



nashoba
LEARNING GROUP

NEWS & NOTES

PROVIDING HELP FOR THOSE WITH AUTISM
AND HOPE FOR THEIR FAMILIES

A Letter from the President

UPCOMING EVENTS

New Parents Dinner
February 6, 2025

**Adult Service
Parent/Guardian Meeting**
February 27, 2025

Full Court Charity Challenge
March 8, 2025
Boston University

Profound Autism Summit
April 10 & 11, 2025
Sheraton Boston

Grandparents Tea
April 30, 2025
(10 Oak Park - Bedford)
May 1, 2025
(170 Lexington - Billerica)

**Profound Autism 5k
Adventure at the Zoo**
June 14, 2025
Franklin Park Zoo, Boston, MA.

Questions?
info@nashobalearninggroup.org

Happy Holidays from all of us at Nashoba Learning Group! 2024 has given us much to be thankful for, and we look forward to the exciting initiatives planned for 2025!

We are grateful to the 204 students and adults we serve for being unique and wonderful individuals who bring joy and love into our lives. Their hard work and perseverance in building lifelong skills inspire us every day. We also extend our gratitude to the families who trust us as partners in educating and caring for their loved ones.

Moreover, we are thankful for our incredible staff. Their skill, dedication, and love for our students and adults are crucial in helping each other reach their full potential.

We appreciate the support of the NLG community. Without the commitment of so many families, friends, and community organizations, we would not be able to provide the quality services needed by individuals with profound autism. We must continue fundraising to bridge the gap between costs and revenue, primarily as we work towards adjusting our rates to reflect inflation.

Thank you for your generous responses to our Annual Appeal, which supports our programs. We are excited to announce that we have secured a storefront space that will allow us to expand our Adult Program by 20 participants over the next few years and provide them with more community opportunities. More details will be included in this letter.

Additionally, we are working on other critical initiatives, such as support for graduate school for staff, enhancing our research capacity, and increasing outreach to assist more individuals than we can serve directly. We are excited to share more information on these endeavors and how you can help.

Thank you for allowing us to support those who need us the most. We genuinely appreciate your support for our staff and the amazing individuals we serve!

Liz Martineau

Liz Martineau, President and CEO



AUCTION



We are immensely grateful to our amazing donors, sponsors, volunteers, and the NLG community for making our recent auction a tremendous success!



It was a joy to spend the evening with all of you, sharing stories and enjoying the fun auction games. Thank you for helping us create a memorable night we can't stop talking about.



Thank you for being part of our story!



Thanks to your generosity and support, we have raised over **\$570,000**, and the total continues to grow. These funds will directly impact our students and enhance their educational experience. Your commitment to our mission ensures we can continue providing an exceptional and transformative education for every child.



NEW NEWS

We are excited to announce that we have leased a storefront space in the Great Road Shopping Center in Bedford. This 5,000 square foot space will allow us to expand our Adult Program by 20 adults over the next few years. The site will provide walkable community access to a variety of locations for our adults and will also be a community donation site that will provide volunteer opportunities. We will begin to use the site in December and rotate groups through the space each week.

Our Story Starts With You...

My name is Kathryn Judge. My son Ellis is 6 years old and has been at NLG since May of 2023. I imagine while unique to us, our family story echoes many of your own, which speaks volumes about the theme of this year's auction and the importance of our NLG community.

Our family story began in 2018 when Ellis barreled into the delivery room- almost 9 pounds, a full head of hair and a set of lungs that didn't quit. At that time our world was infinitely wide. Stroller walks with neighbors? Yes. Adoring glances from strangers at Market Basket? Absolutely. Families fawning, strangers cooing, Mike, Ellis, and I perfecting the family snuggle- it was magical & the possibilities endless.

Fast forward to the 12-month pediatrician check-up. The talk of speech delays and poor eye contact. Of lack of interest in other children and repetitive movements. The blue plate special of missed milestones. Five months later we had an ASD diagnosis and I began to feel pangs of pain when spending time with mom friends whose children played with other kids or said "I love you." During this time, other behaviors began. Biting. Hair pulling. Scratching. Bolting into the woods at Breakheart Reservation. Bolting in a parking garage. Our world inevitably eroded.

Profound autism is insidious in that way- slowly, social engagements and family rites of passages fell off the calendar and were replaced with therapy appointments. Family magnets- like farms and museums- were only visited during off hours or if the weather was opposite to what the NT family preferred. Farm trips on rainy days were our usual. Museums the opposite. I imagine many of you can relate.

By age 4, Ellis was bringing the public preschool in our hometown to its knees. Two full-time paraprofessionals were assigned to him and even so, he perfected his art of escape and his aggressions became more frequent, more intense and less predictable. Our world continued to shrink- neighborhood walks were abandoned. BBQ's with friends and their families that included other children were skipped. Neighborhood get-togethers were off limits. Even errands that at best can be considered socially adjacent, like trips to the grocery store or mall walks were off limits.

At this point, Mike and I knew an Out of District placement was our best chance to right Ellis's behavioral ship and we put on our investigative hats to find the gold standard of therapeutic schools. We didn't need Sherlock Holmes, Columbo, Scooby Doo, or Inspector Gadget to solve this mystery- All of our doctors and advisors sang the same tune- Ellis needed to be at Nashoba Learning Group. Full stop.

And on May 22, 2023 our family story began a new chapter, new characters and surely a happier ending. On our first day, Ellis became agitated in the lobby. Historically, I would steer him outside as quickly as possible so as to ensure aggressions didn't become a public spectacle or anyone who wasn't directly responsible for his presence on this Earth wouldn't be injured. I had danced this routine countless times. But what happened instead blew me out of the water. A smiling man who introduced himself as Marcus crouched to Ellis's eye level and started speaking calmly to him. In what seemed like both a second and a lifetime, Ellis went from Jack-in-The-Box ready to pounce to, well, not. He didn't aggress. He didn't flop. He didn't bolt. And that was that Marcus smiled and continued up the stairs with the student with whom he was accompanying. In that one moment- our world became bigger. Because there was proof that it COULD be bigger. That our self-made family Alcatraz wasn't going to last forever. That there was hope. And that hope lived in the staff at Nashoba Learning Group.

And that brings me to what the NLG community means to our family. Recently, Ellis had some struggles at home that required a stay at an inpatient facility. Mike and I were bombarded with love and messages of support from our NLG family. Ellis's BCBA Amanda and former lead therapist, Emily even joined us in the hospital. While Mike and I struggled to think clearly, they filled in the clinical gaps to the endless parade of anonymous providers who documented Ellis's challenges, but who did not know our boy. NLG parents sent us meals, flowers, and practical advice about how to navigate these unknown waters. Even Liz Martineau reached out and reassured me that the program he was to attend was "set up for our population." Our population. No longer is my family a satellite that rotates around communities we cannot join. No longer is my family excluded from a seat at the proverbial table of agency and choices. NLG welcomes families like mine, families like yours and for that I am endlessly grateful. But gratitude only gets us so far- let's reach deep into our hearts and our wallets and provide NLG with the means to continue its mission so other families can feel the light, warmth, and essential belonging that comes from the NLG community.

Thank you.

What a Summer!



PROFOUND AUTISM 5K WALK & RUN ADVENTURE AT THE ZOO!

On June 4, 2024, we held our first Profound Autism 5K at the Franklin Park Zoo in Boston, MA.

Your participation, enthusiasm, and support made the day a resounding success, and we are incredibly grateful for the energy you brought to the race. Whether you ran, walked, volunteered, or cheered from the sidelines, you helped make a meaningful impact on our Profound Autism community. We can't wait to see you again at our next 5K!



Congratulations Jellis' Zoo Crew on being 2024's Top Fundraised Team & Biggest Team!



Mark your calendars for **June 14, 2025**, and prepare for a day filled with fun and rewarding experiences! Whether striving for a personal best or simply enjoying the festivities, there's something for everyone. Stay tuned for more details, and thank you again for helping us make this event unforgettable.

BIKE-A-THON

Thank you to all the amazing riders who participated in this year's Bikeathon!



Your enthusiasm, determination, and support made the event a great success. Together, we raised essential funds to support our school programs and create a brighter future for our students. We are incredibly grateful for the energy and community spirit you brought to the day—it was truly inspiring.



FISHIN WITH A MISSION

The "Fishin with a Mission" event was a fantastic experience filled with boats, bubbles, BBQ, and much more! Seeing our NLG friends at this year's gathering was beautiful, as it focuses on raising awareness and support for autism.

Thanks to NLG parents Jim and Esther DeOliveira, My Little Buddies Boat, and Mystic Wellington Yacht Club for organizing the event. We also appreciate the staff members who attended and represented NLG during this fantastic family fun day.



PROFOUND AUTISM SUMMIT

Get Ready for the Profound Autism Summit 2024!

Join us on April 10-11, 2025, at the Boston Sheraton, where we'll accommodate 750 attendees (up from last year's 560!). Over two full days, you'll have access to a wealth of exciting content, including three tracks each day, giving you plenty of options to explore the latest research, treatment strategies, and advocacy efforts. Whether you are a professional, a parent, or a caregiver, there is something for everyone.



This year's summit will be presented by the Nashoba Learning Group (NLG) and the Profound Autism Alliance (PAA) and sponsored by The Doug Flutie Jr. Foundation. We are committed to making this event even more impactful than our inaugural summit. Based on feedback from last year's participants, we've introduced some exciting new features, such as additional sessions focusing on adults with Profound Autism and a sibling panel. You'll hear from diverse speakers, including BCBA's, medical researchers, psychologists, service providers, and individuals with lived experience. One of our featured speakers is Kaelyn Partlow, an autistic self-advocate who works directly with individuals with Profound Autism.

The summit isn't just a conference; it's an opportunity to connect with a community dedicated to improving the lives of individuals with Profound Autism. We can't wait to see you there as we work together to build a future of support, understanding, and positive change. For more details, visit www.profoundautismsummit.org.

PROFOUND VILLAGE

Profound Village (profoundvillage.org) is our follow on to the Summit.

This online learning community will provide information, resources, and connection to members of the Profound Autism Community.

We already have several webinars scheduled, and Profound Village is where the talks from the Summit will be available.

Join us now at profoundvillage.org to be part of the conversation!



10 Oak Park Drive
Bedford, MA 01730

NLG SWAG

Order your NLG gear from our Lands' End Store and have it shipped directly to your home. Visit <https://business.landsend.com/store/nlg/> or use the QR code below.

We have a selection of items and sizes to try on at Mini Mike's (10 Oak Campus) and Natalie's Store (170 Lexington Campus).



Lands' End Store



ANNUAL FUND

At Nashoba Learning Group, our goal is to be the best at serving those with Profound Autism or other complex needs, by being the best place to work for staff who are inspired by our mission and committed to excellence.

Donations to NLG's Annual Fund allow us to invest in staff recruiting, training, and retention – critical costs which are not fully funded by the tuition and payments we receive.

We cannot do this important work without your support. Please give as generously as you can!

Scan here to make a gift today!

