



World Autism Awareness Day



World

Autism



World Autism Awareness Day  
April 2, 2008



Awareness



Day

[www.worldautismawarenessday.org](http://www.worldautismawarenessday.org)



*“Society has a responsibility to persons with disabilities and their families... let us dedicate ourselves to enabling the family, the most basic unit of society, to fulfill its role ensuring that persons with disabilities enjoy full human rights with dignity, and flourish as individuals.”*

*--UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's message for the International Day of Families, observed on 15 May, 2007.*



## World Autism Awareness Day • April 2, 2008



**World Autism  
Awareness Day**

On December 18, 2007 the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 62/139 tabled by the State of Qatar, which declares April 2 as World Autism Awareness Day (WAAD) in perpetuity. Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Missned, Consort of His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, the Emir of the State of Qatar, supported the campaign for a World Autism Awareness Day through the current 62nd UN General Assembly Session, garnering consensus support from all United Nations Member States.

This UN resolution is one of only three official disease-specific United Nations Days and will bring the world's attention to Autism, a pervasive disorder that affects tens of millions. The World Autism Awareness Day resolution encourages all Member States to take measures to raise awareness about autism throughout society and to encourage early diagnosis and early intervention. It further expresses deep concern at the prevalence and high rate of autism of children in all regions of the world and the consequent developmental challenges.

World Autism Awareness Day will shine a bright light on autism as a growing global health crisis. WAAD activities will help to increase and develop world knowledge of the autism epidemic and will impart information regarding the importance of early diagnosis and early intervention. Additionally, WAAD will celebrate the unique talents and skills of persons with autism and will be a day when individuals with autism are warmly welcomed and embraced in community events around the globe.

By bringing together autism organizations all around the world, we will give a voice to the millions of children worldwide who are undiagnosed, misunderstood and looking for help. Please join us in our effort to make this possible.

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## World Autism Awareness Day Toolkit

The **World Autism Awareness Day (WAAD) Toolkit** is designed to assist autism organizations, missions, and ministries in promoting **April 2 as World Autism Awareness Day**. We hope you will take advantage of the tools offered in this kit and use them to bring autism awareness to your local communities.

### Contents:

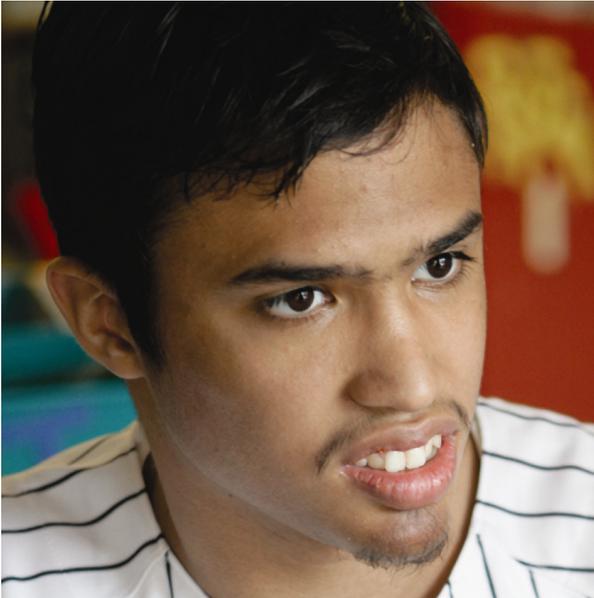
1. *Awareness Materials*: Tool such as brochures, billboards and advertisements and advice regarding how to use them to support short-term and long-term autism awareness-raising goals.
2. *Government & Community Support*: Information about how to generate community support for the celebration by encouraging local government, opinion leaders and area officials to get involved. There is also information about engaging businesses and organizations in other aspects of the campaign as well.
3. *Media Outreach*: Ideas for advertising and promoting World Autism Awareness Day in the news media. Topics include writing and distributing press releases (samples are included in the Appendix; organizing conferences, and training spokespeople
4. *Planning Press Events*: Ideas to increase the visibility of your campaign through exciting special events.

## 1. Awareness-Raising Materials

There are many ways to raise autism awareness. Communications such as brochures, billboards, advertisements, direct mail, flyers, slogans and publicity in print media (newspaper, magazine, and newsletter) and broadcast media (radio, TV, cable) are excellent vehicles to spread awareness about autism, organizations and available services. It is also helpful to seek ongoing support from public officials and opinion leaders.

The following is a description of various materials:

**Brochures:** A brochure is a written document that details specific information about an agency and its services. It is one of the most important written materials for promoting an organization. Brochures can be used when responding to inquiries. It is also an excellent idea to include them in mailings, place them in the agency's lobby, and leave them at doctor's offices and medical practitioners.



**Billboards/Bus Cards:** Billboards are another excellent awareness-raising tool. Although most people are not aware of this fact, billboard space can be negotiated for free. Some outdoor advertising companies will agree to post a billboard free of cost if no one is waiting to purchase the space. If a billboard appears dated or dilapidated, call the number on the board. During the summer and after large political campaigns, outdoor advertising companies often experience a slow season. They may agree to donate billboard space to an organization until a company is ready to rent the space, so they can display a new billboard in place of an old or empty one.

**Advertisements:** Advertising is usually paid publicity, but can and has been successfully negotiated for free. Forms of advertising include ads in newspapers, magazines and phone books. They also include direct mail, TV and radio commercials, billboards, bus cards and the messages that flash on the movie screen prior to the previews.

Advertising costs and donations will vary based on factors such as the size of an ad or the length of a commercial, where it is appearing (the local newspaper vs. a national magazine), and how long it will appear (an ad that appears once versus a commercial that airs for three months).

**Promotional Items:** Promotional items serve the dual purpose of thanking supporters and spreading awareness. They are useful tools for increasing campaign visibility. It is amazing to think about the number of logo pens or coffee mugs there are in homes and offices these days.

Promotional items usually have a longer shelf life than print or broadcast advertisements. That is not to say that print and broadcast advertisements are less effective modes of communication. However, as part of an overall campaign, promotional items have the potential to serve as long-term marketing tools. Contact an advertising specialty company for a catalog of promotional items that can be imprinted with a specific organization's logo or the campaign slogan for World Autism Awareness Day.

## 2. Generating Governmental & Community Support

One of the most important steps in marketing your local campaign is rallying the support of influential community members such as local political, business, religious, civic and opinion leaders.

What is an opinion leader? An opinion leader is someone with the stature and influence to sway public opinion. Opinion leaders will help to increase a campaign's visibility and credibility just by lending their names to it or by actively joining your effort.

This section will provide information about how to request support from local governing bodies, as well as from business and religious leaders.

### Involving Local Government

Governors, mayors and council members are responsible for developing policies and legislation related to child welfare. Their support is helpful when educating the local government and community about issues related to autism, early diagnosis, and early intervention.

Ask them to sign a proclamation declaring World Autism Awareness Day locally.

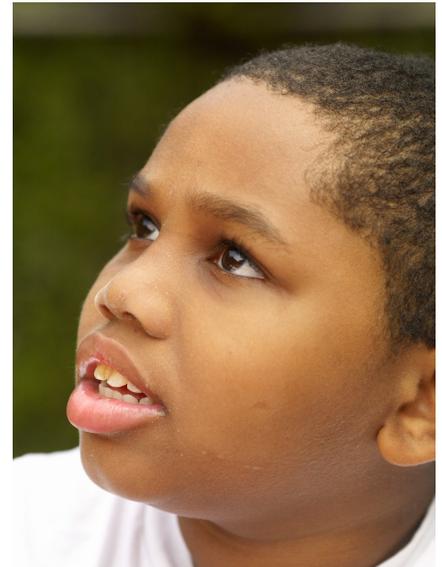
- Contact your local government official to request the adoption of a proclamation.
- They will use their own language and format but you can make it easy for them by providing them sample language (Sample language provided in the Appendix) and information about autism.
- Make an appointment to meet with the mayor for the signing of the proclamation, suggesting April 2<sup>nd</sup> as the date for the signing as a means to publicize his support of the cause, etc.

The media often seek to cover events attended by government officials. The participation of these officials will attract media attention, resulting in exposure for World Autism Awareness Day as well as local campaigns.

### Involving Local Businesses

Businesses can help organizations reach large and diverse audiences. Ask local businesses to participate in the campaign by:

- Providing counter or other space for displaying campaign flyers.
- Hanging posters in their lobbies, patient rooms, cafeterias, lounges, restrooms and other areas visible to patrons and employees.
- Allowing the organization to have an information booth in their lobby.
- Allowing the organization to distribute flyers and greet patrons while entering their stores.
- Adding World Autism Awareness Day information to their websites and/or links to the sponsoring organization and the Autism Speaks website ([www.autismspeaks.org](http://www.autismspeaks.org)) for further information.
- Placing an ad in their company newsletter.
- Sponsoring or providing in-kind donations for any planned World Autism Awareness Day Campaign needs.
- Collecting and sending employee donations to the sponsoring organization or another child welfare agency designated by the sponsoring organization.



## Health Clinics

Health clinics are key places to raise awareness of autism. Consider how many people fill the waiting rooms at doctor's offices and hospitals on a daily basis. To pass the time, patients often read brochures, flyers and posters. Since medical professionals have a vested interest in the safety and wellbeing of children, they usually are very receptive to supporting causes related to child welfare.

To involve health care professionals:

- Ask the administrative staff for their support. Request permission to hang a campaign poster and leave flyers about autism.
- Brief the medical and administrative staff on autism in case patients inquire about the campaign.



## 3. Media Outreach

Gaining media attention during World Autism Awareness Day is an effective way to increase awareness about the widespread need for support for families with autistic children. Positive media coverage will also generate excitement about local campaigns for World Autism Awareness Day.

For starters, research the media. Pay close attention to the area news media. Include print and broadcast media as well as bulletin boards, community events and other outlets that are appropriate for disseminating information. Then follow these research steps:

- Make a media list of all newspapers, radio/TV/cable stations in your area. Ask coworkers to bring in their community newspapers to help broaden the media list (the media list is discussed in more detail in the next section). Make sure you focus on media that reaches the audience

you want to target.

- Make contact with the media on the list to determine the correct reporter to target (for example the reporter who covers community events.)
- Prepare a press release for distribution (press releases are discussed in more detail and are provided in the Appendix).
- Call the advertising department at radio-stations and ask them to provide their list of news, programs and talk shows.
- Use the program list to determine if the medium offers free airtime for agencies or organizations to discuss community affairs.
- Use the compiled information to analyze the audience of each radio/TV/cable station. Find out who is listening (including their age, income, residence and zip codes), and when.
- Watch the TV programs and listen to the radio shows to get a sense of their tone. Craft a message that suits their programs.

Include the following items in your World Autism Awareness Day Press Kit:

- A press release announcing World Autism Awareness Day.
- Information about the history of World Autism Awareness Day and Autism Speaks.
- A biographical sketch about the organization's director and/or lead spokesperson.
- A publicity photograph of the lead spokesperson.
- A listing of events and other activities that the organization has planned for the month.
- Organization's brochure or other promotional materials.
- A human interest story about a unique family dealing successfully with autism and, if possible, their photo.
- A fact sheet of local, state and national autism statistics.

Press kits are traditionally presented in a standard two-pocket folder. If it is financially feasible, it is striking to print an organization's logo and contact information on the press kit folders. Another option is to collate the information in your agency's existing two-pocket folders.

### **Opinion Editorials**

Opinion Editorial (op-ed) pages of newspapers include articles written by experts in certain fields. These articles usually offer a viewpoint on current events and/or hot topics. The topic of autism is compelling enough for potential inclusion in the op-eds.

Customize an op-ed to your community. Then send it to the editors of the local newspaper (locate the editor's name at the top of the op-ed page in that particular newspaper).

A copy of an op-ed is provided in the appendix.

### **Public Service Announcements**

Public Service Announcements (PSAs) are announcements made by the media on behalf of nonprofit organizations and/or worthy causes, and can be used on the radio, in newspapers, on TV, and on billboards. For organizations under budget constraints, PSAs are a practical alternative to paid advertising because the advertising time or space is donated by the media organizations. The Autism Speaks campaign materials are available to organizations and media free of charge. Agencies can add their name and logo to the World Autism Awareness Day PSA.

Most media allocate donated time or space for PSAs from non-profit organizations. However, these donated messages are usually printed in more obscure places, or are aired at off-peak times. Prime space is usually reserved for paying advertisers. Nonetheless, the PSA is still a productive form of advertising. Since non-profit organizations compete for the limited spots available, you need to submit your PSA request in advance of the desired print or air date.



Plan to hand-deliver PSAs to all targeted newspapers and stations including the cable stations that feature community calendars. Personal delivery and follow-up are key components to getting a PSA the attention that it deserves. Schedule a meeting, research stations for "hooks" or connections to issue (i.e. president of station adopted, etc.)

#### 4. Planning Press Events

Press conferences are designed to gather the media for an important announcement. To attract media attention, the announcement must be newsworthy.

A kick-off event, such as a press conference or rally, will draw attention to the campaign at the beginning of the month. If there is other compelling news about autism, consider presenting it in a press conference format or host an energetic rally. It is also possible to combine a press conference and rally into one informative and festive affair.



#### Uniting for the World Autism Awareness Initiative

It is important for the world autism community to come together on this day, April 2<sup>nd</sup>, to build attention around the growing health care crisis of autism. . By bringing together autism organizations all around the world, we will give a voice to the millions of children worldwide who are undiagnosed, misunderstood and looking for help. Please join us in our effort to make this possible.

Throughout the month of April, record the success of each World Autism Awareness Day initiative. Document the amount of press received, the number of people who attended events, the community leaders who joined the campaign, the number of speaking engagements fulfilled, the public service space that was donated, and the number of families recruited and the number of distributed giveaway items.

Send your ideas and initiatives to us at:  
[info@worldautismawarenessday.org](mailto:info@worldautismawarenessday.org)

#### ***Autism Resources on the Web***

<http://www.autismspeaks.org>

<http://www.shafallah.org.ga/>

<http://www.autism-india.org/>

# Appendix

Sample PSA



World  
Autism  
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Day

April 2, 2008



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Awareness Day

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*Sample Proclamation (to be put on official letterhead)*



**Proclamation**

-Whereas autism affects all persons regardless of race, religion, socio-economic status or geography;

- Whereas the incidence of autism in the United States is 1 in 150 and 1 in 94 boys, with rates appearing to have increased similarly around the globe;

- Whereas a child is diagnosed with autism every 20 minutes,

- Whereas based on data collected from North America, Western Europe and Japan, it is conservatively estimated that 35 million people worldwide have autism;

- Whereas on December 18<sup>th</sup> 2007 the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 62/139 World Autism Awareness Day by unanimous consent, encouraging UN Member States to take measures to raise awareness about autism throughout society and to promote early diagnosis and early behavioral intervention;

-Whereas the resolution designates World Autism Awareness Day as a United Nations Day to be observed every year starting in 2008 to raise global awareness of autism;

- Whereas the aims for World Autism Awareness Day are to inform the general public about the global health crisis of autism, stress the importance of early diagnosis and early intervention, and to celebrate the unique talents and qualities of individuals with autism,

- Whereas autism is a lifelong condition in which the bulk of cost calls in adulthood, creating an enormous economic impact,

- Whereas the consequent development challenges of autism threaten to undermine the achievement of the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals;

Now, therefore, let it be resolved that the City of \_\_\_\_\_ implements the ideals of World Autism Awareness day in the United States on April 2<sup>nd</sup> in perpetuity until the cure for autism is found.

## *Background Information*

### **World Autism Awareness Day**

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By bringing together autism organizations all around the world, we will give a voice to the millions of individuals worldwide who are undiagnosed, misunderstood and looking for help. Please join us in our effort to make this possible.

*Sample: Op-ed*

INTERNATIONAL  
**Herald Tribune**

## **Accepting autism**

By Jacqueline Aidenbaum International Herald Tribune  
Tuesday, January 8, 2008

**New York:** Last month, the United Nations designated April 2 as World Autism Awareness Day. As the mother of a 3-year-old boy who was diagnosed with autism, I might not, at first glance, read much into a nonbinding resolution that does not allocate resources for research or require states to take action.

But the act addresses a critical shortage: It promotes the acceptance and the compassion necessary for our children to grow up with opportunity and support.

My son is a handsome boy, funny and affectionate, who was born a “healthy” child. However, from early on I noted that his personality was somehow different from the other babies who seemed hyperactive compared to his laid back, pleasant ways.

I noticed that he would hit the so-called “milestones” later than others - crawling when other kids were walking; not liking to be held by others. By the time he was one, he showed little awareness of the world outside. Being my only son, I thought it was just a matter of personality. But these were warning signs.

By the time he was a year-and-a-half-old I started to share my concerns. A friend told me I should bring him for an evaluation, but I was discouraged by both my family and doctors, who told me that my son was just fine, that boys were simply slower.

The warning signs increased. While other kids his age were now talking, jumping, showing cognitive development, my son seemed to regress. He stopped saying the couple of words he had (“mom” being one of them). He wouldn’t respond to his name, his eye contact was very poor and he wouldn’t play appropriately with toys, other than putting them in his mouth or banging them against the floor.

The day after his second birthday, I called the Early Intervention Office of the New York Department of Health. Throughout the evaluations, they kept asking me whether he had the habit of flapping his arms, tiptoeing, spinning or staring at lights. I answered yes to all. He did not engage in “pretend play,” he could not imitate my funny faces and would not point at things. Two months later, I was hit with what now seems so obvious: an autism diagnosis.

Eventually, I confided in friends and family members. Some supported me; others just thought that I was exaggerating, and that my son behaved as he did merely because I was an overprotective mother. Others said they saw something along the lines of autism, but did not think it was their place to say. I wish they had had the courage to tell me then; my son would have gotten therapy earlier, and by now he would have progressed even further.

If that isn’t crushing enough, there are implications to society’s lack of acceptance as well. With children with autism, tantrums in public are common, and so are the harsh looks and the

unfair judgments that my son is a brat or that I am a bad mother. I know that my son must face the world without me one day. He must have friends. He must have opportunities.

The UN resolution promotes early diagnosis and awareness of autism's warning signs. Once diagnosed, early intervention can make a huge difference in the development of children with autism. My son received intensive therapy for a year, five days a week from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., by a team of two special educators, an occupational and a physical therapist; two speech pathologists, and a social worker. Today, at 3-and-a-half, my son is able to make short sentences both in English and Spanish. More importantly, he's been able to tell me whether he is hungry or sleepy, cold or hot, sad or happy. He attends a preschool for kids with special needs from 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., receives home therapy in the afternoons, and is expected to be mainstreamed to a regular school by age five.

Where would he have been had he not received early intensive treatment? We will never know. Where will he be 10 years from now? We don't know that either. But we do count our blessings.

Many parents are concerned with whether their children will be doctors or lawyers, and when, and to whom, they will get married. For us, the concerns are: Will my child be able to live an independent life? Who will take care of him when I am no longer around?

One of the things that we, parents of children with autism, have learned is to be in the moment, and to celebrate every little, yet giant, progress our child makes every day.

I hope World Autism Awareness Day will educate the world by showing that these kids are not the way they are because we spoil them, neglect them or overprotect them. They don't choose to avoid eye contact or to be silent. This resolution, like their friends and families, speaks for them.

*Jacqueline Aidenbaum, a national of Argentina, is on leave as an information assistant with the United Nations.*

*Article on WAAD:*

INTERNATIONAL  
**Herald Tribune** **Qatar spearheads designation of April 2 as  
World Autism Awareness Day**

The Associated Press, Wednesday, November 28, 2007

**UNITED NATIONS:** With the rate of autism increasing dramatically, Qatar is spearheading adoption of a U.N. resolution that would designate April 2 as World Autism Awareness Day starting next year.

The resolution surmounted its first hurdle on Nov. 1 when it was approved by the General Assembly's human rights committee. It is co-sponsored by 50 countries and is expected to be adopted by the 192-nation world body in early December.

Qatar's U.N. Ambassador Nassir Al-Nasser told a news conference Tuesday that the country's emir, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, and his consort, Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al Missned, took the initiative because of the high rate of autism in children in all regions of the world.

"Her highness has made tremendous efforts to change the way the Qatari society views people with disability, and breaking the barrier of shame, of which this group and their families have been suffering," Al-Nasser said.

The draft resolution would designate every April 2 as World Autism Awareness Day and ask all countries, U.N. bodies, international organizations and non-governmental groups to take steps to raise awareness of the disorder.

It calls autism "a lifelong developmental disability that manifests itself during the first three years of life and results from a neurological disorder that affects the functioning of the brain." It mainly affects children and is characterized "by impairments in social interaction, problems with verbal and non-verbal communication and restrictive, repetitive behavior, interests and activities," the draft says.

The draft resolution expresses deep concern at "the prevalence and high rate of autism in children in all regions of the world and the consequent developmental challenges."

Autism has always been diagnosed by making judgments about a child's behavior. For decades, the diagnosis was given only to children with severe language and social impairments and unusual, repetitious behaviors. But in the 1990s, the autism umbrella expanded, and now includes a group of milder, related conditions.

Bob and Suzanne Wright, who founded the U.S. national advocacy group Autism Speaks in February 2005 after their grandson was diagnosed with the disorder, stressed the importance of adopting the resolution.

Autism affects "tens of millions worldwide," including 1.5 million Americans, "and numbers are increasing dramatically," Suzanne Wright said.

Bob Wright said Autism Speaks is sponsoring an epidemiological study to measure the scale of the global epidemic, working with more than 20 countries to collect and share data that could help in deciding policies and research into causes, diagnosis and treatment.

The resolution's call for action and observances on April 2 will bring autism organizations from all around the world together "in a single voice to fight this terrible disorder," said Wright, a vice chairman of General Electric, who served as CEO of the NBC television network for more than 20 years.

"By bringing autism awareness to a global level, we'll give it a voice to the millions of children worldwide who are undiagnosed, misunderstood, abused and looking for help," Bob Wright said.