

Autistic Voices MATTER

CELEBRATING DIFFERENCES

autismconnect.org.za



in TOUCH Quarterly Newsletter

April to June 2026



Stay Connected and Informed with 'In Touch,' Autism Connect's Quarterly Newsletter Bringing You the Latest Updates, Insights, and Stories from the Autism Community.



Thank you for joining us on this journey of connection, awareness, and empowerment within the autism community.

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Dear Autism Connect Family,

Welcome to the April to June 2026 edition of our quarterly newsletter! As we look back over the last three months, we're filled with gratitude. April, May & June have been a season of growth, connection, and celebration across our community. From new programmes taking root, to parents and learners stepping forward with courage, to partnerships that lifted us all higher — this quarter has reminded us why this work matters so deeply.

Inside this edition you'll find:

1. **Highlights & Stories:** Moments that made us smile, learn, and grow together.
2. **Community Partners:** Special features on the teams who walked with us, including St. Gentlemen and Autismsowhat!
3. **Looking Ahead:** A gentle preview of what's coming as we move into the next term.

Thank you for being part of the Autism Connect village. Every therapy session, every parent meeting, every small win — it all adds up to big change for our children. We're honoured to walk this journey with you.

Nicolette Ripepi
Director and Parent



April whispers a powerful reminder:

April 2026

Every mind is a universe, and every voice deserves to be heard.

As we step into Autism Awareness and Acceptance Month, let's choose to see beyond differences and celebrate the vibrant tapestries of neurodiversity.

Let's create space for acceptance, understanding, and love.

CELEBRATING DIFFERENCES



History in the making

April 2026

On 11 April 2026, we hosted our first Autism Connect Autism Awareness Symposium — a day filled with courage, honesty, expertise, and hope. Parents, professionals, self-advocates, and allies came together to learn, share, and stand for awareness, acceptance, and real inclusion. We're deeply grateful to our collaborators: **Karin Dick (The Sisú Hub)**, **Carmen Walker (AutismSoWhat)**, **Michelle Lewis (Perez Wellness)**, **Taswill Welcome (Taswill Welcome Foundation)**, **The Gents (Saint Gentlemen Foundation)**, and our founder **Nicolette Ripepi**.

Thank you to our staff, volunteers, and parents for building true community and lasting impact.



Happy World Book & Copyright Day

April 2026

Our centre was filled with stories, giggles, and a little magic. Teacher Teresa transformed into Where's Wally and led an engaging reading adventure, reminding us why stories matter. At Autism Connect, books were safe spaces, supporting routine, emotional expression, language development, and joyful exploration at each learner's pace. We celebrated authors, illustrators, and every learner who found comfort, connection, and curiosity within the pages of a book.



Farewell to Hannah and Unako

May 2026

In May, we welcomed two incredible UCT Occupational Therapy students, Unako and Hannah, into the Autism Connect family for block training. From day one, they showed up with open hearts, curiosity, and genuine care, engaging with our learners, adapting to their needs, and becoming part of our daily rhythm. They left handwritten notes and chocolates, and we shared tears, hugs, and gratitude. Their impact, relationships, and care will remain with us. Once Autism Connect, always Autism Connect.



Child Protection Week | 29 May – 5 June 2026

We paused to remember that every child deserved to feel safe, seen, and protected. Child Protection Week was not only about laws, but about creating daily spaces where children could speak, be heard, and be believed. Neurodivergent communication in all forms was respected, and behaviour was understood as need. We ended the week with powerful posters reading "All children. Every child. Always protected," now displayed as a daily reminder of safety, dignity, and belonging.



Blankets of Love and Kindness

June 2026

Our Early Learning & Skills Centre was filled with warmth in more ways than one. The youth and church leadership from Reheboth Christian Church, Strandfontein, visited and hand-delivered blankets for our little ones and young adults. Their kindness, smiles, and servant hearts inspired deep gratitude and showed our children what community care looked like. We welcomed ongoing donations of blankets, stationery, books, or time to continue giving our learners a brighter start.



Celebrating Youth Day

June 2026

On 16 June, we honoured the courage, voice, and vision of South Africa's youth. At Autism Connect Skills Centre, we celebrated every young person, including autistic youth and youth with special needs. Their creativity, determination, and unique perspectives reminded us that every voice mattered. Youth Day reflected more than 1976; it called for inclusive spaces where all young people were heard, valued, and supported to learn, grow, and move toward independence.



Parent Meeting

June 2026

In June, we held our 2nd quarter Parent Meeting for 2026 at our Early Learning Centre. We welcomed the **Saint Gentlemen Men's Group**, who poured into our parent community, and **Carmen Walker from AutismsoWhat**, who shared wisdom and encouragement that inspired every parent. We thanked all parents who attended, asked questions, and committed to the journey. Together we continued building a village where every child was seen, supported, and celebrated.



HIGHLIGHTS



Art Exhibition

Thank You for Making History With Us

To our Autism Connect families, friends and community – thank you for making our first-ever Young Adults Art Exhibition so special. By being there, you gave our young artists something priceless: the chance to be seen, celebrated, and valued. Thank you to every parent, sibling, friend, supporter, and raffle participant who encouraged our artists and shared in this milestone. A special thank you to Rehoboth Church Hall for your warm hospitality, our raffle prize winners, and most importantly, our incredible young artists. Your courage, creativity, and talent inspired us all.

This is only the beginning. Thank you for believing in our vision.

With heartfelt gratitude,
The Autism Connect Skills Centre Team

To our sponsors and everyone who gives, pledges, and supports our campaigns – thank you!



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