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April 2, 2023

Sara Dallas, Director
Southern Adirondack Library System
22 Whitney Place
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866

Dear Sara and Members of the Library Services Committee,



**Neurodiversity
Club** 

I am very pleased to nominate Saratoga Springs Public Library's **Neurodiversity Club**, a partnership with the SUNY Empire State University Center for Autism Advocacy, for the 2023 SALS Library Program of the Year.

In 2023, SSPL Youth Services Librarian, Kate Lambert, had been seeking partnerships that would bring a new program to the library for neurodivergent kids and teens, when the SUNY Empire State University Center for Autism Advocacy: Research, Education, & Supports (CAARES) reached out to SSPL to explore the possibility of collaborating on program offerings that would serve the local autistic and neurodivergent communities, and thus **Neurodiversity Club** was born.

Created for autistic and neurodivergent kids and teens in grades K-12, along with their friends and families, the goal of the club is to be student-directed, so that those who attend can spend their time in a way that is fun and meaningful for them. This is a collaborative program intended for community members to connect in a welcoming environment. Students have the opportunity to choose from various self-directed activity stations including: crafts, games, Legos, dancing, music and more. The CAARES program helped to market the club to families and the library marketed it to local schools and families.

The club first met on September 25, 2023 and has become increasingly more utilized as time goes on. More than 70 people have attended to date.



The success of this program is encouraging growth, and the collaboration is expanding its offerings to include 1) a Teen Neurodiversity Club and 2) a series for parents and teens called "Neurodivergent in College- Navigating the Transition from High School."

At SSPL, our mission is "Delivering resources and experiences that engage, entertain, educate, and empower our entire community." **Neurodiversity Club** represents our mission in action. The current SSPL plan of service includes four focus areas (Universally Accessible, Community Leadership, Community Convener, and Library as Place). The Neurodiversity Club centers the library as a place for families to meet and learn. The focus on neurodivergent patrons and their families supports the library's goals of serving people with all needs. Being a leader in welcoming diverse patrons and opening a dialogue for families to meet with each other, the staff and our community partners. The planned expansion of the club to provide more education on germane topics will expand the scope and reach of the program.

Attached are some photographs from **Neurodiveristy Club** meetings, a poster promoting the club, and a press release from CAARES.

Knowing the dedication and creativity of our SALS colleagues, I'm certain you will receive many worthy nominations, and will have a difficult time choosing your honorees. As always, I appreciate your consideration and your hard work on behalf of libraries and library users.

With all best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. Issac Pulver". The signature is fluid and cursive.

A. Issac Pulver
Director





September 22, 2023

EMPIRE STATE UNIVERSITY'S CAARES PARTNERS WITH SARATOGA PUBLIC LIBRARY TO HOST NEURODIVERSITY CLUB



EMPIRE STATE UNIVERSITY
CAARES
CENTER FOR AUTISM ADVOCACY:
RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND SUPPORTS

(SARATOGA SPRINGS, NY – September 22, 2023) The first meeting of the Neurodiversity Club, co-sponsored by Empire State University's Center for Autism Advocacy: Research, Education, and Supports (CAARES) and the Saratoga Public Library will take place on Monday, September 25 from 4:30-5:30 p.m. at the Saratoga Springs Public Library (SSPL).

Created for autistic and neurodivergent kids and teens in grades K-12 and their friends and families, the goal of the club is to be student-directed, so those who attend can spend their time in a way that is fun and meaningful for them.

"The aim is for Autistic and neurodivergent children and teens to have fun and make connections in a welcoming environment," said Lauren Allen, assistant director of CAARES. "There will be various self-directed activity stations to choose from such as crafts, games,



The idea for the club was born when CAARES reached out to SSPL to collaborate on program offerings that would serve the local autistic and neurodivergent communities.

“CAARES was excited to collaborate with SSPL given the library’s commitment to inclusive offerings, such as their ‘Escape Room: Downtime for Adults’ and ‘Sensory Story Time,’ among other programs and policies,” Allen said.

Ultimately, the driving force behind the club is connection.

“The sense of belonging is so important to cultivate, and our hope is that Neurodiversity Club can contribute to that for children and teens who attend,” Allen said.

Interested individuals can register for the free session:

<https://sspl.libcal.com/event/11009817>.

Subsequent sessions will occur on Monday, October 23 from 4:30-5:30 p.m. and Monday, November 27 from 4:30-5:30 p.m.

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[All 2023](#)

[Older >](#)

MEDIA CONTACT

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Tuesdays, March 12 & April 9
4:30 - 5:30 p.m.
H. Dutcher Community Room
Grades K-12
Registration Required



Neurodiversity Club

