
It's what you're sufferin' from when you  
simply don't care  
if it's an 80 degree day  
and there's no frickin' air conditionin'  
And you can't see the bitch's hair is  
frizzin'  
'Cause you got the windows up, blarin'  
the system  
In your Chevrolet Prizm  
The devil ain't on a level same as him  
Picture someone who revels in straight  
masochism  
And imagine him givin' an adjective an  
ass-whoopin'  
So bad they should put his ass in prison  
A word bully, I verbally abuse verbs  
Like they did somethin' to me personally  
Used to get bullied, so I'd cut class and  
ditch it  
Now I bully rap, I'm the sh..t, f....t (Sniff it!)  
Cadillac from a K Car....*

*And I'm sick of poundin' a square peg in  
a round hole  
Sorry, another catchphrase  
But your baggage ain't gon' fit in my  
storage overhead space  
'Cause it just ain't big enough to fit your  
damaged goods."*

*from Wicked Ways, Eminem*

## The Art of Chris Baker



*Pencil drawings by Chris Baker*

*Chris Baker is a twenty-two-year-old autistic man from South Wales, UK, whose pencil drawings look like photographs. He does not like to be the center of attention and prefers to have his parents speak on his behalf during interviews and at conventions. Chris started drawing as a form of therapy to help with his anxiety. But soon he realized that his art, which he is intensely passionate about, caused much joy to others. Today, he spends up to forty hours working on a single pencil portrait.*

## HONOREES

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### **The Bryan Noble Award**

*Attorney Shain M. Neumeier*



The ***Bryan Noble Award*** was created in the memory of Paul Bryan Noble, who died way too young, but who lived a full life despite his medical problems and other challenges. This award is presented yearly to a person who has strived to show that disabilities do not define or limit a person.

This year, we are honoring Attorney Shain M. Neumeier who is an autistic activist for disability, youth, and queer justice and liberation. They are a solo attorney in Western Massachusetts whose practice focuses on disability and transgender law, including defense against civil commitment, obtaining court-ordered name changes, and seeking justice for survivors of institutional abuse and neglect. For the past nine years, Shain has written articles and spoken at numerous conferences and colleges about issues of bodily autonomy and freedom from coercive medical treatment. They have also received the 2018 Outstanding Young Lawyer Award from the Massachusetts Bar Association, the 2015 Leadership in Advocacy Award from the Association of University Centers on Disabilities, and the 2017 Self-Advocate of the Year Award from the Self-Advocacy Association of New York State.

### **The Asperger Works Award**

*Tom "Woody" Wood*



The ***Asperger Works Award*** is given to a person in recognition for their commitment to individuals and/or nonprofit organizations, like Asperger Works, that try to make life better for all in their communities.

Our honoree this year is Thomas "Woody" Wood, who has spent a lifetime fighting for the rights of the disabled and has been the longest serving member of our Board until he was sidelined by Cerebral Palsy that is now affecting his eyesight. Woody, as he is affectionately known by his friends, joined the organization in order to be a liaison between Asperger Works and other nonprofits dealing with issues that people on the Autism Spectrum face. He brought us his personal knowledge of the difficulties faced by disabled adults, especially those with Asperger's Syndrome. Woody was diagnosed with Asperger's only about 14 years ago but has faced adversity all his life since, as was mentioned above, he also suffers from Cerebral Palsy. He has been a powerful advocate for our organization and for the disabled community. He is not afraid to confront influential politicians if he feels that such a challenge would benefit those he advocates for.

Tom Wood received his engineering degree from Wentworth Institute but found it difficult to find permanent employment in his field. Thus, for most of his adult life, he has been

unemployed. Employers have not been able to see past his disabilities to realize that he is a highly educated and competent person. As a result, he has been on SSDI since 2006 and has essentially dropped out of the workforce permanently though he would have preferred to be employed.

customized approach allows their partners to pursue their needs and dreams while enriching the community. They strive for excellence by supporting people in becoming leaders and ambassadors of equal opportunity.

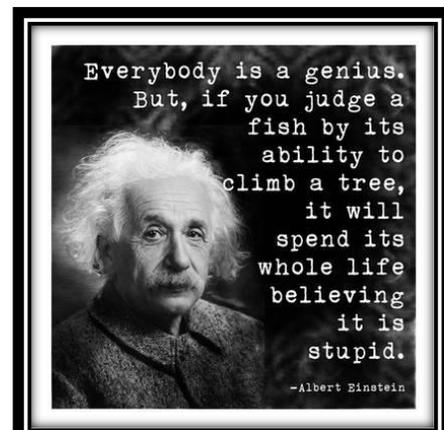
### **Community Service Award**

*The Arc of Greater Haverhill-  
Newburyport*



The **Community Service Award** is given each year to a local organization that provides unwavering support for people with disabilities, including those on the Autism Spectrum. The Arc of Greater Haverhill-Newburyport, is this year's honoree. Over the past 60 years The Arc has been the leading statewide and national movement advocating for the human rights, appropriate supports and community inclusion of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Their vision is to be a dynamic and innovative organization that recognizes and supports every person's unique gifts and talents. Their work is shifting the focus from "doing for" to partnering with the individuals and families they support. They personalized and



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## SPEAKERS

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### **KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

**State Senator Diana DiZoglio**, this year's Keynote Speaker, has been an early supporter of Asperger Works.

Ms. DiZoglio proudly serves as state senator for the First Essex District, which includes the Cities of Amesbury, Haverhill, Methuen and Newburyport, the Towns of Merrimac and Salisbury, and portions of the Town of North Andover. In this legislative session, Diana will serve as chair of the Joint Committee on Community Development and Small Business and vice chair of the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities and Joint Committee on Municipalities and Regional Government.

Educated in Methuen Public Schools, Diana is a graduate of Wellesley College and Middlesex Community College. Prior to her election to the State Senate in 2018, she served three terms as state representative for the 14th Essex District. Before winning her first race for public office in 2012, Diana worked for multiple non-profit, community-based organizations and was a small business owner. She worked as a legislative aide in the House of Representatives before serving as chief-of-staff to Edward A. Kelly, then-president of the Professional Fire Fighters of Massachusetts (PFFM) and current General Secretary-Treasurer of the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF)

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**Tim Coco**, our Master of Ceremonies, first entered communications in 1978 as an intern at WHAV AM and FM in Haverhill and within a few months landed a job there in the news department. He would remain in news throughout the 1980s – serving as City Hall reporter for the then-daily *Haverhill Gazette*, regional reporter for the *Daily News* of Newburyport, and editor of an environmental trade publication based in Manchester, New Hampshire. He was later tapped to create the communications department for Ogden Corporation, Fairfield, New Jersey.

He founded COCO+CO., an advertising agency, in 1991. In 2004, coming full circle, Coco acquired the WHAV name and founded Public Media of New England Inc. Today, the non-profit corporation operates 97.9 WHAV FM, the only Haverhill-based news source.

Coco is also a commissioner of the Haverhill License Commission, past president of the Trustees of the John Greenleaf Whittier Homestead, and a commissioner of the Essex National Heritage Commission.

Coco holds an associate degree from Northern Essex Community College and a Bachelor of Science in Management from Lesley University School of Management.



**Andy Vargas**, last year's keynote speaker, is a second term State Representative for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Essex District, representing the people of Haverhill, Massachusetts. Andy previously served on the Haverhill City Council, as a White House intern under the Obama administration, and worked for EForAll in Lowell. Representative Vargas is a graduate of Haverhill High and Boston University and is a Haverhill native who is proud to represent his hometown in the State Legislature.



**Christina Minicucci** has lived most of her life in the 14th Essex district, which she now represents in the State House. She has spent her life giving back to the community that has been so giving to her. Most recently, she served as Vice-Chair of the North Andover School Building Committee, was a member of the North Andover Master Plan Advisory Committee, and the Expo Coordinator for the Feaster Five Road Race. Christina is also an active member of the Franklin School PTO, North Andover Parent Advisory Council (NAPAC), her local Boy Scout Troop, and the Merrimack Valley Striders running club. She is a former member and Vice President of the Greater Lawrence

YWCA Board of Directors, and spent many years as a sexual assault hotline advocate and peer educator. She has spent the bulk of her professional career in commercial and multi-family housing development and construction.

Christina and her husband, Eric Loth, are raising their two sons and one daughter in North Andover. Christina has a BA in Spanish from Bowdoin College, an MBA from Suffolk University, and is a graduate of the Advanced Management Degree Program at the Harvard Graduate School of Design.



**Juana Matias** is an immigrant, a graduate of local public schools, a social worker, a lawyer, and one of the first Latina State Representatives elected in Massachusetts. In 2018, she decided to run for Congress because she believes that the American dream is under attack for the hard-working families in our communities. Juana immigrated to the United States at the age of five and was raised in Haverhill. Her father spent more than seventeen years at Polartec in Lawrence as a machine operator, and her mother worked for Central Metal Finishing as a precision finisher. Juana got her first job as a papergirl for the *Lawrence Eagle Tribune* when she was 11. Her family worked hard, played by the rules, and was able to achieve their dream of sending Juana to college.

Through scholarships, loans, and part-time jobs, Juana paid her way through college

and law school. She graduated from the University of Massachusetts-Boston and earned a law degree from Suffolk University Law School in 2014. She's served as a case worker to families and children in Lawrence, Lowell, and Haverhill and as a Justice AmeriCorps Legal Advocate. She shocked the political establishment in 2016 by upsetting a career politician in Lawrence to become one of the first Latinas ever elected to the Massachusetts Statehouse.



**Former State Senator Barbara L'Italien**  
*with*  
**Former Congresswoman Niki Tsongas**  
*Dinner of Hope, 2016*

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many congratulations, happy flaps, bounces, & squees from Lydia Brown to the 2019 Asperger Works Awardee SHAIN MAHAFFEY NEUMEIER, ESQ.



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