



**ASPERGER**  
FOUNDATION  
INTERNATIONAL

501 Madison Ave  
18th Floor  
New York, NY 10022  
[www.aspfi.org](http://www.aspfi.org)

# Common Connections™

## Kick-Off and Special Ed Expo

an official **Common Connections** event

**Saturday, September 10, 2005, West Hills Day Camp in Huntington, NY**

11 am-4-pm. \$15 per person, including lunch. Rain date Sunday, September 11. Register online at [www.aspfi.org](http://www.aspfi.org)

Asperger Foundation International, in conjunction with Gersh Academy, presents Common Connections Kick-Off, a day of activities for children ages 5-16 with social skills challenges and their whole families.

### Interest Centers

Interest Centers will help children meet new friends. Nothing helps a friendship like common interests and enthusiasm. Your child can explore a special interest and meet others who share that focus. Experienced instructors will conduct activities where children will have an opportunity to connect with other children and families will be able to plan future get-togethers. We are in the process of identifying venues throughout the tri-state area where these types of activities can be continued, after the event, to encourage budding social connections.



Trains!                      Cartooning!                      Harry Potter!                      Chess!  
Movie trivia!                      Dinosaurs!                      Jeopardy!                      Warhammer!  
Trampolines!                      Architecture!                      Maps!                      and more!

### Ask the Expert

Experts on developmental and social issues, including Brenda Smith Myles, Jeanne Ganz, Joanne Walker, Tony Hollander, Michael Cohen, John Suozzi, and Lynda Geller, will be available throughout the day to answer specific questions about developing friendships, managing behaviors, understanding sensory problems, fussy eating, and other topics that may challenge families. Well-known adults on the Spectrum who have built independent, fulfilling lives for themselves, including Michael John Carley, Katherine Eddy, and Valerie Paradiz, will also be available to talk to children and families about their experiences growing up.



### Boardwalk of Resources

Professionals and service providers who offer assistance for individuals and families will be available to answer questions about what they do. Tables will be set up to allow families to explore resources in the tri-state area, including special sports activities, psychologists, occupational therapists, speech and language pathologists, camps and recreational opportunities, therapeutic toy and specialized book dealers, and many other helpful services.

### Special Olympics

Staff from Long Island Special Olympics will be conducting activities designed to involve children of varying abilities in personal and team sports.



## About West Hills Day Camp Facilities

West Hills Day Camp is a camp with first-rate features and activities. Among them are pools and water slides, fishing, row boating and paddle boating, miniature golf, tennis, batting cages, track and field, and arts and crafts. The facilities of the camp are open for the day to all participants.

### Attention Parents: You must supervise your children throughout the event.

Trained facilitators with trained assistants will conduct activities, and certified lifeguards will be working at the pools and the pond. Other volunteers will also be on hand to help the day run smoothly. Tennis rackets, baseball mitts and balls should be brought as needed, and participants must also bring their own bathing suits and towels to swim. Also, please note that children who are still in diapers are not allowed in any of the West Hills Camp pools.

Proceeds from the event will benefit Asperger Foundation International, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization that supports research and education about Asperger Syndrome.

**Please do not contact West Hills Day Camp for information.** If you are a service provider, professional, or interested community member and would like to get involved, please contact John Cavanagh at Asperger Foundation International at 212-371-7755 ext. 240, or by e-mail at [jcavanagh@aspfi.org](mailto:jcavanagh@aspfi.org). **Volunteers are needed!** Promotional opportunities at the event for service providers and related businesses and non-profits are also available by contacting AspFI. If you and your family would like to attend, **register online** now at [www.aspfi.org](http://www.aspfi.org).

This event launches **Common Connections™**, which is a unique way of assisting individuals with social disabilities find acquaintances who share their interests. As difficulty with finding, developing, and maintaining friends is the hallmark problem of neurobiologically based social disabilities, we are making a concerted effort to provide meaningful support in this area. Children with autism spectrum disorders not only have brain differences that impede socialization, they also have the lack of opportunity to experience typical social interaction during critical periods of development, further limiting their growth in that area. Researchers are concerned that this skill deficit plus lack of opportunity to develop normally will create significant personality problems in adulthood that contribute to poor quality of life.

Therefore, Asperger Foundation International is developing a model for improving opportunity for social connections. Our first event is aimed at school-aged children and their families, but future events will target both younger and older individuals. The important elements of the Common Connections model are:

- Opportunities for individuals to participate in an activity of particular interest to them.
- The presence of trained instructors to facilitate social interaction among participants.
- A structured means of registering interested parties so that follow-up contacts can be eased.
- Instructional materials for families regarding the importance of establishing friendships to support development of emotional regulation, social interaction, cognitive skills, behavioral appropriateness and self-esteem, and information about how families can facilitate friendship maintenance.
- Eliciting the cooperation of community agencies to develop social opportunities for individuals of all ages with social disabilities, as follow-up to Common Connections events.

Common Connections Kick-Off is presented by AspFI in conjunction with



Major sponsors include:

# Flatiron Restaurant Group

