

# The Town of Brookhaven Celebrates Autism Awareness Month

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**Farmingville, NY** - Supervisor Mark Lesko announced that on April 28, 2010, the Town of Brookhaven will be "lighting it up blue" for autism awareness. The event is sponsored by the Autism Coalition of Long Island and will feature numerous local autism advocacy and education organizations. The Town will also hold a ceremony to bring attention to autism spectrum disorder and light the Town Hall Auditorium up blue.

Supervisor Lesko said, "So many families in Brookhaven are affected by autism. Hopefully this event will provide information to residents about the various organizations on Long Island that work every day to ensure that children and adults with autism lead healthy and productive lives."

"No parent or child should ever feel alone in their journey," said Deputy Supervisor/Councilwoman Kathleen Walsh. "I am proud that Town of Brookhaven is partnering with the Autism Coalition of Long Island and Autism Speaks to bring together families with the resources that will help us all to better understand Autism and improve the quality of life of these special individuals and their families."

"The Autism Coalition of Long Island applauds Town of Brookhaven Supervisor Mark Lesko for hosting an event where the entire community, including individuals and families living with autism can come together, share information, and celebrate Autism Awareness Month in the Town of Brookhaven," said Diane Cahill, President of the Autism Coalition of Long Island.

"The fact that autism is estimated to occur in 1 of every 110 children touches and concerns most everyone at some point in their lives," commented Brookhaven Town Councilman Dan Panico. "While relatively recent developments have led to increased research and understanding of autism, there is still much more to be done and programs like Autism Speaks raise the public awareness and likeliness of a cure."

Councilwoman Connie Kepert said, "As a special education teacher I am well aware of both the unique challenges that confront autistic children, as well as, their enormous potential. This tremendous potential and the many difficult challenges were recently portrayed in a recent movie entitled Temple Grandin. Due to the advocacy of many parents and organizations like the Autism Advocacy Coalition opportunities for autistic children and adults will continue to multiply."

"It's wonderful that the Town is taking part in such an important event," said Councilwoman Jane Bonner. "I know of so many families with autistic children who overcome difficult challenges everyday, but they need help. I am happy to support the efforts of Autism Speaks and the Autism Coalition of Long Island. They are two great organizations and their work is an inspiration to all."

Councilman Tim Mazzei said, "Light it Up Blue is a great way to generate awareness and build support for the children and families that are most affected by Autism. I will do whatever I can to help these families and I urge residents throughout Brookhaven to participate in this event and show your support as well."

"Autism affects 1 in 110 children and 1 in 70 boys and apparently the numbers are even greater on Long Island," said Councilman Steve Fiore-Rosenfeld. "With statistics like that we should do all that we can to bring awareness to this disorder and make the future brighter for all those who struggle with Autism."

According to Autism Speaks, a major national autism advocacy organization, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention found that autism affects 1 in every 110 American children, including 1 in 70 boys. The prevalence rate for autism rose 57% between 2002 and 2006 and more children will be diagnosed with autism this year than with AIDS, diabetes, and cancer combined.

The Brookhaven autism awareness event starts at 6:30 pm in the Town Hall Auditorium (1 Independence Hill, Brookhaven, NY). Various autism organizations will provide materials to the public and a ceremony will take place at 7:00 pm. The Ceremony will include remarks from the Autism Coalition of Long Island and two Brookhaven parents of children with autism, who are both from Shirley: Keith Ray, a member of the LI Walk Committee for Autism Speaks and Joan Hempton, a member of the Long Island Autism Coalition.

Entertainment will be provided by the Family Residences and Essential Enterprises (FREE) Players Platinum Explosion Jazz Ensemble, nine men and women that celebrate music together in a way that can only be described as breathtaking. Their vocal repertoire features everything from 1940's swing to doo-wop to current hits, all in four part harmony. In addition, the audience will enjoy musical performances from Sarah Turkiew, a Long Island autism advocate who is also an individual with autism. Miss Turkiew attends Nassau Community College and performs there with the general band and the jazz band. She also participates in the New World Jazz ensemble at Dowling College, the Farmingdale Pops Community Band, and plays regularly at Long Island autism fundraising events with the Manhattan Rhythm Machine.

The organizations represented at this event will include:

- Autism Coalition of Long Island
- Eden II / Genesis Outreach Autism Center
- Autism Speaks
- Nassau Suffolk Services For Autism (NSSA)
- Autism Society of America - Nassau / Suffolk Chapter (NSASA)
- Spectrum Designs
- Family Residences and Essential Enterprises (FREE)
- The Elija School
- Asperger Syndrome and High Functioning Autism Association (AHA)
- Nassau Suffolk Law Services, Inc.
- Hope Fitness
- The Town of Brookhaven Anti-Bias Task Force
- School for Language & Community Development (SLCD)

To RSVP for this event log on to [www.brookhaven.org](http://www.brookhaven.org). If you are an Autism organization and would like to participate, contact Diane Cahill of the Autism Coalition of Long Island at [dcahill.autismspeaks@gmail.com](mailto:dcahill.autismspeaks@gmail.com) and or 631-612-8884.

**Division of Public Information \* Office of the Supervisor**

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