



# Fundraising Event Guide



## Welcome!

Thank you for thinking about organizing a fundraising event to benefit the AANE community! It is precisely because of concerned and engaged folks like you, that we are able to offer life-changing programs and services to a growing group of individuals, families, and professionals.

Third-party fundraising events are conceived, organized, and carried out by individuals or organizations who want to help AANE with its mission. AANE has no fiduciary responsibilities and typically does not involve staff in such events. However, we are incredibly appreciative of your support and want to help you run a successful event and gladly offer guidance. Please review this packet to learn more about AANE and how to spread the word in order to extend our vital resources to even more people in the community.

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## Ten Steps for Planning a Successful Event

1. **Decide what type of an event.** Decide what will be most appropriate and enjoyable for your community, friends, and family members. It should fit the size, interest, talents, audience, and time availability of the planning committee. Be creative and have fun!
2. **Identify your target audience.** Consider who is most likely to attend and support your event. Generally they are people who are connected to the planning committee, have ties to AANE, or have a strong interest in the type of event chosen.
3. **Determine the fundraising component of the event.** Will there be an auction table, drawing, or tickets sales? Will the event have individual donors or registration fees? Think about and choose the most effective way to raise money that is best suited for your type of event.
4. **Establish a goal.** Choose what your goals are for the event. There may be goals beyond fundraising, such as honoring someone special or creating awareness of Asperger Syndrome and Autism. Be sure to plan a realistic financial goal.
5. **Establish a realistic timeline.** Give yourself plenty of time to organize and publicize an event. Check for other events that may be taking place in your area at the same time. Try to avoid scheduling your event near a holiday weekend.
6. **Be sure to publicize.** Tell your story--describe why you're raising money for the AANE community. Be sure to offer complete event information. Choose a few communication methods that reach your audience most effectively (i.e. social media, emails, flyers, etc.). Please send AANE a copy of your communication BEFORE distribution for approval to ensure proper use of logos, branding, etc. Be sure to align your messaging with AANE values:
  - Aligned - awareness, community, diversity, empowerment, understanding
  - Not Aligned - fight or cure Asperger's/autism, disorder, disease



7. **Plan a budget.** Develop a list of expenses while keeping in mind what items could potentially be donated. As a guideline, try to maintain expenses less than 25 percent of anticipated revenue.
8. **Select a date and discuss your event with AANE.** Any fundraising activity for the benefit of AANE must be approved by AANE's development office, enabling us to provide you with the support and guidance that you deserve.
9. **Collect funds.** AANE asks that all funds generated by your event be forwarded to AANE's development office within 30 days of the event. We hope you can share any stories or photos from your event with AANE so we can share them with our community on your good work.
10. **Be thoughtful with media attention.** If you speak with a media representative at your event, please describe AANE's work thoughtfully, using language that accurately reflects our values and mission. (See #6.)
11. **Say thank you!** Please be sure to acknowledge everyone who participated in or supported your fundraiser with a note, phone call, or special mention in an organization's newsletter or other communication tool.



## Event Contributions

When you run an event for AANE, you help to bring our shared vision of acceptance, support, and connection into this world. There are several different ways that participants can give to the AANE community:

- Make a donation online at [www.aane.org](http://www.aane.org).
- Call AANE at (617) 393-3824 and donate with a credit card.
- Send a check to AANE, 51 Water Street, Suite 206, Watertown, MA 02472.
- Go to <http://www.aane.org/support-us/donate/> for further options.

Remember that you can tailor gifts to suit personal needs and wishes. Give anonymously, give in somebody's memory, celebrate or commemorate a special occasion, or honor somebody. Know how much our community appreciates each and every contribution.

Please visit [www.aane.org/support-us/donate](http://www.aane.org/support-us/donate) or email [fundraising@aane.org](mailto:fundraising@aane.org) for more specific information.



# Sample Letter Requesting Support

Spread the word about your event with an email or a letter to friends, family, and co-workers. Below is sample letter that you are welcome to tailor toward your event:

Dear [Name or, Friends and Family]:

I am excited to announce that on [Date], I will be hosting an event to support the Asperger/Autism Network (AANE)!

If you don't already know, AANE works with individuals, families, and professionals to help people with Asperger Syndrome and similar autism spectrum profiles build meaningful, connected lives. This mission means a great deal to me personally, which is why I am organizing [Name of Event].

[Tell a personal story that highlights how AANE has made a difference in your life or the life of someone you care about.]

My goal is to raise [\$ amount] for AANE, and your participation will help me reach this goal.

Please contact me with any questions at [your contact information]. You can learn more about AANE at [www.aane.org](http://www.aane.org).

Thank you for joining me to help bring our shared vision of acceptance, support, and connection into this world.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]



# Create a Social Media Campaign

Use your social media platforms to tell your story and to get the word out about your event on your own personal page or an Event Page that you create. Post event details, announcements, photos, reminders, contests, and other information regularly to build excitement and increase exposure. Get as many people as you can to spread the word. See below for sample posts, and be sure to include our web address, **www.aane.org**, so people can learn more about the organization they are supporting.

Please send AANE a copy of your communication BEFORE posting for approval to ensure alignment of messaging with AANE values.

- Aligned - awareness, community, diversity, empowerment, understanding
- Not Aligned - fight or cure Asperger's/autism, disorder, disease

Examples include:

## Facebook

Help bring our shared vision of acceptance, support, and connection into this world. Join me at [your event] on [date] at [location] to spread awareness. All donations will support the work of the Asperger/Autism network (AANE). Visit: [www.aane.org](http://www.aane.org). #AANE #[Yourevent]

## Instagram

Join me to help bring our shared vision of acceptance, support, and connection into this world. Join me at [your event] on [date] at [location] to spread awareness. All donations will support the work of the Asperger/Autism network (AANE). See link in bio. #AANE #[Yourevent]

## Twitter

Support a vision of acceptance and connection at [your event] and support [www.aane.org](http://www.aane.org). Contact [contact info] for more info. #[Yourevent]

## Email

Send out updates to participants to keep them in the loop, to celebrate successes, and to generate excitement as you move closer to your goal.



## Tell Us About Your Event

We would love to hear about your event so that we can share it with others in our newsletter or on our social media channels. Remember that your commitment and enthusiasm will inspire other people in the community to get involved, so tell your story!

You can share . . .

- An inspirational moment from your event.
- Photos and/or videos.
- A quote from a participant.
- Quantifiable outcomes, e.g. amount raised (\$) and number of participants.

Please send information to [fundraising@aane.org](mailto:fundraising@aane.org).

Please note: AANE may share your photo/video in our marketing materials unless you specify the use your photo/video for a specific purpose.





## Event Ideas

The following are some ideas for your community fundraiser. We suggest thinking of something you enjoy doing (e.g. book club, cooking) and working to add a fundraising component into that. This way you are not starting from scratch and, in addition to giving back to a great cause, you are doing something you love.

**Birthday Party** -- Do you have an upcoming birthday, anniversary, shower or bar/bat mitzvah? Consider making a contribution to AANE in lieu of personal gifts – and ask your friends and family to do the same.

**Fitness Fest** -- Perhaps your local fitness center can help you host a spinning class or Zumba-thon. Ask friends and family to sign up for the class and donate \$20 to AANE, or solicit pledges for every hour they exercise. They can get fit and have fun while creating awareness for Asperger Syndrome.

**Cocktail Party** -- Throw a cocktail party in your home or at a local restaurant or bar. Many venues provide great deals for very little money. Ask your friends to donate \$50 and then spend no more than \$20 per person on the food. This will ensure you will have a good amount to donate by the end of the night. Include a raffle or auction to increase revenue.

**Kids Who Care** -- Have fun with your students while teaching them about the meaning of philanthropy with anything from a coin drive to a car wash to a read-a-thon. Lemonade stands, bake sales, raking a neighbor's yard or shoveling driveways are all easy, great ways for kids to get involved. Chances are a classmate knows someone on the autism spectrum.

**Garage Sale** -- Ask friends and neighbors to clean out their basement or garage for a good cause. Organize a garage sale, and you'll clean out your house while supporting the AANE community at the same time!

**Dress Down/Up Days** -- Give working professionals a good excuse to take a day off from wearing a suit or dress by hosting a casual Friday. Employees can donate to wear their favorite jeans and t-shirts. Already work in a relaxed dress environment? Then offer a dress up day to give your audience a picture-worthy opportunity while donating to the Asperger community.



**Golf Outing** -- Whether planning a small golf outing with friends and family or an outing for your business, think about making your swing really count and partnering with us to give back to AANE!

**Food Event** -- A food event can be whatever your tummy desires -- a chili cook-off, potluck, spaghetti dinner, etc. Money can be raised through ticket and treat sales.

**Independent Business Gives Back** -- Are you a local independent business owner, restaurant or retail owner who is looking to align with a great cause? Whether it is a percentage of proceeds for a week or simply collecting change, you can make a difference while you work.

**Backyard Carnival** -- Take advantage of your own space and host a carnival in your yard featuring fun games and activities, arts and crafts, popcorn, bouncy house, etc. Neighborhood flyers and signs can let people know you're raising money for the AANE community!

**Trivia Night** -- This is a fun way to raise funds while increasing awareness about Asperger Syndrome and similar autism profiles. Host your trivia night at a restaurant or other local establishment and invite between 10 and 50 of your friends and family.

**Sports Tournament** -- Grab your friends and family and organize a tournament based around your favorite sport. Have participants pay a fee to participate in the event. Check with your local recreation department to find out when fields, courts, etc. are available.

**Restaurants Give Back** -- Choose a charity-friendly restaurant (i.e. Bertucci's) known to donate a portion of the night's sales to a local organization. Groupraise.com has a searchable list for participating restaurants in your area. Contact the restaurant, choose a date, and let people know through a simple flyer that a percentage of their dinner's total will go directly to AANE!



## Who is AANE?

The Asperger / Autism Network (AANE) was founded in 1996 by a small group of concerned parents and professionals who believed that helping those with Asperger Syndrome to know themselves was the key to promoting meaningful, connected lives. We were one of the first organizations in the world to address the needs of people with Asperger profiles. AANE is now a large, vibrant, well-respected organization, known throughout the United States and beyond. We started with a single phone line, and in our 21st year, the heart of our operations is still providing expert individualized support, referrals, and technical assistance.

In fulfilling this mission, our most valued resources are the ideas and thoughts of individuals with Asperger profiles themselves and their families. Our staff and Board include members of our community who identify as being on the autism spectrum. Additionally, many of our employees have children, siblings, other relatives, or friends with Asperger/autism profiles. For each of these professionals, their work at AANE is personal. Moreover, the voices of our entire community informs each decision we make.

While our primary mission is to assist individuals living with Asperger Syndrome and similar autism profiles, AANE is an inclusive community that also serves people who have other neurological differences or who feel our services would be helpful. You do not need to have received a professional diagnosis of Asperger Syndrome to make use of AANE's services. The organization is committed to welcoming all individuals, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, or gender identification.



## Mission

A fundraising event provides an invaluable opportunity to educate the greater community about the work of AANE and to communicate our driving mission:

*The Asperger/Autism Network (AANE) works with individuals, families, and professionals to help people with Asperger Syndrome and similar autism spectrum profiles build meaningful, connected lives.*

## Programs and Services

AANE builds a supportive community by providing education, information, and connections to individuals with Asperger profiles, their extended families, and the professionals who work with them. AANE is easily accessible no matter where you live. Online options are available for coaching, information, support, and education. Some of our programs include:

- LifeMAP Coaching
- Parent Coaching
- Expert consultations on parenting, housing, IEP's, and college
- Resources and referrals
- Webinars and online forums
- Conferences with world-renowned speakers
- Support and social groups for adults, parents, grandparents
- Training for professionals
- A Neurodiverse Couple's Institute
- An Artist Collaborative
- Much, much more



## Values

### **Community**

The insight and empathy of many AANE staff and volunteers is rooted in their family or other direct experience of Asperger Syndrome, making it possible for AANE to welcome individuals with Asperger Syndrome—in all their diversity—their families, and the professionals who work with them. We validate their experiences and offer hope. We provide them with networking opportunities, a sense of belonging, and an end to the isolation often associated with autism spectrum conditions.

### **Learning Across the Lifespan**

AANE provides accurate, current information and resources to individuals with Asperger Syndrome, their families, and professionals, empowering them to make informed choices. Our support is designed to sustain individuals and families, meeting varying levels of need, and facilitating transitions and meaningful life experiences at all ages and stages, from early childhood to old age.

### **Respect**

AANE works with people to address and accommodate the challenges associated with Asperger Syndrome while fostering respect for the strengths and differences. We work to empower people with Asperger Syndrome to maximize their independence, and to achieve equity and parity in society. This value permeates our approach to our work, leading us to include people with AS in our governance and strategic decision-making.

### **Innovative Programming**

AANE's approach combines realism with idealism. We seek solutions to the challenges of our community that are responsive to needs and driven by our innovative, creative, “think-outside-the-box” approach. We identify unmet needs through dialogue with people we serve, and address their needs through a range of measures—including outreach, pioneering interventions, and the use of technology. Through networking, training and the development of educational materials and model programs, we also build capacity for service delivery within communities.

### **Advocacy**

We seek to remove barriers, and support efforts to guide public policy collaboratively at local, state, and national levels. Our strength in advocacy derives from a long-standing partnership between our grassroots membership and our professionals, both of whom live and work with the pervasive and daily realities of Asperger Syndrome.