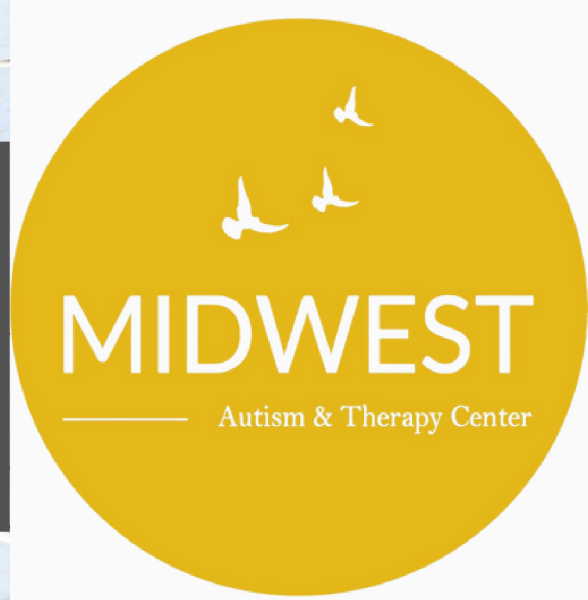


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MOSAIC MINDS

Official Newsletter of Midwest Autism & Therapy Centers



ELOPEMENT PREVENTION

WINTER SAFETY WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

“Elopement” is a clinical term used to describe when a child wanders off, runs away, or gets lost. It is a common behavioral challenge for children with ASD. For many families with children on the Spectrum, elopement is a major safety concern. The most common places children from which children tend to elope, include home, school, or public spaces (like the grocery store). Often times, the children who are most likely to elope are those with social or cognitive challenges who might also have difficulty regulating emotions. While it should be noted that most children who elope are found safely, elopement can be life-threatening, or result in serious injury.

Especially as we enter the colder months of the year, we feel it's only appropriate to seize this opportunity to share some winter safety tips for families who may be struggling with elopement. Rather than learning how to respond when the situation arises (which is important!), we think it is equally important, to learn how to prevent elopement.

See page two for tips from the National Autism Association.



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ELOPEMENT PREVENTION (CONT.)

TIPS & RESOURCES FOR WINTER SAFETY WITH ASD

The following tips come from the National Autism Association and the AWAARE Collaboration (a central source of information and tools to address autism-related wandering).

- Add a visual/ audible exit reminder to each door. This could be a stop sign, a bell, an alarm system, etc.
- Have your child practice stopping at the door with an adult each time they leave the house
- Practice safe behaviors every time you go out. For children who tend to elope in public, it can be helpful to have them hold your hand, the shopping cart, etc. Some families utilize safety devices like a bracelet or backpack with a connecting parent attachment.
- Praise your child when you see safe behaviors- like looking both ways before crossing the street or waiting for an adult before leaving a building.
- Recruit your neighborhood watch. If your neighbors, school personnel, etc. know that your child is at risk of elopement, they can help monitor for safe behaviors or risky behaviors.
- Practice with your child for what they should do if they get lost or separated from you. If they can speak, ensure they know their name, address and phone number. For children with limited language abilities, keep an identification card or bracelet on their person.
- Connect with local law enforcement to see about registering your child in case they do get lost. Many officials are part of Project Lifesaver, which is designed for families of individuals with ASD who tend to wander.
- Enroll your child in swimming lessons and educate them on water safety. Around 90% of elopement-related deaths are caused by drowning. Your child knowing how to swim, or understanding that they should never approach water without an adult, could potentially save their life.
- Develop a safety plan for your family. Take a daily picture so you have their current attire, haircut, etc. to share with emergency personnel, if needed.
- Ensure anyone else who may be providing care for your child has important information like direct contact information, a medication list, warning signs, triggers, and de-escalation tactics.
- If your child does elope and is returned safely, take notes about the situation so you can understand what triggered the event. For example, if a loud event caused the elopement it may be helpful for your child to wear noise-cancelling headphones.
- Consider the use of a tracking device or GPS locator for children who frequently elope.

LEARN MORE WITH THESE RESOURCES:

National Autism Association:
nationalautismassociation.org

Autism Wandering Awareness Alerts Response Education Collaboration:
awaare.org

Project Lifesaver:
projectlifesaver.org



TEAM MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



KAYLEE KNAPP | ALTOONA CAMPUS

Registered Behavior Technician (RBT) at Midwest since November 2023

Kaylee is driven to create impactful moments with clients and their families, fueled by her passion for working with children since adolescence. The work memories that give her a sense of pride are those which revolve around the amazing connections she has made with coworkers and clients alike!

Kaylee enjoys Twix candy bars, Halloween, the color red, and spending time working out, fishing, hiking, reading, and traveling. She has a Goldendoodle named Malibu.



JENNA POMRENKE | ANKENY CAMPUS

Registered Behavior Technician (RBT) at Midwest since October 2023

Bachelor's Degree from Iowa State University - May 2023
Criminal Justice and Psychology

She is driven to help others by assisting them to live their best possible lives. She loves seeing her clients accomplish their goals while providing them a safe and fun environment to do so!

Jenna enjoys reading Thrillers, hiking, traveling, and trying new recipes. Jenna's favorites include Kit-kat candy bars, Christmas, the Fourth of July, the color Sage green, and vacationing in Florida and Colorado.



TIERI CHUN | EDINA CAMPUS

Program Manager at Midwest since April 2023

Bachelor's Degree from the University of Hawaii at Mānoa in Communications. After graduation Tieri worked at an ABA clinic in Honolulu as an Office Manager. Tieri recognizes her work with Midwest as one of her largest accomplishments of 2023, helping to open two centers in Minnesota. She feels incredibly proud of the strides both centers have made, and being able to take part in the successes of both Minnesota centers, along with the kiddos at each center!

"When clients run into the center rather than cling to their caregiver. Seeing their excitement to begin their day sets the mood for my day as well. I love hearing constant laughter, noises, and stomps throughout the office."

Tieri enjoys reading, singing karaoke, doing makeup, and trying new restaurants. She loves Christmas and Halloween, Kit Kats and Li Hing Mui candies, the color yellow, vacationing in Fiji, and watching Grey's Anatomy.

TEAM MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

New Hire



CAITLIN HORNBACK | WAUKEE CAMPUS

Registered Behavior Technician (RBT) at Midwest since December 2023

Bachelor's Degree from Northwestern College
Psychology and Sociology

Caitlin loves how the brain works, which led her to psychology where her interest piqued in how the brain and behavior correlate, leading her to be an RBT. She loves to assist children with their skill development.

Caitlin's favorites include the color green, dark chocolate and coffee, and visiting anywhere in the mountains. She has a dog named Murphy.

Welcome Caitlin!



TALIA SMITH | WEST DES MOINES CAMPUS

Registered Behavior Technician (RBT) at Midwest since October 2023

Talia thrives in building rapport with the kiddos in her center.

Talia enjoys everything Pumpkin Spice or caramel, Reese's sticks, the color pink, and holidays like Halloween and Valentine's Day.



ALYSSA STETTNER | WOODBURY CAMPUS

Administrative Assistant with Midwest since September 2023

Alyssa recalls fond work memories in the gym playing with the clients and providing operational support to the team to help things run smoothly for the staff and kiddos.

Alyssa's favorites include Kit-Kat candy bars, Christmas, and the color Coral. She enjoys reading and writing, and spending time with her cat, Cassiopeia.



THE BUZZ AROUND TOWN

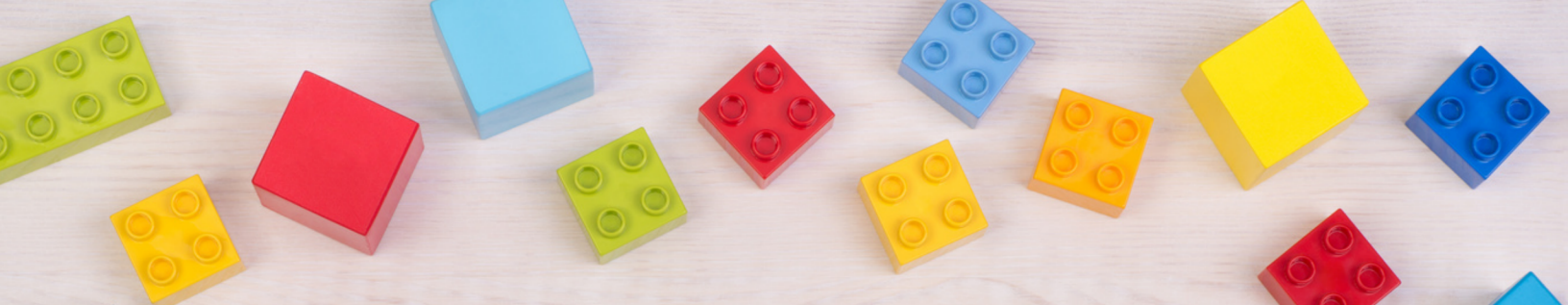
TESTIMONIALS FROM OUR CLIENTS & THEIR FAMILIES

Kari is excellent and it's obvious that not only does he work hard, but he genuinely enjoys working with my child.

Shawna is amazing! She goes above and beyond! Our daughter is thriving at school. We are eternally grateful for everything! I am looking forward to continuing our daughter's education and ABA therapy with Shawna and the team!

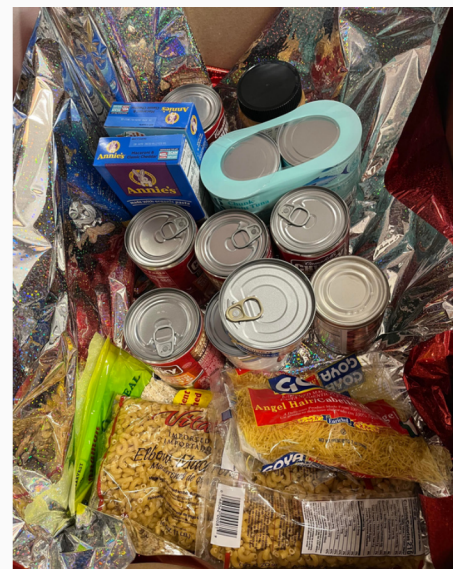
The Ankeny team is INCREDIBLE. They adore my little girl, and even went out of their way to purchase toys that are high-interest for her. I also love the "small" feel of this clinic because it makes me feel like my child is a priority.



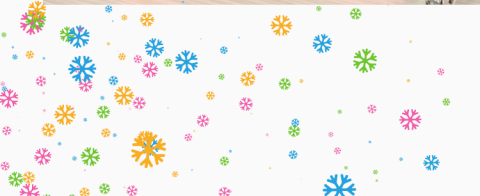


During the month of December, our centers collected non-perishable food items to donate to local food pantries.

The Edina team took their donations to the VEAP food pantry before their team's Holiday dinner!



HAPPY HOLIDAYS



Our West Des Moines campus was visited by Santa (aka Santanio) who brought treats and goodies for all the good little kiddos-- i.e. all of them.



Our Ankeny center kiddos put their creative skills to work to celebrate the season by crafting snowflakes, painting plate snowflakes and exploring the winter fun.





FIND MIDWEST AT THESE UPCOMING EVENTS

Waukee FamilyFest

Saturday, January 20th, 2024

9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Free, family-friendly event to help kiddos burn off energy and enjoy a variety of activities and interactive exhibits.

*Lutheran Church of Hope - Waukee
305 NE Dartmoor Drive Waukee, IA*



People to People Career Fair

Friday, February 16th, 2024

10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

A professional environment to connect with our team, discuss internships, and learn opportunities that await in the field.

*Memorial Union, Great Hall - ISU
Ames, IA 50011*



Striding 4 Awareness

Saturday, April 20th, 2024

10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Resource Fair 10:00-11:00 a.m.
4th Annual Walk to Include 10:30 a.m.
Lunch and Silent Auction 11:00-2:00 p.m.

*430 School Street Carlisle, IA 50047
35 Vine Street Carlisle, IA 50047*



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MIDWEST Autism & Therapy Centers!
Email updates include monthly
newsletters, new blog posts, center
updates, and more.



Get Connected

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ANKENY CAMPUS:

2405 N ANKENY RD ANKENY, IA 50023 | 515-446-2080

EDINA CAMPUS:

7550 FRANCE AVE S, STE 200 EDINA, MN 55435 | 952-955-4057

WAUKEE CAMPUS:

287 SE WESTOWN PKWY WAUKEE, IA 50263 | 515-446-3420

WEST DES MOINES CAMPUS:

1280 OFFICE PLAZA DR WEST DES MOINES, IA 50266 | 515-446-3420

WOODBURY CAMPUS:

748 BIELENBERG DR WOODBURY, MN 55125 | 651-796-2306



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