

# weap: The People

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Wisconsin Early Autism Project, Inc.

2010

## Going to the Movies

By Justin Sallows

Wisconsin Early Autism Project, Inc.



Marcus Theaters is announcing they are introducing a new film series, "Reel Movies for Real Needs" designed for families of special-needs children with autism or other challenges who seldom attend movies. "Reel Movies for Real Needs" features select first-run film showings the fourth Saturday of each month at 10:30 a.m. at select Marcus Theatres locations. Upcoming titles and dates are Saturday, May 22, *Shrek* and Saturday, June 26, *Toy Story*.

"The 'Reel Movies for Real Needs' program creates a welcoming and comfortable environment for special needs children by offering family films with a lower sound volume and brighter lighting for families who may not feel

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## A Camp for Autism

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As a boy I was lucky enough to go to many summer camps and I had many wonderful experiences at them. I got to feel like a part of nature and engaged in fun activities and of course made friends. Unfortunately summer camp is an opportunity rarely afforded children with autism.

Camp Awesum was created specifically to fill this void and they have gone to great measures to make sure their campers have a safe, fun growing experience.

I asked Board Member Glenis Benson to give us some details about the program and facilities of the camp.

*JS: How did the idea for Camp Awesum come about?*

GB: The catalyst, if you will, was one family's rejection from a typical camp. Their son, who has an ASD was unwelcome at a 'typical' camp. Wanting a camping experience, this mother took it upon herself to begin Camp Awesum with the assistance of numerous others. The camp has been in existence since 2005 so this is year 6 that we are going into.

*JS: How many children attend the camp session? How many counselors supervise them?*

GB: We accept 44 campers (ages 9-15), meaning 4 campers per cabin, and they are staffed by at least 2 counselors per cabin. We have some staff that are floaters and can go to where the need is, in addition to the counselors assigned to a cabin. Furthermore there are occupational therapists, as well as activity personnel in addition to the counselors.

*JS: Could you describe some of the activities and how they are operated?*

GB: The campers hike (with a naturalist from the camp), fish (from a pontoon boat), swim, use watercraft (kayaks, paddle boats etc.), go to workshop (activities often with a sensory component), drum (we have a drummer come in to lead these drumming sessions), gross motor activities

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comfortable attending regularly scheduled shows,” said Bruce J. Olson, president of Marcus Theatres. “This specially designed program will provide entertainment to special-needs children without the challenges of a regular show. We are happy to support this group of families and children by offering them a real movie experience they all can enjoy.”

“Families with special needs children are looking for opportunities to get them out and participate in the same activities many other families enjoy,” said Cindy Schultz, a volunteer with Autism Network through Guidance, Education & Life (A.N.G.E.L). “Thanks to Marcus Theatres’ new series, ‘Reel Movies for Real Needs,’ we will have the chance each month to attend movies together as a family. We are excited about this program which will make a difference in the lives of children and their families.”♦

“Reel Movies for Real Needs” will take place at the following Marcus Theatres locations:

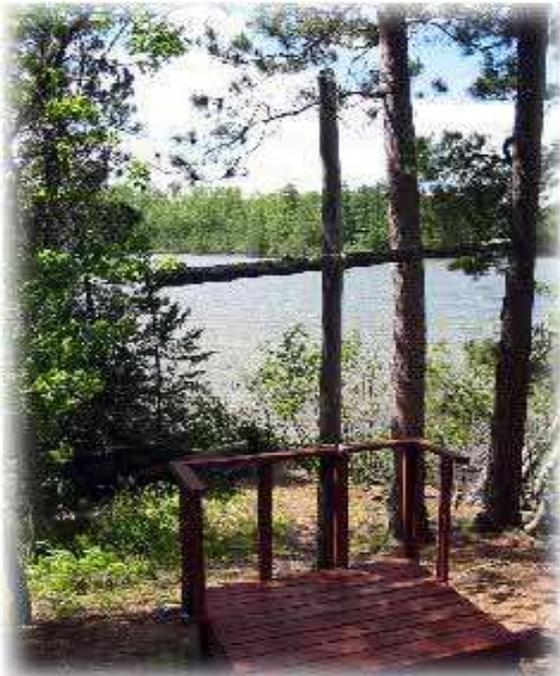
South Shore Cinema, Oak Creek  
Bay Park Cinema, Ashwaubenon (Beginning 5/22)  
Point Cinema, Madison (Beginning 5/22)

For movie schedules, go here:

<http://www.marcustheatres.com/Promotion/PromotionDetail/21/>

Kerasotes Theaters (Star Cinema) in Madison has similar showings called “Matinee Movie Magic”. You can find out about it and sign up for a newsletter detailing the showings here:

<http://www.kerasotes.com/SpecialFilmsEMail.aspx?Type=MovieMagic>



Camp Awesum is located at Beautiful Moon Beach near St. Germain, WI

on the Fun Hill etc. In the evening there is karaoke, variety night, movie night and boat ride/campfire night.

JS: *What type of sleeping arrangements are there?*

GB: They stay in cabins that are very well equipped - think Holiday Inn! Most cabins are stand alone so that there are 4 campers and 2 counselors per cabin. All have lovely bathrooms with running water (of course), and most accommodate two campers per bedroom.

JS: *Can you describe the safety precautions that are taken to protect the children?*

GB: Safety is a high priority for us as well. The campers are ALWAYS with their counselors, and I do mean ALWAYS. The smallest grouping at camp is 3 as there always has to be at least one adult with a child, and we never allow one on one situations; there would always be another adult or other camper with them. There are lifeguards provided by the camp for any watercraft or swimming activity. There are two nurses at the camp around the clock. There are a minimum of 3 first responders at the camp at all times. The camp itself is quite far from the road so that is not an issue. The campers are supervised to such an extent that we have not had any breach of safety in our 5 years.

JS: *What methods do the counselors use to handle tantruming?*

GB: Camp AweSum is purely a positive environment. Punishment (behaviorally defined) is NOT used at all. There is no timeout, no seclusion, nothing that would approximate punishment, NOTHING. I simply cannot stress this point enough. All hands at Camp AweSum are “safe hands” and any counselor who is reluctant to embrace this philosophy would be encouraged to look elsewhere for the opportunity. Most of the counselors have read Behavioral Support by Janney and Snell, as well as AS and Difficult Moments, Tantrums, Rages and Meltdowns by Myles and Southwick.

The staff are trained to treat all the campers respectfully and the campers respond (though often perplexed) very, very well. We pride ourselves on giving these campers an experience with adults who listen to them and who predict their needs. The entire camp is full of visuals, whiteboard/timers, and blue painter tape for boundaries, to name some visuals in play.

Campers receive a booklet of Social Stories before they arrive at camp. They also get to see photos of camp so they can anticipate the environment. Counselors are in touch with campers' families prior to camp and they introduce themselves by way of photos, and often Social Stories about themselves.

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The campers also know the daily/weekly schedule of activities in advance, as well as the menu for the week, right down to evening snack. There is also a visual over their bed of the week such that they cross off the day as they go to sleep. This assists them to know where they are in the week and how much time is left in the week.

*JS: How has the transition been for children who may be leaving home for the first time? Does it take them a long time to adjust to being around new people?*

They adjust phenomenally well but then, we foreshadow EVERYTHING, both prior to camp and once they arrive, and we do so visually, not verbally. A couple of years ago when a first time camper arrived at camp, I overheard him telling his parents "and that is the big bell they ring at mealtimes, and there is the Lodge where we eat." He'd seen the photos, read the stories and he knew what to expect. At this point, going into year 6, approximately 75% of our campers are returning campers.

*JS: Can you describe the screening process for applicants?*

The screening process looks at diagnosis; this is a camp for campers with an ASD so that is a requirement. Part of the application is the provision of the camper's IEP. We review that to determine fit with camp. We have releases signed so we call the camper's teacher to discuss with him/her the potential camper's fit with camp. Sometimes we actually conduct a school visit to see the camper in his/her school environment to determine fit. So we have a lot of work behind the scenes.

The time between application and start of camp is 5 months and allows counselors to become familiar with the campers assigned to them. When I train at the retreat a couple of months prior to camp, we are able to discuss campers specifically.

The campers are also grouped with care, and assigned very specifically to counselors depending upon skill set. For example, this year we have one camper who will bring a communication device so I will intentionally put him with a counselor who is an SLP with knowledge about AAC systems.

Campers need time to become familiar with camp via Social Stories/photos. Some campers even meet other cabin mates prior to camp as the families take it upon themselves to try to help their camper familiarize him/herself with other campers.

*JS: Can you tell us about a camper that has met success at Camp Awesum?*

There are simply too many to mention. We always hear "Now my child has a friend" and "My child was able to just be himself for a week", "He feels like he belongs". "Our boys now email and talk on the phone to each other" (they

were cabin mates), "My child talks about camp all year long."

I can clearly recall the pride one young boy felt when he kayaked independently. He experienced an incredible degree of accomplishment.

Camp Awesum has gone SO WELL, that the camp where we hold it, Moon Beach, has begun an Autism Family camp week. We recognized the need for families that include a member with autism to feel welcome at a family camp and so in 2010 we will offer the second annual Autism Family camp week the 3rd week in August.

Camp Awesum is open for registration on New Years Day and fills within 10-14 days. Camp dates are Sunday, June 27 to Friday, July 2 this year and costs \$825. Scholarships are available for 2011.♦



*Camp Awesum offers swimming, hiking, boating, canoeing, fishing, crafts, music, and much more.*

**If you are interested in becoming a camp counselor, you can print off an application here:**

<http://www.campawesum.org/employ.htm>

**If you would like to learn more about Camp Awesum, or make a donation, you can go here:**

<http://www.campawesum.org/index.htm>

**Email: [CampAwesum@yahoo.com](mailto:CampAwesum@yahoo.com)**

## Upcoming Events

### Gio's Garden Benefit Concert

Local bands SuperTuesday, LUBE, and Whitney Mann will all be performing! prize drawings and a silent auction, offering some pretty sweet merchandise - including entertainment packages, vacation. We'll also have some getaways, spa treatments, and much more. It's a night full of fun, for a great cause.

**Thursday, June 10**

**6:30PM**

**\$10**

**\$30/person or \$50/couple VIP treatment, which includes admission, free food, and free beverages**

**SCATZ, 2248 Deming Way, Middleton**

All of our WEAP clinics are looking for experienced therapists to join a number of new teams getting started in the upcoming months. If you are interested in joining new teams or adding additional hours for the summer months, please contact the Human Resources Department in the clinic in your area.

## Groups and Classes

Location	Group	Age/Level	Facilitator	Fee	Days	Time	Start Date
Madison	Teen Group	Ages 13-16	Matt S	\$30/session (register by June 1st)	Mondays	4:00PM-5:30PM	June 15th-Ongoing
Madison	Social Skills: Dolphin Pod	Ages 4-5	Kim W	\$30/session (register by June 1st)	Thursdays	12:30PM-2:00PM	June 17th-Aug. 26th
Madison	Social Skills: Kangaroo Troop	Ages 5-6	Megan S	\$30/session (register by June 1st)	Wednesdays	9:00AM-10:30AM	June 16th-Aug. 25th
Madison	Social Skills: Lion Pride	Ages 7-9	Andrea W	\$30/session (register by June 1st)	Thursdays	3:00PM-4:30PM	June 17th-Aug. 26th
Madison	Social Skills: Elephant Group	Ages 10-12	Katie K	\$30/session (register by June 1st)	Tuesdays	3:00PM-4:30PM	June 15th-April 24th
Madison	Sibling Group	All Ages	Kim W	\$30/session (register by June 1st)	Wednesdays	3:00PM-4:30PM	Feb. 30th-Sept. 1st
Madison	Speech Adventurers	Ages 4-6	Amy S	\$50/session (register by June 1st)	Thursdays	2:00-3:30PM	June 17th-Aug. 19th
Milwaukee	Making New Friends	Ages 5-7	Stephanie	\$30/week	Tuesdays	4:30-6:00PM	March 30 – April 27
Milwaukee	Friendship Club	Ages 11-14	Stephanie	\$30/week	Thursdays (no group 04/22)	4:30-6:00PM	March 25 – May 27
Milwaukee	Self Esteem 2	Ages 8-10	Stephanie	\$30/week	Tuesdays (no group 05/18)	4:30-6:00PM	May 4 – June 8
Milwaukee	Monday Night Kids' Group	Ages 8-12	Robin	\$30/week	Mondays	4:30-6:00PM	April 5 – June 14

## Current Openings

MADISON 608-288-9040	MILWAUKEE 262-432-5660	GREEN BAY 920-338-1610	EAU CLAIRE 715-832-2233
Brooklyn Mt. Horeb New Glarus Seneca	Brookfield Brown Deer Delavan Dousman Elkhorn Germantown Hartford Ixonla Juneau Kenosha Kewaskum Menomonee Falls	Muskego Mukwonago Milwaukee S. Milwaukee Racine Waukesha Wauwatosa West Allis	Brantwood Buffalo City Catawba Chippewa Falls Colfax Deer Park Eau Claire Fairchild Glenwood City Hazelhurst Hixton Hudson New Lisbon Mauston Menomonie Merrill Osseo Phillips Prescott Somerset Wausau Westfield