



Firefly Autism

September Newsletter

2025

Welcome to the September Newsletter!

This September, we are proud to shine a light on the remarkable progress happening every day at Firefly Autism. Inside this newsletter, you'll find stories of achievement, updates on upcoming events, and ways our community continues to grow stronger. Your support makes this journey possible, and we are deeply grateful.



When Supports Say 'No': The Crisis of Exclusion in Profound Autism

By: Dr. Amanda Kelly

For many learners with significant support needs, attempting to access supports and services outside of Firefly comes with an enormous amount of fear and uncertainty. We often hear about learners being removed from day treatment or alternative activity programs, and/or an inability to find any suitable residential or day treatment care. The reality is that levels of ability and behaviors can create significant barriers to accessing needed care and supports. The Profound Autism Alliance recently conducted a nationwide caregiver survey and found that 80% of individuals with **profound autism** have been outright denied the opportunity to participate in community programs because of their support needs, with 63% asked to leave a program due to behaviors and 69% denied access to healthcare, respite or school. Behind every statistic is a family fighting for care.

In most cases, it's not a lack of willingness that keeps organizations from accepting individuals. The reality of limited staff, inadequate space and resources, and insufficient training make it difficult to provide the level of support our most vulnerable community members need. On top of that, there are no financial incentives to include them, and the costs of care increase significantly as support needs rise. Ensuring continued education regarding the complexities of significant support needs is key.

Firefly Autism's Training and Consultation program hopes to offer solutions. The program focuses on developing train-the-trainer systems and a consultative support model that can be implemented internally. This approach helps establish an independent support infrastructure, promoting the long-term self-sufficiency of the inclusion model and reducing the need for full-time consultants or new staff. By empowering internal team members with the right skills and knowledge, the program ensures that these models can operate efficiently and effectively, minimizing reliance on external resources over time.

The crisis of exclusion for individuals with significant support needs will not be solved overnight, but we can make meaningful progress with intentional strategies and collaboration.



Dr. Amanda Kelly
President & CEO of Firefly Autism

Shanda J. Kelly

Firefly Success Stories



A Heartwarming Moment in the Grocery Store

During a recent grocery shopping trip, one of our Transition to Work learners experienced a special connection. After finishing his shopping, his staff member signed “ready?” to him. At that moment, a woman who is deaf noticed and approached them. She pointed to the learner's cochlear implant and asked—using American Sign Language (ASL) along with her voice—if they knew sign language.

The staff member explained that the learner is deaf and that she was his behavior technician, though she only knew a little ASL herself. She encouraged the learner to introduce himself in sign. The woman smiled, introduced herself back, and told him it was nice to meet him.

Later, the staff explained to the learner that he had just met someone else who is deaf. With a big smile, he shared that the encounter made him feel happy.

Moments like this remind us of the power of community, connection, and belonging. ★



Upcoming Events



Firefly Autism's 4th Annual Sensory Friendly Pictures!

Firefly Autism is excited to host its 4th Annual Sensory Friendly Pictures!

- Saturday, December 6th
- 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM
- Firefly Autism, 2001 Hoyt Street, Lakewood, CO 80125

Families are invited to take pictures with Santa, the Grinch, and/or a Winter Wonderland backdrop in a calm, sensory-friendly environment. Guests can also enjoy a hot chocolate and cookie bar, explore resources from our community partners, and watch a holiday movie.

Don't miss this festive, family-friendly celebration—please **RSVP by November 22nd**.

Firefly Invites You To:

OUR 4TH ANNUAL SENSORY FRIENDLY PICTURES!

Saturday December 6th
at Firefly Autism
2001 Hoyt St. Lakewood CO, 80215
10:00 AM-4:00 PM

Take pictures with Santa, the Grinch, and/or a Winter Wonderland for the whole family in a calm and sensory friendly environment!

Enjoy the hot chocolate and cookie bar while exploring resources from our partners, and watch a holiday movie!



Scan here to RSVP
by November 22nd

Please email Sheila with any questions at
sorozco@fireflyautism.org



RSVP HERE!

Volunteer with Us!

We're looking for enthusiastic volunteers to help make our 4th Annual Sensory Friendly Pictures event a success! From greeting families and assisting with activities to serving hot chocolate and cookies, there are plenty of ways to get involved. If you'd like to spread holiday cheer while supporting our Firefly community, sign up today!

Volunteer Signup!



BRICKS ARE STILL AVAILABLE!



The Path To Success

All families, friends, community members, and alumni are invited to be a part of our Path to Success project. This project will honor the past and present members of Firefly Autism.

BUY YOUR BRICKS NOW AT
FIREFLYAUTISM.ORG



[Buy Bricks HERE!](http://FIREFLYAUTISM.ORG)



Recognizing Infinity by Marvin



This month, we are proud to recognize Infinity by Marvin for their generous support of Firefly Autism.

Infinity by Marvin designs windows and doors that enhance the beauty and comfort of homes, backed by more than 100 years of Marvin innovation. With a mission to imagine and create better ways of living, Infinity brings quality, craftsmanship, and care to every product.

Their commitment to community is equally inspiring. Infinity shares Firefly's vision of uplifting individuals and families, and we are grateful for their partnership in helping us carry out our mission. Together, we can continue to make a lasting difference for individuals with autism, their families, and communities.

Thank you, Infinity by Marvin, for standing with Firefly!



Get Involved

Every person deserves the chance to thrive—and at Firefly, we're committed to making that possible through donor support. Many of our learners face up to a \$2,000 monthly gap between the cost of care and what insurance covers. Thanks to generous donors, children who arrived nonverbal and overwhelmed are now communicating, regulating emotions, and engaging with the world.

Monthly gifts of \$50, \$100, or \$250 help us continue delivering this life-changing care, regardless of a family's financial situation. Your support powers programs like Transition to Work, our sensory garden, and community-based adult services. Help turn barriers into breakthroughs—one Firefly at a time. Donate to Firefly today by following the link below:



[Donate HERE!](#)



[**MAKE A WISH COME TRUE!**](#)

You can support Firefly Autism by helping to provide our center with niche items our regular funding does not provide. Curious about what we need? Check out or newly

curated wish list.

[WISHLIST](#)

HAVE A GREAT MONTH!

Thanks for being part of our community. We truly value our supporters, our readers, our staff, and our community.

We hope you have a great month and we will check in again with you in October.

As always, you can make a one-time or recurring donation to Firefly through our giving partner, **ColoradoGives**, anytime. Thanks for everything!

[DONATE](#)

Firefly Autism | 2001 Hoyt Street | Lakewood, CO 80215 US

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