

brain bites

MARYLAND
BRAIN STUDY

VOLUME 7:
FALL 2025



upcoming events

- December 3, 10, & 17: AUSOM BINGO FUNDRAISER
 - @ 5-10p.m Ridgley's Run Community Center
- December 4: General Family Support Group
 - @ 7:30-9p.m Virtual

[Click here to view more events at Autism Society of MD!](#)

this summer, we welcomed



Mia Zwally!

Mia returned to the DSCN lab as our new lab manager in July.



Emily Reid!

Emily joined the DSCN lab as our new project coordinator in August.

recent publications

Drs. Jones, Yarger, and Redcay recently published a commentary emphasizing the need to increase research on mental health in Black autistic youth. Black autistic youth may have unique risk and protective factors related to the intersection of their racial identity and autism diagnosis, but research on this topic is very limited. Examples of such risk factors include structural racism, victimization, and community stigma. These risk factors can be buffered by protective factors, which help people deal with stress and become more resilient to mental health challenges. Examples of protective factors include access to resources in the community or at school, family support, and a strong sense of identity. We call for an increase in racial and ethnic diversity in autism research and encourage engagement in community-based research to help fill this gap in knowledge.

Jones et al., *JAACAP*, 2025

Dr. Heather Yarger has left our lab to start her own at James Madison University! There, she is running a study that looks at anxiety in autistic young adults. She wants to find ways to more easily detect anxiety in autistic individuals by collecting heart rate and breathing data. She thinks that atypical variability in heart rate may be a physical marker of anxiety in autistic kids. You can read about her work in her new publication.

Yarger et al., *BMJ Open*, 2025
10.1136/bmjopen-2025-107684



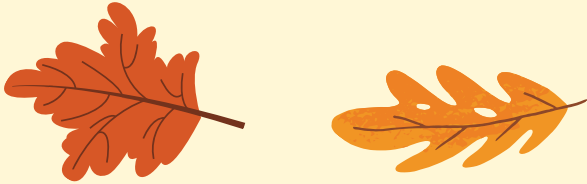
study update!

We recently had our last fMRI scan for the social connection study!

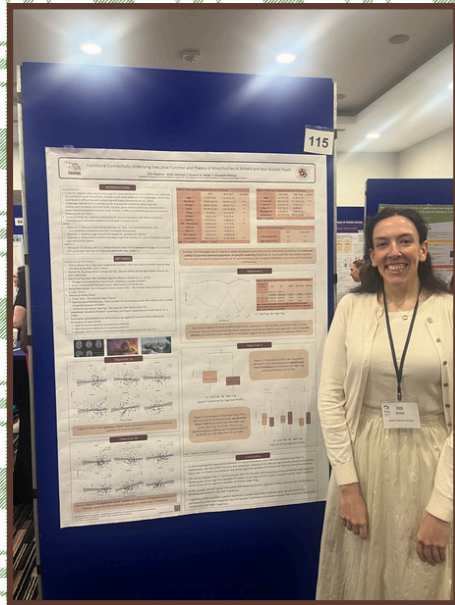


conference!

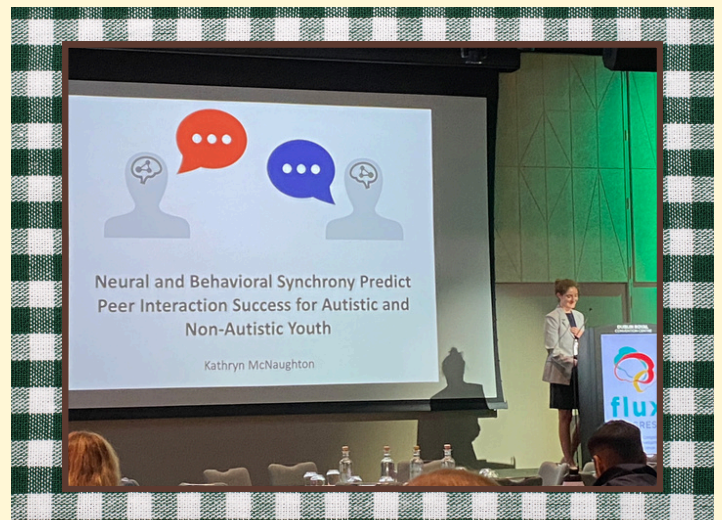
Lab members attended the Flux Conference in Dublin, Ireland this past September, which focuses on developmental cognitive neuroscience.



Dr. Redcay co-organized a panel on how our brains get into sync with each other and how this "synchrony" between people changes across development and different people.



Graduate student Erin Reckner presented a poster on her research on autistic profiles of executive function & theory of mind!



Dr. Kathryn McNaughton gave a talk on work from our study. She showed that for people whose brains are more similar to other participant's in the study, the way they feel after a social interaction is more dependent on who that interaction is with.



undergraduate shoutouts!

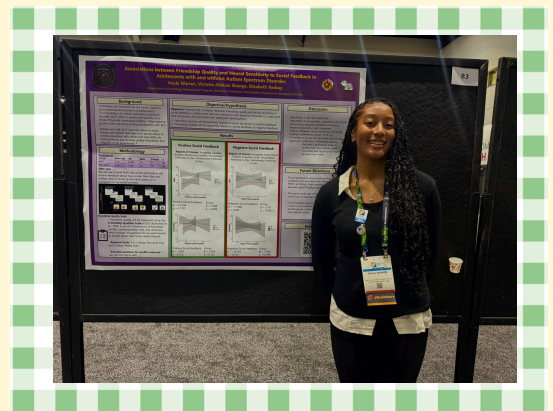
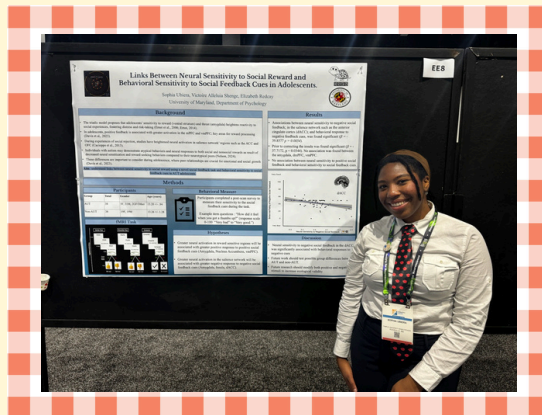
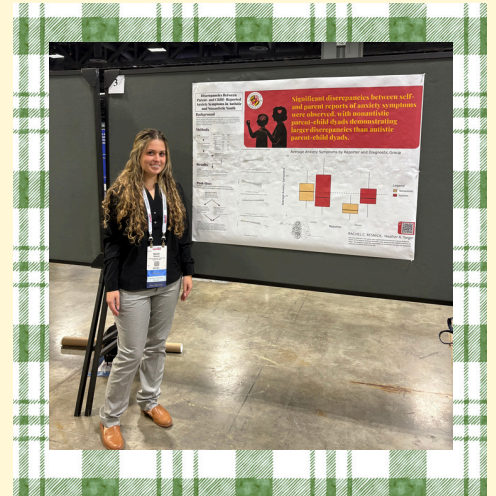
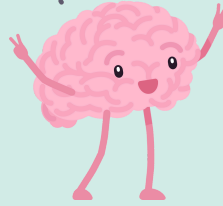


Brynn Saffer was designated a Phillip Merrill Presidential Scholar alongside her mentors!



brain bite!

The adult brain weighs about 3 pounds, which is equal to about a half gallon of milk!



Rachel (top) presented a poster at the American Public Health Association Annual Expo. Sophia (left) and Kayla (right) presented posters at the annual Society for Neuroscience conference.

