



# Adults Independent and Motivated

*Making Independence Possible*

July 29, 2022

## Register, Sponsor, Donate for 2022 Tutus & Ties Fun Run

AIM's 6<sup>th</sup> annual Tutus and Ties Fun Run will happen Sunday, Oct. 2<sup>nd</sup> at 9am at Lakeway City Park. AIM does not charge a fee for our services, so we rely entirely on donations and fundraising. Tutus and Ties is our biggest event of the year, and this year's goal is \$37,000.

Please help us reach our goal by sponsoring, registering, and donating. We are proud to announce that Independent Financial is returning as the Signature Sponsor.

Although AIMers can do so much for themselves, they would never achieve such a high degree of independence if it weren't for the supports that AIM provides, such as transportation to work and AIM activities, social and recreational activities, and stability so this can be their long-term community. Consider our impact on our 1<sup>st</sup> 2 AIMers: pre-AIM, they lived under their parents' roof and watchful eye 365 days a year, year in, year out. After joining AIM 7.5 years ago, they have each now spent over 2,500 days in their very own apartment. For people with significant disabilities, that is a true triumph!

If your business wants to make a big impact, please consider sponsoring at the Platinum, Gold, Silver, or Friend of AIM levels.

We will again have an online silent auction the week prior to the fun run. Can you help us with donations of cool items—hand-made and store bought are both needed, gift cards to restaurants and entertainment venues, and other similar items?

The course is 1.2 miles with 6 activity stations along the way (basketball free throws, hipity hop races, etc.) to add playful fun. For those who prefer to bypass the stations, we offer a self-timed 5K walk or run.

The deadline for Sponsors to be included on the Event flyer is Aug. 25<sup>th</sup>. For sponsors' names and logos to be included on the t-shirt and for participants to be guaranteed their preferred shirt size, the deadline is Aug. 30<sup>th</sup>.

Our website has additional details as well as links to sponsor and register. Thank you so much for helping AIM make independence possible!

<https://www.aimtx.org/events.html>

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*Past AIM Newsletters can be found on our website.*

*To reprint or share any part of this newsletter, please indicate that it first appeared in the AIM Newsletter.*

## AIM Core Principles

1. Safety
2. Employment or Meaningful Regular Activity Away from Home
3. Lifelong Learning
4. Healthy Living
5. Social Activities
6. Family Engagement and Family Commitment
7. Increasing Independence
8. Continuity

## They Visited AIM

Joining AIM is a process that takes at least 1 year. We are creating a community, not running a group home. Thus, we ask Prospective AIMers to spend a year getting to know current and other Prospective AIMers, trying to gauge whether everyone is a good fit for one another.

It often helps people wondering whether AIM might be right for them to get to visit the apartments of current AIMers. Because this is asking a lot of current AIMers (hey—do you mind if a bunch of strangers walk through your home?) we only offer this opportunity about once a year.

Our most recent Visit AIM event happened on May 1<sup>st</sup>, and we had an excellent turnout. AIMers were gracious hosts, and their parents were able to field many questions from the Prospective AIMers and their families. Most importantly, families who are exploring the best living arrangement for their young adult had an opportunity to see for themselves what the AIM community is all about.

## AIM Socials

AIM has socials for people who are taking the next step in exploring whether AIM is the right fit.

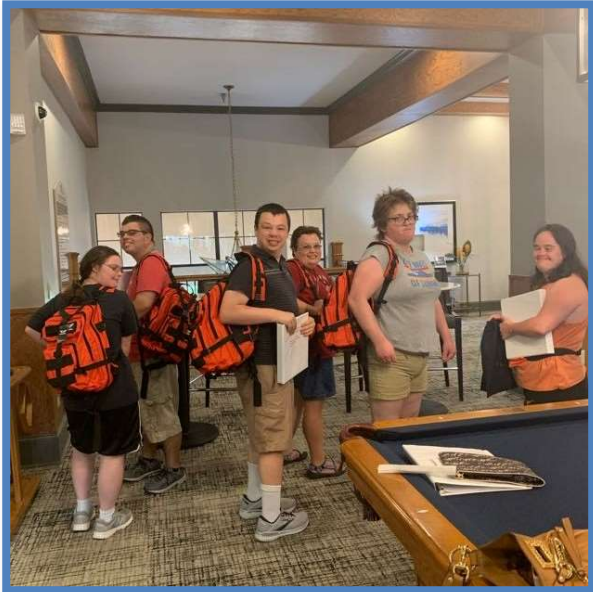
Recent socials have included watching the Austin FC Elite, a pool party, dinner at Panera Bread, listening to Del Castillo Tria, listening to the Jones Boys, Hanging with Kate and fitness at HCI

## Donors Made this Possible – Thank You!

One of the items we were hoping to fund for AIMers with the Amplify Austin campaign in March was safety kits for each AIMER. We are delighted to say that we were successful, and the AIMers who were available to attend the unveiling of their new Emergency Preparation Supplies were delighted (as were the AIMers who were unable to attend that evening but received their kits afterwards). Packs included food, hydration, and first aid supplies; battery chargers; emergency lighting; and much more. THANK YOU for supporting our campaign and helping AIMers be ready for the next unforeseen emergency!

## Board Members:

- Ashley Sanchez, President
- Ronda Phillips, Vice President
- Julie Buchanan, Secretary
- Kim Eudy, Treasurer
- Bobby Jones
- Darla Jones
- Barb Lucido
- Hector Sanchez
- Suzanne Shepherd



# Attending the Williams Syndrome Association National Convention - by Darla Jones

On June 25, our son Zach celebrated his one-year anniversary of living in his own apartment with his roommate and now incredibly close friend, Blake. For our family the year has flown by, and we continue to marvel at the smooth transition we have experienced, primarily due to the advice and support of the veteran AIM families who have traveled this road before us. In fact, we've been so excited about getting involved with AIM that we almost passed on attending the Williams Syndrome Association ([www.williams-syndrome.org](http://www.williams-syndrome.org)) Convention which was held in Chicago from July 12-16. Thankfully, we decided it was important to attend, and we're so happy we did!

Like most individuals with Williams Syndrome (WS), Zach has never met a stranger. So, it was no surprise to me that he had befriended two new WS families from Central Texas before we even landed in Chicago. By the time the conference had ended, that number had grown significantly, and if you count friends from across the United States and beyond, I wouldn't be able to give you an accurate number. While the bonding was familiar-- and we've been to several conferences over the years-- this time was different. In previous years, fear of the unknown had been my primary motivation for attending. Would Zach have everything we all want for our children? Would he develop the skills he needed for meaningful employment? Might he live apart from us some day? Most important, of course, would he find friends, a community, happiness?



Top: Zach & Darla Jones

Bottom: Will Kuhn & Zach Jones

As in previous years, I eagerly attended parent-focused sessions while Zach ventured forth to explore Chicago with his WS friends in his age group. As always, I was particularly focused on sessions exploring housing opportunities, and it was no surprise that this was the number one concern for most parents I met. In one session with an audience of over 250, the panelists asked us to raise our hands if our sons and daughters lived outside our homes. In the age group over 30, I saw about 15 hands in the air. For my group (ages 20-30), I was one of a handful who did so. To say I was humbled and grateful would be a gross understatement. But as I listened to those panelists who did indeed have some unique models to share, I realized that most of the discussion was focused on external factors, including funding sources, types of housing, and benefits which vary wildly from state to state. Obviously, those are critical elements to consider, and to say I've spent hundreds of hours contemplating them over the past twenty-five years is no exaggeration. But now I realize that, while daunting and fundamental, those are actually the least important considerations.

As I shared with anyone who would listen, we began our journey with AIM thinking about **where** and **how** Zach might be able to live apart from us. Would the budget work? Would he be able to get up on time and get himself ready to work? Take his own medications, exercise, stay fed, and keep his apartment reasonably clean? Would he be safe? July of 2021 began as the scariest experiment of our lives. But now I realize that, while terrifying and fundamental, those were just problems to be solved. And as proud as we are that he's mastered these important life skills, we now know that what Zach was really missing in his life were deep friendships of his own. When we started this process, we were looking for an affordable housing solution for Zach, but what we've found through AIM can't be easily quantified. His community and ours have now expanded, and I hope our new AIM family continues to grow.





## AIMers Supporting AIMers – and another organization benefitting people with disabilities

AIMers Blake and Cristina do therapeutic horseback riding and job training at RED Arena ([www.redarena.org](http://www.redarena.org)) in Dripping Springs. During RED Arena's annual Round Up fundraiser and exhibition, Blake and Cristina showed off their horsemanship skills as part of a drill team. Fellow AIMers Gracie, Chris, Zach, Clark, and Rebecca came out to show their support.



## Fire Safety

Lake Travis Fire House 603 welcomed AIMers to their station to learn about fire safety. AIMers had fun practicing with a virtual fire extinguisher, getting to see the gear and trucks up close, and learning important information about staying safe from fire. As an added bonus, in the words that AIMer Zach texted to his parents afterwards, "After we left they must of gotten a call because I heard a siren and horn i turned around and the lights were on and the horn sounded I was like that's the same fire engine with the latter being rushed through lights it was so freaking awesome."



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Remember us on Amazon Smile: <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/46-4998131>

## AIMers Supporting AIM Volunteer, Sophie

Sophie Sanchez, Zoe Jones, Brad Ehler, and Rachel Tunis can be found on most Sundays at a beautiful fitness facility called HCI in Bee Cave leading fun fitness activities for AIMers. These young adults are similar in age and energy level to the AIMers, and thus AIMers thoroughly enjoy spending time with them each week. On July 1<sup>st</sup>, AIMers and Prospective AIMers cheered on Sophie and her semi-pro soccer team the Austin FC Elite in Round Rock thanks to free tickets generously provided by the team. Despite the heat, we were in the shade, Sophie and her team played great, and a fun time was had by all.



## Participant Corner – 1 Year Roommate Anniversary



Blake and Zach recently celebrated their first year of living together, in their own apartment! Both lovers of music and Elvis, they were excited to learn the new Elvis movie would be in theaters on their big day. Dressed in their matching shirts that they purchased at a prior Elvis concert in Fredericksburg, they were able to walk to the theater and catch the show.

Being able to walk to local venues such as the theater, restaurants, shops, a grocery store, community concerts, farmers market, and apartment activities are all perks that AIMers enjoy.

As we like to say, our AIMers are living their best lives!