



SPECTRUM STRONG

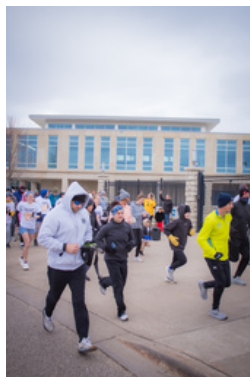
MAY

2026

A NOTE FROM THE SPECTRUM STRONG TEAM



As we head into May, we want to extend a warm welcome to all of the new families, caregivers, educators, and community members who have recently joined the Spectrum Strong community. We are so grateful for your support and for your belief in our mission to create a more understanding, inclusive, and accepting world for individuals on the autism spectrum. In this month's newsletter, we'll be focusing on the transition from the school year into summer break—a time that can bring both excitement and uncertainty for many families. Be sure to watch our website for an upcoming social story to help support this transition. We also have many fun events planned in the months ahead, and we would love for you to join us—every event is completely free. Thank you for being here and for being part of this incredible community.



Upcoming Events

SUNDAY, MAY 17:
MOTHER'S DAY MORNING RETREAT

TUESDAY, JUNE 16
PARENT WORKSHOP:
HOW MUSIC THERAPY CAN SUPPORT
YOUR CHILD

SUNDAY, JULY 19
FAMILY MUSIC DAY CAMP WITH
DYNAMIC MUSIC THERAPY



On Saturday, April 18th, our Spectrum Strong Autism Parent Network hosted the 1st Annual Steps to Acceptance 5K and community event—and what an incredible morning it was. Even with a very cold Wisconsin start, nearly 250 runners, walkers, and riders came together in support of the autism community. The energy, positivity, and shared purpose were felt from start to finish, reminding us just how powerful a connected and compassionate community can be.

Beyond the race itself, the event featured a resource fair filled with valuable information and connections, a successful silent auction made possible by generous donors, and countless volunteers who gave their time and energy to ensure everything ran smoothly. Their contributions were essential in creating such a meaningful and welcoming experience for all. We are deeply grateful for the families, friends, and community members who continue to support this mission. Whether you participated, volunteered, donated, or simply showed up to cheer others on, you helped create a space where individuals feel seen, supported, and accepted. We also want to acknowledge the partnerships that make this work possible. Together, we are growing this mission into the broader community which will create a lasting impact and greater understanding.

Events like this are a powerful reminder that acceptance is built through connection, education, and shared experiences. Thank you to everyone who helped make this day so special. We can't wait to continue this journey together.

☀️ MAKING SUMMER WORK FOR YOUR FAMILY ☀️

As the school year winds down, many families look forward to the slower pace of summer. For autistic children, however, the loss of predictable routines, school-based supports, and structured days can bring new challenges. At Spectrum Strong, we hear this from families every year and we also know that with the right supports in place, summer can become a season of connection, regulation, and joy. Below are research-informed, neuro-affirming strategies to help your family navigate the summer months in a way that feels supportive and sustainable.

📅 **Keep Structure—But Make It Flexible**

Predictability supports regulation and reduces anxiety for many autistic individuals (National Autistic Society; APA). Without school routines, even simple structure can make a big difference.

Try creating a “rhythm” to your day:

- Morning routine → activity → lunch → quiet time → outdoor/play → evening routine
- Use visual schedules (pictures, whiteboards, or apps)
- Give transition warnings (“5 more minutes, then we clean up”)

This doesn’t need to be rigid—consistency is more important than perfection.

🌱 **Focus on Regulation, Not Behavior**

What can look like “challenging behavior” is often a sign of dysregulation, sensory overwhelm, or unmet needs. Research in occupational therapy and models like SCERTS emphasize supporting regulation first.

Support your child by:

- Building in daily downtime with no expectations
- Offering sensory supports (water play, swings, shaded spaces, movement breaks)
- Noticing early signs of overwhelm and adjusting the environment

Regulation is the foundation for everything else.

💛 **Use Summer to Follow Their Interests**

Deep interests are a strength—not something to limit. Research shows that incorporating a child’s interests increases engagement, learning, and connection.

Ideas:

- Visit local parks, libraries, or community spaces tied to their interests
- Build activities around favorite topics (trains, animals, maps, etc.)
- Let play be child-led whenever possible

In the St. Croix Valley, even simple outings—nature trails, splash pads, or quiet morning library visits—can become meaningful experiences when centered around your child.

👉 **Prepare for New or Unfamiliar Activities**

Summer often includes camps, family gatherings, or vacations. Preparation helps reduce uncertainty and anxiety.

Helpful supports:

- Preview locations with photos or Google Maps
- Talk through what will happen in simple, concrete language
- Bring familiar comfort items
- Have a flexible exit plan

It’s okay if plans change—success looks different for every child.

💬 **Support All Forms of Communication**

Communication is not limited to spoken words. Gestures, AAC, scripting, and behavior are all valid and meaningful.

You can support communication by:

- Modeling language without pressure
- Honoring all attempts to communicate
- Ensuring access to AAC tools if your child uses them

Connection grows when communication is respected in all forms.

🌿 **Build in Connection (For Your Child and You)**

Summer can feel isolating without school supports. You are not alone. At Spectrum Strong, we are committed to creating opportunities for families to connect, learn, and feel supported. Whether it’s attending whole family events, joining workshops, or simply connecting with another parent, you deserve support too.

Consider:

- Attending local family-friendly events at your child’s comfort level
- Connecting with other parents who understand
- Letting go of expectations of what summer “should” look like

A Gentle Reminder - There is no perfect summer plan. Some days will feel smooth, others may feel hard and that’s okay. What matters most is creating a space where your child feels safe, respected, and able to be their authentic self. Small, intentional supports can make a big difference. We’re here for you.

If you’re looking for resources, upcoming events, or support, Spectrum Strong is always here to help families in the St. Croix Valley navigate every season—summer included.

