



Who We are

A group of proactive parents working collaboratively with family, neighbours, community, education & autism professionals, school districts, government, and private associations to create happiness and success for their children with Autism.

SASS – YEAR AT A GLANCE 2022!

We've finished another **amazing year of supporting families** in our community affected by **Autism and other special needs**. This support would not be possible without the **generous contributions from organizations like yours**, directed by **kind & purposeful people like you**.

Here are some of the HIGHLIGHTS from 2022:

- We provided **8 Monthly SASS Support Meetings** from **September to May** for parents, caregivers & community advocates with a variety of guest speakers providing valuable information making a meaningful difference in the lives of others and connecting families to the resources they need.
- We **hosted our AGM in April** to promote the input of our SASS Membership so we could formulate our plan to increase how we can provide even more support our community.
- We provided a **Free Family Swim Pass to 20 families in April** to acknowledge **April as Autism Acceptance Month**.
- We provided **20 amazing Holiday & Craft Care Packages to families in November**.
 - These are loaded with crafts and memory-making items for families to share together
- We sponsored a tree for **SASS the Festival of Trees in December** and families came down to add their home-made decorations and enjoy a **free family swim on behalf of SASS**.
- We provided a **free Sensory Santa Photo Shoot for 15 families**¹ making memories for years to come – some of these families had never had these photos done before because of the sensory issues of malls (lights, noise, line-ups, etc.).
- We held our **Annual Bottle Drive Fundraiser in May** and raised \$2200 -- This is a great way to connect as a group as well as, raise awareness in the community!
- We awarded the **SASS Inclusion Scholarship** for the 4th year to a deserving graduate of EMCS!

¹ Full Disclosure: The power went out 10 minutes before the first appointment at the Sooke location where our photo was arranged! Team North Pole & all the families managed to shift gears and move the photo shoot to my house immediately!

- We provided **several one-on-one mentoring and support sessions** to families receiving their new ASD diagnosis.
- We provided families with **numerous items from our SASS Lending Library**, which includes books, videos, games and other learning & development resources.
- We are now **providing information, support and programs for 112 families** and approximately **30 community advocates and service providers** – and this list is growing every single month! We do this through our active SASS Facebook page (513 followers), our website, our monthly email newsletter and the many, many emails we receive and respond to at sooke.sass@gmail.com.
- We were **granted Registered Charitable Status by CRA** and we can now issue our own Tax Deductible Charity Receipts!

Festival of Trees – Our SASS Tree



Sensory Santa Photos!



Home-Made Decorations

Holiday Craft & Care Packages



WHAT'S NEW FOR 2023?

We applied for our very first grant in Fall of 2022 and were delighted to be awarded the **Mary Brown Memorial Grant (overseen and administered by the Juan de Fuca Health Foundation) in January 2023.** This \$5,000 grant is enabling us to initiate **3 new programs & initiatives** in the community which we know will have a significant impact on the families and community at large.

#1 BRINGING SIBSHOPS TO SOOKE APRIL 2023

We are delighted to bring SIBSHOPS to Sooke in April for the very first time!

The purpose of this program is to **support the siblings of those with special needs.** Did you know that as much as their lives are profoundly ENRICHED by their life experience with their sibling who has special needs that:

- Siblings will be part those with special needs lives LONGER than parents will
- Siblings endure a LIFETIME of challenges and responsibilities they did not sign up for
- Siblings make many personal SACRIFICES that go unrecognized and unacknowledged
- Siblings bring PEACE OF MIND to parents when they have to think about what life is like once they are not there to support their child with special needs (this IS the kind of stuff we lose sleep over)

We are initiating SibKids which is for those aged 6 to 11 and SibTeens which is for those aged 12 to 17.

#2 EASTER SEALS ADVENTURE OPPORTUNITY

The Easter Seals organization (www.eastersealsbcy.ca) has been providing fun & adventure for children & adults with special needs for many years. They are the gold standard for quality camps of fun with qualified individuals overseeing every activity.

The **Easter Seals Summer Camps** are excellent and something that is looked forward to by those attending *and* the families sending their children. For many, this is the ONLY time of year they get extended respite from supporting their child with ASD and provides them the opportunity to **spend quality time with their other children to do 'normal' activities that are otherwise not possible when their brother or sister is with them.**

Our family has relied on Easter Seals for *many* years for this exact reason and we are blessed with the financial means to do so – but many families are not. Our son, Ethan who has Autism is 21 now and attended their Adult Summer Camp Program in July 2022 (see picture) and can't wait to go back next year! For individuals like Ethan, this is often the only independent vacation they can take – which is so very important.



We are delighted to share this opportunity with one of our families this summer!

#3 ANOTHER EMCS SCHOLARSHIP

At present we have the **SASS Inclusion Scholarship \$500** which is awarded to a graduating EMCS student who supports the inclusion of those with special needs at home, school and in the community. All applications are received and reviewed by the EMCS Scholarship Committee – they choose the successful candidate (please see list of past recipients).

We are especially delighted to add the **SASS Support Scholarship \$500** to a graduating student with special needs this year! This scholarship is to assist a student with the very difficult transition from youth to adulthood, which is especially challenging for these kids and their families. We want to proactively promote and support these individuals with the vision they have for moving their life forward in a positive, inclusive & successful manner.

A SINCERE & HEARTFELT THANK YOU

As you can see, we are **passionate about our commitment to making a difference** in the lives of those affected by Autism. Everyone in our organization is a volunteer and the work we do is only possible because of the generous contributions from people like you – thank you!

If you have any questions about any of our SASS community initiatives or would like to continue to support the Sooke Autism Support Society (SASS), please feel free to contact us.

We appreciate you and we wish you all the very best for 2023!

Sherri Palle,

Sooke Autism Support Society (SASS) President

Sooke.sass@gmail.com

6489 Beechwood Place

Sooke BC V9Z 0Y7

250.642.2100



Edward Milne
Community School

SASS RECIPIENTS

We are pleased to share with you the wonderful group of past SASS Scholarship Recipients:

- 2022 Sam Ostropolski
- 2021 Tayalynn Stephens
- 2020 Madeline Fisher
- 2019 Craig Phipps