

# 2025

## NORTH GEORGIA AUTISM CONFERENCE



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Children's Institute

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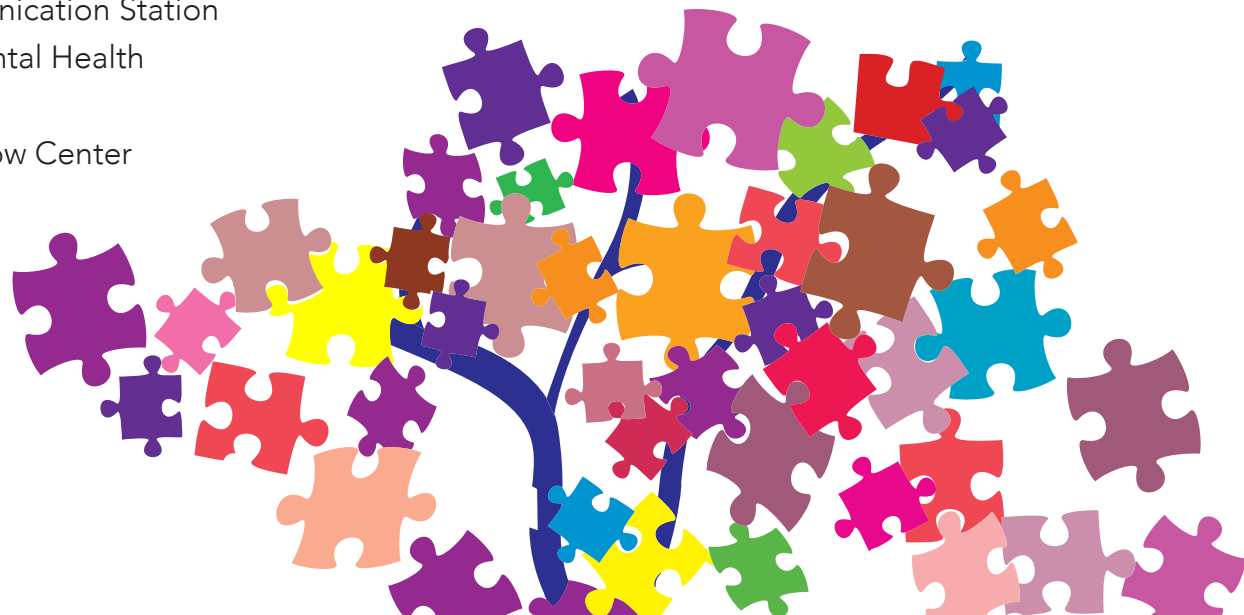
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 Aging Care Management  
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## PREMIUM NONPROFIT EXHIBITORS

Cross Plains Community Partner  
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 Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency  
 Real Life Village  
 BLOOM  
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 Tellus Museum

## STANDARD NONPROFIT EXHIBITORS

The Horizons School  
 Chattanooga Autism Center  
 Chattanooga Autism Center: GCA  
 Chattanooga Therapeutic Rec Services  
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 Parent to Parent of Georgia  
 Department of Family and Children Services  
 North Georgia Health District  
 Spirit Horse at Freedom Ranch



# NORTH GEORGIA AUTISM CONFERENCE AGENDA

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2025

**DALTON CONVENTION CENTER**  
 2211 Tony Ingle Parkway | Dalton, GA 30720  
 (formerly 2211 Dug Gap Battle Rd)

Track/Presentación	Room / Sala
PARENT TRACK	CII-CIII
NEW TEACHER TRACK	BANQUET HALL II
EXPERT TEACHER TRACK	BANQUET HALL I
HEALTHCARE TRACK	AI-AIII
YOUNG ADULT	BIII
SPANISH	BI-BII
Breakfast and Lunch Desayuno y Almuerzo	Exhibit Hall (downstairs) Salon de expositores

Time	REGISTRATION					
7:30 - 8:30 AM	REGISTRATION					
8:30 - 9:45 AM	<b>BREAKFAST KEYNOTE:</b> <b>Empowering Nonspeakers with Communication, Regulation and Education</b> Elizabeth Bonker					
9:45 - 10:00 AM	BREAK: VISIT EXHIBITORS					
	PARENT	TEACHER - NEW	TEACHER - EXPERT	HEALTHCARE	YOUNG ADULT	SPANISH
10:00 - 11:00 AM	Visual Supports at Home – Part 1 Lynn Sams CII-CIII	Tools and Teammates Claire Stockman	Troubleshooting AAC in the Classroom Hannah Cannon	Mind Over Motor Dana Johnson	Embracing Change Jordan Salzano	Sensory vs. Behavior – Part 1 Lauren Breck Vita Aguilar BI-BII
11:00 - 11:15 AM	BREAK: VISIT EXHIBITORS					
11:15 - 12:15 PM	Visual Supports at Home – Part 2 Lynn Sams CII-CIII	Thriving with Autism Kim Clairy	Empowering Nonspeakers Q&A Elizabeth Bonker	Observation with Purpose: Understanding the ADOS-2 Nancy Carnevale	My Journey as an Autistic Adult Kenlee Ballew	Sensory vs. Behavior – Part 2 Lauren Breck Vita Aguilar BI-BII
12:15 - 1:30 PM	LUNCH/NETWORKING BREAK					
1:30 - 2:30 PM	Sensory vs. Behavior – Part 1 Lauren Breck BI-BII	Troubleshooting AAC in the Classroom Hannah Cannon	Autism and Trauma Karen Weigle	Toilet Training Autistic Individuals Sharon Hynes	You Ask, They Answer: Students with Autism Open Panel Shaun Ware NW Students	Visual Supports at Home – Part 1 Lynn Sams Haydee Concan CII-CIII
2:30 - 2:45 PM	BREAK: VISIT EXHIBITORS					
2:45 - 3:45 PM	Sensory vs. Behavior – Part 2 Lauren Breck BI-BII	Thriving Not Just Surviving Veronica Crafton	Sensory Detective Kim Clairy	Autism and Trauma Karen Weigle	Let's Talk Gifts Taylor Duncan	Visual Supports at Home – Part 2 Lynn Sams Haydee Concan CII-CIII

## BREAKFAST KEYNOTE

Empowering Nonspeakers with Communication, Regulation and Education

8:30 AM – 9:45 AM

Come alongside Elizabeth Bonker as she takes you on a journey into her world and shares how she gained access to communication and education. As she shares the mission of her organization, Communication 4 All, families and schools will be empowered to help nonspeakers live happy, productive lives. She, along with her organization, hope to change the way people understand nonspeakers and presume competence.



Elizabeth Bonker is the Executive Director of Communication 4 ALL, a nonprofit with the mission to ensure nonspeakers with autism have access to communication and education. Elizabeth is a 2022 Rollins College graduate, and her valedictorian commencement address went viral with 4 billion impressions propelling her mission onto a global stage. Elizabeth's advocacy work includes a 2011 book, I am in Here, and a 2022 music album. She gives keynote presentations around the world and her story has been featured in the documentaries SPELLERS and Understanding Autism. Elizabeth is a member of Autism Society's Council of Advisors and Autism Society of Florida Board.

9:45 AM - 10:00 AM **BREAK**

## AUTISM CONFERENCE SESSION TIMES & DESCRIPTIONS

10:00 AM – 11:00 AM **WORKSHOPS**

### PARENT TRACK – CII-CIII

#### Visual Supports at Home – Part 1

Lynn Sams, MS CCC-SLP

Anna Shaw Children's Institute

Parents and caregivers will learn how visuals can support learning, communication and independence within daily life. After discovering types of visuals and how to implement them in daily routines, caregivers will participate in a make and take activity to build a library of visuals to support their loved ones at home.

### NEW TEACHER TRACK – BANQUET HALL II

#### Tools and Teammates

Claire Stockman, MME, Ed.S

Creative Discovery Museum

Join Claire Stockman, educator, VP of Education at Creative Discovery Museum, veteran educator, and mom of a neurodivergent child to explore behavior as communication and ways to empower kids with tools and teammates for various situations. She will share some of the strategies that Creative Discovery Museum (Chattanooga, TN) uses to ensure that all learners can engage in FUN and meaningful learning. Attendees will view a mental model demonstrating behavior as communication and understand the emotional response curve and when to intervene. Attendees will also learn more about various tools, teammates, and techniques that promote engagement in activities.

### EXPERIENCED TEACHER TRACK – BANQUET HALL I

#### Troubleshooting AAC in the Classroom

Hannah Cannon, MS CCC-SLP

Anna Shaw Children's Institute

Students with limited verbal communication skills rely on alternative communication tools when verbal speech is inefficient. Learning to communicate with a speech generating device can be overwhelming for both the communicator and their communication partners. In this session, we will identify common difficulties teachers and therapists face as they incorporate communication devices into the classroom setting, as well as strategies to make the process easier. Attendees will be able to identify 6 barriers to success with integrating AAC systems into their classrooms, learn strategies to overcome barriers, and formulate a plan for success.

## HEALTHCARE TRACK – AI-AIII

### Mind Over Motor

Dana Johnson, PhD, MS, OTR/L

Spellers Center Atlanta

Recent research on autism and other motor disorders points to neurological “noise” that impacts efficient and purposeful movement in the population. These differences result in a disconnect between nervous system and causing prolonged fight-or-flight responses. This presentation will discuss the current research on motor differences in autism including the sympathetic and parasympathetic response nonspeaking and unreliably speaking autistic population. Attendees will learn specific ways to support the brain and body disconnect, regulation, and how to build purposeful motor skills including the growing body of knowledge on motor differences and regulation. Attendees will be able to define whole body apraxia, as well as, identify and describe the four types of movement and how they relate to clients/patients with autism. In addition, attendees will be able to identify the individual differences of someone with whole body apraxia and implement strategies in their practice to support those with neuro-motor disabilities.

## YOUNG ADULT – BIII

### Embracing Change and Pivoting Your Passion on the Autism Spectrum

Jordan Salzano, Graduate Occupational Therapy Student at Springfield College

Change can be a stressor for people on the autism spectrum, whether they’re changes in daily life or in life in general. As many people on the spectrum, like herself, like routine and structure in life, this can be a challenge. However, there is no way to live a life 100% free of change: we all have to face it sometimes. This session will discuss how people on the autism spectrum can get more comfortable with changes throughout life, whether large or small. The audience will walk away with inspiration to feel more comfortable with trying new things and being okay with pivots and changes made in life, as doing so will open more doors to discover new passions, dreams, interests, and connections. This presentation will include a mixture of evidence-based research and information, and bits from the story of her life; including tools and skills she picked up throughout the years on embracing change and pivoting her past passions.

## SPANISH TRACK – BI-BII

### Respuesta Sensorial vs. Respuesta Conductual: Como Diferenciar

Lauren Breck, MS, OTR/L

Anna Shaw Children’s Institute

Vita Aguilar, MS, OTR/L

Whitfield County Schools

Los presente adquirirán una comprensión básica de la función del cerebro y que sucede cuando se desconecta. Al comprender funciones básicas del cerebro, podrán desarrollar mejores estrategias para manejar/navegar esas respuestas. También aprenderán a identificar las diferencias entre una respuesta sensorial y una conductual, y aprenderán estrategias nuevas para implementar en su hogar y en la comunidad para apoyar a su hij(o)(a) durante su respuesta conductual o respuesta sensorial.

11:00 AM - 11:15 AM BREAK

11:15 AM – 12:15 AM WORKSHOPS

## PARENT TRACK – CII-CIII

### Visual Supports at Home – Part 2

Lynn Sams, MS CCC-SLP

Anna Shaw Children’s Institute

After attending Visual Supports at Home – Part 1 and learning how visuals can support learning, communication and independence within daily life and discovering types of visuals and how to implement them in daily routines, caregivers will participate in a hands on, “make and take” activity to build a library of visuals to support their loved ones at home.

## NEW TEACHER TRACK – BANQUET HALL II

### My World, Your World, Our World: Thriving with Autism

Kim Clairy, OTR/L

Georgia Autism Out of the Box, LLC

This presentation fills a critical gap by providing authentic autistic voice in professional education. Research shows that supports are often ineffective because they’re designed without input from those who actually experience autism processing differences. By learning directly from an autistic occupational therapist, attendees gain insider knowledge that transforms their understanding and approach to support. The live demonstration of reasonable accommodations shows practical partnership in action, giving attendees concrete examples of what thriving with autism looks like rather than just surviving.

## EXPERIENCED TEACHER TRACK – BANQUET HALL I

### Empowering Nonspeakers with Communication, Regulation & Education:

#### Your Questions Answered!

Elizabeth Bonker

Communication4All

Elizabeth Bonker will discuss the C4A Academy typing program and her 2-year Regulation 4 ALL experiment that got her out of fight-or-flight. She will demonstrate how nonspeakers are taught to type, first on large stencils, then on a letter board, and finally on a keyboard. She will discuss how schools can start pilot typing programs. Most importantly, she will answer your questions and let the conversation be guided by your interests.

Attendees will better understand dyspraxia and why nonspeakers need to be taught to type and how to calm nonspeakers with co-regulation. They will be shown how to use C4A Academy’s free tools to teach nonspeakers how to type at home or at school. They will be given information about how a school can start a pilot typing program.



## HEALTHCARE TRACK – AI-AIII

### Observation with Purpose: Understanding the ADOS-2

Nancy Carnevale, MD

Anna Shaw Children's Institute

In this presentation, Dr. Carnevale will review the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS-2) along with developmental tools used during these assessments. Attendees will leave with a better understanding of the differences between ADOS and ADOS-2, as well as how a child's developmental age affects the appropriate module used.

## YOUNG ADULT TRACK – BIII

### My Journey as an Autistic Adult

Kenlee Ballew

Whitfield County Schools, CAPS program

Through sharing her personal experience as an autistic adult, Kenlee will help attendees understand the strengths autistic individuals can bring to the workplace. Attendees will be able to better understand the unique perspective of an autistic paraprofessional, identify common challenges autistic staff face in the school setting, and appreciate the importance of representation and various role models.

## SPANISH – BI-BII

### Respuesta Sensorial vs. Respuesta Conductual: Como Diferenciar – Part 2

Lauren Breck, MS, OTR/L

Anna Shaw Children's Institute

Vita Aguilar, MS, OTR/L

Whitfield County Schools

Los presente adquirirán una comprensión básica de la función del cerebro y que sucede cuando se desconecta. Al comprender funciones básicas del cerebro, podrán desarrollar mejores estrategias para manejar/navegar esas respuestas. También aprenderán a identificar las diferencias entre una respuesta sensorial y una conductual, y aprenderán estrategias nuevas para implementar en su hogar y en la comunidad para apoyar a su hij(o)(a) durante su respuesta conductual o respuesta sensorial.

12:15 PM – 1:30 PM

## LUNCH/NETWORKING/BREAK

1:30 PM – 2:30 PM **WORKSHOPS**

## PARENT TRACK – BI-BII

### Sensory vs. Behavior: How to Tell the Difference – Part 1

Lauren Breck, MS, OTR/L

Anna Shaw Children's Institute

This presentation will provide a brief exploration of what is happening in the brain during a sensory or behavior response allowing us to be more effective in how we respond to the person. Lauren will help attendees identify the signs of sensory overwhelm and sensory meltdown and explore different strategies to support the person through that response. In addition, attendees will be able to identify the signs of a behavior response and strategies for maintaining clear boundaries and working through the response without giving into the demand.

## NEW TEACHER TRACK – BANQUET HALL II

### Troubleshooting AAC in the Classroom

Hannah Cannon, MS CCC-SLP

Anna Shaw Children's Institute

Students with limited verbal communication skills rely on alternative communication tools when verbal speech is inefficient. Learning to communicate with a speech generating device can be overwhelming for both the communicator and their communication partners. In this session we will identify common difficulties teachers and therapists face as they incorporate communication devices into the classroom setting, as well as strategies to make the process easier. Attendees will be able to identify 6 barriers to success with integrating AAC systems into their classrooms, learn strategies to overcome barriers, and formulate a plan for success.

## EXPERIENCED TEACHER TRACK – BANQUET HALL I

### Autism & Trauma: What Teachers Should Know

Karen Weigle, PhD, Licensed Psychologist

Anna Shaw Children's Institute

Autistic people frequently experience an increased rate of traumatic events than that of their neurotypical peers. This presentation will describe unique characteristics of autism that make post-traumatic disorders more likely and how symptoms are often misunderstood, leading to exacerbation of problems in the classroom. Participants will learn to how trauma impacts learning, question their observations and assumptions, and consider alternate interventions and supports for autistics demonstrating these symptoms.

## 2:45 PM – 3:45 PM WORKSHOPS

### HEALTHCARE TRACK – AI-AIII

#### Toilet Training Autistic Individuals

Sharon Hynes, Med, BCBA, LBA

Emory Autism Center

Toileting independence is a critical skill that can significantly impact social inclusion and access to community experiences. For autistic individuals, establishing a consistent and effective toileting routine can present unique and complex challenges. This presentation will explore common barriers to successful toilet training and share evidence-based, practical strategies to support the development of toileting skills. A comprehensive toilet training protocol will also be introduced, offering a structured approach to building toileting independence. Gaining independence in this area not only enhances personal autonomy but also increases access to inclusive educational, social, and community opportunities.

### YOUNG ADULT TRACK – BIII

#### You Ask, They Answer: Students with Autism Open Panel

Shaun Ware

Whitfield County Schools

During this presentation, local high school students with autism will open the floor for questions and answers to help attendees understand their personal school and classroom experiences, friendships and social life, as well as communication and understanding. Students will also be open to answering questions about their personal strengths, talents, interests, and how they are preparing for their futures. They will also provide advice to peers and educators to help ensure those on the spectrum can live enriched successful lives.

### SPANISH TRACK – CII-CIII

#### Apoyos Visuales en Casa – Parte 1

Lynn Sams, MS CCC-SLP

Anna Shaw Children's Institute

Los padres y cuidadores de familia aprenderán cómo los apoyos visuales pueden favorecer el aprendizaje, la comunicación y la independencia en la vida diaria. Después de descubrir los tipos de apoyos visuales y cómo implementarlos en las rutinas diarias, los padres y cuidadores de casa participarán en una actividad de hacer y recibir para crear una colección de apoyos visuales que respalden a sus seres queridos en casa.

### PARENT TRACK – BI-BII

#### Sensory vs. Behavior: How to Tell the Difference – Part 2

Lauren Breck, MS, OTR/L

Anna Shaw Children's Institute

After attending Sensory vs. Behavior – Part 1, exploring what is happening in the brain during a sensory or behavior response, identifying the signs of sensory overwhelm and sensory meltdown, and exploring different strategies to support the person through that response, attendees will participate in a hands on, “make and take” activity to build a library of sensory items to support their loved ones at home.

### NEW TEACHER TRACK – BANQUET HALL II

#### Thriving, Not Just Surviving: How to Rock Your First Years in Special Education

Veronica Crafton, M.Ed, BCBA, IBA,

BCASE, C-TRS

Amazingly Uplifted

The first few years in special education are often the most challenging due to the steep learning curve, high demands, and risk of burnout. By providing a clear framework and practical, “use-it-to-morrow” strategies, this session equips teachers with systems that save time, improve student outcomes, and foster professional confidence. Attendees will leave with action able steps to lead their classrooms with clarity, manage the workload more efficiently, and create a positive, inclusive environment that benefits both students and staff.

### EXPERIENCED TEACHER TRACK – BANQUET HALL I

#### Sensory Detective: Solving the Inner Mystery

Kim Clairry, OTR/L

Georgia Autism Out of the Box, LLC

Regulation is the foundation that makes all learning and participation possible, yet interoceptive awareness - the ability to sense internal experiences - is often overlooked in autism support. Many environments provide minimal sensory supports (fidgets, quiet corners) but fail to recognize that autistic individuals need sensory considerations and interoceptive development integrated into every aspect of their day. This presentation addresses this fundamental gap by combining interoceptive awareness training with comprehensive sensory integration. Without interoceptive awareness, regulation strategies are hit-or-miss, and without comprehensive sensory integration, supports remain superficial. By providing approaches to developing internal awareness alongside day-long sensory integration, attendees gain tools that can transform an autistic person's ability to self-regulate. This leads to improved learning outcomes, reduced behavioral challenges, increased independence across all life areas, and the ability to truly access and participate in life fully. The autism lens approach ensures supports are neurologically appropriate rather than neurotypical assumptions applied to autistic brains.

## HEALTHCARE TRACK – AI-AIII

### Autism and Trauma: What Clinical Providers Should Know

Karen Weigle, PhD, Licensed Psychologist

Anna Shaw Children's Institute

Autistic people frequently experience an increased rate of traumatic events than that of their neurotypical peers. This presentation will describe unique characteristics of autism that make post-traumatic disorders more likely and how symptoms are often overlooked or misdiagnosed and treated. Participants will learn to question their observations and assumptions, and consider alternate interventions and supports for autistics demonstrating these symptoms.

## YOUNG ADULT TRACK – BIII

### Let's Talk Gifts: Find Your Niche to Find Your Talents

Taylor Duncan

Alternative Baseball Organization

Every person has gifts waiting to be discovered within themselves. Find out ways to discover your differences, passions, and skills. Different lessons are taught in the presentation through the lens of Taylor Duncan's nearly 10 years of experience founding and leading Alternative Baseball toward associated membership with the Olympic governing body for baseball! First, there is no particular 'one way' toward finding your own talents. The purpose is to teach those in attendance to continue experimenting until they find and develop the right skills in their passions. Second, it is essential to find the right support system of individuals who will help inspire and encourage their continued leadership and life skills development (ex. mentors, friends, and those who 'get it'; no matter how geographically far apart others may be.) Networking is a key that will be discussed. Part of that, yes, is facing rejection or those who don't understand your goals or your motives and learning how to deal with difficult circumstances. Each failure can be a learning opportunity toward another attempt or finding a different direction for yourself and your passions. The biggest lesson is to never give up on yourself, even if you are a young adult on the autism spectrum who has no idea where or what to turn to upon aging out of high school.

## SPANISH TRACK – CII-CIII

### Apoyos Visuales en Casa – Parte 2

Lynn Sams, MS CCC-SLP

Anna Shaw Children's Institute

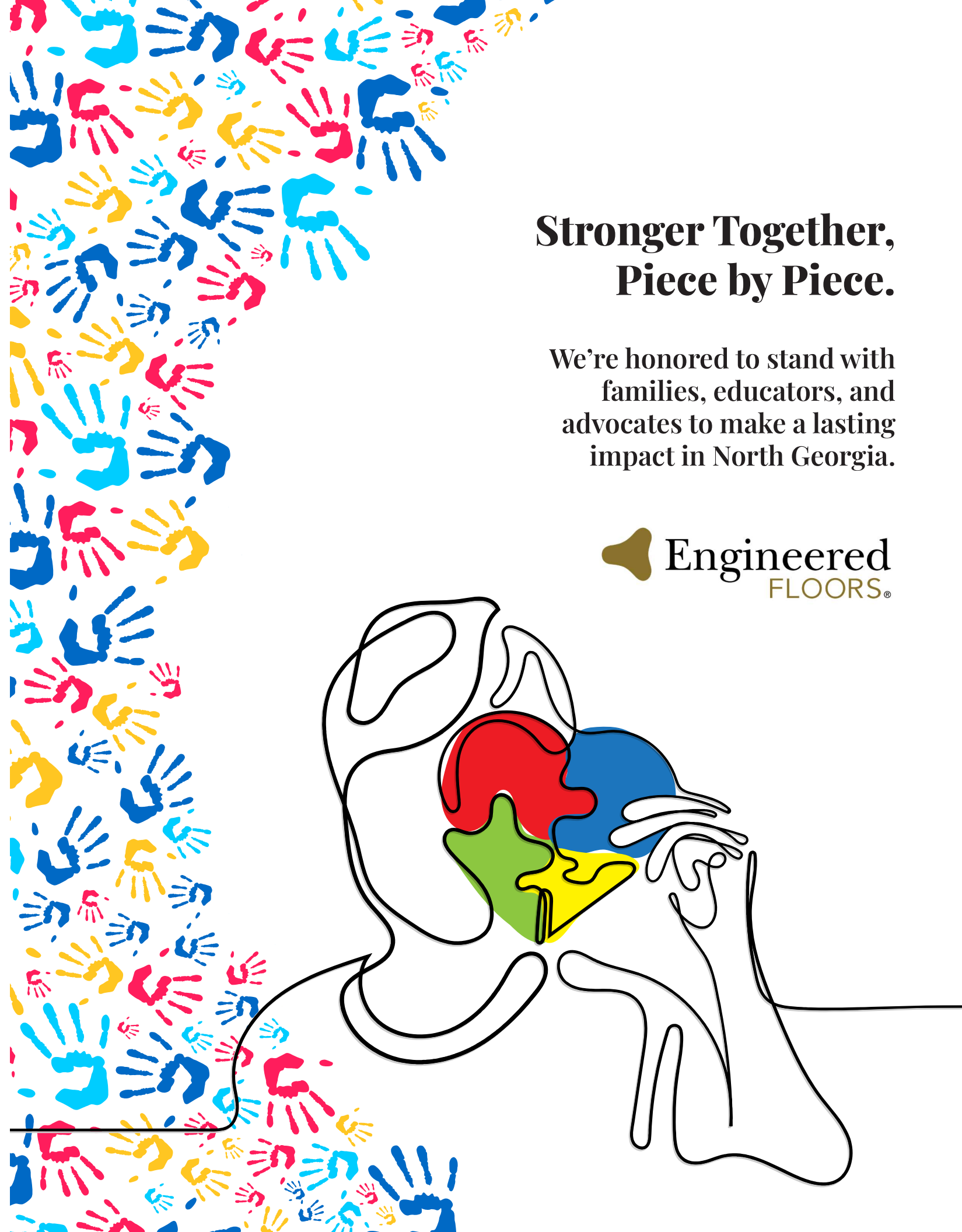
Después de asistir a Apoyos Visuales en Casa – Parte 1 y aprender como los apoyos visuales pueden favorecer el aprendizaje, la comunicación y la independencia en la vida diaria, así como descubrir los tipos de apoyos visuales y como implementarlos en las rutinas diarias, los padres y cuidadores de familia participaran en una actividad de "hacer y recibir" para construir una colección de apoyos visuales que puedan respaldar a sus seres queridos en casa.

## REMINDERS

1. **Conference Surveys:** PLEASE BE SURE TO FILL OUT THE SURVEY ON THE BACK OF YOUR BOOKLET AND RETURN AS YOU LEAVE.
2. **CEUs:** IF YOU PURCHASED CEUs COMPLETE THE CEU EVALUATION FORM AND RETURN IN THE BIN AS YOU LEAVE. CERTIFICATE WILL BE MAILED TO YOU.

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## CONTINUING & PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

GEORGIA COLLEGE & STATE UNIVERSITY

# ABA THERAPY GEORGIA

### LOCATIONS

#### CLINIC

##### Norcross

3294 Medlock Bridge Rd., Norcross, GA

##### Snellville

2835 Centerville Hwy, Snellville, GA 30078

##### Dalton

1504 N. Thornton Ave., Dalton, GA, 30720

##### Atlanta

1675 Terrell Mill Rd., SE Marietta, GA 30067

1343 Canton Rd., Marietta, GA 30066

#### HOME

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presents

# C4A Academy



## C4A WHAT IS C4A?

Communication 4 ALL (C4A) champions efforts to ensure all nonspeakers have access to effective communication and education so they may live meaningful lives. C4A was founded by Executive Director Elizabeth Bonker, an advocate with Autism who types to communicate.



Scan to learn more on C4A's website

## FREE LEARN TO TYPE

C4A Academy offers instructional videos, case studies, lessons, a Facebook group, resources, and support to teach your nonspeaker how to type to communicate, all FREE of charge.



Scan to explore C4A Academy

To get you started, C4A offers cardboard stencil sets for a donation of what you can give.

## STAY CONNECTED

Join our C4A Academy Community Facebook group for support from 1200+ members.

Sign up for the email list to be the first to know about upcoming events and ongoing initiatives.

Register for C4A Network to advance the Communication Bill of Rights nationwide.

## FAQ HAVE QUESTIONS?

**What typing app does Elizabeth use?**  
Elizabeth uses iMean. Available for \$5 on Apple devices, iMean was created by typer Dan Bergmann and his father Michael.

**What makes a successful Communication Partner (CP)?**  
According to Elizabeth, "BELIEVE IN US. REGULATE YOURSELF. GIVE US YOUR POSITIVE ENERGY."

## RESOURCES

- Films:**
- *SPELLERS* (YouTube)
  - *Makaqyla's Voice* (Netflix)

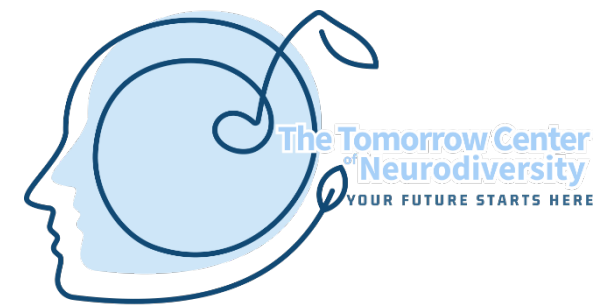
- Books:**
- *I Am in Here* by Elizabeth Bonker and Virginia Breen
  - *Underestimated* by J.B & Jamie Handley
  - *Ido In Autismland* by Ido Kedar

## REGULATION 4 ALL

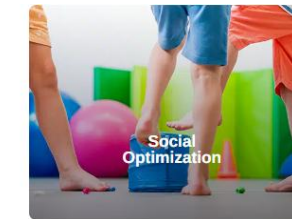
Dysregulation is a major challenge for many nonspeakers with Autism, often resulting in them being in constant fight-or-flight mode. C4A has partnered with Rutgers University to research Heart Rate Variability (HRV) and natural interventions and to develop an app with a Regulation Index to help families monitor and improve regulation.

For more details and resources, visit: [www.communication4all.org](http://www.communication4all.org)

# Accepting New Patients at Our Buford Location!



At The Tomorrow Center, we believe that every child deserves to be embraced for who they are—and supported with love, respect, and unwavering belief in their potential. A place where fun = learning and learning = independence. The Tomorrow Center specializes in serving autistic children and teens using a holistic, relationship-based approach that nurtures emotional well-being, communication, learning, and self-expression. And did we mention it's fun?



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**Who we are**

At Northern Lights, we believe that each individual deserves the best care that empowers them to live a full, thriving life. We do this through compassionate, trauma-informed, and assent-based ABA therapy and involving families in developing meaningful programs.

**Service Area**

We provide in-home and community based ABA therapy from Hixson, TN to Lafayette and Chatsworth, GA for ages 2 to 21.

**Accepted Insurances**

We accept Aetna, Anthem BCBS, BCBSTN, Cigna-Evernorth, GA Medicaid and MCOs TennCare and MCOs, and UHC-Optum. We are credentialing with Tricare East.



What if everything you thought about AUTISM was wrong?

**WHAT IS SPELLED COMMUNICATION?**

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Maxim Healthcare Services - Behavioral Division ("Maxim Behavioral")

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