

# The Island Autism Center





Please watch our film: [islandautism.org/video](http://islandautism.org/video)



## Our Vision

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The Island Autism Center: a place on Martha's Vineyard where children and adults with autism and their families can come for summer camp, respite, education, seminars, therapies, and to spend essential time together as a family.

The Island Autism Group envisions a place where children and adults with autism can enjoy therapeutic riding, arts and crafts, gardening, and other activities not only in the summer months, but also year round, through afterschool programming and weekend workshops. The Center would be a place where parents could meet other parents, share resources, and learn about various therapies and trends in the field. Siblings of autistic individuals could meet one another and draw support from their common experience.

With the essential support and accepting spirit of the Island community, the Center would be a place for collaboration and cooperation. The Center would provide social, physical, and emotional supports for the Island's autistic population without their having to leave their home.

Island children and their parents could be confident that they could stay together and still have high quality and much-needed resources, programs and support available to them.



**ISLAND  
Autism  
GROUP**

## The Island Autism Group, Inc.

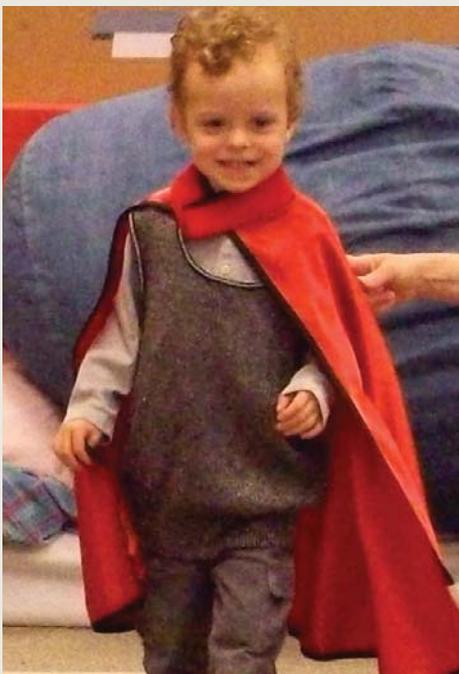
With offices in West Tisbury the Island Autism Group, Inc., IAG, is a well-established non-profit corporation tax exempt under Section 501(c)(3), that has been serving autistic children and their families, as well as providing services and resources to the local school systems, on Martha's Vineyard for many years. IAG was founded in 2008 by Kate DeVane and Marcy Bettencourt, both mothers of young sons with autism. Since its inception, IAG has helped autistic children on the Island access extracurricular programs and equipment necessary and beneficial for their

development. We support local children and families living with autism by providing numerous resources. IAG works closely with teachers, therapists, parents and friends interested in supporting those with autism.

### Our Work

Since its inception, IAG has raised more than \$50,000 annually which it uses to fund therapeutic riding classes, iPads, laptops, squeeze machines, teacher enrichment, music programs, sensory camps, individual summer camp scholarships, parent seminars and many other valuable supports. To date, these efforts have benefited more than 90

percent of the school age Island children on the autism spectrum. IAG contributed annually to both Project Headway (the preschool program within the school system) as well as the Bridge program, which provides support to the schools' autistic population up to high school age. IAG has provided individual support to students in the Life Skills program at the high school. Numerous children with special needs in typical inclusive classrooms have received support from IAG. IAG strives to supply anything children with autism need, outside or in school to enrich their experience and further their ability to become a more integrated part of their community.



The Centers for Disease Control estimate 1 in 68 American children are autistic. Another government survey of 12,000 parents indicates it is 1 in 45.



## Our Team

IAG director, Kate DeVane, is an experienced businesswoman and a former teacher, in addition to being a parent of a child with autism. Kate has lived on Martha's Vineyard for more than 20 years and is landscape coordinator for Donaroma's Nursery and Landscape. She attended Cornell University where she earned her BFA, as well as the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. Kate was a teacher at The Foote School in New Haven, Connecticut, for five years. She has assembled a group of partners, advisors and supporters for the Center who provide a wide range of program and administrative expertise and

experience to work with her on this project.

These individuals include Liza Gallagher, executive director of the Island's extraordinarily successful Camp Jabberwocky, as well as Kara Thibideau, executive director of Rising Tide, a well-known 501(c)(3) organization providing therapeutic riding programs on Martha's Vineyard. Both of these women are assisting Kate with their knowledge and experience in connection with the creation of a family respite camp in summer and an afterschool program for all children with autism on the Island.

IAG's Board of Directors is currently comprised of parents, educators, and interested professionals, including Marcy Bronzino Bettencourt, Joanie Creato, Kim Leaird, James Logue, Marie Logue, and Kevin McGrath.

IAG's Advisory Board, which serves as a sounding board and advising body, consists of parents, professionals, and other interested community members: Connie Berry, Joanne Eccher, Kristine Grazioso, Dr. Julia Stunkel, Jenny Royal, Lea Rosbeck, and Penny Uhlendorf.

Each of these boards meets on a regular basis, helping IAG develop its vision of the Center and refine its historic services

and program offerings to better serve its constituents. Many of the board members live on the Island and are invested in the community, committed to lending their support and expertise to the individuals and families living with autism.

In Massachusetts alone, an analysis of basic Census and CDC numbers and an adjustment for age categories tells us that there are approximately 19,569 school age children between the ages of 5 and 22 on the autism spectrum. On the Island itself, we currently have approximately 450 children with special needs. Despite this, it has been our consistent experience that every family with an autistic child must learn to cope essentially from scratch and in relative isolation with piecemeal resources, support and information.

## The Island Autism Center

The Center will be owned and operated by IAG. IAG will focus on individuals with autism ranging in age from 5 years old into adulthood. It will also provide programs and support



activities to families and siblings of these individuals, including a family overnight retreat program operated during the summer as well as a summer day-camp program. The Center will also serve the Island community of autistic individuals and their families year-round through its afterschool program and weekend events. Because it will be owned and operated by a non-profit corporation, the Center will be largely reliant on donations and participation fees, with a goal of providing programs and services on a sliding scale fee model based upon an assessment of ability to pay. The Center will engage in on-going marketing and fundraising through grants, private and institutional contributions, and by hosting special events with partners and

supporters both on- and off-Island.

As previously noted, our goal is to provide educational, physical, emotional, social, and community support to persons with autism and their families where they live. The Center will provide families with an alternative to the heart-wrenching decision to be separated because they need resources not available on the Island. The Center hopes to be an anchor for Islanders, summer residents, and visitors who have autism and their families.

Through fun activities such as art, music, therapeutic riding, cooking, gardening, and farming, people of all ages with autism can enjoy a wonderful camp experience infused with therapeutic components.

Dedicated paid and volunteer staff will work as a team to provide the most effective and beneficial experience for families and their family member with autism.

The Center will provide opportunities for parents, siblings, and community members to build relationships with one another, allowing them to share ideas, knowledge and experience, as well as a supportive environment based on common life experience. Because of our unique location, we will be able to attract and host experts with a broad range of experience who will come to the Center to share their knowledge.

The Center also will provide employment and volunteer opportunities for Islanders who are already active in supporting those with autism. The Center will welcome graduate and undergraduate students from colleges and universities for relevant experience and field learning within their major areas of study.

Within the next five years, we hope to establish a secondary fund with the ultimate goal of eventually providing appropriate co-housing for adults with autism. They could live near the Center and work either there or in the community.

Martha's Vineyard offers a

Our goal is to provide educational, physical, emotional, social, and community support to persons with autism and their families right where they live, providing families with an alternative to the heart-wrenching decision to be separated because they need resources, programs or support not available on the Island.

beautiful natural environment for the Center. More important, the Island community welcomes diversity and honors the unique qualities of every individual. We feel strongly that there is no better place for children with autism to live and thrive than their own Island home.

The Center we envision will

be a community that supports individuals with autism and their families throughout their lives, from childhood through adulthood. Our dream is to give the Island's autistic community the social, physical, creative, and functional skills they need for their best possible futures, and then to be part of their futures when they need us.

We are asking donors to take a big leap together with us, trusting in our experience, expertise, resources and commitment. We need to leap from the piecemeal interventions and therapies that schools are able to provide to a comprehensive center offering layers of well-coordinated support and activities designed to enable individuals with autism

to lead the best lives possible. The Center would offer that one thing most families of children with autism want desperately for their child: a sense of belonging and community.

We want to be the place where those with autism can go for everything from art classes and drumming lessons and summer camp as children, to life skills and yoga as teenagers, to jobs and job training as young adults. We want to be a unique place where parents, caregivers, and members of the community come together to cheer on these children, to connect through workshops and seminars on anything from alternative communication technology to how to teach your child to ride a bike.



#### Ripple Effect:

- 50 children ▶ 150 siblings
- ▶ 200 parents
- ▶ 500 community children who will gain from the center



## The Center will provide:

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### Family Camp

One-week retreats for families including a full therapeutic camp program for their autistic children, with speech, occupational therapy and physical therapy embedded in their daily traditional camp experiences such as swimming, horseback riding, art and music. Our setting will provide opportunities for the entire family to enjoy beaches, events like the Agricultural Fair and Illumination Night, and quiet summer life.

### Transition Program

To prepare adolescents on the autism spectrum for adulthood, we can be a resource to Vineyard

schools, families, and local businesses. We can offer space and staff for job training and life skills classes, and we can host conferences on planning and facilitating internship and job placements in the community. Our space would facilitate collaboration and critical coordination among family, friends, schools, and community members.

### Community Farm

Guided by the horticultural expertise of our founder and other community farmers, we plan to create a community farm that will grow a variety of fruits and vegetables. The farm would provide hands-on opportunities for all members of the Center to participate in and learn about planting, harvesting, and conservation.

## What the Center will offer:

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Most important, IAG recognizes the exceptional qualities of life on the Vineyard and the extraordinarily and exceptionally supportive nature of this community. If this concept can take root anywhere, the Island is the best place.

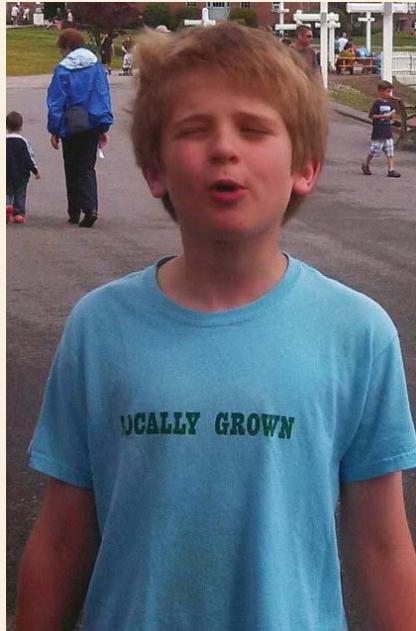
The Center will provide top-notch programs and seminars for parents, interact with other Island camps and partners, and send families home not only refreshed but better informed on how to navigate life with their autistic family member. We envision five phases in the growth of the Center as described below:

### **PHASE I: 2016-2017** *Acquiring a Property*

IAG will launch a robust fundraising campaign. We again will host our two annual summer fundraisers, the Blue Water Classic fishing tournament and the Summer Tea. We have successfully completed our first annual 5K this past spring. We plan to make our vision available to a wider audience, and hope to partner with charitable foundations both on and off Island. We plan to continue to apply for grant funding, something we have already been

successful at accomplishing, and we plan to utilize local media and social media to help define and communicate our plans for the Center. We have already produced a fundraising film and we recently updated our website, [islandautism.org](http://islandautism.org).

We need to raise \$3.5 million initially, which should enable us to purchase an appropriate property to house the Center. We will likely then require an additional \$2.5 million to get the property completely operational and ready to accomplish our full vision.



We hope to reach our first goal of \$3.5 million by December 2017, allowing us to purchase a property and spend spring getting it ready for an inaugural 2018 summer day camp.

### **PHASE 2: 2018-2019** *Summer Day Camp*

We will host our first day camp for Island children and visitors in the summer of 2018. We envision a weekly summer day camp for up to 25 school-age children (ages 5-22) with autism or related disorders, grouped by age and camper profile. Activities such as horseback riding, art, drumming, cooking, swimming, gardening, and other weekly themes (many geared toward campers' interests) will be planned so that speech,

occupational, and physical therapies will be embedded in the fun. For young adults, some of our activities would include life skills, job skills, and social skills. The Center would be the kind of place where we might host occasional events such as a party or dinner for adolescents, allowing them a nurturing and safe environment in which to practice appropriate social skills.

### **PHASE 3: 2018-2019** *Programs*

#### **Year-Round Extracurricular Activities and Afterschool Programming**

By the fall 2018 school year, we plan to offer similar activities in the form of weekly afterschool sessions. Our offerings would

depend on need, interest, and available expertise, but our mainstays will include therapeutic horseback riding, cooking, art, music, and life skills. Martha's Vineyard has over 450 children with differing special needs, and there is a real scarcity of afterschool activities and programs to serve them. This is an immediate need. For our first year, we plan to run fall, winter, and spring sessions consisting of weekly programming for up to 15 students per class. We can also partner with the school system in helping them provide afterschool programming for their students with special needs.

### *Weekend Seminars/ Experts-In-Residence*

Because the Island is such a desirable place to visit, we expect to be able to attract experts from all over the country to share their expertise with local families and eventually in Phase 4, and camp participants, local and visiting special education professionals, at weekend seminars and workshops throughout the year. The list of possible topics for such workshops is endless — from Social Thinking seminars to gluten-free cooking to sibling experiences. There would be accommodations appropriate for professionals and parents coming from off-Island to stay

for weekend seminars. Island residents could attend the programs at a day rate.

### **PHASE 4: *Overnight Family Retreats***

In the fourth phase of the Center's development, coming to completion by the summer of 2019, we hope to construct overnight family accommodations, where 10 to 12 families and their children (both autistic and neuro-typical), can come for weeklong summer sessions of respite, vacation, networking, and education while the children are in the day camp. Each week we would also host prominent autism professionals, experts-in-residence, who can work with both local and

visiting families, offering them a beautiful Martha's Vineyard vacation in exchange.

### **PHASE 5: *The Future***

Our long-term vision for the Center is to design and build autism-friendly co-housing for autistic adults with a variety of independence levels. An inspiration is the Sweetwater Spectrum community in California, which offers help to programs that want to replicate their model, and with whom we have spoken. The adult residents would have job training and work opportunities at the Center or in the community as their skills allow. There will also be job opportunities at the camp: in the barn, in the kitchen, in the camp

store, and in the farm garden. Adult residents will interact with younger children with autism in a way that builds positive connections and community, serving as positive mentors and role models. *(Revenues and expenses associated with this facet of the project are not in the financial projections at this time.)*

We envision community-centric endeavors at the Center, where autistic members of the Island community lead enriched lives by the day-to-day activities and contact within and outside of the Center. We hope to have visitors come to purchase our produce, eggs, or other items made on site. Adults with autism could also sell our products at the Farmers' Market.





## Who We Serve

### The Market

Unfortunately, our “market” is enormous and growing fast. In a recent estimate, the Center for Disease Control, CDC, stated that 1 in 68 children is currently diagnosed with autism, and the number increases every year.

While innovative interventions and therapies and assistive technologies emerge every year to help those children learn to become independent adults, too few receive them. Services are inconsistently delivered due to budget constraints nationwide.

In Massachusetts alone, an analysis of basic Census and CDC numbers and an adjustment for age categories tells us that there are approximately 19,569 school age children

between the ages of 5 and 22 on the autism spectrum. On the Island itself, we currently have 450 children with special needs, we know of approximately 50 children who are likely day camp candidates for our first summer. The autistic population regularly swells to over 200 in the summer as summer Vineyard residents return.

We need to start by focusing on the group of autistic children on the Vineyard who have nowhere to go for summer camp or for afterschool activities and their families. These young residents are in dire need of programs that can help facilitate their social, emotional, and physical development. Only occasional programming or support is currently available on the Island outside of the school system. Moreover, as these children move

towards adulthood, programs for their housing, training, and vocational opportunities are desperately needed to help them gain independence, realize their potential and contribute to their community. IAG is seeking to address these urgent needs.

The other important target population that we expect to reach once our day program is well established is families outside of the local community. With Phase 4 of our plan, the Center can accommodate approximately a dozen such families at a time for weeklong residential camp experiences. We expect that families around the country will jump at the chance to spend a beautiful week together on Martha’s Vineyard, with their children engaged in the right camp. Their participation will fund the operational costs of the Center and fund sliding-scale families

### Competition

#### *Competitive Day Camps*

For our core target population, there is virtually no competition here on Martha’s Vineyard. Camp Jabberwocky, a well-established camp for children with cerebral palsy does not consider us a competitor because the needs of our two populations are different. Furthermore Camp Jabberwocky has 100 campers on



its waiting list, and the current director has indicated that they could make referrals to IAG for appropriate individuals. While Camp Jabberwocky accepts campers with autism, it was founded as a camp for children with cerebral palsy and the specific needs of children with autism are neither its focus nor its particular mission. Camp Jabberwocky also does not provide a family camp experience.

For the 20,000 children who have autism in the rest of Massachusetts, there are approximately 15-20 camps, which each serve an average of about 200 campers during

the summer. If we round those numbers up grandly, we have only about 4,000 camping spaces available for about 20,000 children. This estimate is useful in a general sense — there are about five times as many young people on the autism spectrum in Massachusetts as there are camp spaces to serve them.

Moreover, those camps are difficult for parents to find, access, and apply to. Because of the huge range of needs and abilities among individuals on the autism spectrum, camps are careful to specify eligibility requirements.

Camps that serve multiple disabilities are less selective, but

also less specifically therapeutic in a way that can help youth on the autism spectrum gain specific social and behavioral tools they need. The “come as you are” approach to special needs camps, generous as it is, can be merely a holding pattern for autism spectrum youth capable of progress in a different, more specifically tailored, type of environment.

## Marketing and Development

We have already begun developing a network of resources on and off the Island. We plan to build relationships, which will help us target our potential

audience. By communicating with universities, school systems, hospitals and other camps, we can grow the numbers of potential program participants. We already have a strong presence on Martha's Vineyard and are working to extend our reach off-Island. We have greatly improved our social media presence over the last two years

## Management and Personnel

The Center will be led by the IAG's president, Kate DeVane. As the full-time executive director of the Center, Ms. DeVane will oversee all aspects of its operations and will be part of a team of dedicated individuals devoted to the Center's success and mission.

We envision hiring additional

employees, including a full-time communications and marketing specialist, an office administrator, a program director to oversee activities offered to campers, and specialists in the area of art, music, gardening, etc. prior to opening. We have discussed the possibility of sharing some specialists with Camp Jabberwocky where there is appropriate overlap. The Center will require a nurse onsite during the summer camp sessions. We have already spoken to representatives at Mass General, Children's Hospital, and Leslie University, about our staffing needs and we believe these institutions, among others, are fertile ground for us to recruit appropriate summer staff. Kitchen, grounds and maintenance staff will also be needed, at least on a

part-time basis. Our off-season programs will require staffing for the afterschool program and support for the special weekend programs.

## Location and Facilities

The Center will be located in a rural setting, and we believe it will require at least 10 acres to house all the facilities needed, and to allow for both seclusion and inclusion. We anticipate that we will have a large main building with accommodations for guest speakers, meeting space, an office, dining space, and a professional kitchen where students in transition could learn cooking skills and where meals and snacks will be prepared for campers and families.

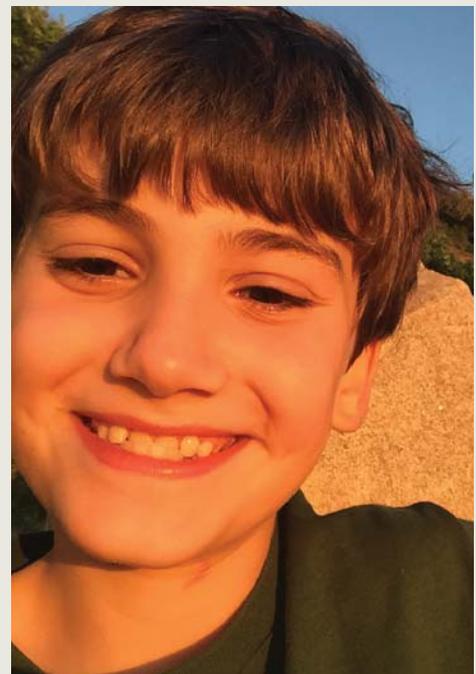
Additional facilities include adequate space for camp activities such as arts and crafts, drumming, music, yoga, and others. A barn with stalls for horses, goats, chickens, etc. would be ideal. Open space for group activities and team building. The property must be large enough to accommodate added structures as the Center expands, including overnight facilities for counselors and families. We also anticipate that we will need to acquire one or more appropriate vehicles such as vans to carry out our day-to-day operations.



We are asking donors to take a big leap together with us, trusting in our experience, expertise, resources and commitment. We need to leap from the piecemeal interventions and therapies that schools are able to provide to a comprehensive center offering layers of well-coordinated support and activities designed to enable individuals with autism to lead the best lives possible.



Families attending the camp will be able to access all the fun available on Martha's Vineyard



## Financials

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Our financial plan includes two categories of expenses: capital expenditures and operating costs.

### Capital Expenditures: \$6 million

As noted above, we estimate the purchase price of an appropriate property to be approximately \$3.5 million. We have projected an additional \$2.5 million will be needed for renovations, furnishings, fencing, engineering fees, and other miscellaneous costs.

### Operating Costs (Approximately \$600,000 in Year 1)

<b>Salaries and Professional Development</b>	\$505,000*
Executive Director	\$115,000
Communications/Marketing Specialist	\$ 80,000
Office Administrator	\$ 50,000
Director of Programming	\$ 50,000
Summer Activity Specialists	
5 positions at \$10,000 each	\$ 50,000
Summer Counselors	
20 positions for 10 weeks	
(30 hours/week @ \$20/hour):	\$120,000
Summer Kitchen Staff	
2 positions:	\$ 30,000
Professional Development	\$ 10,000

*\*Salaries and staffing will necessarily be dictated by what financials can support.*

<b>Facilities (Operating)</b>	\$ 63,000
Insurance	\$ 30,000
Heat and Utilities	\$ 15,000
Landscape and Maintenance	\$ 9,000
Pool Maintenance	\$ 9,000
<b>Supplies for Camp Activities</b>	\$ 10,000
<b>Office Supplies and Computers</b>	\$ 10,000
<b>Legal Consult Fees</b>	\$ 10,000
<b>Combined Operating Total (Salaries &amp; Facilities)</b>	<u>\$568,000</u>

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Estimated Annual Income \$1,000,000

(Once all phases of the program are running:  
Day Camp, Family Camp, Afterschool and Seminars)



Island Autism Group Inc. LLC

[islandautism.org](http://islandautism.org)

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