

STARability Foundation shining light on World Autism Month

Every April, World Autism Month raises awareness and increases understanding and acceptance for families affected by autism. This year, STARability Foundation is asking the community to join in helping create a world where all people with autism, across the spectrum and throughout the life span, can reach their full potential — and keep the support going all year long.

Autism, or autism spectrum disorder, refers to a broad range of conditions characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech and nonverbal communication. The condition typically starts during childhood and continues into adulthood. There is not simply one type of autism, but many subtypes that are influenced by a combination of genetic and environmental factors. Each person with autism has a distinct set of strengths and challenges. The ways in which people with autism learn, think and problem-solve, as well as the amount of care they require in their daily lives, varies greatly. Though people with autism experience the world differently, with support, they have the potential to live fulfilling and impactful lives.

“Our goal is to ensure everyone in need has access to programs, resources, and an educated and respectful community that can provide opportunities for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to live a meaningful and productive life,” said Karen Govern, CEO of STARability Foundation. “We



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do this through advocacy, programs that focus on vocational training, continuing education, teamwork, social engagement and community involvement, and providing resources and support to families throughout their journey.”

The experienced team at STARability is dedicated to promoting solutions for the needs of individuals with autism and their caregivers, allowing them to express themselves through music, art and dance, use technology to interact with others, and find rewarding jobs. They take pride in helping them reconnect with old friends and form bonds with new ones.

Currently, STARability offers a variety of programs that promote inclusive employment, engagement and independence such as family forums; STAR Connections — creative expression workshops, wellness classes, continuing education and sports leagues; the Trailblazer Academy — a pioneering day program; employment services; and the STAR Store and Studio. At STARability Foundation, about 60% of the individuals they serve are on the autism spectrum.

“At STARability, we refer to the individuals in our programs as STARs because they brighten our lives, our community and our world,” said Govern. “Our STARs inspire our work and spark our passion to create new initiatives and to build on the innovative programs that help them thrive. STARs show us again and again the achievements and milestones they can accomplish — reaching new goals each day, developing critical life skills, and laying the foundation for a positive future.”

To learn more about the services and program offerings available, visit <https://STARability.org/>.■

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SPRING INTO HEALTHY HEARING EVENT

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