

# McPartland Lab

## FALL NEWSLETTER



## DIRECTOR'S WELCOME

Dear friends of the McPartland Lab,

I hope everyone's Fall is off to a good start and, for those in school, it's been an enlightening and enjoyable few months. In the lab, we have been working hard to train all the new team members that joined us this summer and to launch some new research studies. As you will read, we are starting a study to learn more about how online interactions affect teens – for better and for worse. Other projects are moving forward on pace, and we are grateful for your support in letting others know about our work. Please help us by letting any families with autistic or non-autistic children between 6 and 11 years old know that we seek their involvement in an extremely important national study we are leading to improve treatment research for those with autism.

Appropriate for this time of year, this edition of our Newsletter has some excellent ideas for celebrating Halloween in sensory friendly ways. We introduce two members of our stellar research team and highlight Clifford Beers-ASRC, one of our most valued and long-standing community partners. Be in touch, and let us know if there are topics you would like us to cover in future editions of this newsletter.

Have a BOO-tiful October!

Best wishes,  
Jamie McPartland

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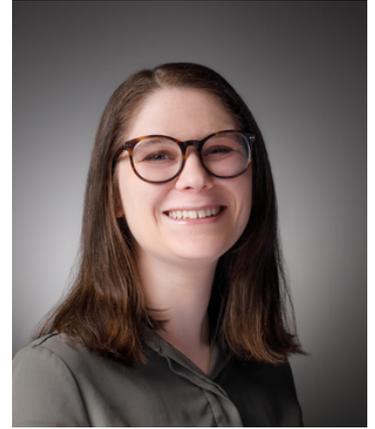
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# MEET THE LAB!

## SOPHIE CRAMER

### **Introduce yourself! What is your role at Yale?**

My name is Sophie and I am a second-year Sparrow Fellow in the lab. I grew up in Buffalo, New York and graduated from Skidmore College in 2022 with a B.A. in Neuroscience and Psychology. As a Fellow working with our large datasets, I get to learn all about how we analyze data and make sense of all the information we collect. My favorite part of this job is solving problems with our huge team of scientists that work all over the country! Outside of work, I love journaling, crocheting, and any other type of craft I can learn!



### **What did you do before you joined the McPartland Lab?**

Before joining the lab, I was a member of the Language and Social Development Lab at Skidmore where we studied how kids learn about abstract concepts like time, gender, and infinity. In college, I was a leader for the Peer Health Education Program and spent a lot of my time teaching students about mental health and running our campus wellness center. I also worked at the Institute for Autism Research SummerMAX program, where I got to work with autistic 4-year-olds to help them learn important skills like asking for help and calming down when they have big feelings.

### **What made you interested in working in this field?**

There are many different factors that have led to me being interested in neuroscience and autism! I love learning about the brain and how we can study behavior at so many different levels from cells and brain chemistry to hearing stories from people and observing communities. I also grew up with autistic people and have always been interested in how two people can have the same diagnosis but such different presentations!

## LINDSEY ROSENTHAL

### **Introduce yourself! What's your role at Yale?**

Hi everyone! My name is Lindsey, and I am a second-year Sparrow Fellow. My favorite part of my job is getting to know the families that participate in our lab's research studies! I grew up in California and this is my 5th year living on the east coast! I graduated from Smith College with a BA in Neuroscience. Outside of work, I enjoy hiking, cooking, and binge watching my favorite TV shows.



### **What did you do before you joined the McPartland Lab?**

Before joining the McPartland Lab, I completed my Senior Honors Thesis on the relationships between socioeconomic status, expressive language, and self-injurious behaviors in autistic children under the supervision of Dr. Ellen Hanson at Boston Children's Hospital (BCH). During my time at BCH, I worked with autistic children and children with rare genetic conditions. I assisted with conducting parent interviews and neurobehavioral assessments.

### **What made you interested in working in this field?**

I first became interested in working in this field while volunteering as a summer classroom aid for preschoolers with disabilities. This experience brought me so much joy but also taught me about the challenges these kids face. Once I got to college, I got involved with clinical research through internships which solidified my interests in pursuing child clinical psychology. The Sparrow Fellowship has allowed me to continue pursuing my goals while also working with and learning from our amazing families.



# CELEBRATING HALLOWEEN

## BY DR. CARA KEIFER



**What does a ghou! put on its pizza? Monster-ella cheese!**

Spooky season is upon us! For many, Halloween is an exciting holiday to celebrate with friends and family. However, for some autistic children and teens, it presents a unique set of challenges. Changes in routine, potential sensory overload, and interacting with lots of new people can be difficult to navigate. Here are some tips that may help to make this Halloween fun and accessible!

- Trick-or-treating and other Halloween activities represent a big change in your child's usual routine. To prepare for this change, it may be helpful to create a visual schedule or social story that clearly and concretely outlines the plan for the day. You can personalize your own social story using this [template](#) from Autism Speaks and read it with your child throughout October.
- Costumes can be uncomfortable for children with sensory sensitivities. You and your child know their sensory needs best so help them to choose a costume they will enjoy wearing. Consider having your child practice wearing their costume before Halloween. It is okay to start small, for instance, by trying on one piece of the costume at a time and slowly increasing the amount of time they have it on. Remember that costumes aren't required, and it is okay to trick-or-treat without one!
- Some kids benefit from practicing trick-or-treating ahead of time with trusted family, friends, or neighbors. For example, you could walk the trick-or-treating route ahead of time, practice ringing neighbor's doorbells, and role play saying "trick or treat". If trick-or-treating around your neighborhood isn't a good fit for your family, attending a trunk-or-treat event geared towards autistic kids is another great option. Sun, Moon, & Stars is hosting an indoor trunk-or-treat for families with children on the spectrum and you can learn more about it [here](#).
- In recent years, some families have chosen to carry a [teal pumpkin](#) to signify to others that their child has food allergies, epilepsy, and/or is on the spectrum while trick-or-treating. Similarly, some families choose to wear a badge that says, "I may not say trick or treat". You can talk with your child about whether this is something they may want to do. If your child has dietary restrictions, keep an eye out for houses with a teal pumpkin displayed which may indicate that they offer non-food treats. Alternatively, you can consider dropping off safe treats or small toys with neighbors ahead of time to be given to your child when they trick-or-treat.



- On Halloween, many people use lights, music, or decorations that pop-up or make unexpected noises. Consider bringing headphones, ear plugs, or other soothers if this is something that may be distressing for your child.
- If you are handing out candy on Halloween, welcome all children and remember that people may celebrate differently than you! It is okay if they don't say "trick-or-treat" or don't wear a typical Halloween costume.
- Here are a few fun ways to celebrate Halloween other than trick-or-treating:
  - Make a craft.
  - Watch a movie.
  - Attend a local event:
    - [Stew Leonard's Halloween Drive](#)
    - [Moon, and Stars Trunk or Treat event](#)

**Have a safe and happy Halloween!**

## EXCITING LAB EVENTS

On October 3, we hosted the **Annual Meeting of the Autism Biomarkers Consortium for Clinical Trials!** Scientists from around the United States and Europe came together to think about how to do better autism research!



# STUDY SPOTLIGHT

## EEG STUDY FOR TEENS

BY CARA KEIFER

### **What is the FLAMINGO study?**

FLAMINGO stands for Finding Links between Adolescent Motivations and Interactions through Neuroscience and Games Online. This is an exciting new study specifically for teens that will be starting soon in the McPartland Lab!

### **What is the goal of this study?**

The goal of this study is to learn about how teens interact with peers in a computer game and in everyday life. We are especially interested in how brain responses during online interactions relate to different kinds of mental health issues, like anxiety and depression, that many autistic and non-autistic teens experience.

### **What will a typical study visit look like?**

Participation includes one or two visits to our offices where families will talk to a clinician, complete questionnaires, and teens will do computer activities while their brain waves are recorded. Adolescents will also answer questions on a cell phone app for a few days after their visit is over.

### **Who is eligible to participate?**

We will be recruiting autistic and non-autistic teens between 13 and 17 years old. Participants will receive a clinical evaluation, assessment report, and compensation up to \$100.

**Interested participants can contact Bela  
at 203-737-3439 or [autism@yale.edu](mailto:autism@yale.edu).**



# IN THE COMMUNITY

## CLIFFORD BEERS

Clifford Beers Community Care Center (CBCCC) is a partner of the McPartland Lab in improving understanding and care for those with autism. CBCCC has offered comprehensive services for those with ASD and other intellectual/developmental disabilities since 2017. Services are provided for all ages so there is no aging out of care, and include the entire family. This year, their services have further expanded to better serve their communities.

CBCCC's Camp Farnam in Durham is a summer day camp for youth which uses art, outdoor play, and a trauma-informed approach to provide campers with a modern day camp experience. In July, they held their first ever ASD Camp which consisted of one week of half days for autistic campers. Special training was provided to camp staff and multiple CBCCC clinicians were present to mediate and facilitate activities. Some families even took the opportunity to tour the camp before the week began as a way to help their children feel safe and acclimated to this new environment.

The week was structured but flexible, allowing kids choices and opportunities to engage socially with others. They played games, made kites, swam, played volleyball, made slime and used the basketball courts for both games and chalk. Kids particularly enjoyed swimming and made many special bonds with the lifeguard staff. Due to the success of the camp, there are definite plans to hold another week of ASD Camp Farnam next summer with the possibility of longer time periods to accommodate more campers.

Additionally, CBCCC is excited to share that Autism Services & Resources Connecticut (ASRC) has merged with our parent company, Clifford Beers Community Health Partners (CBCHP) to form a united network that ensures uninterrupted services. This integration includes ASRC's existing programs like the Warm Line, recreational activities, training, support groups, social skills groups, the annual Walk for Autism, Job Fair & Transitions Workshops, and the Resource Guide. Families can rely on their continued support in navigating the autism spectrum journey. For more details, visit ASRC's [website](#). Their growing network of autism resources and services will better help connect families with what they need to help their children thrive.

CBCCC continues to offer autism services such as diagnostic evaluation/psychological testing, individual and family therapy, therapy groups for arts and social skills, medication management, and case management. For more information, visit their website at [www.cliffordbeersccc.org/autism-idd-services/](http://www.cliffordbeersccc.org/autism-idd-services/) or contact them at [info@cliffordbeers.org](mailto:info@cliffordbeers.org).



**Clifford Beers**  
Community Care Center

A Clifford Beers Community Health Partner

# FUN FALL ACTIVITIES IN CONNECTICUT

Embark on a [Foliage Drive](#)

Check out one of the **many fall events** at the [New Canaan Nature Center](#)

[Pumpkin Patch Trains](#) at the **Danbury Railway Museum** in Danbury, CT:

The event includes a 20 minute round trip train ride, picking out your own pumpkin, trying local apple cider and cookies and many photo ops.

Explore the [Ben Franklin Corn Maze at Lyman Orchards](#) in Middlefield, CT:

While you're there, pick your own apples, pears, or pumpkins or visit their Apple Barrel Farm Market grocery store!

Visit a [Corn Maze](#) near you in Connecticut:

Learn about the [Oldest Steam-powered Cider Mill](#) in the country.

Fall Family Fun at [Bishop's Orchards Little Red Barn](#) in Guilford, CT: There is a pumpkin patch, food and beverages! You can also pick your own apples, raspberries, and pumpkins and get ice cream from the creamery!

Drive through Stew Leonard's family-friendly [Halloween Drive Through](#), featuring inflatable pumpkins, Halloween cartoon characters, and more!

Visit [Pumpkintown, USA](#) in East Hampton, CT.

Visit a [Fall County Fair or Festival](#) near you in Connecticut

Total Joy Are You (TJAY) [EmpowerHer Pageant](#). Apply by clicking the link! More information to come.

[Terror at Quassy Amusement Park](#) (ages 10+):

Amusement rides, haunted houses, and live entertainment on the stage.

Attend Sun, Moon, and Stars [Trunk or Treat event](#).



# LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR LAB!



CHECK OUT  
OUR WEBSITE



INTERESTED IN  
PARTICIPATING?  
FILL OUT THIS  
FORM!



READ OUR LAB'S  
DIVERSITY  
STATEMENT



## KEEP UP WITH US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!



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