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NJDOE Professional Development Provider # 1619

## ASPEN<sup>®</sup> ANNUAL SPRING CONFERENCE

*How We're Doing It: Navigating Life With GPS  
Greater Personal Happiness and Success*

**Keynote Presenter:**

**STEPHEN SHORE, Ph.D.**

*Self-Advocacy and Disclosure: Achieving Success in  
Reaching A Greater Understanding with Others in Work,  
Education, Community and Relationships*

### **Young Adult Panel Discussion**

**Moderator:**

**John Elder Robison**

**Panelists:**

Alex Plank • Kirsten Lindsmith  
Jack "Cubby" Robison • John "Scotty" Holman

### **Afternoon Session Presenters:**

**David Finch**

*So, Are We Supposed to Hug Now?  
Best Practices for Neurologically Mixed Marriages  
and Other Harrowing Relationships*

**Dan and Julie Coulter**

*Finding and Keeping A Job With Asperger Syndrome*

**Yvonne Foster, Ph.D.**

*Preparing for College Life: Making A Successful Transition  
From High School Through College*

**Valerie Powers Smith, Esq.**

*Navigating the Healthcare System*

**SUNDAY, APRIL 29, 2012 • 8:00AM-4:30PM**

**HILTON WOODBRIDGE**

120 Wood Avenue South, Iselin, NJ 08830



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9 Aspen Circle  
Edison, NJ 08820

# **How We're Doing It: Navigating Life With GPS Greater Personal Happiness and Success**

## **ABOUT THIS CONFERENCE**

### **KEYNOTE PRESENTATION**

**\* *STEPHEN SHORE Ph.D.***

*Self-Advocacy and Disclosure: Achieving Success in Reaching  
A Greater Understanding with Others in Work, Education,  
Community and Relationships*

At some point in our lives, we each must advocate for our own needs and be able to explain the reasons why. Beginning with a definition of self-advocacy and a process for considering disclosure, participants will learn the importance of gaining self-awareness, improving communication skills, and learning procedures in order for people with autism spectrum disorders to obtain accommodations and achieve greater mutual understanding. Material from this workshop can be used to enable persons with autism spectrum disorders and other conditions to reach their potential for leading fulfilling and productive lives in employment, education, relationships, independent living, and in the community.

### **YOUNG ADULT PANEL DISCUSSION**

*Moderated by John Elder Robison*

*Panelists: Alex Plank, Jack "Cubby" Robison  
Kirsten Lindsmith and John "Scotty" Holman*

This panel of young adults on the autism spectrum will discuss their individual challenges, triumphs and what they've learned along the way, including their strategies for finding happiness and success. Question and answer period will follow.

### **AFTERNOON WORKSHOP SESSIONS**

*Conference attendees will choose **one** of the following  
four afternoon workshops.*

**\* "SO, ARE WE SUPPOSED TO HUG NOW?"— BEST PRACTICES  
FOR NEUROLOGICALLY MIXED MARRIAGES AND  
OTHER HARROWING RELATIONSHIPS**

*Presented by David Finch*

*Love is blind—marriage is the eye-opener.* There is universal truth in this timeless quote from Pauline Thomason, and it rings especially true for anyone sharing an intimate, romantic relationship with an AS partner. Romantic relationships thrive when both parties are able to show adequate support for one another, to communicate with each other, and to anticipate the unspoken needs of their partner—to adapt, to listen, and even to help fold the laundry. David Finch was not equipped with any of these skills, and his marriage nearly fell apart as a result. But things can change. In this revealing and empowering session, David presents the strategies he and his neurotypical wife, Kristen, employed to reclaim their marriage and, ultimately, their friendship. Filled with humor and winning insights, this session is a must for anyone who has ever looked at their partner and thought, *Who the #@\*! did I marry?!*

## \* **FINDING AND KEEPING A JOB WITH ASPERGER SYNDROME**

*Presented by Dan and Julie Coulter*

They will describe successful strategies employees with Asperger Syndrome have used to get hired and stay employed, sharing information from interviews with employees, bosses, co-workers and job coaches.

The presentation will cover:

- Assessing your strengths and challenges and looking at the total job to find a good career and individual job match
- Working with a job coach
- Preparing for a successful job interview
- Disclosure issues
- Asking for reasonable accommodations
- Modifying challenging Asperger behaviors and fitting into the workplace
- Giving coworkers cues they can use to help you get back on track if you don't notice that certain behaviors are interfering with work
- Taking direction, following instructions and asking for help
- Using feedback from your supervisor and coworkers
- Being productive in your job and becoming a valued employee
- Starting your own business or freelancing

Dan will also share some of the workplace insights he gained from a career that included serving as a radio disc jockey, a television weatherman, a national media spokesperson and a corporate executive.

## \* **NAVIGATING COLLEGE LIFE FOR STUDENTS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS: THE STEPS TO MAKING A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION FROM HIGH SCHOOL THROUGH COLLEGE**

*Presented by Yvonne Foster, Ph.D.*

This breakout session will address the differences between what you've experienced in high school and what you can expect to experience in college. It will cover the documentation process and what needs to be taken care of in high school to ensure the smoothest transition possible to college and receiving services. Other topics covered will be how to research and choose a college, the admissions process, when and how to disclose, what are the possible accommodations you can expect the college to provide, and most importantly what are the "unwritten and unspoken rules" for navigating the classroom, dorm life, and avoiding the most common obstacles of college life for the student with Autism/Asperger's Syndrome.

## \* **NAVIGATING THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM**

*Presented by Valerie Powers Smith, Esq.*

This session will discuss what parents of those with special needs need to know about the various forms of healthcare coverage, coordination of coverage, state-mandated services that certain plans must provide, appeal procedures and how to maximize chances of success in getting expenses covered.



### **WHO SHOULD ATTEND?**

Parents, grandparents and other family members; individuals (age 14 and older) with autism spectrum disorders; educational professionals; medical and health professionals; legal professionals

**Educators attending this full day conference will earn 6 Professional Development Hours.**

## ABOUT OUR PRESENTERS

**Dr. Stephen Shore** was nonverbal until age 4 and diagnosed with “Atypical Development and strong autistic tendencies.” Pronounced “too sick” for outpatient treatment, he was recommended for institutionalization. With much support from his parents, teachers, wife, and others, Dr. Shore is now a professor at Adelphi University where his research focuses on matching best practice to the needs of people with autism spectrum disorders.

In addition to working with children and talking about life on the autism spectrum, he presents and consults internationally on adult issues pertinent to education, relationships, employment, advocacy, and disclosure as discussed in his books *Beyond the Wall: Personal Experiences with Autism and Asperger Syndrome*; *Ask and Tell: Self-advocacy and Disclosure for People on the Autism Spectrum*; the critically acclaimed *Understanding Autism for Dummies*; and the newly released DVD *Living along the Autism Spectrum: What it means to have Autism or Asperger Syndrome*.

President emeritus of the Asperger's Association of New England and former member of the Board of Directors for Autism Society, Dr. Shore currently serves on the Department of Health and Human Services' Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee.

**John Elder Robison** grew up in the 1960s and always knew he was different, but he didn't know why. His social and academic failures would be signs of disability today, but back then, they were just signs of laziness or a bad attitude.

Diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome at the age of 40, that knowledge changed his life and he was inspired to spread the word and help others, especially young people. An internationally renowned speaker and author, John's first book *Look Me in the Eye* went on sale in the fall of 2007 and instantly became a *New York Times* bestseller. His second book *Be Different!* was released in the spring of 2011. His third book, about raising his son Jack (“Cubby”), will be published in January 2013. Today, his writing has been translated into 18 languages, and his books are sold in 65 countries.

John serves as an adjunct professor in the department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at Elms College in Chicopee, Massachusetts. He's a member of the Science and Treatment boards of Autism Speaks, and he's served on review boards for the National Institutes of Mental Health and the Centers for Disease Control. John is a member of the Youth Care advisory board for Harvard's Mass General Hospital and is currently involved in TMS autism research at Harvard's Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center.



**Alex Plank** is 25 years old and runs, owns, and develops WrongPlanet.net, a popular online autism community that he established in 2004 after being diagnosed with autism. He graduated from George Mason University with a Bachelors of Arts in Film and Video Studies. A co-host of Autism Talk TV, Alex lives in Los Angeles, California where he works as a filmmaker.

**Jack Robison** is 21 years old and is diagnosed with Asperger's. He is a co-host of WrongPlanet's Autism Talk TV show. Majoring in chemistry, Jack takes classes at both Greenfield Community College and the University of Massachusetts Amherst. His specialty is chemistry, but he also dabbles in engineering, electronics, programming, economics and many other miscellaneous geeky things. Jack and his girlfriend Kirsten Lindsmith were the subject of "Navigating Love and Autism," the front page article in the December 26th issue of the *New York Times*.

**Kirsten Lindsmith** is a 20-year-old aspergian female majoring in Pathology at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. She was only recently diagnosed at the age of 19, and is relatively new to the autism community. Kirsten and her boyfriend Jack Robison were the subject of the *New York Times* front page article, "Navigating Love and Autism." She is a blogger for WrongPlanet.net, and a co-host of WrongPlanet's online show, Autism Talk TV. She likes reading, writing, and World of Warcraft.

**Scotty Holman** went undiagnosed for nearly 25 years as he struggled to understand himself in a world that remained foreign and threatening. His distress was exacerbated by a traumatic series of events that devastated his family, and left him "bitter, depressed and alone."

Since being diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder, he has embarked on a journey of self-discovery, and is learning to embrace himself and let go of the past.

He now writes and speaks publicly about his experiences with autism. His work is featured regularly in *Forbes* magazine and on WrongPlanet.net, and his first book will be published in 2013 by AAPC. Scotty says, "If my story can prevent others from experiencing the pain and confusion of an undiagnosed life, those difficult years will not have been in vain."

He likes Bob Dylan and pumpkin pie.

**David Finch** grew up on a farm in northern Illinois. He earned a degree in music engineering at the University of Miami, then returned to Chicago where he worked as an engineer for ten years. He and his wife Kristen married in 2003, and in 2008 David was diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome. His essay "Somewhere Inside, A Path To Empathy" appeared in the *New York Times* and became the basis for his first book, *The Journal of Best Practices: A Memoir of Marriage, Asperger Syndrome, and One Man's Quest to Be a Better Husband*. Already earning rave reviews from *People*

*Magazine, O, The Oprah Magazine, and Kirkus Reviews*, the book will be released in January. David lectures frequently at schools and other organizations on the topics of educational challenges for individuals on the spectrum, and on the importance of love, understanding and guidance in all relationships.

**Dan and Julie Coulter** produce DVDs for people with Asperger Syndrome and Autism. Dan is a former television writer/producer/director for AT&T and media relations director at Bell Labs. While their children were in school, Julie served on the local school board and led two support groups for students with special needs. When their son, Drew, was diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome in 1997, Julie suggested they produce a video to explain Asperger Syndrome to his teachers. In 2003, they began producing educational videos full time, including their DVD *Asperger Syndrome At Work*. Their products have been recommended by the *School Library Journal* and endorsed by autism experts at Harvard Medical School and Yale University. In 2009 Dan was diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome and is now using the insights from that diagnosis in his writing, speaking and video productions.

**Dr. Yvonne Foster** is a graduate of Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine with a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology. For the past 9 years she has been Director of Disability Services at Lebanon Valley College, located in Annville, PA. In addition to her work at the college, Dr. Foster has a private practice in Millersville, PA with a focus on adolescents and adults diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder.

**Valerie A. Powers Smith, Esq.**, of Counsel, Slovak Baron & Empey, LLP, has over fourteen years experience in the field of special needs and disability law, including the following highly specialized practice areas: health care insurance, disability insurance, Medicaid, Medicare, special needs trusts, trust administration, estate planning and administration, guardianships, and accessing federal and state government disability-based benefits. Valerie is licensed to practice in NJ, PA, NY and CA.

She has concentrated her legal work in the area of health care law and has vigorously advocated for families and people with disabilities to gain medically necessary care from private insurance companies, Medicaid, Medicare, and other health insurance providers.

Valerie has written extensively on a variety of disability law topics, has co-authored several publications on accessing adult services, Medicaid, and health insurance, and is a regular contributor to the Arc of New Jersey's *Healthy Times Newsletter*. She has also lectured for disability-related groups throughout Pennsylvania, New Jersey, California, and Washington, D.C. Valerie currently sits as one of the 12 members appointed by the Governor to the New Jersey Medical Assistance Advisory Council.

# CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

**8:00 AM** **REGISTRATION/BREAKFAST/  
VISIT VENDORS**

**9:00 AM** **LORI SHERY, PRESIDENT, ASPEN®—**  
*Opening Remarks*

**9:15 AM** **STEPHEN SHORE—**  
*Self-Advocacy and Disclosure:  
Achieving Success in Reaching A  
Greater Understanding with Others in  
Work, Education, Community and  
Relationships—PART I*

**10:30 AM** **BREAK/VISIT VENDORS**

**10:45 AM** **STEPHEN SHORE—**  
*Self-Advocacy and Disclosure:  
Achieving Success—PART II*

**12:00 Noon** **BUFFET LUNCH** (provided)

**1:00 PM** **YOUNG ADULT PANEL DISCUSSION—**  
*Moderated by John Elder Robison*

**2:30 PM** **COFFEE AND DESSERT BREAK/  
VISIT VENDORS**

**3:00 PM** **AFTERNOON WORKSHOPS**

**Conference concludes 4:30 PM.**

## Directions to the Hilton Woodbridge

Visit their website at <http://www.hiltonwoodbridge.com>.

## Hotel Accommodations

For special ASPEN Conference rates at the Hilton Woodbridge Hotel call 1-732-494-6200 as soon as possible.

## General Questions or

## to Become a Conference Vendor

Please contact us at (732) 321-0880 or [info@aspennj.org](mailto:info@aspennj.org) if you have any questions.



- All registration fees are per person. Cash, check, money order or purchase order.
- Registration must be postmarked by 4/14/12. Early registration is suggested due to limited seating.
- Additional copies of the form may be downloaded from our website at [www.aspennj.org](http://www.aspennj.org).
- Walk-in registration the day of the conference (at higher rate) *only if space is available*. \*\* All walk-in registrants MUST call our office by 12 noon on 4/27/12 at (732) 321-0880 and reserve a space to be admitted the day of the conference. \*\* If the number of registrants reaches capacity, registration will close earlier than the deadline.

**• Confirmations are sent ONLY to those who include a self-addressed stamped envelope.**

**• If you have reserved a space as a walk-in, you will be responsible for payment.**

- Cancellations and Changes - No refunds for cancellations received after 4/11/12. Sorry, no exceptions. Kindly notify us in advance if substituting for original registrant.
- If, due to unforeseen circumstances, it becomes necessary to substitute speakers without advance notice, fees are non-refundable.

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## REGISTRATION FORM

### Spring Conference

Sunday, April 29, 2012

Early Registration Discount Deadline 4/14/12

#### Please Print:

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

#### Check One:

Legal Professional \_\_\_\_\_

Parent \_\_\_\_\_ Medical/Health Professional \_\_\_\_\_

Family Member \_\_\_\_\_ Educational Professional \_\_\_\_\_

Individual Young Adult Member with ASD \_\_\_\_\_

Aspen Member? (as of date of conference)

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_ If you would like to join, please enclose a SEPARATE check for annual dues (Families: \$35; Professionals: \$55) payable to ASPEN, along with member conference registration fee. (See reverse)

Kindly mail your completed form with your check or money order made payable to ASPEN to:

**ASPEN Spring Conference 2012**

**9 Aspen Circle**

**Edison, NJ 08820**

***Please complete reverse side.***

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## ABOUT ASPEN<sup>®</sup>

ASPEN provides information, support and advocacy to individuals and families whose lives are affected by Asperger Syndrome, PDD-NOS, High-Functioning Autism and Nonverbal Learning Disabilities. Its numerous chapters meet monthly, alternating support meetings with scheduled speakers. Members receive the newsletter ASPECTS; have access to a lending library of books, videos, and articles; receive a copy of the ASPEN Resource Directory, and are entitled to free attendance at all monthly chapter meetings in addition to substantial discounts on conferences. A NJ Department of Education Professional Development Provider (#1619), ASPEN sponsors workshops and conferences featuring some of the most prominent names in the research community. ASPEN is a national 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

[WWW.ASPENNJ.ORG](http://WWW.ASPENNJ.ORG)



### PLEASE CHOOSE ONE WORKSHOP FROM THE FOLLOWING FOUR AFTERNOON WORKSHOPS (3:00-4:30PM):

#### AFTERNOON WORKSHOPS

- A) *So, Are We Supposed to Hug Now? Best Practices for Neurologically Mixed Marriages & Other Harrowing Relationships*
- B) *Finding and Keeping A Job With Asperger Syndrome*
- C) *Preparing for College Life for Students With Autism Spectrum Disorders*
- D) *Navigating the Healthcare System*

### REGISTRATION FEE

(INCLUDES MATERIALS, BREAKFAST, LUNCH, AND COFFEE & DESSERT BREAKS)  
We regret that we cannot accommodate special dietary requests.

#### ALL FEES ARE PER PERSON.

- MEMBER (PARENT or FAMILY MEMBER)**  
\$110.00 (\$140.00 AFTER 4/14/12)
- MEMBER (PROFESSIONAL)**  
\$180.00 (\$210.00 AFTER 4/14/12)
- NON-MEMBER (PARENT or FAMILY MEMBER)**  
\$140.00 (\$170.00 AFTER 4/14/12)
- NON-MEMBER (PROFESSIONAL)**  
\$210.00 (\$240.00 AFTER 4/14/12)
- MEMBER (YOUNG ADULT INDIVIDUAL WITH ASD)**  
\$ 80.00 (\$100.00 AFTER 4/14/12)
- NON-MEMBER (YOUNG ADULT INDIVIDUAL WITH ASD)**  
\$100.00 (\$120.00 AFTER 4/14/12)