

## 4-A CLUB: AUTISM, AGING, ALEXA, ACCESS



### LEADER & PRESENTER:

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### INTRODUCTION

It is rare that society encounters a wholly new population, but older adults with autism and other developmental disabilities living in the community are just that. Simultaneously, the technological advancements happening in this generation are unparalleled. While these advancements have the potential to bridge the gap between isolation and feeling connected for older adults with autism, this population is being left behind because of a lack of education, accessibility, and ongoing assistance. The 4-A Club: Autism, Aging, Alexa, Access disrupts this status quo.

The Amazon Alexa provides access to social connection, home automation, and entertainment. Without adaptation, this device can be used by highly and moderately verbal participants, but potentially excludes users who have low or no vocal audio output. We will partner the Alexa technology with low-tech recordable push buttons or voice output smart device apps, such as Voice Recorder or Voice Memos, to provide access for everyone. These simple solutions can lower the barriers of isolation and loneliness and create a sustainable impact.

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Social isolation and loneliness have been proven to contribute to physical and mental health problems, but technology can offer a solution. For older adults with autism, being able to participate in online communities, as well as seeing family members and friends through video-calling, helps build and maintain social connections and friendships. Listening to music and audio-books lessens the silence when they are alone. Watching movies alleviates boredom. Setting reminders, alarms and having lights automated, provides safety life hacks. The 4-A Club disrupts the notion that this group is unable to incorporate enhancing technology into their lives.

We will send a dedicated team of experts including a Social Worker, a Home Automator and Occupational Therapy Interns to work with participants to create maintainable home automation and Alone Plans using the Amazon Alexa. Our approach is unique, combining technology and in-person education in a home setting.

We propose a pilot program of initially thirty Seniors ages 40 and up,  $\frac{1}{3}$  with high verbal communication,  $\frac{1}{3}$  with moderate verbal communication and  $\frac{1}{3}$  with low or no verbal communication. Once we have completed a successful first year pilot, we aim to expand with a global approach to reaching Yachad's international network of people aging with autism by creating an easily duplicated project tool kit that can be used by anyone.