



OFFICE FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

All Abilities Newsletter

4th Quarter Edition (October 2024)



Access to Good Jobs for All
National Disability Employment Awareness Month



National Disability Employment Awareness Month 2024

From the Department of Labor:

Each October, during National Disability Employment Awareness Month, or “NDEAM,” we celebrate the value and talent workers with disabilities add to America’s workplaces and economy. NDEAM’s purpose is to confirm our commitment to ensuring disabled workers have access to good jobs, every month of every year. That’s the spirit behind this year’s official theme: “Access to Good Jobs for All.”

Website: [National Disability Employment Awareness Month \(NDEAM\) | U.S. Department of Labor \(dol.gov\)](https://www.dol.gov/odep)

The Putnam County Office for Individuals with Disabilities is spotlighting success stories from our local providers, as well as businesses who have proven their support to our individuals with disabilities by just going above and beyond.

The Putnam County Office for Individuals with Disabilities recognizes the inalienable rights of individuals with disabilities as demonstrated by the ADA. It celebrates the value and talent workers with disabilities add to the American workforce and economy, while building diverse workplaces and striving for diversity in all aspects of society.

A Spotlight on Disability Employment from our local providers:



From the desk of CAREERS:

“Helping people with disabilities find suitable employment takes more than job search assistance. At CAREERS Support Solutions, a local not-for-profit with a mission to help people with disabilities find meaningful employment in the community, we understand what it takes to achieve this goal. We offer programs for high school students to help them prepare for employment, we provide workforce training programs for adults, and we offer programs in the community for those not quite ready for the workforce.

We have been helping people find employment for 37 years and one thing has become clear... we can identify a great employer when we see one -- companies who believe in the value of a diverse workforce and can recognize unique strengths that an employee can bring to a job. That's why we are acknowledging Tops Friendly Market in Carmel as a superb employer. We currently have several clients employed at Tops and they have all benefited from the stores commitment to providing employees with a safe and successful work environment.

We first placed Brian Callahan in Tops in 2012 (it was Hannaford until Tops took over in 2016) while participating in CAREERS work experience program with Carmel High School. Through our high school transition program, Brian found success and two years later, he was hired as a store clerk. In 2015 Brian was given the opportunity to train on the register, a demanding responsibility, and with the support of his manager and his CAREERS Employment Specialist, Brian was successful. When Tops took over Hannaford in 2016, they recognized Brian's hard work and commitment to the company. He worked diligently through COVID –



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very stressful and demanding time especially for supermarket employees. Currently, Brian works in just about every department in the store and Tops recognizes the loyal employee he is.



Brian Callahan
10 years at Tops

Ahmed Gonzales, another CAREERS/Tops success story, began his journey with the company in 2022 as a part of CAREERS Pre-Vocational Program. He rotated through the various store departments and worked on his communication skills and safety protocols with the assistance of his CAREERS Employment Specialist. Ahmed's work ethic and strong customer service skills earned him a full-time position with Tops in September 2023. He is currently employed as a stock person and is responsible for stocking shelves and rotating products. Ahmed enjoys helping customers find items throughout the store.



Ahmed Gonzales
2 years at Tops

Jessica Ekback's journey as a Tops employee began back in 2007 when CAREERS placed her in a role as a customer service clerk. On the job coaching from her CAREERS Employment Specialist helped Jessica learn to gather shopping carts, maintain the bottle machines and provide customer service. She often helps customers to their cars when they need a hand and currently assists with Instacart orders. Tops recognizes Jessica's loyalty and her commitment to showing up each day with a smile on her face and her dedication to doing her job well.



Jessica Ekback
17 years at Tops

Brian, Jessica and Ahmed are all hard-working Putnam County residents, committed employees and have each earned more responsibilities at Tops – a fantastic and supportive employer. Tops appreciates having a diverse work force and provides a work environment that allows all of them to be successful and valued members of the Tops team. CAREERS will continue to provide the on-the-job training at Tops for as long as each of our clients' needs to help them continue to grow in their jobs and learn new skills."



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From the desk of the Arc Mid-Hudson:

The Arc Mid-Hudson is a private not-for-profit agency founded by families who believed that their children with disabilities should have the same opportunities as their peers. Supporting 1,324 people from preschool through adulthood, their mission is "To empower people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities to achieve and experience the highest quality of life."

From Employment Services:

The Arc Mid-Hudson's Employment Services would like to recognize Tops supermarket on Route 6, and the front-end supervisor Kerri Iossa, in supporting the Arc Mid-Hudson's mission and vision. In the past year Kerri has hired three individuals and currently, the Arc Mid-Hudson has seven individuals employed at Tops. Kerri hired one individual who previously worked in a sheltered workshop to work in Tops' Shop from Home Department, taking a chance, even with little work experience. She has employed some of the Arc's individuals as stock workers, lot attendants, front end cashiers, and cleaners. Kerri continuously provides individuals with assistance and works well with job coaches. She has allowed the Arc Mid-Hudson to do assessments to determine if young adults and members of the community are ready for work-anything asked, she has allowed. Tops has become the go-to for anything since they are so good to the individuals.

Employment Services would also like to highlight several young adults who they provide supports to. The first individual, Mason Delavalle works at Burger King. He is a young adult who was originally hired as a cleaner at Burger King. Mason's supervisor saw a lot of potential in him and allowed him to try different job tasks. In addition to working his cleaning tasks, he is also now working the drive thru and front counter-taking peoples orders. He is someone that his co-workers report is fun to be around, and he is a hard worker; never missing a day of work and always volunteering to learn to do more.

The second individual the Arc Mid-Hudson's Employment Services would like to highlight is a gentleman who works on the agency's Cut and

Hedge Crew. He came to the Arc Mid-Hudson via ACCES-VR and was enrolled in an initial work readiness class which occurred during the summer of 2020. This individual showed a lot of promise, was offered a work experience on the lawn crew in the fall of 2020 and was hired as a crew member later that fall. He had no experience in landscaping and was trained on the job. His current position entails maintaining the properties of the Arc Mid-Hudson during the warmer weather and during the winter is learning the skills of painting. Since he has been on the lawn crew, this gentleman has trained newer individuals as he is now one of the senior crew members. In addition, the gentleman has located a small position outside the agency assisting at a local church. This individual is a young adult who in four years went from staying home to working a steady part time position.

From the Afternoon Respite Program:

"For over ten years Mike Condreas has worked in the Arc Mid-Hudson afternoon respite program, lovingly known as the Pals program. Mike provides invaluable services caring for the individuals we support; he is kind and attentive to all. He provides invaluable perspective into the needs and wants of the program participants. Michael is treated like every other member of the staff, he is loved by his coworkers, participant's and families alike. I could not imagine the program without him. He is an example of what the Arc Mid-Hudson's vocational programs can do as well as living up to our mission statement of providing "exceptional opportunities" for people with disabilities"

Additional Business Spotlight on inclusivity in the community:



Running a Respite program can sometimes mean bringing large groups of individuals into the public. Each group and each person has its own special needs. The management and staff at Salsa Fresca, have always, without fail, provided exceptional service and support to our individuals. They welcome Arc Mid-Hudson groups, listening attentively and supporting in every way imaginable. It is beyond just customer service. It's true support and help, done without pandering providing dignity to all we support. From the management on down to every employee encountered has been supportive, patient and kind to all.



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Starbucks in the Putnam Plaza really offers true community integration. Its manager Patrick Ford provides a wonderful experience for all of our community workers. He offers a warm and supportive environment for all. Seeing him and his staff interact with our individuals, is truly heartwarming. It is simply treating them as people, not as someone different or other but as full members of the community, this is a skill that is easier said than done. The staff there meets everyone at their level offering help and support, but most importantly a valuable community experience.



**2024 Invisible Disabilities Week
October 20 – 26, 2024**

Bring awareness, education and support to your family, friends, co-workers, and community during Invisible Disabilities Week.

Did you know?

- An “invisible,” “non-visible,” “hidden,” “non-apparent,” or “unseen” disability is any physical, mental, or emotional impairment that goes largely unnoticed.
- An invisible disability can include but is not limited to: cognitive impairment and brain injury; the autism spectrum; chronic illnesses like multiple sclerosis, chronic fatigue, chronic pain, and fibromyalgia; d/Deaf and/or hard of hearing; blindness and/or low vision; anxiety, depression, PTSD, and many more.
- Invisible disabilities can impact daily life. Just because a disability is not visible, doesn't mean it doesn't greatly impact a person's daily life.
- Age doesn't matter- Children and adults alike can acquire a disability. While we often associate learning disabilities with children, many adults also face challenges and require accommodations. In fact, according to the CDC, 40% of adults over 65 have a disability.

To learn more:

<https://invisibledisabilities.org/seminarsandevents/invisible-disabilities-week/>



October is Down Syndrome Awareness Month

Down Syndrome Awareness month is a time to raise awareness and celebrate the many abilities of our loved ones with Down syndrome. DSAM seeks to break down barriers and focus on promoting advocacy for people with Down syndrome.

Did you know?:

- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately one in every 775 babies in the United States is born with Down syndrome, making Down syndrome the most common chromosomal condition. About 5,000 babies with Down syndrome are born in the United States each year
- Regardless of the type of Down syndrome a person may have, all people with Down syndrome have an extra, critical portion of

chromosome 21 present in all or some of their cells.

To learn more:

https://ndss.org/about#p_51



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Office of the Chief Disability Officer

About The Most Integrated Setting Coordinating Council (MISCC)

The Chief Disability Officer also serves as the Chair of the Most Integrated Setting Coordinating Council (MISCC). The MISCC hosts subcommittees for state agency staff and community stakeholders who meet regularly to investigate new programs, services, and technologies that support independent living for people with disabilities.

These subcommittees include:

- Community Services
• Emergency Preparedness
• Employment Options
• Housing Options
• Informal & Formal Supports
• Technology
• Transportation

The next meeting of the MISCC is:

- December 11, 2024: 1:00 - 3:00pm at Empire State Plaza, Meeting Room 6. You can also attend the meetings virtually by registering in advance. Click the "Registration Link" under the agenda link to register. For reminders about MISCC meetings, please sign up for our listserv at Accessibility@exec.ny.gov. You will receive a notice that an agenda has been posted and registration is open for the meeting.



Office for People With Developmental Disabilities

OPWDD Launches New Videos Celebrating the Positive Impact of Hiring People With Disabilities

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

In honor of National Disability Employment Awareness Month, OPWDD is excited to share two new videos that highlight the positive impact of hiring people with

disabilities: It's Time to Employ Ability: Hiring People With Disabilities and Employing People with Developmental Disabilities: The Employer Perspective. I hope you will appreciate the powerful messages in the videos and share them widely to promote a more diverse and inclusive workforce.

People with developmental disabilities are skilled, competent employees who add diversity and value to all kinds of businesses across New York State. Yet the employment rate for working-age New Yorkers with a disability is less than half of what it is for people without disabilities. We need to work together to bridge the gap between job seekers and employers and to bring more people with disabilities into the workforce.

Thanks to Governor Hochul's commitment and support, we are making strides and increasing employment for people with disabilities. As part of New York's commitment toward becoming an Employment First State, we are partnering with businesses that have already committed to hiring people with disabilities, and we're excited to build more relationships that will benefit our state economy by strengthening the workforce, increasing diversity and broadening perspectives.

Today, to kick off the month, we are thrilled to sponsor New York's 3rd Annual DREAM Symposium, hosted by Governor Hochul's Chief Disability Officer, Kim Hill-Ridley. This incredible event celebrates the rights of people with disabilities and the value they bring to the workforce, matches prospective qualified candidates with employers and offers workshops that can help people prepare for and succeed in employment.

This month, and all year long, we urge businesses and employers in New York State to take our Employability Pledge and let everyone know you believe in the value of a diverse workforce and the rich contributions of employees with disabilities. All of us can help by patronizing the businesses that hire people with disabilities. Those that have signed our pledge appear on our EmployAbility Honor Roll.

At OPWDD, I have prioritized bringing people with developmental disabilities into our workforce because I value their contributions to policy development and decision-making. Working together, I believe we can and will improve the number of people with disabilities working in our communities. Your help and support are invaluable to us. Thank you.

Sincerely, Willow Baer Acting Commissioner



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Public Meetings:

All information regarding meetings can be found on the [OPWDD Events page](#).

- 📅 **November 13, 2024:** Autism Spectrum Disorders Advisory Board Meeting
- 📅 **December 3, 2024:** Developmental Disabilities Advisory Council Meeting
- 📅 **December 4, 2024:** Family Support Services Quarterly Meeting

Learning/Training Opportunities/Information Sessions:



(Parent to Parent of NYS) When You Are Considering a Developmental Evaluation for Your Child: A Parent's Perspective to Assist Your Visit.

Date: October 3, 2024
Time: 6:30 pm – 7:30 pm

This presentation provides an overview of the parent's perspective when planning for a child's developmental evaluation. This webinar will not be looking at specific tests or types of evaluations. Instead, they want to share some tips and potential suggestions learned based on personal experiences when children were evaluated.

Link to register:
https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_91CcL_0RXmS5JOkF3EmkA

(Parent to Parent of NYS) A Guide for Families to Understanding Supports & Services Administered by OPWDD

Date: October 17, 2024
Time: 11:00 am - 12:30 pm

Please join Parent to Parent of NYS, for this great presentation on A Guide for Families to Understanding Supports & Services Administered by OPWDD. The purpose of this training is to introduce families to the language of service delivery systems and to define and clarify information about services and supports. Participants will gain an increased awareness and

understanding of eligibility criteria and the eligibility determination process. The training includes an overview of Home and Community Based Services Waiver, and Family Support Services.

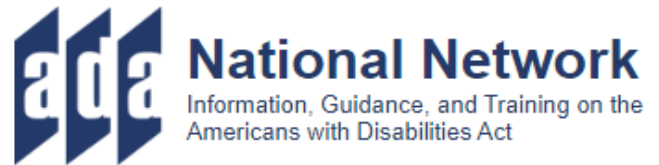
Link to register:
https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Ycuk19XkSza8ehlgtkN2Nw#/registration

(Parent to Parent of NYS) Parent Group for Parents of Older Children with developmental or physical disabilities 21 and older

Date: November 25, 2024
Time: 7:00 pm- 8:00pm

Transitioning to adulthood isn't easy for our kids, or us! Connect with other parents who understand the joys and struggles of raising older children with special needs. Share experiences, advice, and encouragement in a welcoming environment. This group is specifically for parents of children 21 and older.

Link to register:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAsdOuraDgUHTYiCMbB8QfcrQp2tIUcMXLG>



Understanding the ADA's Interactive Process: How Employers and Employees Should Discuss Requests for Accommodations

Date: Tuesday, October 15th, 2024
Time: 2:00 pm- 3:30 pm

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)'s "interactive process" is about an employer and employee (or applicant) having a meaningful discussion about a request, including why accommodation is needed and what forms of accommodation might be effective. Yet, both employers and employees often lack understanding on why a discussion generally is necessary and how to discuss a request, including what types of information may need to be shared and their respective roles in having a meaningful discussion. This session will discuss how to ensure an interactive process that provides employers with the information to make a legally sound decision consistent with the requirements of the



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ADA. We will discuss how each person plays a part in ensuring that critical information is shared (including sometimes medical documentation) and outside sources that can assist in identifying potential accommodations.

Link to register:

<https://www.accessibilityonline.org/ADA-Audio/session/?id=111138>



Upcoming Groups

Navigating Risky Behaviors — October 22 and 23, 2024

People with mental health disabilities and I/DD, brain injuries, or other cognitive differences are often punished for engaging in what many people call "risky behaviors" like self-injury, perceived aggression, and inappropriate conduct. When they are punished for these things rather than understood and supported, it is more likely they will continue to do things that hurt themselves or others. This topic will discuss ways people can support those with lived experience to reduce harm while allowing everyone to keep their autonomy.

There are four sessions on this topic, each for a different audience. Click a link below to sign up for the group most relevant to you. Registration is required.

- [Direct Support Professionals: October 22, 1:00-2:30 p.m. ET](#)
- [Clinical Professionals: October 22, 3:00-4:30 p.m. ET](#)
- [Families of People with Lived Experience: October 23, 1:00-2:30 p.m. ET](#)
- [People With Lived Experience: October 23, 3:00-4:30 p.m. ET](#)

****Live captions and ASL interpretation are provided during all events. ****

From the New York State Department of Health-Bureau of Early Intervention

The Central Directory of Early Intervention Services and Resources (Central Directory) serves as a statewide resource for families, providers and other interested groups or individuals to access an array of sources.

The Central Directory can be found at:

https://www.health.ny.gov/community/infants_children/early_intervention/service_providers/

For new families:



Is your family new to the Early Intervention Program? Are you looking for resources, information, or support? Do you want to learn how to advocate for your child and family? Visit the EI Families' website www.eifamilies.com. The website can help support and develop parent involvement at all levels of the Early Intervention Program.

In the news:



HUD Takes Action to Support Community Living for People with Disabilities

New Mainstream Voucher flexibilities designed to help people with disabilities choose where they live

WASHINGTON - On the heels of the 34th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the 25th anniversary of the landmark Supreme Court decision on *Olmstead v. L.C.*, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is taking policy actions to support community living for people with disabilities. Specifically, HUD published guidance that creates new alternative requirements and waivers that enable public housing agencies (PHAs) to better utilize Mainstream Vouchers to help persons with disabilities transition from and avoid institutional settings, in furtherance of the goals of *Olmstead*.

"Affordable and accessible housing is essential to realizing the goals of *Olmstead*," said HUD Acting Secretary Adrienne Todman. "The flexibilities we are providing today will further enable local leaders to support the housing needs of people with disabilities".

To read the full article, see [HERE](#).



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Recreational events/activities:



Visit Putnam County Tourism for Putnam County happenings: <https://www.putnamcountyny.gov/tourism>

Trunk OR TREAT

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 18TH, 2024
TIME: 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM (RAIN OR SHINE)
AT THE DONALD B. SMITH CAMPUS (PARKING LOT)
110 OLD ROUTE 6, CARMEL, NY 10512

HOSTED BY:
 PUTNAM COUNTY YOUTH BUREAU IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
 THE CHILD CARE COUNCIL OF DUTCHESS & PUTNAM, INC.

For more information, please contact the
 Putnam County Youth Bureau
 (845) 808-1600
putnamyouthbureau@putnamcountyny.gov

Putnam County Youth Bureau Trunk or Treat
When: Friday, October 18, 2024
Time: 6:00 pm- 7:00 pm
Where: 110 Old Route 6, Carmel, NY 10512

COME CARE SCARE

SATURDAY OCTOBER 19TH 2024
2PM TO 5:30PM
TRUNK OR TREAT, HAUNTED HOUSE AND FOOD TRUCKS.
1808 ROUTE 6 CARMEL NY 10512
PARKING AT PALADIN CENTER

CoveCare Center
 COUNSELING AND WELLNESS MANAGEMENT

Cove Care Scare
Trunk or Treat, Haunted House and Food Trucks
When: Saturday, October 19, 2024
Time: 2:00 pm- 5:30 pm
Where: 1808 Route 6, Carmel, NY 10512





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CARMEL RECREATION AND PARKS DEPARTMENT

FALL-O-WEEN INCLUSIVE SOCIAL



MUSIC • DANCE • DINNER • COSTUMES
ALL IN A JUDGMENT-FREE ZONE

Each attendee will be matched with a buddy unless accompanied by a Comhab worker

2 NOV 24 • 7 PM - 10 pm
Fee \$25/Residents ; \$60/Non-Residents
For: Ages 13 -25

SYCAMORE PARK

REG BUILDING-790 LONG POND ROAD MAHOPAC

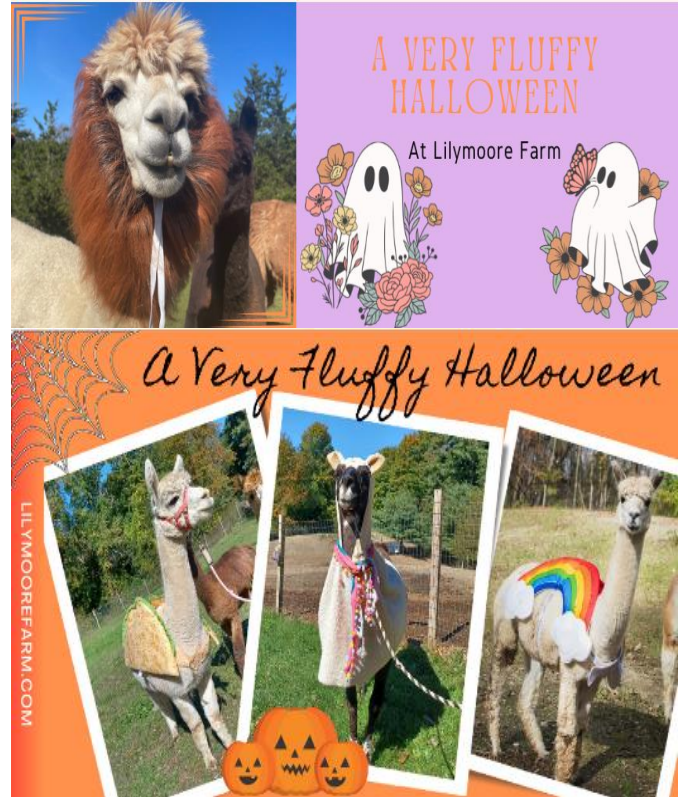
LOOKING TO MENTOR AS A BUDDY?
CONTACT US FOR MORE INFO

REGISTRATION IS OPEN NOW & ENDS ON OCT 30TH

REGISTER AT
CARMELNY.ORG/RECREATION

845-628-7888 | CARMELNY.ORG/RECREATION | CARMELRECREATION | CARMELREC

Carmel Recreation
Fall-O-Ween Inclusive Social
When: November 2, 2024
Time: 7-10 pm
Where: Sycamore Park
Register at: carmelny.org/recreation



A Very Fluffy Halloween at Lilymoore Farm

It's our version of a Halloween fest – only way cuter. Join Lilymoore Farm for a fun-filled guided farm tour where you can meet the adorable animals of Lilymoore Farm and the Dreaming of a Chance pigeon sanctuary. This year, we've got even more alpacas in Halloween costumes, goats dressed up, and even the llamas are joining the fun! Feel free to come in costume, or just let our fabulous alpaca, Lady Valentina Von Sparkles, steal the show. Either way, you're in for a ton of fun. It's a blast for all ages!

When: Weekends in October
Where: Lilymoore Farm
 21 Moore Rd
 Pleasant Valley, NY 12569

For more information:
<https://www.lilymoorefarm.com/a-very-fluffy-halloween/>



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Christmas Spectacular TDF Autism Friendly Performance



Christmas Spectacular Autism Friendly Performance

When: Sunday, November 17, 2024 at 9 a.m.

Where: Radio City Music Hall
1260 Sixth Avenue at 50th Street
New York City

Ticket prices: \$60-\$70. Accessible seats available

For more information: <https://www.tdf.org/accessibility-services/tdf-autism-friendly-performances/christmas-spectacular-starring-the-radio-city-rockettes-tdf-autism-friendly-performance/>



Winter Wolves at the Wolf Conservation Center
7 Buck Run, South Salem, NY 10590

Winter offers families a unique opportunity to visit the wolves during their favorite time of year. Learn about the mythology, biology and ecology of wolf families and discover why this season is such a magical time for packs in North America. Whether the wolves are living on the Arctic tundra or the high desert of the southwest, wolf families are out searching for prey as their maturing pups experience their first winter season. Guests will visit Ambassador Wolves Alawa, Nikai, and Zephyr as well as the WCC's critically endangered red wolves and Mexican gray wolves. Guests will enjoy hot beverages in our woodstove-heated classroom. Dress for COLD weather. Pre-registration is required.

For more information: <https://nywolf.org/programs-events/winter-wolves/>



Sun, Moon & Stars
Autism-Friendly Santa Express



Sun, Moon & Stars, Inc is thrilled to continue its partnership with the Railroad Museum of New England to offer an autism-friendly version of the Santa Express. This train ride is considered judgement-free with sensory considerations (lowered volume for the holiday music).

The train ride is 1 ½ hour long. It is a relaxing time to spend with family and friends as Santa, Mrs. Claus and their elves walk through the train and visit with each child.

Sun, Moon & Stars is pleased to offer their PROMO CODE: (moon) for a \$5 discount per ticket.

When: Sunday, December 1, 2024
Time: 12:00 pm and 2:15 pm
Where: Thomaston Station, 242 E. Main St. in Thomaston, CT

For more information:
<https://www.rmne.org/excursions/sun-moon-and-stars-autism-friendly-santa-express-1>