

13 Holiday Survival Tips For Your Child With Special Needs

- by Emma Sterland

While most children live for the holiday season, it can be an extremely stressful time of year for children with autism and other forms of learning disability. The disruption to their routine, unfamiliar sights and smells, the house full of noise and people — it can all prove too much. Holidays are all about the family, but it can be hard keeping everyone happy.

The following tips for surviving the holiday season have been contributed to Scope by parents of children and adults with special needs. The general consensus seems to be to plan ahead. Whether that's creating a visual story for your child, preparing them what to expect, or giving relatives a heads-up in advance about your child's particular needs — **preparation is key.**

1. Reduce The Stress

Try to find ways to reduce the stress – both on your child and you. Schedule in quiet times and create chill-out zones in your home. Remember, your child will pick up on your stress levels, so try not to over-stretch yourself.

2. Ask For Help

Friends and family may not know how they can help unless you tell them. Give them a list of things they can do to support you – from looking after your child while you spend quality time with your other children – to pouring you a glass of champagne!

3. Wrap Up Familiar Toys

If your child is not keen on opening presents because they're new and unfamiliar, try wrapping up some favorite toys. Sometimes unwrapping something familiar is very reassuring.

4. Give Your Child A Job And A Schedule

I always give my children, who have ASD, "jobs" to do at family gatherings — take coats, offer nibbles around, etc. Giving them something to do reduces their stress of having people in the house. I also give them an itinerary so they understand, for example, that people stand around and chat a lot, and that is part of the occasion.

5. Manage New Smells

Add cinnamon to your child's play-dough to gradually introduce new smells. One thing that people with autism complain about during the holidays is the many different perfume smells coming from visiting adults. Ask your family and friends to hold off on the perfume.

6. Work On Gift Giving

Help and encourage the person you are caring for to give gifts. This provides an excellent opportunity to work on social skills, like thinking of other people's needs and interests, and being kind and helpful. I support my daughter to make gifts for her family and friends. She also looks forward to giving out the presents as well.

Continued on page 5

Here to serve you ...

Staff Members: Sondra Nocella-Thorn, *Executive Director*
Wanda McCann, *Rep Payee*

Office Hours: Monday-Thursday 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Closed on Friday

Located at: 6021 Parkside Drive, Monroe, MI

Phone: 734.241.5881

Fax: 734.241.3694

E-mail: arcmonroe@sbcglobal.net

Website: www.monarcofmonroe.org

MON-ARC Board Members

Maureen Dempsey
President

John Deku
Vice President

Connie Janus
Secretary

Jeffrey Stoll
Treasurer

Roxie Boll
Member-at-Large

Susan Pickens
Member-at-Large

Bonnie Swatek
Member-at-Large

Board meetings are held on
the 2nd Tuesday of every month
at 6 p.m. at the MON-ARC office.

Mon-Arc Would Like to Talk with Local Agencies

Do you know of a group or organization that would like to learn more about Mon-Arc? If so, please contact the office at **(734)241-5881** and talk with Sondra, our executive director.

Sondra has presented at several different community venues/groups and would be happy to do a presentation for other clubs or businesses.

Support us when you
shop this holiday

Amazon donates when you
shop at smile.amazon.com.

amazon smile



When first visiting **AmazonSmile**, customers are prompted to select a charitable organization from almost one million eligible organizations. In order to browse or shop at **AmazonSmile**, customers must first select a charitable organization. For eligible purchases at **AmazonSmile**, the **AmazonSmile** Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price to the customer's selected charitable organization.

IMPORTANT DATES COMING UP...

December 24	Mon-Arc office is closed until January 7
January 1	HAPPY NEW YEAR
January 7	Mon-Arc office re-opens
January 11	Dance at Monroe County Community College
February 15	Dance at Monroe County Community College
March 8	Dance at Monroe County Community College
April 26	Dance at Monroe County Community College



Our Mission: The **MON-ARC of Monroe, Inc.**, promotes the general welfare of all persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families through advocacy, counseling, education and community/program services.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

As we wind down the year, it is important to take stock of all the things we are grateful for, and to look ahead to the new year as an opportunity to explore possibilities and to continue striving each day to do the best possible work that we can.

To help us with our services, in the coming year we have received the following grants and donations:

- A grant from the Community Foundation of Monroe County to expand our Art Therapy program. Please follow us on Facebook and check our website for registration and schedules in January.

- A grant from the La-Z-Boy Foundation that will be used to expand our day-to-day operations within Mon-Arc Offices.

- Knights of Columbus donations from their Tootsie Roll drive which will be used for the monthly dances and our advocacy program

Because of these foundations and organizations, we can provide social recreational opportunities, such as dances, art classes and advocacy support to area individuals and families. We also hope to serve as a resource to other groups in this community who share our values and commitment to service. You are part of this work, and we can't thank you enough!

However, the future is still uncertain. We need your support to continue to build opportunities, provide supports and services, and fight for strong governmental policies and programs. During this special season, take some time to think about a friend, family member, or someone you teach or support who has an intellectual or developmental disability. Why not donate in their name? Donating to Mon-Arc is a great way to show friends, family members, co-workers and even clients that you are thinking of them during the holiday season, as well as sending a message that you are mindful of the needs in your community and respectful of their interest. Whether you donate instead of purchasing a traditional gift or as an add-on, this is a truly thoughtful opportunity to spread a message of cheer and charitable giving during the Christmas season.

Thank you for taking the time to read our newsletter. It is our hope that you will be inspired by the wonderful people in our family. For more information on how you can get involved, please visit us at www.monarcofmonroe.org.

Merry Christmas and best wishes to you and your loved ones at Christmastime and all year long.



Regards,
Sondra Thorn
Executive Director

The Christmas Season is a Time to Celebrate and Remember Someone Special in Your Life!

By making a gift to **The Mon-Arc of Monroe**, you can commemorate the passing of a loved one, celebrate a birthday or anniversary, or give a gift to the person who has it all. Your gift will allow us to continue our work of advocating for and serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to help them achieve their life goals.

Please fill out and send the form, with your donation, to our office at: **The Mon-Arc of Monroe; 6021 Parkside Drive; Monroe, MI 48161. Questions?** Please call the Mon-Arc office at **734-241-5881**.

Memorial and tribute donations to the MON-ARC of Monroe, Inc., are fully tax-deductible as provided by law.

Enclosed is my gift of:

\$25.00 \$50.00 \$75.00 \$100.00 Other _____

Number of Tributes: _____ Total Amount _____

Donor Information

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: (_____) _____

This gift is made: In Memory of In honor of Membership for
 Other: _____

Print Tribute Name: _____

We will send the following individual/family a card informing them of your tribute:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Enclose additional tribute names and addresses on a separate piece of paper.



 *Happy
Holidays*

Once again during the November dance, the participants made some holiday decorations. We decorated a Christmas wreath for the Christmas Tree Festival at the Monroe Historical Museum.

Please visit the display at the Christmas Tree Festival at the museum in downtown Monroe.



Welcome to Our New Board Member

John Deku

John Deku, attorney and counselor at law, joined our organization recently and was elected as Vice President of our Board at the October meeting.

John is a graduate of Monroe County Community College and earned his bachelor's degree in public affairs at Wayne State University. He graduated from the University of Toledo School of Law with a Juris Doctorate degree.

He and his wife have been married for 23 years and have three children.

John brings a great deal of experience and knowledge with him to Mon-Arc. He will be a valuable asset to our organization.



Photo from Welcome BBQ at M.C.C.C.

Making New Community Connections

Mon-Arc has established several new community connections that support our projects with volunteers, in-kind and monetary donations. We believe that when we connect with each other, we foster sustainable partnerships and collaborative relationships.

Just recently, we set up an informational booth at the Welcome BBQ at Monroe County Community College. We talked with many students and staff members about our organization. As a result, we connected with students from the College, Monroe County Middle College, and St. Mary Catholic Central High School. These students have committed to becoming involved with our social recreation program.

7. Reserve Some Special Time For Your Child

It's easy to get overloaded with festive preparations at this time of year, so plan daily activities to make some special time for your kids – i.e., 5 to 10 mins of undivided attention. Let your children take the lead, tune into their world and see it through their eyes.

8. Create A Weekly Calendar

Print off a week-to-view calendar page from your PC or the internet and add a picture of your planned activities during the holidays (divide into morning, lunch, afternoon, etc.) and this will help put your child at ease about the week ahead.

9. Prepare Your Family

Talk to family members ahead of time. Discuss your child's specific needs, and gently but firmly tell them what your plans are. Be sure to let them know that this will make the whole experience better for everyone. Ask for their support.

10. Prepare A Bag Of Activities

When you are visiting friends or relatives, fill a backpack with things your child finds comforting or enjoys playing with — toy cars, a stuffed animal, a CD and CD player, or a few books. If your child gets overstimulated, find a quiet corner or a back room and pull out the backpack.

11. Prepare With Pictures

Our daughter loves looking at pictures and we have found it a great way of explaining different events to her. We have a holiday season book we've made with pictures of her and the family doing things during the holidays. We've included pictures of her in the school play, relatives coming to visit, etc. It helps her not to get overwhelmed with what's going on.

12. Create an Alternative Experience

I run a group for kids who have an autism spectrum disorder. Instead of having a party at this time of year, we arrange an experience for them. For them and us — as their parents — it's much more enjoyable as there is no pressure to conform to the demands that a social occasion puts on them.

13. Easy To Open Presents

My son has trouble with fine motor skills, so I "doctor" his cards and presents to allow him to open them easily. Makes for a much happier time for all and gives him a sense of satisfaction that he can complete tasks.



MTV Documenting Disability Activist's Journey To Space

by Michelle Diamant

A 28-year-old with a disability is headed to space and MTV plans to chronicle the voyage.

The cable network said this week that it will follow Eddie Ndopu as he works with an aerospace company to prepare for and make the flight. Ndopu is from South Africa and has spinal muscular atrophy. He is expected to be the first person with a physical disability to travel into space, MTV said.

Diagnosed at birth, Ndopu was predicted to live just five years. Nearly three decades later, however, he has a master's degree in public policy from Oxford University and works to champion the rights of young people with disabilities around the globe.

Ndopu intends to deliver a message to the U.N. General Assembly from space "on behalf of young people everywhere who have ever felt excluded by society," according to MTV.

Production on the untitled project is slated to



GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Disability Groups Hope For Additional Support From New Congress

by Blythe Bernhard | November 28, 2018

Advocates are optimistic that the forthcoming shift in the balance of power in Congress could bring positive change for people with disabilities.

Come 2019, the U.S. House of Representatives will turn over to a Democratic majority while Republicans will hold their advantage in the Senate.

The new Democrat-led House essentially ends the push to repeal the Affordable Care Act, or ACA, experts said. Advocacy groups have fought to preserve the law and its insurance protections for people with pre-existing conditions and expansion of Medicaid coverage to more families.

"We hope to be able to move from a mainly defensive posture back to a more affirmative agenda," said Julia Bascom, executive director of the Autistic Self Advocacy Network. "The voters sent a clear message that they want Congress to move on from ACA repeal, stop the attacks on Medicaid and other lifeline programs, and get back to work. We have a lot of stuff we'd love to be able to work with them on."

A top priority for disability advocacy groups is the **Empower Care Act**, which would extend funding for the *Money Follows the Person* program. The Medicaid initiative helps older people and those with disabilities leave nursing homes and institutions in favor of community-based housing. More than 88,000 people have moved into group homes or other community settings through the program since it started in 2005.

The bill to renew *Money Follows the Person*, which expired in 2016, passed through a House committee in September and is awaiting a full vote in the House along with a similar bill in the Senate. States have been running out of money to fund the program, and advocates are hopeful it will be approved before the new year.

"We are pulling out all of the stops to get MFP passed in the lame-duck session," said Sarah Meek, director of legislative affairs for the American Network of Community Options and Resources, or ANCOR. "We're hoping that the environment is right for more incremental, good changes for the disability sector."

Meek said the *Money Follows the Person* renewal could be advanced through a merger with the ACE Kids Act — another bill that was recently approved by a House committee — which would help coordinate care for children with complex medical needs who visit specialists at different hospitals or in different states. The ACE Kids Act is supported by the National Down Syndrome Society, Autism Speaks and the Autism Society.

When the new legislative class takes over in January, advocacy groups are also optimistic that the Keeping All Students Safe Act will finally gain approval. The bill, which would regulate the use of restraint and seclusion in schools, was first introduced in 2009. Top Democrats in the House and Senate recently reintroduced the measure.

Another bill supported by advocacy groups is the Healthcare Extension and Accessibility for Developmentally Disabled and Underserved Population, or HEADs UP, Act which would create incentives for medical providers to specialize in caring for people with disabilities.

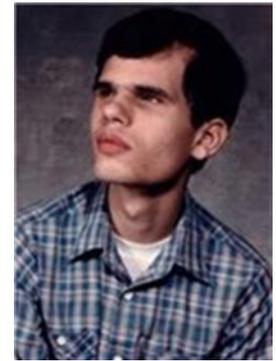
Bascom of the Autistic Self Advocacy Network said her group will also push for the end of subminimum wage for people with disabilities.

Perhaps the biggest message from the midterm elections is the popularity of Medicaid, the government health insurance program for people with low incomes or disabilities, advocates said.

All but 14 states have accepted additional Medicaid funding with higher income limits, after midterm ballot wins for expansion in Idaho, Nebraska and Utah. As many as 500,000 more people will be covered under Medicaid in the three states, according to ANCOR.

"Support for Medicaid as a program is strong in the country, so that also gives us hope about possible improvements," Meek said.

Educating new members of Congress on developmental disabilities will be another primary goal, advocates indicated.



In Memory of ...

ROGER RUSSEAU

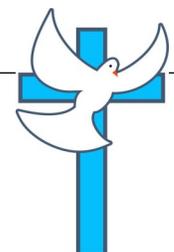
Roger Michael Russeau, age 52, of Monroe, passed from this life into perfect happiness on Thanksgiving evening as he went home to be with his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

While he was here, Roger was non-verbal, but had some limited communication. We rejoice knowing that now he is singing.

Roger was born on July 10, 1966, to Sharon (LaBeau) and the late Roger Russeau. Roger had special needs and attended the Monroe County Educational Center. Roger made his home with Barbara Sarkody, who devoted many years to providing excellent care and unconditional love.

Roger is survived by his mother, Sharon Russeau Bauer; his "Other mother" Barbara Sarkody and her daughter Julie Evans; his brother Scott (Jennifer) Russeau; his sister Sharon "Cheri" Bellino; and niece Serena Russeau.

Along with his father, Roger was preceded in death by both sets of grandparents and four uncles.





L A Z B O Y

Live life Comfortably.



Very Special Thanks to ...

■ **Richie Eadie**

for helping with our paper shredding at the Mon-Arc office.

■ **Kendra Leibenguth and Janice Kraus**

for assembling the Mon-Arc newsletters.

■ **Monroe Knights of Columbus Council #1266**

for their generous donations.

■ **Judy Grounds**

for her generous donation.

■ **Community Foundation of Monroe County**

for the grant to expand our Art Therapy program.

■ **La-Z-Boy Foundation**

for the grant to support our office operations.



We appreciate our new and renewal members!

NEW MEMBER:

John Deku

RENEWED MEMBERSHIPS:

Bill & Cathy Brodie

Connie Janus

Jolynn Koren

Janice Kraus

Joseph & Sandy Kraus

Ken & Susan Miller

Krysten Niemiec

Frank Rojewski

Dale & Lynde Woolace

GIFTED

MEMBERSHIPS:

Beverly Gerber

RENEWAL FROM ROXIE BOLL

Barb Sarkody

NEW MEMBERSHIP FROM ROXIE BOLL

UPCOMING DANCES

■ **Friday, January 11** ■ **Friday, February 15**

■ **Friday, March 8** ■ **Friday, April 26**

All dances will be held at

Monroe County Community College

Dances run from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

CANCELLATION POLICY: If Monroe Public Schools are closed on the day of the dance, the dance will be cancelled. You can check our Facebook page [The Mon-Arc of Monroe] or our website page [www.monarcofmonroe] for cancellation notices.

THE MON-ARC OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED beginning Monday, December 24th. WE WILL RE-OPEN on Monday, January 7, 2019



Consider a membership donation to a consumer, parent or interested individual or organization.

PEOPLE HAVE HONORED OTHERS BY BUYING THEM A YEAR'S MEMBERSHIP IN OUR ORGANIZATION!



For people with intellectual
and developmental disabilities

Mon-Arc of Monroe, Inc.
6021 Parkside Drive
Monroe, MI 48161

Affiliated with:
The ARC U.S.
The ARC Michigan

Proud to be a United Way agency.



Community Partner

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name:		
Address:		
City:	State:	ZIP:
Phone (Home):	Phone (cell):	
Email Address:		
Please check all that apply		
<input type="checkbox"/> Parent/Guardian	<input type="checkbox"/> I/DD Challenged Person	<input type="checkbox"/> Sibling/Family
<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Friend	<input type="checkbox"/> Business Member
<input type="checkbox"/> Arc Staff/Board Member	<input type="checkbox"/> Other	
MEMBERSHIP TYPE		
<input type="checkbox"/> Renewal Membership <input type="checkbox"/> New Membership <input type="checkbox"/> Gift Membership (See Below)		
<input type="checkbox"/> I/DD Challenged	\$10.00	
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual/Family Membership	\$25.00	
<input type="checkbox"/> Silver Membership	\$50.00	
<input type="checkbox"/> Gold Membership	\$100.00	
<input type="checkbox"/> Patron	\$200.00	Grand Total:
<input type="checkbox"/> Additional Contribution to Mon-Arc	\$ _____	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> I am unable to contribute but would appreciate receiving the newsletter.		

Send to **MON-ARC; 6021 Parkside Drive: Monroe, MI 48161.**

For Office Use Only:

Date Rec: _____ Amt. Rec: _____ Ck. # _____ Recorded by: _____ Mem. Comm. _____