

ASPIRE

The Autism Spectrum Association of Ireland



AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2024

Welcome to the Autumn 2024 Newsletter from Aspire!

As we turn our focus to the new academic year we are excited to share updates, news and resources tailored specifically for the autistic community.

Whether you are returning to school, college or simply adjusting to the changing seasons, we are here to support you along the way

It is important to acknowledge the Autism Strategy that launched at the end of August. It aims to address long-standing gaps in support services, education, and employment opportunities

This strategy represents a commitment to not only recognise the unique challenges faced by autistic individuals but to provide the tools and resources needed to overcome them. It's a significant step towards a more inclusive and supportive society. Aspire hopes to see this strategy being legislated for with appropriate resourcing allocation and implementation plans

Aspire is delighted to announce that our Social Enterprise, Aspire Designs is now an award-winning social enterprise after its success in the Dublin City Council Social Enterprise Awards



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland




Arna chomhchistiú ag
an Aontas Eorpach
Co-funded by the
European Union



government supporting communities





In 2022 Aspire made the decision to pivot and change our Social Enterprise business model from media production to graphic design

In 2023 this process began and within a short year Aspire Designs has gone from strength to strength. It's growth and engagement with the autistic community has exceeded all our expectations

Receiving this award means so much to Aspire Designs, in particular the recognition of striving to make an impactful change for unemployed autistic adults. We thank our funders for their continued support through the Community Service Programme and Innerscity Enterprise for this wonderful opportunity

Most importantly your unwavering support has been nothing short of amazing. Whether you have attended our events, volunteered your time, or simply spread the word about our cause, your contributions have made a significant difference

We look forward to sharing our latest news, strategies, and ways you can get involved in the months ahead

Stay tuned and thank you for being part of Aspire!

LINKS



[Website](#)



[Instagram](#)



[Facebook](#)



[Show Your Support Here](#)





ASPIRE DESIGNS IS NOW AN AWARDEE OF THE DUBLIN CITY SOCIAL ENTERPRISE AWARDS 2024!

We are immensely proud and honoured to be recognised for the hard work of the Team over the past year

We started trading at St Anne's Park on 23rd September 2023 and the response to the Stall has been phenomenal for the Aspire Designs Team but also in terms of community outreach for Autistic people, their families and professionals

This element has been a bonus as this innovative project is getting greater reach to isolated or marginalised individuals

The CSO statistic speaks for itself - 84% of Autistic Adults are unemployed or under employed in Ireland today, which is far above the national average of 4%

We provide meaningful work experience and progression to Autistic Adults. Every day we are inspired by the creativity of the Team with their unique outlook on the world

Come to the Stall any Saturday and check out the unique greeting cards and in-demand sensory stock

We hope to use the award money to purchase much needed office furniture and work on opening the first Sensory Store in Dublin!

We are looking forward to the Awards Ceremony in City Hall at the end of September. We wish to thank Inner City Enterprise and Dublin City Council and our Funders for enabling us to do this impactful work.

And we wish to congratulate The Dublin City Social Enterprise Awards on their 10 year anniversary!





Our Manager, Louise, at the Ballymun Office, being interviewed for the Dublin City Social Enterprise Awards 2024.



Our CEO Linda, during the interview for the Dublin City Social Enterprise Awards 2024.

We are looking for an interior designer to help us design our Offices in Ballymun.

Please reach out!

louise@greene@aspireireland.ie

Thanks!



THE WORKABILITY PROGRAMME LAUNCH

By Ross

We went to Bray last Thursday, to walk along the seafront and get lunch in a restaurant (that was very nice). We got there at 10:30 a.m. and took a minibus down to Bray, it was a very relaxing ride, and didn't take as long as I thought it might. We met Linda, Gustavo and some of the others down there, they'd made their own way. We started with getting coffee and gelato from Gino's, and started chatting and walking, in a relaxed manner. Gustavo took some lovely photos, including one of all of us, and we walked about half-way up the hill, before turning back, to get ready for our dinner in a lovely place called 'Dockyard No.8.' The service was excellent, and the food was delicious. We also had the venue booked for ourselves.

There was some nice music playing in the background, and the cost was very kindly covered by Aspire. Gustavo didn't stop taking photos until the very last minute, until he was on the bus...(though I'm sure they were very good ones).

After we'd finished, we just took the bus back again and it was another easy ride. We got back at about 4 O'clock, and some people were collected, and others (including me) made our own way back.

I would consider this an important work trip as it gave people the chance to bond with others they may not know as well, and was a new experience.

Overall, I really enjoyed it, I wasn't sure what to expect of it beforehand, but I did really end up enjoying it, and I can't wait to do something like that again some time.



Workability
Programme
Launch Day



ASPIRE
IRELAND



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Arna chomhchistiú ag
an Aontas Eorpach
Co-funded by the
European Union



**L-R Back: Louise, Moira, George, Steven, Tom, Ruan, Ross
L-R Front: Adam, Clare, Linda, Nisha, William, Colm, Gulimire**

TEEN MEETUPS

Teen Meetups continued meeting fortnightly throughout the Summer and are now back meeting every Saturday in various parks in Dublin. These relaxed and friendly walks in nature means that nervous newcomers joining are simply welcomed into the group

Meeting in person on a regular basis creates a real social connection and a sense of belonging. Meeting others in a similar situation to ourselves is a great way for Autistic teens to develop social confidence and reduce feelings of loneliness, isolation and stress.

It is lovely to see friendships blossoming and the support parents get from each other is invaluable.

Most recently our Teens had an opportunity to have career interests assessments with an Educational Psychologist. We look forward to further events and activities for this lovely group.

TEEN MEETUPS
EVERY SATURDAY

STEPHEN'S GREEN/PHOENIX
PARK/ALBERT PARK/ST ANNE'S PARK

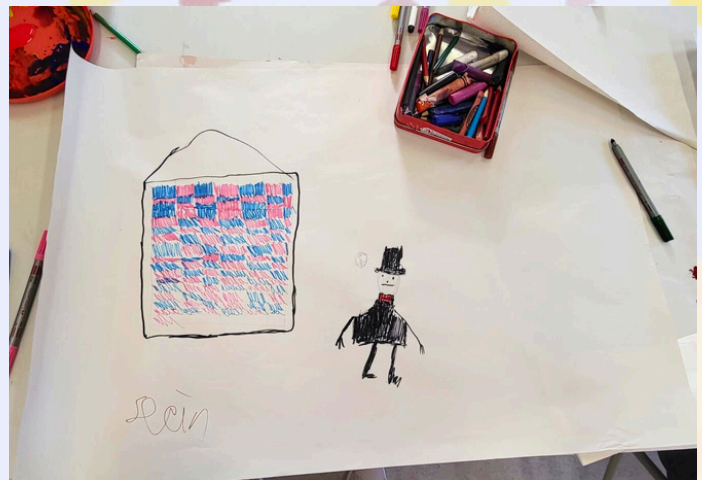
MORE INFO
EMAIL: LOUISEGREENE@ASPIREIRELAND.IE

ASPIRE
The Autism Spectrum Association of Ireland



CLASSES FOR YOUTHS

Art Classes



ART CLASSES

ART CLASSES For Teenagers

Thursdays, 6 pm, Clontarf
With artist and visual storyteller David Rooney



CLASSES FOR YOUTHS

Drama Classes for Teens

Creative Club for Teens is a new group starting on **Friday 4th October** next in our Ballymun Offices.

This activity is for teens (ages 13-17) to hangout on a Friday evening with an amazing drama teacher who focuses on fun (with some educational drama thrown in 😊)

ASPIRE DESIGN PRESENTS

CREATIVE CLUB

for Neurodiverse Teens

Drama Classes Starting in October, 2024

*Limited Availability

→ Fridays, 6 pm

→ at **Aspire Designs**,
Ballymun, Dublin

Reach out to us at
info@aspireireland.ie
and find out more

ASPIRE
Designs



Places are filling fast.

Any queries or to put your young person's name on the list, please email Louise:
louisegreene@aspireireland.ie





ADULT SOCIAL GROUP

Coffee and Talk

"Coffee and Talk" is a welcoming social group we operate for autistic adults, held in the comfortable setting of the Third Space café in Smithfield Square. Every first Tuesday of the month, from 18.30 to 20:30 in the evening, the café becomes a place of connection and understanding

The group provides a supportive environment where participants can come together, enjoy a warm cup of coffee, and engage in conversations that range from light-hearted to meaningful

The atmosphere is relaxed, allowing everyone to be themselves without the pressure of fitting into conventional social expectations

The monthly meetups at "Coffee and Talk" will hopefully become a cherished night for many. It's a space where friendships can be formed, experiences shared, and a sense of community fostered

The consistency of the meetings helps build trust and familiarity, making it easier for new members to join and feel welcomed

Whether discussing personal interests or navigating the challenges of daily life, the group offers a valuable opportunity for autistic adults to unmask and connect with others who understand and appreciate their unique perspectives



FOR PARENTS

Mindfulness



Thursdays, 7.30 pm,
Scot's Hall, Clontarf

Drop in for a taster
class with David

MINDFULNESS FOR PARENTS

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

Mindfulness can be defined as the practice of being fully present and engaged in the current moment, allowing thoughts and feelings to come and go without judgement.

Our Mindfulness for Parents classes help reduce stress, promote patience, and improve emotional regulation. By practicing mindfulness, parents can cultivate a calmer, more compassionate approach to parenting while also reducing anxiety, improving mental clarity, and enhancing their own well-being.



ASPIRE
Designs



RECENT EVENTS

Aspire Designs First Summer Art Exhibition 2024

On June 21st 2024, Aspire hosted its first-ever Summer Art Exhibition.

Held at Aspire Designs HQ in Ballymun, the exhibition was a success, showcasing the work of many talented artists, with visitors from Dublin and other counties alike. This event was a celebration of creativity, inclusion, and self-expression.



We had photography, oil on canvas, pencil on paper, and more.

We exhibited a variety of art pieces, including work by teenagers from our Aspire Art Class, led by David Rooney. Every piece displayed was a reflection of the unique perspectives and imaginations of our artists, offering the world a glimpse of what autistic individuals are capable of.

The exhibition wasn't just about the art—it was an opportunity for connection, socialising, and confidence-building. Many of our artists were bravely sharing their work with the community for the first time. Seeing their art appreciated reminded us of the importance of community support.

Visitors had the chance to chat with the artists and gain a deeper understanding

of the inspiration behind their work. Some of these artists have even set up shops to sell their art, which we hope will inspire others with similar dreams.

Light refreshments, tea, and coffee were provided, creating a cosy atmosphere for these conversations.



Overall, the day was so much more than just an art exhibition—it was a day of connection. Artists, attendees, and supporters came together to share in the joy of art and raise awareness about autism. It reinforced, once again, how uniquely beautiful autism is and how important it is to celebrate these different perspectives.

We want to extend a heartfelt thank you to our artists, volunteers, and everyone who attended the exhibition. Your support is what makes all of this possible.

By supporting us—whether through purchasing artwork, volunteering, or donating—you’re helping autistic individuals develop skills, build confidence, and achieve independence.

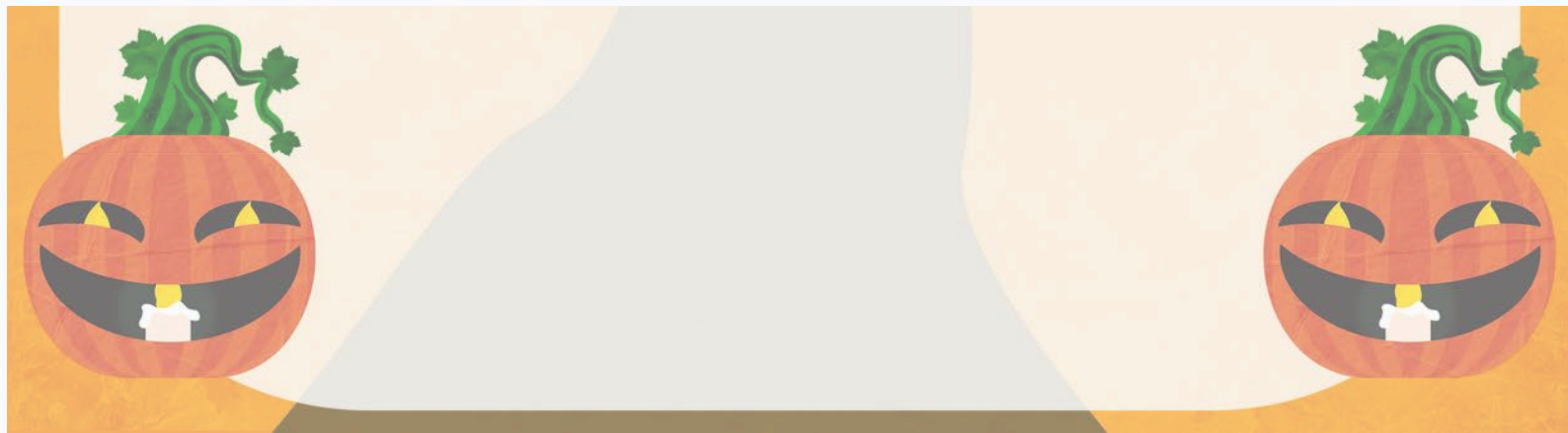
If you’re interested in supporting Aspire’s mission, reach out to us or visit our website. Your involvement helps us create more opportunities like this.

Don’t forget to follow us on social media to stay updated on how you can help us continue this important work!

Gustavo Lazarin



Artist Holly Grogan with CEO
Linda and Manager Louise





COLLABORATIONS

Outside the Box

Aspire recently started a new partnership with Outside the Box learning resources.

They stock a wonderful selection of books on Autism and educational resources.

Parents, Professionals, and Individuals can avail of a 10% discount when purchasing resources from the [website page](#) by using the discount code – ***aspire10***

[CLICK HERE TO GO TO THE WEBSITE](#)

www.otb.ie/aspire

 **OUTSIDE
the BOX**
LEARNING RESOURCES

Remember to use our code
aspire10 at the checkout.



TRAINING

Barista Training Course

Fancy knowing the difference between a Flat White and a Mocha?

Would you like to have an accredited Barista qualification?

Aspire Designs has established a connection with **The Irish Barista Academy** and **Excel Recruitment**.

We are taking names for small group one day Barista Training in The Capel Building in Dublin for a Group session this Autumn

Please email: info@aspireireland.ie to register your interest.



BARISTA TRAINING COURSE

A one-day comprehensive barista course accredited by the **Irish Barista Academy**.

DUBLIN



LEARN LATTE ART, COFFEE MAKING AND MORE!

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN:

- 10 steps from farm to cup
- Coffee beans and blend
- Understanding the espresso machine
- The importance of grind size
- Espresso techniques & Milk Texturing
- Production of espresso drinks incl. flat white, latte, cappuccino
- Equipment maintenance and cleaning
- Barista work-flow

*With **FREE** Food Safety Level 1 Certification

A combination of coffee theory and practical barista training



FUNDRAISING


KeoghFit's 24-Hour Triathlon!



It seems like an impossible feat, but that's exactly what the **KeoghFit Team** accomplished over the weekend of June 22nd and 23rd: 24 Hours of Cycling for Aspire

Entrepreneur, fitness coach, and Ironman-certified coach **Michael Keogh** took part with his team in an endurance cycling event like no other—**Mondello24**—which involves cycling continuously for 24 hours. Can you imagine the amount of stamina and determination required to tackle such a challenge? Not to mention the preparation, physical endurance, and mental resilience involved. But they didn't stop there.





If cycling for 24 hours wasn't challenging enough, Michael Keogh and his team elevated the challenge by using it as an opportunity to fundraise for Aspire. The Charity is close to his heart as his four year old son Bobby was recently diagnosed.

The KeoghFit team, including Jono, Ross, Christine, and Richie, embraced the challenge wholeheartedly. Together, they raised over €5,500, which will directly support Aspire's mission to improve the lives of individuals on the autism spectrum and their families.

Michael believes in setting goals, pushing boundaries, and enjoying the journey. We would like to express our deepest gratitude to you, to everyone in the KeoghFit team, and to all those who supported the fundraising—whether by donating or cheering them on.

If you'd like to get in touch with Michael, you can email him at mickmdkeogh@gmail.com or visit his website at <https://www.keoghfit.com>.

Would you also like to fundraise for Aspire or learn more about how can you help? Reach out to [**info@aspireireland.ie**](mailto:info@aspireireland.ie)

Would you like to make a **DONATION** and support our work?

[**CLICK HERE**](#)



STORIES FROM THE SPECTRUM

William Oliver



I have recently finished reading the science fiction book called *Blindsight*. It was a very entertaining story. The aliens are defeated in the end but only physically with the destruction of their mega-city ship. However, the story is as much about the nature of being, consciousness and personhood and in this case the aliens are far from defeated. It should also be pointed out that the human ship's advanced AI and vampire captain were very much responsible for defeating the aliens in a physically battle of mutual destruction. Even though I did enjoy the story, I do not agree with the theme and thesis of the story which is that that consciousness is an obstacle to higher intelligence and progressive evolution.

I am now reading a Stephen King book called *Under The Dome*. I am barely a tenth of the way through it and already it is better than the TV series based on it. The story is considerably darker than its television counterpart which seems to have been very much sanitised, presumably for a broader audience appeal, much to its detriment. That been said I have still yet to finish reading the rest of the novel and since King is well-known for ending his stories with less enthusiasm than the beginning and middle of his stories, I will not be disappointed if this should turn out to not be the exception to the rule.

On reflecting upon my time with Aspire Designs in the Ballymun office I find it bizarre as to just how fast the past seven months have gone by. I have set myself well into the routine of working in the office on Tuesdays and Thursdays as well as taking part at the market stall on Saturdays at St. Anne's Park in Raheny.

So far, the business at the market is doing very well and should be doing even better as the Winter months leading up to Christmas approach. I still find my time and experiences with Aspire Designs to be very rewarding and I hope for these experiences to continue into the foreseeable future.



STORIES FROM THE SPECTRUM

MY FIRST JOB INTERVIEW AS “FULLY AUTISTIC”

Gustavo Lazarin



Job interviews can be challenging, but this one was particularly tough. I will share with you the challenges I have faced and what I have learned from it.

Traditional interviews often feel disconnected from the actual job, in a “tick boxing” process while your entire being complexity is judged by a few Q&A and what's written on a resume. Most of them are like that, whether we like it or not. Additionally, this interview was my first after being diagnosed with autism.


A late diagnosis can lead one to an important work related decision: should you present yourself as autistic or “continue masking”? That’s not a simple decision to be made. In my case, after much reflection and struggle, I opted for embracing my autism, even though I was not sure how to do that yet. The decision was less of a choice than a sense of duty. I felt I owed it to other autistic people out there. It is a way of saying, “Yes, it's possible. It might hurt, but it’s possible.”

My Plan:

- Identify companies in a particular niche that seemed genuine and aligned with my values,
- Approach these potential employers as an autistic individual.

Showing up openly as an autistic individual to the workforce has more cons than pros, and that’s still the truth. However, I believe in looking into the eye of the storm rather than pretending it’s okay. It is not okay, and probably it will always be hard, but there are ways to navigate it.





The first interview was landed. I opted to be in-person. I wanted to look it in the eye. My approach was “simple”:

1. Embrace my autism, knowing it could backfire
2. Accept that if it did backfire, it was because I wasn't masking
3. Understand that if I wasn't a good fit, then the company wasn't right for me
4. If they didn't appreciate who I truly am, they didn't deserve the value I could bring
5. If it didn't backfire, then it was the right place for me



The Outcome:

It did backfire, and I wasn't offered the position. The experience was painful, less because of the job itself, and more because it felt like a proof that I couldn't show up as my true autistic self. My mind told me, “You should have kept the mask on; you would have nailed it.”

Possibly. Probably. Likely.

But then I remembered something: one bad experience doesn't define all future experiences. Because if there's one thing an autistic person is good at, it's being **resilient**. We get up because we have no other choice. We learn, we regroup, we reiterate.

What I Would Have Done Differently:

1. Get to know the company's premises and the interviewers beforehand.
 2. Feeling 100% safe is crucial when you're allowing yourself to be vulnerable.
 3. Take a moment to really transition from one situation to another (arrival – interview). I like to call it “the in-between” situations. I couldn't do this.
 4. Bridge better the “autistic self” and “professional self.” Even though they are one and the same, for this specific purpose, having more familiarity on this would have helped.
 5. Asked for the specific questions in advance.
- 
- 

To Other Fellow Autistic Job Seekers Individuals:

- Consider not disclosing your autism to every company right away.
Build a relationship first.
- **Take your time** to respond to interviewers' questions. They don't know how much information you're accessing simultaneously to "grab" the right answer.
Use mental tricks to reduce self-pressure.
- **Show your value** and results before discussing your autism – I did the opposite, thinking it was going to be safe, but it wasn't.
- Remember, it's a two-way street. You need to demonstrate your capability to **perform the job**. A job itself does not care who you are, your mood, or how your brain functions. That's the truth.
- Understand that your success isn't determined by the outcome of one interview.
You're courageous for putting yourself out there. Trust this.
- Most people don't truly care, even if they say they do. Try not to take it personally and surround yourself with those who genuinely do care.
- Playing the social game, even a little, usually has more benefits than not.
- Don't expect them to fully understand who you are; they're primarily assessing your fit for the role.

This is a work in progress. If you think you can't do that, it's okay. Consider putting your professional mask on and just going as a "regular person" because your chances of getting the job will increase. It's easier in the short term, but work on developing coping strategies until you can request reasonable accommodations from an employer. Show how these accommodations benefit both you and the company. Ask for professional help if necessary, and remember: **you can do this.**

***Once you allow yourself to be who you truly are,
you open a door for other people to do the same.***

Gustavo Lazarin

*This was just a reflection based on ONE personal
experience.*

*All experiences are different. This is not
professional advice, just my own reflections.*



STEVEN'S UPDATE

Dublin Pride 2024

Supporting neurodiverse people marching in the Dublin Pride Parade was an incredibly rewarding experience, filled with a sense of unity and celebration.

Despite the rain, the vibrant energy of the crowd was undeniable, as everyone came together to honour diversity in all its forms. Marching alongside neurodiverse individuals, I could feel the strength and resilience in their voices, as they expressed their pride and the importance of inclusion.

The rain only seemed to amplify the determination in the air, making each moment feel more meaningful.

Being part of this event was a reminder of the power of community and the beauty of embracing differences. Supporting the people who joined us was not just about standing with them in the rain, but about acknowledging their rightful place in the celebration of Pride.

The shared experience of marching, despite the less-than-perfect weather, created a bond that reinforced the importance of continued advocacy for inclusivity.



MINDFULNESS BY NISHA

4 - 7 - 8 Breathing Exercise



- 4 - Close your mouth, inhale quietly through the nose for 4 counts
- 7 - Hold your breath for 7 counts
- 8 - Exhale completely through the mouth for eight counts

Why is 4-7-8 Breathing Exercise useful?

- **Reduces Anxiety and Stress:** Activates the relaxation response, calming the mind and body
- **Improves Sleep:** Helps you fall asleep faster by promoting relaxation
- **Lowers Blood Pressure:** Enhances circulation and reduces blood pressure
- **Enhances Focus:** Improves concentration and mental clarity
- **Promotes Relaxation:** Shifts the body from "fight or flight" to a relaxed state
- **Decreases Heart Rate:** Slows the heart rate, reducing tension
- **Manages Cravings:** Helps control urges and emotional eating
- **Balances Nervous System:** Supports emotional and physiological well-being



FRIENDS OF ASPIRE

Thank you to all the incredible individuals and organisations who generously supported Aspire this year. Your kindness and dedication have made a tangible difference in the lives of many. We're also immensely grateful to those who have supported those we have referred to them, for their unwavering commitment and passion for making a positive impact in our community.

Pobal

HSE

Specialisterne

Screen Ireland

Tusla

Hiqa

First Aid Supplies

TTM Training

AsIAm

ADHD Ireland

Dyspraxia Ireland

Dyslexia Ireland

Inner City Enterprise

South City Partnership

Ultra Fusion Group

Fiona O'Donnell Mindfulness

Kennedy Health & Safety Group

Middletown Centre for Autism

Innovate Communities Ballymun

Disability Federation of Ireland

O'Sullivan's Accountants

Killester Basketball Club

Photo Museum Ireland

Market Pharmacy Smithfield

Dublin Northwest Partnership

Ballymun Job Centre

RBK Accountants

CourCon/CCL

Get a Gardener

In Good Co/McKenna

Michael Bowe

Kilkenny Animated

Token Smithfield

Sharp Group

Ausome Training

Employability

Irish Cancer Society

Botanic Pottery

Google

Yellow Harbour

Carmichael

Snowflakes

Neuropride

Ahead

Tennis Ireland

Skerries Mills

Chambers Pharmacy

Little Fitness

Spillane World Markets

Your Local Pharmacy Ballinteer

Excel Recruitment

Dublin City Council

DWM Cards

Phoenix Radio

Cartoon Saloon

Lighthouse Studios

DWF Foundation

W.A.L.K

IKEA Business Network

Alex Koster

The Rediscovery Centre

Third Space Cafe

The Wheel

AIB

DBS

TU Dublin

Tesco Community Fund

Accenture

Accenture Song

EY

Wolfe Group

Axis Capital

PC Moore & Co Solicitors

David Rooney Artist

Anne Weber

Irish Barista Academy



ST ANNE'S PARK



Aspire Design's stall at St. Anne's Park Market, Raheny. Every Saturday from 10 am to 4 pm. Featuring sensory items and greeting cards created by our graphic designers.rs.



PLAY AT PAVILLION THEATRE

Written by an autistic lady

Graffiti, Once Off Productions & Pavilion Theatre
in association with Cork Opera House
present

GRACE

A new play by Jody O'Neill
Directed by Niall Cleary



Ages
8+

A new play from the writer of
'What I (Don't) Know about Autism'

PAVILLION THEATRE | **Fri 27th Sept:** 11am* & 4pm
Sat 28th Sept: 1pm & 4pm
Sun 29th Sept: 1pm & 4pm

As part of **Dublin Theatre Festival 2024**
€14 (+ booking fee)
Book now: paviliontheatre.ie | (01) 231 2929

***Schools performance**
Schools & groups contact: boxoffice@paviliontheatre.ie
Pavilion Theatre, Dún Laoghaire

GRAFFITI: 

When?

Fri - 27 Sep - 4pm

Sat 28 & Sun 29 Sep - 1pm & 4pm

Special group rate for anyone who comes through Aspire Ireland of €13 per person for groups of 10 or more.

ABOUT THE PLAY

The play is a beautiful exploration of family for ages 8+ from playwright Jody O'Neill, who herself is autistic, and all performances are relaxed performances with captions, making them more accessible for people with sensory sensitivities.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE SHOW:

<https://www.paviliontheatre.ie/events/view/grace>



Aspire

An acrostic poem by Ross

Always there for those left behind

So many ways you and I can work together

Proud of the work we create, and what we
achieve

I am happy to say, I have been part of this
journey for a long time now

Remember, we work stronger together

Everybody has something to offer



FINAL THOUGHTS



Reply to this email telling us what initiatives you would like us to develop or explore more.

Examples: "I would like you to create a special interest group", "I would love to have more activities for kids".



For general inquiries or to fundraise for Aspire, reach out to: info@aspireireland.ie



For **DONATIONS**, [Click Here](#)



Know an **interior designer** able to help us design our Offices in Ballymun? Reach out to Louise louisegreene@aspireireland.ie



Did you miss our Summer Newsletter? Don't worry, you can read it by [CLICKING HERE](#)

**ADDITIONAL
RESOURCES**



[Website](#)

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ASPIRE

The Autism Spectrum Association of Ireland

