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**PAID**  
 Union, NJ  
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# Life After High School: The Journey Continues

## ABOUT THIS CONFERENCE

### KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

#### *Relationships and Family Life on the Spectrum: Bridging Our Differences, Sharing Our Strengths*

*presented by Zosia Zaks*

This keynote address will help parents, practitioners, autistic individuals and relatives understand the unique challenges those on the autism spectrum face when it comes to relationships of all types. How can two people, one on the spectrum and one not, bridge the communication, social, and sensory gaps that often make closeness difficult to obtain? Concrete strategies and practical methods for enhancing communication and building on strengths will be described. Participants will come away with new ideas for sharing, communicating, helping, and caring that invigorate a sense of cooperation and mutual collaboration.

### PANEL DISCUSSION

High school and college students will share their personal experiences and answer questions from the audience.

### AFTERNOON WORKSHOP SESSIONS

*Conference attendees will choose two of the following four afternoon workshops.  
 Each workshop will be repeated during Afternoon Sessions I and II.*

#### **A. Sexuality and Sexuality Education for Learners With Autism Spectrum Disorders**

*presented by Peter Gerhardt*

Persons with ASD are sexual beings. However, individual interest in sex or in developing an intimate sexual relationship with another person varies widely across individuals at all ability levels. Unfortunately, despite much discussion about decision making skills in the self-determination literature (e.g., Clark, et al., 2004), there continues to be “lack of evidence (supporting the) effectiveness of sex education and training for persons with developmental disabilities” (Duval, 2002, p. 453) in general, and autism spectrum disorders in particular. As such, there is a significant need for individualized, effective instruction for persons with ASD across the ability spectrum.

#### **B. Journeys Through College Life & Students on the Autism Spectrum: Strategies & Recommendations for Achieving Success in Class, on Campus & Beyond (From Self-Advocacy, Personal Experiences & Research)**

*presented by Scott Robertson*

This workshop will focus on the college experience for students on the autism spectrum. The presenter will share reflections and lessons learned from his undergraduate and graduate school experiences as a college student on the spectrum. He will also incorporate recommendations for supporting college students on the spectrum from the autistic self-advocacy and academic research communities. Topics discussed will include navigating college social life, managing academic work, learning self-advocacy, developing interdependent living skills, and numerous other facets of life at a college/university.

#### **C. Interview Survival Skills: How to Prepare For and Navigate the Interview Process**

*presented by Paula Varrassi, LCSW*

This workshop will focus on activities that will assist adolescents and adults as they prepare for a job or school interview. Attention will be paid to appropriate dress and grooming, verbal and non-verbal skills and using the purpose of the interview as a focus for preparation. Suggestions for practice and follow up will be provided. Audience: young adults, teachers, counselors, parents.

#### **D. Maximizing Career Opportunities and Utilizing Available Tools to Get There**

*presented by William Schubin*

Joining the work force is a landmark step toward independence and autonomy. There are specific challenges that individuals with Asperger Syndrome will face. The process of joining and remaining in the work force includes both direct work skills as well as broader “socialization skills.” This presentation will focus on the importance of these skills, and the resources available to assist with honing these skill areas and tools as they relate to: the job search process, applications and resumes, interviewing skills, behavior in the workplace, employee and employer expectations, communication with coworkers and supervisors, disclosure and advocacy choices, socialization, and coping with the unexpected. The importance of the impact that personal choices and fulfillment in adulthood has on employment success, autonomy and quality of life will be discussed.

### WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

Parents and caregivers of individuals with autism spectrum disorders; educational professionals including college disabilities service providers and counselors; medical and health professionals; individuals (age 15 and older) with autism spectrum disorders.

**Educators attending this full day conference will earn 6 Professional Development Hours.**

**ASPEN ANNUAL  
 SPRING CONFERENCE**

Life After High School:  
 The Journey Continues

**Keynote Presenter:**  
**Zosia Zaks, Author**  
*Relationships and Family Life on the Spectrum:  
 Bridging Our Differences, Sharing Our Strengths*

**Panel Discussion:**  
 High School and College Students

**Breakout Session Presenters:**  
**Peter Gerhardt, Ed.D., President, O.A.R.**  
*Sexuality and Sexuality Education for Learners  
 With Autism Spectrum Disorders*  
**Scott Robertson, Vice President,  
 A.S.A.N.**  
*Journeys Through College Life & Students on the  
 Autism Spectrum: Strategies for Achieving  
 Success in Class, on Campus and Beyond*  
**Paula Varrassi, LCSW**  
*Interview Survival Skills: How to Prepare For  
 and Navigate the Interview Process*  
**William Schubin, President,  
 APL Associates**  
*Maximizing Career Opportunities & Utilizing  
 Available Tools to Get There*

  
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### PLEASE CHOOSE 2 AFTERNOON WORKSHOPS:

- A) *Sexuality and Sexuality Education for Learners With Autism Spectrum Disorders*
- B) *Journeys Through College Life & Students on the Autism Spectrum: Strategies & Recommendations for Achieving Success in Class, on Campus & Beyond*
- C) *Interview Survival Skills: How to Prepare For and Navigate the Interview Process*
- D) *Maximizing Career Opportunities and Utilizing Available Tools to Get There*

### REGISTRATION FEE

(INCLUDES MATERIALS, BREAKFAST, LUNCH AND COFFEE BREAK)  
 We regret that we cannot accommodate special dietary requests.

All fees are per person

- MEMBER (PARENT or FAMILY MEMBER)  
 \$100.00 (\$125.00 AFTER 3/26/08)
- MEMBER (PROFESSIONAL)  
 \$140.00 (\$165.00 AFTER 3/26/08)
- NON-MEMBER (PARENT or FAMILY MEMBER)  
 \$130.00 (\$155.00 AFTER 3/26/08)
- NON-MEMBER (PROFESSIONAL)  
 \$170.00 (\$195.00 AFTER 3/26/08)
- INDIVIDUAL WITH ASD  
 \$65.00 (\$80.00 AFTER 3/26/08)



## ABOUT OUR SPEAKERS

**Zosia Zaks** was diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome at the age of 31. Having devised many creative strategies to address autism-related issues over the years, she wrote the book "Life and Love: Positive Strategies for Autistic Adults" (AAPC 2006) to help other adults on the spectrum. Zosia speaks and conducts workshops nationally on issues of importance to the Autism community; consults with families, autistic adults, and professionals to meet challenges based on Autistic strengths; and is pursuing licensure as a rehabilitation counselor at Hunter College. In addition to disability advocacy, consulting, public speaking, and writing, she teaches basic academic and community living skills to nontraditional adult learners including those with developmental disabilities.

**Peter Gerhardt, Ed.D** is president of the Organization for Autism Research. A consultant with over 25 years experience working with adolescents and adults with autism spectrum disorders in educational, employment, and community based settings, he serves on several national professional advisory boards, including ASPEN's. The author or co-author of articles and book chapters on the needs of adolescents and adults on the autism spectrum, he presents nationally and internationally. Dr. Gerhardt received his doctorate from the Rutgers University Graduate School of Education.

**Scott Michael Robertson, 27**, is a Ph.D. candidate in the College of Information Sciences & Technology at Penn State. His doctoral research is focusing on how online technology can support the transition to college for students on the autism spectrum. Scott frequently speaks about issues concerning autism, disabilities, and bullying challenges at schools, conferences, and groups throughout the U.S. Scott is the vice president of the Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN), and has taught and mentored adolescents and young adults on the autism spectrum. Scott currently co-organizes a social group for middle school and high school students on the autism spectrum in central Pennsylvania.

**Paula Varrassi, L.C.S.W.** is a Clinical Social Worker in private practice in Delaware. Her areas of specialization include emotional and social difficulties of adults, adolescents and children. The former Director of West Bergen Mental Healthcare Center for Children and Youth and former Director of Special Services, Fair Lawn Public Schools, she has over 35 years experience working with children and adults with developmental disabilities.

**William Schubin** is the co-director of APL Associates, an agency that focuses on vocational opportunities and supported employment. APL offers transition services, job coaching, mentoring and support through programs administered by the New Jersey Department of Labor's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) and the Department of Human Services Division of Developmental Disabilities' (DDD) Real Life Choices Program. They also have developed and are expanding classroom based transition programs in New Jersey High Schools for students. Through job and transition coaching they focus on developing broader socialization and judgment skills that will facilitate greater independence and social integration.



### ABOUT ASPEN®

ASPEN provides information, support and advocacy to individuals and families whose lives are affected by Asperger Syndrome, PDD-NOS, High-Functioning Autism and Nonverbal Learning Disabilities. Its numerous chapters meet monthly, alternating support meetings with scheduled speakers. Members receive the newsletter ASPECTS; have access to a lending library of books, video tapes, DVD's, articles, and audio cassettes; receive a copy of the ASPEN Resource Directory, and are entitled to free attendance at all monthly chapter meetings in addition to substantial discounts on conferences. As a NJ Department of Education Professional Development Provider (#1619), ASPEN sponsors workshops and conferences featuring some of the most prominent names in the research community. ASPEN is a national 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

## CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

- 8:00 AM** REGISTRATION/BREAKFAST/VISIT VENDORS
- 9:00 AM** LORI SHERY, PRESIDENT, ASPEN®—  
*Opening Remarks*
- 9:10 AM** ZOSIA ZAKS—KEYNOTE PRESENTATION—  
*Relationships and Family Life on the Spectrum: Bridging Our Differences, Sharing Our Strengths*
- 10:45 AM** BREAK/VISIT VENDORS
- 11:00 AM** PANEL DISCUSSION—*High School and College Students*

- 12:00 Noon** BUFFET LUNCH (*provided*)
  - 1:00 PM** AFTERNOON WORKSHOP SESSION I
  - 2:30 PM** COFFEE AND DESSERT BREAK
  - 3:00 PM** AFTERNOON WORKSHOP SESSION II
- Conference concludes 4:30 PM.**

### Directions to the Hilton Woodbridge

Visit their website at <http://www.hiltonwoodbridge.com>.

### Hotel Accommodations

For best available rate at the Hilton Woodbridge call 1-800-HILTONS as soon as possible.



### Questions

Please contact us at (732) 321-0880 or [info@aspennj.org](mailto:info@aspennj.org) if you have any questions.

- All registration fees are per person. Cash, check or money order only. We do not accept credit cards.
- Registration must be postmarked by 3/26/08. Early registration is suggested due to limited seating.
- Additional copies of the form may be downloaded from our website at [www.aspennj.org](http://www.aspennj.org).
- Walk-in registration the day of the conference (at higher rate) only if space is available. \*\* All walk-in registrants **MUST** call our office prior to 4/5/08 at (732) 321-0880 and reserve a space to be admitted the day of the conference. \*\* If the number of registrants reaches capacity, registration will close earlier than the deadline.

• Confirmations are sent **ONLY** to those who include a self-addressed stamped envelope.

• If you have reserved a space as a walk-in, you will be responsible for payment.

- Cancellations and Changes - No refunds for cancellations received after 3/20/08. Sorry, no exceptions. Kindly notify us in advance if substituting for original registrant.
- If, due to unforeseen circumstances, it becomes necessary to substitute speakers without advance notice, fees are non-refundable.

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## Spring Conference

Friday, April 6, 2008

Pre-Registration Deadline 3/26/08

### Please Print:

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

### Check One:

- Parent \_\_\_\_\_ Medical/Health Professional \_\_\_\_\_
- Family Member \_\_\_\_\_ Educational Professional \_\_\_\_\_
- Individual with ASD \_\_\_\_\_

## REGISTRATION FORM

Aspen Member? (as of date of conference)

Yes \_\_\_ Chapter \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_ If you would like to join, please enclose a SEPARATE check for annual dues (Families: \$35; Professionals: \$55) payable to ASPEN, along with member conference registration fee. (See reverse)

Kindly mail your completed form with your check made payable to ASPEN to:

ASPEN Spring Conference 2008  
9 Aspen Circle  
Edison, NJ 08820

**Please complete reverse side.**