



## 2011 to 2012 - Another Great Year!

In October 2011, AMI was very excited to host the first National Conference on Asperger Syndrome with renowned speaker, and AS expert, Dr. Tony Attwood. The event was a huge success with over 300 delegates attending, some whom came from as far away as Colorado, Saskatchewan, Ontario, and Newfoundland! There were a number of informative and interactive presentations by Dr. Attwood and many great breakout sessions that covered a wide variety of topics. The conference wrapped up with an opportunity from those in attendance to work together in creating a priority list for mapping the future of services and supports for individuals with AS, their families, friends and co-workers, throughout the coming years. The "World Cafe" was an opportunity to meet and understand the perspectives of the many different people who came to the conference - adults with AS, service providers, family members, educators, psychiatrists, etc. AMI will be using the report from the World Cafe as we develop our strategic plan later this year. Feedback from our delegates was overwhelmingly positive. Our thanks to Andrea Villeneuve and Carolyn Rickey for heading up the conference committee, as well as the many volunteers who helped to make it the experience that it was. Our plans for the future include a series of workshops for the fall 2012 followed by another large conference in October 2013 with Michelle Garcia Winner (Social Thinking) and Rudy Simone (AsperGirls) at Canad Inns Regent Park Casino. Stay tuned to the website for more information as it becomes available.

AMI continues to grow as the needs of our community grow and develop. We are in uncertain times with the fate of the AS diagnosis in question when the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual is published. Ensuring that our identity and membership continues to grow and find a home with our organization will be a prime focus in the coming months and years.

Our organization is facing a time of renewal and we saw this when some of our most dedicated board members recently retired. Both Bev Larmour and Janet Thomson have worked diligently to promote the interests and needs of AMI and the individuals and families we serve and we thank them for their dedication. We welcome both Dr. Gary Altman and Jamie Penner to our board and are confident that their interests, expertise and energy are sure to bring new opportunities to our organization.

I will be stepping aside as President of AMI as my term comes to an end, and am looking forward to working with Charlene Walberg in the coming years in my position as past-President. Our organization is dynamic, energetic and our board of directors continues to provide inspired leadership. Thank you for the opportunity to serve on the executive over the past number of years!

—Anne Kresta, President, AMI



# The Asperger Manitoba Resource Centre (AMRC)

Our programs and services have continued over the past year with:

- Adult skills groups, planned to begin fall 2012,
- Children's skills groups, including SPARK, a program developed by Heather Mackenzie at University of Manitoba that develops self-regulation skills, offered this past year with plans for additional groups for the fall 2012,
- Parallel parent groups, coinciding with dates and times that SPARK kids groups run.

This year we also began The Kids Club, regular opportunities for children with AS and their families to get together and socialize with activities that included Lego robotics, swimming, bowling and more.

We have also renewed the adults social group with the help of Marion Schaeffer and her family and there are many activities planned for the coming months.

Something that we are really excited about is a support group for spouses of adults with AS. This will be started in the fall 2012.

We are also looking at unique ways of supporting women with AS and more news should be coming soon as those plans evolve.

AMI continues to offer workshops on a variety of topics, to both our membership and the community at large. This fall, workshops will be staged to address specific interests like cooking skills, building resilience as caregivers, and learning about various systems including post-secondary education and employment. Kris Perlmutter had a very successful year heading up the caregiver support group for adults with AS. Her monthly meetings provided great opportunities for parents and siblings of those with AS to get together, share their experiences and concerns and learn about the Registered Disability Savings Plan, how to navigate our provincial supports and services, and so much more. Our thanks to Kris for her dedication to this group.

Our support group for parents of children also continued to run regularly with record attendance as more and more children are being diagnosed and parents are networking through AMI. Charlene, Andrea and Caitlin work together to make sure that topics of interest are addressed and someone is always on hand to lead the group and answer any questions.

Charlene in particular has gone above and beyond the call of duty in organizing the skills groups for both adults and children, keeping our website up to date,

answering emails and phone calls and sending out our electronic newsletters.

This year, AMI was able to secure an office at SMD and we now have a home for AMRC. This will make storing records and hosting interviews and other meetings much easier.

*The AMRC and its programs are made possible with grant and in-kind support from: The Winnipeg Foundation, Investors Group and the University of Manitoba. In addition, a grant to support groups for youth was received from the Opt In program at St. Mary's United Church. We would especially like to thank Dr. Janine Montgomery of the University of Manitoba for her ongoing support and collaboration in the development of programs and services for children, youth and adults with AS and their families.*



## What is SPARK?

*spark\** is a comprehensive, practical and systematic program covering details from pre-assessment through lesson implementation to evaluation of progress.

Unique features of *spark\**:

1. Focuses on three important areas of self-regulation: behavioral, cognitive and emotional.
2. Presents enjoyable activities that help each child progress from awareness of simple motor acts to cognitive and emotional self-regulation.
3. Develops resilience and self-advocacy skills in the children so that they can remain self-regulated even in stressful or disruptive situations.
4. Explicitly teaches generalization of each self-regulation skill.
5. Is based on current neurological research and works to enhance attention and executive functioning.

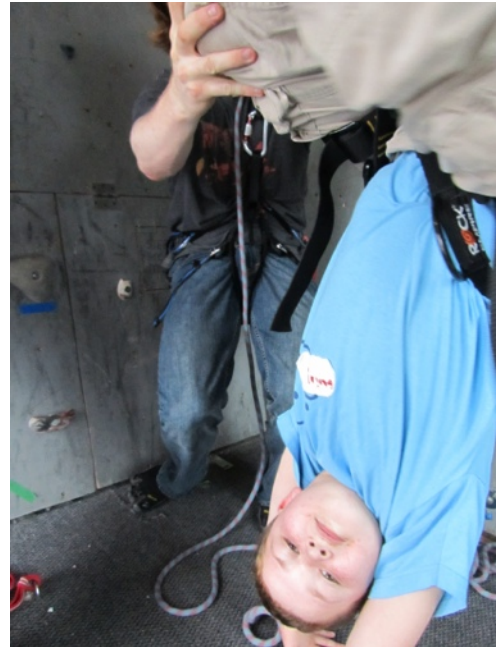
## **Making Sense of the Thrive! Initiative**

In June 2011, the Government of Manitoba announced a five year plan for targeting the lifespan challenges that people with ASD experience. This plan, Thrive!, has led to the development of a “leadership committee” that includes representatives from various Government Departments (Family Services and Labour, Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade, Education, Health, etc.) as well as those from Asperger Manitoba Inc. Autism Manitoba, Manitoba Families for Effective Autism Treatment and The Children’s Coalition. This committee has been meeting semi-regularly to develop priorities and project proposals for those priority areas.

Areas that AMI has been working on include the creation of a centralized web portal that would guide individuals, families and professionals through the information, services and supports available to them throughout the province. The proposal for this project has been completed and the committee is currently reviewing estimates for the web-portal development that have been fielded from a number of suppliers. The completed proposal and recommended supplier will be presented to the leadership committee by the end of September.

Another project currently under development would address the services gaps that many on the spectrum experience once they leave the public school system. Members of the leadership committee have been invited to view “The Ability Hub” housed at the University of Calgary to see how their unique way of providing life skills training and support. We hope to bring back some knowledge and ideas for next steps to make something similar available in Manitoba.

We hope to hear more from the government in the coming months regarding their commitment to supporting Thrive! and urge you to keep in touch with your local MLA so they understand the importance of lifespan approaches to supporting individuals with ASD, their families, educators and service and support providers.



## Looking Forward ...

Our membership continues to grow. We have 76 memberships – 62 of those were for individuals or families and represent over 200 active individuals. The remaining 14 memberships are for corporate entities including school divisions, employment assistance agencies, occupational therapists, psychiatrists and various others that work with AMI. In the coming two years AMI will be renewing its strategic vision with the help of organizational development funding from United Way. AMI is in the process of selecting a consultant to help with this process and guide us to be a stronger, well positioned entity with provincial outreach and national presence.

*Thank you to our funders and membership. Your support helps us to remain a strong, vibrant organization that can respond the needs of those affected by Asperger Syndrome in Manitoba and beyond.*



## Our 2011 Board of Directors

### Executive

Anne Kresta – President  
Charlene Walberg – Vice President  
Caitlin Wray - Secretary  
Andrea Villeneuve - Treasurer

### Directors-at-large

Kris Perlmutter  
Damon Schuler  
Bryan Kehler  
Quinn Senkow  
Sebastien North  
Dr. Gary Altman  
Jamie Penner  
Melissa Harju

### Save the Date!

October 8 and 9, 2013

Asperger Manitoba Inc. presents:  
Michelle Garcia Winner and Rudy Simone  
at Canad Inns Regent Park Casino,  
Winnipeg



For more information about the work of Asperger Manitoba Inc., the many support groups and social activities we offer and other news, please visit our website: [www.asperger-manitoba.ca](http://www.asperger-manitoba.ca). become a member and subscribe to our regular newsletters to keep in touch!