



**Fall
2014**

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Comments? Tips? Suggestions?

To send in comments, suggested topics for our next newsletter, or grandparent tips, please [email to us.](#)

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)

Welcome to Our New GAN Members!

GAN members are a vital resource for autism ... and each other!

The **Grandparent Autism Network** is an all-volunteer, international nonprofit organization that supports grandparents of children with autism and their families. GAN's mission is to promote awareness and understanding of autism and to enhance the resources essential to community responsiveness.

The Board of Directors is pleased to extend membership to grandparents internationally. The rate of autism is rapidly increasing *everywhere* and we support grandparents who want to make life better for their families and increase autism resources in their communities..

GAN's current focus is on the development of lifetime supports for people with autism. Our eNewsletters and websites address issues that universally impact grandparents. ***All of GAN's programs and projects may be replicated, however, GAN's name and logo are trademarked and may not be used without permission.***

We know that the best recommendations come from our members and we welcome your feedback and suggestions about how we can increase support for you and your family.

Got Too Much Stuff? Donate it to GAN!



Got Too Much Stuff? Donate to GAN's eBay Site, [gan_charities!](#)

Grandparents have lots of "stuff" like collectibles, unused gifts and household goods, clothing, vintage jewelry and things in good condition that our children "do not want."

Your "stuff" can benefit other grandparents and families

affected by autism. The Grandparent Autism Network welcomes donated goods, each valued at \$25 or more.

You can drop off tax deductible items at Jay's Catering, 10581 Garden Grove Blvd., Garden Grove, CA - or send them C/O GAN at 23785 El Toro Road, #103, Lake Forest, CA 92630 (USPS flat rate boxes may lower mailing costs!)

Please contact GAN at info@ganinfo.org for additional options. Donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.
Tax ID #20-5230144

Plan Better, Less Stressful Holidays

These suggestions should help to make your family events easier and more comfortable for everyone. You will find additional holiday and gift ideas on the GAN website.

Before Events

- Have realistic expectations and modify traditional celebrations to be more inclusive in meeting your grandchild's needs
- Prepare guests in advance that the child with autism may not behave typically and that it is related to sensory overload issues rather than to permissive parenting skills.
- Discuss the schedule of activities and the food you plan to serve with your children. If a special diet is required for your grandchild, ask if you can prepare it or if they would prefer to bring it.
- Plan ahead for alternative activities, respite sites and early departures, if necessary. Eliminate or modify sensory triggers that you know will be disturbing like loud music or other noise maker traditions like Christmas Crackers.
- Suggest activities in which everyone can participate
- If you plan to take a large group picture bring the child with autism in at the end and try to make the child laugh so his smile will be natural and spontaneous.

Gift Giving Ideas

- Learn about the child's interests and keep their developmental level, rather than their age in mind when selecting toys.
- Read [this article](#), *Toys for Children with Special Needs: What to look for and where to find them* for links to a great number of toy resources
- [Toys "R" Us](#) has a 2014 Toy Guide for Differently-Abled Kids that features toys to encourage play for children with developmental disabilities.
- The [Fun and Function website](#) has educational toys and games,

sensory items, fidgets, weighted items, chewable jewelry, books, music and more "outside the box" gift ideas.

- [Enabling Devices](#) is a company that offers affordable learning and assistive devices to help people of all ages with disabling conditions.
- [Download applications](#) for Apple iPad for productivity and entertainment
- Gift certificates for personal care services, e.g. haircuts, manicures, massages, spa services make great gifts.
- Tickets for outings to amusement parks, zoos, movies, concerts, sporting events, etc. are good gift options
- Shop together for clothing, books, favorite foods, hobby or special interest items. Research online for gifts
- Share a favorite activity, once or on a regular basis throughout the year.
- Do not take it personally if the child shows no interest in the gift given. Some children do not like surprises and it may be something that that the child will treasure at a later date.

Travel Tips

- Prepare the child for the trip by showing pictures of the airport, airplane, destination, etc. Talk about the events that are planned before departing.
- Check to see if you can board an airplane early.
- Bring your grandchild's favorite book, toy and food onboard
- Consider wearing a hat, pin or other clothing that indicates the child has autism

Gift Ideas and Certificates for the Holidays or Any Day

The GAN website has many gift suggestions that are cost-free or affordable for every budget. Go [here](#) to see suggestions and visit other pages with holiday ideas for your family.

Get gift certificates to personalize for your children and grandchildren [here](#). Just print them, fill them in ... ***and your gift giving is done!***

Give a Care Notebook, The Gift that Keeps Giving!

Families that have special needs children are typically overwhelmed with school, medical and therapy reports that need to be easily accessible when when needed for Independent Education Planning

sessions, progress evaluations and for filing insurance claims.

A Care Notebook, may be the *best gift they will receive for years to come*. It helps them to organize the huge amount of paperwork they have and relieves a lot of stress. It is easy to find the components at any office supply store and should cost approximately \$25. Here's how you can make one:

Care Notebook Supplies

- A plain 3-ring binder with 2 inch rings. To personalize the binder, select one with a clear pocket on the front where you can insert a picture of your grandchild.
- A notebook 3-hole punch, a small stapler, colored small "post it" note pads, a highlighter pen and paper clips
- A 3-hole vinyl business card holder
- A vinyl pen/supply pocket holder with zipper
- Notebook index dividers with 10 sections

Suggested Categories for Index Tabs

- Emergency Information
- Medical Records
- Education Reports
- Therapies
- Insurance Claims
- Local Service Agencies
- Autism Resources
- Activities
- Child Care/Respite Help,
- Additional Blank Tabs can be filled in by Parents

Assembling the Notebook

Place the 3 ring hole punch at the front of the notebook and add the additional vinyl pockets for supplies and business cards. Put the stapler, "post it" notes, pens, clips, etc. in the supply pocket.

Label the dividers with the appropriate categories and place them behind the vinyl pockets in the notebook.

Offer to Help Organize and File the Records

If possible, offer to help sort and file the paperwork in the notebook with the most recent reports on the top. Set aside, but do *not discard duplicates*, or any of the paperwork. Label them so that your children can decide what to do with the extra copies.

You may want to purchase additional binders. Some families have a binder for every year, but the current academic year is typically the main focus for schools, physicians and therapists to review. If you are mailing the Care Notebook, consider using a USPS flat rate box.

As our children with autism are aging up, it is apparent that there is a critical shortage everywhere of housing for adults who wish to live in group homes or independently. Some cities have wait lists for housing that are impacted for several years and many people with autism are not eligible for subsidized housing because they are not identified as "disabled."

GAN is working with parents, community leaders and religious organizations to develop new housing options and service providers that will provide lifetime supports for our loved ones. Grandparents might consider donating homes, property or setting up Special Needs Trusts for their grandchildren to address these housing needs. Discuss long term housing goals with your family and check with a reputable estate planning attorney to learn about your giving options.

The board of directors of the **Grandparent Autism Network** and I wish you and your family good health and happiness this holiday season and in the New Year. We invite you to share this newsletter with your family and friends.

Thank you for making GAN members
... a vital resource for autism ... and each other!

Warm regards,

Bonnie Gillman
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