



2022

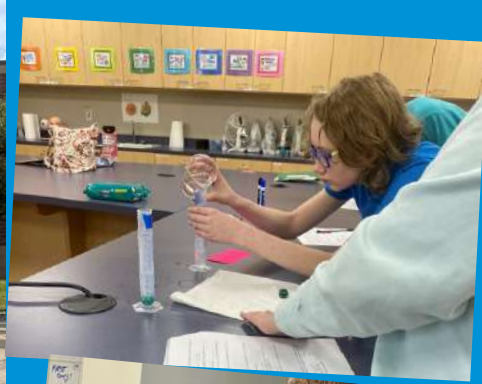
COMMUNITY REPORT 2022

Empowering Autistic Student Success



**INDEPENDENCE
ACADEMY**

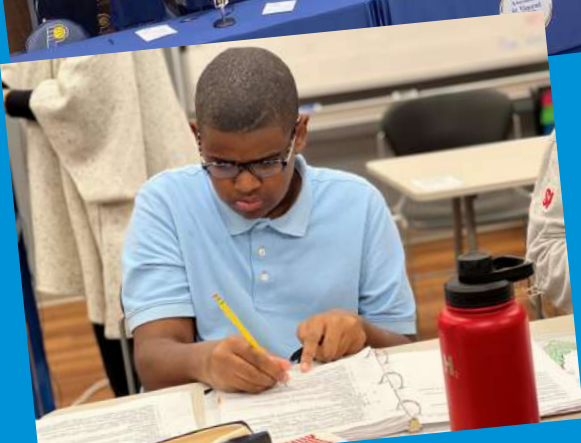
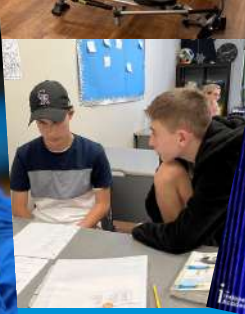
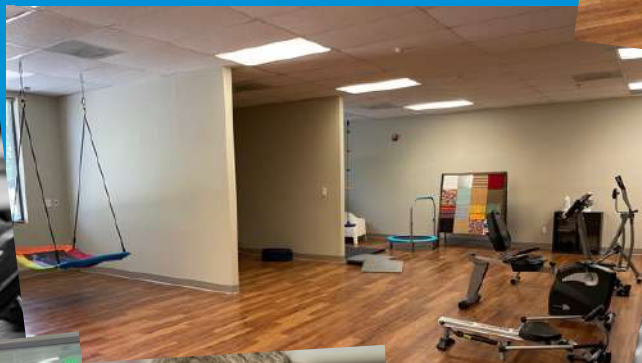
INNOVATIVE AUTISM SCHOOL



DONATING SOFTLY USED SCIENCE EXPLORATION EQUIPMENT TO OUR NEW CENTER FOR SCIENCE LAB IS SUCH A PRODUCTIVE GIFT FOR OUR YOUNG ABLE STUDENT MINDS- THANK YOU SO MUCH TO ROCHE DIAGNOSTICS

COLLABORATION FOR SUCCESS

www.iaindiana.org <https://www.roche.com>



What is autism?

Autism, or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), is a complicated developmental disorder that may result in significant social, communicative, and behavioral challenges. The term "spectrum" refers to the unique array of symptoms, abilities, and levels of difficulty that can exist in individuals with autism.

1 IN 36

children in the United States have been diagnosed with autism.



Why are more people being diagnosed?

- broadened criteria for diagnosis
- better access to healthcare
- increased awareness
- extensive screening by pediatricians
- environmental factors
- improved diagnostic tools

A single factor can't be attributed to the increase in prevalence rates. The trend may reflect more awareness and wider availability of services, rather than a true increase in the number of children with autism. (Shaw KA, Maenner MJ, Bakian AV, et al., 2021)

What are the risk factors?

There is not just one cause of ASD. There are many different factors that have been identified that may make a child more likely to have ASD, including environmental, biologic, and genetic factors. Although we know little about specific causes, the available evidence suggests that the following may put children at greater risk for developing ASD:

- Having a sibling with ASD
- Having certain genetic or chromosomal conditions, such as fragile X syndrome or tuberous sclerosis
- Experiencing complications at birth
- Being born to older parents



Sources: National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and National Institutes of Health (NIH)

Dear Friends,

We have built an even higher level of educational experience during the last year. We've also delivered a clear message of acceptance and inclusion for autistic students. Our faculty worked tirelessly to support not only the students we serve but also one another. We are looking forward to 2023 with appreciation and hope as we continue our mission to unlock the potential in every autistic person.

Our excitement this year was in part due to our celebration of starting classes on our new sensory-friendly campus. Our new school building is a place where we provide innovative evidence-based curriculum programs and services to the ever-growing population of children with autism. There has long been a growing need for more plentiful autism services for children, both now and when they age out of the school system at the age of 22. Autistic adults are known to contribute greatly in their employment settings, yet 85% of these individuals are without employment. We are paving the way to provide the educational foundations and social, emotional, and life skills necessary to promote independence for autistic students through employment internship programs, Life Map programming, and Step into College education opportunities.

It is through the execution of these milestones that we continue to achieve our vision of being a world-class resource for individuals and families impacted by autism. Our gratitude overflows to each organization, sponsor, and countless individuals who have provided Independence Academy with the means to transform the lives of so many autistic students, which now affects 1 in 44 children in the United States.

Thank you for your continued partnership and support.

Marisa Gill, Director of school

BOARD MEMBERS

RACHEL BARNHART

KAKI GARARD

MARISA GILL

EMILY HAGEBOECK

GORDON HOMES

BETSY HUFFMAN

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KELLI WILSON

Independence Academy was established in 2005 by Ruth Padgett and Susan Le Vay. Each founder had a son impacted by ASD. The Independence Academy, located in Indianapolis, Indiana, is an innovative autism school with educational and skill-building programs and therapeutic intervention services.



Providing an educational continuum of academics, social, emotional, and independent life skill building

School-Age:

Summary of services:

State accredited education grades 4 - 12

Therapeutic interventions (speech-language and occupational therapy, behavior therapy, occupational therapy), education (early intervention, parent training), recreation

18 years and older:

Summary of services:

Step Into College collaboration services

Therapeutic interventions including speech-language and occupational therapy, Employment Internship Programs, Self-Advocacy training, independent living training), social groups, recreation, Pre-ETS

VISION

To create the most inviting multidimensional school that provides autistic students with access to an evidence based academic curriculum, sensory supported amenities, personal, social, emotional awareness and life affirming success beyond their high school diploma.

MISSION

Independence Academy is educating and inspiring autistic students to defy barriers now and beyond high school. We are dedicated to better understanding the aspirations of autistic students and assisting them in reaching their educational potential in order to lead independent, positive, productive, and rewarding lives.



IN CELEBRATION

The Independence Academy achieved an exciting milestone in its history on July 15th, 2022, with a ribbon cutting ceremony for our new Independence Academy building.



MEET THE ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM



Marisa Gill
Director of School



Tabitha McMonagle
Assistant Director of School



Todd Root
Director of Advancement



Andrea Rondinelli
Director of Admissions



Asiret Harvey
Executive Assistant

2022 GOALS

- Enhance staff recruitment and retention practices
- Complete the purchase of and move into new IA School building
- Partner with corporations for collaborations and sponsorships
- Produce a comprehensive marketing and development plan
- Refine and broaden scope of autism education programs and services
- Expand financial assistance for families to improve access to school programs
- Extend global outreach and messaging

INSPIRING POTENTIAL

Since our inception in 2005, Independence Academy has been dedicated to helping each autistic student reach his or her fullest potential and providing parents and siblings with evidence-based academic curriculum services to help them cope with the myriad of challenges that can come with having a family member on the autism spectrum. Middle school and high school each present their own unique set of personal and family obstacles to be navigated before the end of public schooling at age 22. The upcoming transition to adulthood can indeed be challenging because of the pressure to become self-sufficient, to find a job that pays well, and to fit in with peers and coworkers.

For our autistic students and their families and community stakeholders, our new sensory-friendly school building will serve as a major hub for autism-specific educational, therapeutic, and peer social programming.

Proven, evidence-based, lifelong approaches, devoted and supportive faculty and families, and the intrinsic drive present in each individual with autism are all necessary to build the potential of each and every child. Independence Academy's impact on individuals, families, and employers who are committed to identifying, building, and nurturing the full potential of every individual with autism will increase dramatically as a result of this school and the collaborative efforts of our donors, employment partners, and staff.

WITH GRATITUDE

To put it simply, the Independence Academy could not provide its students with the cutting-edge, evidence-based, experiential educational programs we do without the generous support of our donors. As a school, we owe a great debt to the individuals who have contributed to our SGO Scholarship Fund. Donors to this fund are eligible for a state tax credit of up to half the amount of their scholarship gift, and families with autistic children are able to receive access to the specialized education their children deserve.

INDEPENDENCE TESTIMONIAL

"This school felt so much like the right place to be for us... so much so that we moved... bought a house... changed townships and hoped and prayed that we would be admitted to this school."

TRACY V.
Independence Academy Family

INDEPENDENCE TESTIMONIAL

"When we came here we were lost and in need of so much help and guidance. I would recommend them 1000 times over and would gladly make the same huge choice to move to a new city, so my son had a REAL SCHOOL to attend."

ANNA D.
Independence Academy Alumni

INDEPENDENCE TESTIMONIAL

"It has been a journey since learning of our son's developmental disorder, especially when it came to finding the right school for him. We found it at The Independence Academy. Now, Donovan, is getting straight A's and is enjoying the school day."

TARRYN J.
Independence Academy Family

MAKING A LIFELONG DIFFERENCE

Our vision is to have a positive impact on autistic children and their families in a way that promotes independent success, understanding and acceptance of autism. Individuals and families in the Indianapolis area who are affected by autism have access to the Independence Academy's evidence-based, specialized school curriculum, support services, and autism education programming thanks to the school's innovative approach.

Individuals and Families

A diagnosis of autism is life-changing news for families in the central Indiana area. Specialized educators and therapists on staff at Independence Academy are available to assist families immediately upon enrollment.

We also incorporate a team of expert professionals in the fields of behavior therapy, occupational therapy, and speech-language pathology to complement IA's cutting-edge curriculum for kids in grades 4–12.

Our school staff will walk side-by-side with you and your family, giving information, recommendations, and support throughout the education, evaluation, and any needed intervention processes. Our team of highly trained experts will make recommendations that can be used to assist your student in reaching their endless potential in school and in independent life.



Business & Workforce Collaborations

Business organizations are now becoming increasingly eager to discover more about the marketable skills of autistic individuals in today's competitive job market. Independence Academy provides businesses with a workforce and a workplace initiative with the aim of optimizing the potential of every adult and delivering value to every employer.

Indiana University School of Medicine's HANDS in Autism Program is a keystone of success, as it provides Indiana University Health and Riley Hospital for Children with access to highly qualified and accomplished high school students for clinical and office internships. Through HANDS in Autism, we are able to provide our high school students with professional guidance, clinical and office skill sets, as well as analysis of their work skills and opportunities to further improve these skills.

Roche Diagnostics USA helps IA's STEM programs prepare students for careers in the real world by giving them scientific lab equipment. The Spectrum Nights Autism Learning Center at Marian University collaborates with IA to provide seamless and ongoing support for students making the transition from high school to college. Along with Independence Academy, the Indiana Pacers host the biggest reverse career fair in the state, specifically for individuals with disabilities.





A post from a parent about her Independence Academy son involved in our IU School of Medicine- HANDS internship program

This is our son wearing his work shirt. These are words I never thought I would get to say. Three years ago his school introduced a program called Hands in Autism through Riley Hospital and it sounded interesting so I signed up for the interview.

When I arrived at school they brought Alex down because it wasn't an interview for me- it was his first opportunity to meet with the administrators. And he shined! After two years of training through weekly sessions at his wonderful school he is finally spending one afternoon each week on campus in a uniform doing projects and working in conjunction with Riley. And he is so proud of this accomplishment!

Recently someone very dear to me asked if Alex understood what was wrong with him and if he understood how his "problem" affects his future. I was taken aback for a second because there isn't anything wrong with this boy. He is kindness and joy and so eager to please. He greets each day with such enthusiasm and sadness just isn't a general part of his makeup. He remembers your name and the name of your pets. He asks enthusiastically about what you care about.

Time for him is a continuum where deadlines mean little unless a dog needs to go potty or it's bedtime as he doesn't march to the toll of heavy burdens like taxes or bills. I hope that I'll always be around to watch over this sweet soul and I know that when I can no longer do it we have a plan for him that is sound. There is no problem here. His life is good and we are so much better for it because he taught me to stop and see the beautiful fall leaves as they're changing colors. He loves this life and I love the way that he has filled our lives for the last eighteen years. This is #autism

General Donation

Our online form for donations is quick, easy, safe, and available every day of the week. www.iaindiana.org/support-independence

Donation Types

Marketable Securities Donations of stocks, bonds, and other marketable securities are welcome at Independence Academy. Call us at (317) 785-0915 if you need detailed, individualized guidance.

In-Kind Goods and Services Companies are welcome to contact Independence Academy's Development Team to explore making in-kind donations of goods and services.

Qualified Charitable Contribution from Your IRA

For those who are retired, Independence Academy is a worthy recipient of the Required Minimum Distribution from an Individual Retirement Account. To get more information, please email our Director of Development at troot@iaindiana.org.



Charity is crucial to Independence Academy's ability to continue serving the community. The funds raised allow the autism school to continue its efforts to understand our autistic student's desires and aspirations and provide each with the foundational tools they need to achieve those goals. Today, it's easy to make a donation which qualifies for a tax write-off.

Estate Planning (Wills & Trusts)

Independence Academy appreciates your consideration to include our school in your estate plans. Our work and the services we've developed to prepare autistic students in central Indiana have far-reaching impact. We welcome your estate planner's questions

Independence Academy (EIN #26-1682732) is recognized by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) tax exempt school.



NAMING OPPORTUNITIES:

A LASTING REMINDER OF YOUR SUPPORT

Independence Academy's 3-acre campus in Indianapolis, Indiana, can be named after our generous donors as a way to say thank you. Buildings, hallways, classrooms, social areas, walkways, and other indoor and outdoor spaces, where lives are transformed every day, are great places for families, corporations, charities, and community groups to leave a lasting legacy of their support.

Our development team can assist you in recognizing and honoring your gift to Independence Academy, whether it be for our campus-wide capital projects (such as a gymnasium and auditorium, a peer cafe, or an arts and music lab), or one of our many existing experiential learning labs (such as the Experiential STEM lab, the therapy and social areas of our new Independence Academy school building, or the pavers in a new sensory courtyard and walkway).

To inquire, please contact troot@iaindiana.org

Make a gift to The Independence Academy (IA), a nonprofit, 501(c)3 accredited school dedicated to providing a transformative education to students on the autism spectrum.

IA has been relying on the generosity of individuals and corporations for the past 15 years to support the school's educational initiatives inside and outside the classroom. With the help of private donors, our innovative school has been able to increase its experiential learning labs and classroom programming.

Your donation is tax-deductible to the full extent allowed by U.S. law. IA gladly accepts contributions from donor advised funds and family foundations.

KEEP INDEPENDENCE EDUCATING



INSPIRE \$75

Support the Lab shop and the ongoing need for student materials that help bring our education to life.



BALANCE \$400

Underwrite a laptop for an Independence Academy student.



EMBODY \$600

Cover the cost of Activities of Daily Life Skills Lab Course (\$50 / month)



CELEBRATE \$1800

Support a faculty member in the Independence extracurricular program as they inspire students to learn about peer socialization within these clubs. (\$150 / month)



HONOR \$3000

Honor our dedicated and renowned faculty of IA by supporting their evolving experiential class needs. (\$250 / month)



ENERGIZE \$13000

Cover the average cost of a year-long tuition to IA after average Choice Scholarship for one autistic child. (\$1,083 / month)

IA Ambassadors

Get Involved : Become an Ambassador

Independence Academy (IA) autism ambassadors and autism ambassador groups act as connecting influencers to the community for the IA organization.

Whether for galas, small gatherings, or exclusive events, the Independence Academy (IA) ambassadors cultivate a unique network that supports the long-term goals of the Independence Academy (IA).



Women for Autism Independence

This extensive network of Indy's leading professional women supports special initiatives and programs of the Independence Academy



The Diamond Society

This Diamond Society members support the Independence Academy (IA) through legacy gifts and keep IA educating for generations to come.



Generation I

Young professionals and future leaders of philanthropic giving ages 21-40 serve as advocates and ambassadors of the Independence Academy.



In addition to monetary contributions, Independence Academy is always in need of dedicated volunteers who can help us realize our goals. Volunteers play a crucial role in our organization, and by giving of your time, you may make a significant difference in the lives of children with autism spectrum disorder.



FOSTERING POTENTIAL

Our school could not function without the help of our wonderful volunteers. All of our volunteers have a strong commitment to helping the children and families we support.



To make a donation that impacts individuals with autism spectrum disorder, use your smartphone to scan the QR code to the right.



2020-2021 GOLF4Autism



Every fall, the Independence Academy hosts a golf tournament called Golf4Autism. Golf4Autism is now an annual tradition, and it is widely considered to be one of Indiana's most enjoyable charity golf tournaments. Participants and sponsors help Independence Academy accomplish its goal of preparing and motivating students on the autism spectrum to succeed in their educational endeavors and independent world beyond their diploma. We are committed to inspiring the hopes and dreams of autistic students so that they can better achieve their academic goals and go on to live fulfilling, successful, and self-sufficient lives.

You may find additional information at www.iaindiana.org/golf-outing.



Held annually at Prairie View Golf Club in Carmel, Indiana, Golf4Autism benefits Independence Academy and raises upwards of one hundred thousand dollars each year.





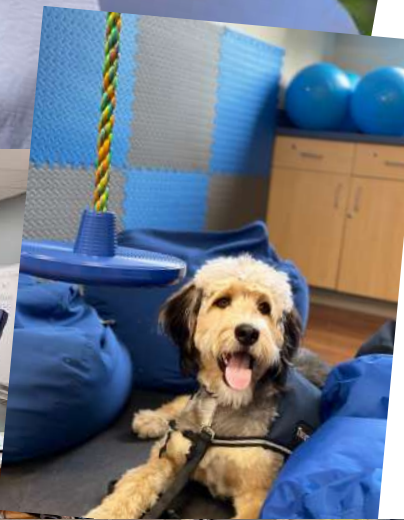
It is always such a treat when our students become Alumni. The treat just gets better when many Alumni stop back by our school to say hello and share how life is progressing. Braiden Proctor stopped by for a visit recently and we sat down to catch up.

Braiden fondly remembered spending his 8th - 12th grade years at IA. Prior to enrolling, Braiden shared that he had not done well academically or fit in socially in his previous township school and that his parents were looking for an answer for his success. "Here at IA I felt accepted and that the teachers wanted to understand me- that was a change and that felt really good."

After high school graduation, Braiden chose to go to Ivy Tech Community College. Welding was his course of study and he was quite successful. After graduation, Braiden has found a well paying career that makes him happy. Braiden is a specialized welder and works on fusing anything from I-Beams to the huge shelving structures you would notice at a Lowes or a Home Depot. He likes concentrating on producing a great product he can be proud of. His attention to detail is uncommon.

Braiden lives on his own in an apartment and really enjoys his independence. He was surprised at how much an apartment costs, but feels a sense of pride in being able to provide it for himself. He mentioned that he has learned to live a balanced life, and that has led to eating many more fruits and vegetables. Since graduation, Braiden smiled as he reported that he has lost 60 pounds.

"I feel really good now." He says he enjoys the relationships he has at work and also around him in his personal life. Braiden said, "I know how to identify who I will get along best with and that helps." Braiden hopes more students will be able to attend the Independence Academy in the future from all sides of our city



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Independence Academy, follow us on
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INDEPENDENCE ACADEMY

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