



in TOUCH Quarterly Newsletter

January to March 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.

Warm welcome back, Autism Connect families!

We were beyond thrilled to kick off a new term at Autism Connect Early Learning Centre! Our amazing team, little ones, and young adults had an incredible first day back, and we were buzzing with excitement to see them grow and thrive during the term.

A huge welcome went out to our new friends who joined Autism Connect – we were so glad to have you as part of our community. And to our returning students and young adults, it was fantastic to have you back – your smiling faces made our day!

During that week, we focused on some key areas to help our kiddos shine:

- Building social connections and friendships
- Getting into the groove with routine setting
- Supporting adaptation and growth in a fun, safe environment

We couldn't wait to share more updates and milestones with you.

Thank you for being part of the Autism Connect journey.

Nicolette Ripepi
Director and Parent



Team Building January 2026



The Autism Connect team took a moment to connect, laugh, and grow together with Catalyst Team building events.

Our staff and the Catalyst Team Facilitators came together for a powerful team building day, focusing on collaboration, trust, and pushing boundaries.

It was amazing to see everyone stepping out of their comfort zones, supporting each other, and building stronger bonds! These connections will make a real difference for our students in 2026.

Grateful for this incredible team and the Catalyst Team for an unforgettable day!

First Parent Meeting January 2026

Grounded and grateful.

Our first parent meeting for 2026 was a hit! Huge thanks to all the parents who joined us, bringing curiosity and support to the space.

It was amazing to connect with you all, share stories, and feel the sense of community. We're excited for the journey ahead, navigating challenges and celebrating wins together. Your presence makes a difference!

Thanks for being part of Autism Connect.

Here's to a year of growth, connection, and empowerment.



Autism Connect Turns 13

January 2026

*Thirteen years of listening, learning, and growing – together.
What started as a small space of understanding has become a community
where every child is seen, every voice is valued, and every family feels supported.*



Over the years we've celebrated first words, first friendships, quiet breakthroughs, and the courage it takes to show up on hard days. We've laughed, we've cried, and we've walked beside you through it all.

Thank you for trusting us with your children and for teaching us that connection looks different for everyone — and that's exactly where the beauty lies.

Here's to 13 years of compassion, progress, and the belief that every child deserves to belong.

World Read Aloud Day

February 2026

We had the joy of celebrating World Read Aloud Day in collaboration with Strandfontein Library this year!

On the 5th of February, our classrooms came alive with stories, voices, and lots of wide-eyed listening. The children joined in for read-aloud sessions that sparked imagination, built vocabulary, and reminded us all how powerful a shared story can be. A huge thank you to the Strandfontein Library team for partnering with us and bringing the magic of books right to our children. Moments like these show how reading together builds connection, confidence, and a lifelong love for stories. Here's to many more chapters shared together.



Board Meeting

February 2026

Our Executive Board convened in February, for the first quarter of 2026, to strategically map the way forward for a year of meaningful impact. The session focused on key initiatives to strengthen our programmes, deepen our reach, and reaffirm Autism Connect's unwavering commitment to creating lasting change within the autism community.

We are excited about what lies ahead and remain fully dedicated to building a stronger, more inclusive, and supportive ecosystem for the individuals and families we serve. We look forward to sharing our progress with our valued stakeholders throughout the year.



Department of Social Development visit

March 2026

We're thrilled to share that Western Cape provincial minister of the Department of Social Developments office, Minister Jaco Londt's team, recently visited our Autism Connect centres as part of their roadshow! The team visited our Early Learning Centre and Skills & Coaching Centre, getting a firsthand look into the incredible work we're doing to support individuals with autism in our community.

Our Director, Nicolette Ripepi, and Programme Manager, Moeneeb Gilbert, had the opportunity to share our story and highlight the impact of Autism Connect. We're grateful for the Minister's interest and support in our mission to empower individuals with autism.

Thanks to Minister Jaco Londt's office for taking the time to witness the difference we're making!



UWC Occupational Therapy students visit

March 2026

Big shoutout to the 2nd year OT students from UWC who visited our Early Learning Centre in March!

We're so grateful for the time they took to engage with our little ones and share their expertise.

Looking forward to our OT sessions kicking off next week! Thanks for making a difference, UWC students!



Makaton Training

March 2026

Our team – Moeneeb, Jade, Sikita, and Simone – just completed the Makaton South Africa Level 1 training at Vera Schools, and we're buzzing with excitement! With Esmari Robertson guiding them, they've taken the first step in empowering themselves to better support our students and community. Makaton is all about inclusive communication, and we're thrilled to bring this back to our centre. Thanks to Vera Schools for hosting and Esmari for sharing her expertise! Here's to breaking down barriers and building bridges with sign language.



Sports Day

March 2026

Our Early Learning Centre students crushed Sports Day on 27th March 2026! So much fun, smiles, and family energy. Big thanks to all the parents who joined the party!



HIGHLIGHTS

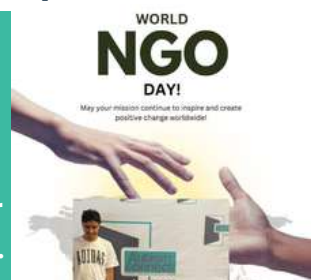
First Info Day



We hosted our first 2026 Info Day at Autism Connect, showcasing our Early Learning and Skills & Coaching Centres. Grateful for the families and community who joined us as we build futures and possibilities.

Celebrating World NGO Day

Recognising NGOs for their vital role in building an inclusive, compassionate world through advocacy, awareness, and empowerment. Proud to stand for autism acceptance. Thank you all.



Training with Elfreda



Elfreda Baartman (Autism South Africa) trained us on autism, competence, executive functioning, communication, and emotional regulation to support our community.

Graduation

Warm congratulations to Aadam Klink and family. His journey with us reflects growth and resilience. As he starts at G* Special Needs School, we celebrate this new chapter and wish him joy ahead.



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



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FUTURES
MOVEMENT**



FIND US HERE:



021 569 7234 |

info@autismconnect.org.za |
www.autismconnect.org.za

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