

Celebrating, Supporting, and Promoting Heterogeneity through Community-Based Events

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Thank you for having us!

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Acknowledgements

- Volunteers
- Community Members
- Sponsors
- Planning Committee members





Overview

- Background and the Why?
- Inclusive Halloween
- Officer Friendly Day
- Q&A



A Note on Language

We would like
to use
person-centered
language

We will use
person first and
identity first
language

The Why Behind What We Do



THERE IS
ONLY ONE WAY TO LOOK AT THINGS
UNTIL
SOMEONE SHOWS US HOW
TO LOOK AT THEM
WITH DIFFERENT EYES.

-PABLO PICASSO

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EXCLUSION

Exclusion occurs when students are directly or indirectly prevented from or denied access to education in any form.



SEGREGATION

Segregation occurs when the education of students with disabilities is provided in separate environments designed or used to respond to a particular or various impairments, in isolation from students without disabilities.



INTEGRATION

Integration is a process of placing persons with disabilities in existing mainstream educational institutions, as long as the former can adjust to the standardized requirements of such institutions.



INCLUSION

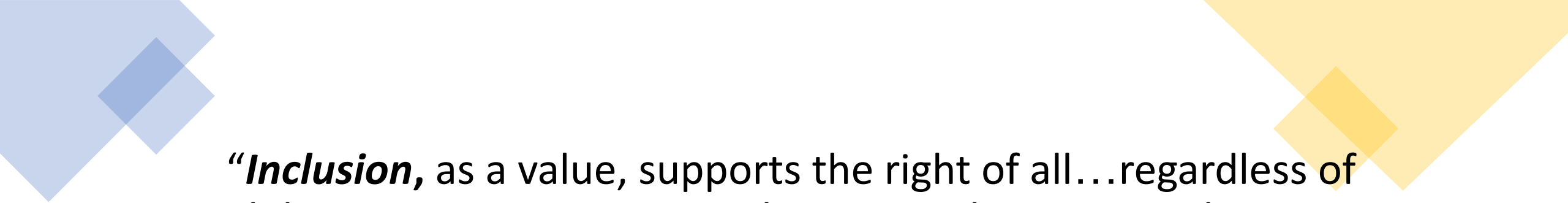
Inclusion involves a process of systemic reform embodying changes and modifications in content, teaching methods, approaches, structures and strategies in education to overcome barriers with a vision serving to provide all students of the relevant age range with an equitable and participatory learning experience and environment that best corresponds to their requirements and preferences.

Placing students with disabilities within mainstream classes without accompanying structural changes to, for example, organisation, curriculum and teaching and learning strategies, does not constitute inclusion. Furthermore, integration does not automatically guarantee the transition from segregation to inclusion.

Inclusion

Inclusion is the removal of barriers to learning and increasing access and participation

(Baglieri and Shapiro, 2012)



“***Inclusion***, as a value, supports the right of all...regardless of abilities, to participate actively in natural settings within their communities. Natural settings are those in which the [individual] would spend time had he or she not had a disability. These settings include, but are not limited to, home... neighborhood school classrooms, child care, places of worship, recreational (such as community playgrounds and community events) and other settings that all... families enjoy.”

(Sandhall, McLean, & Smith, 2000, p. 18)



Community Building for Belonging

Working together to achieve common goals
increases a sense of belonging

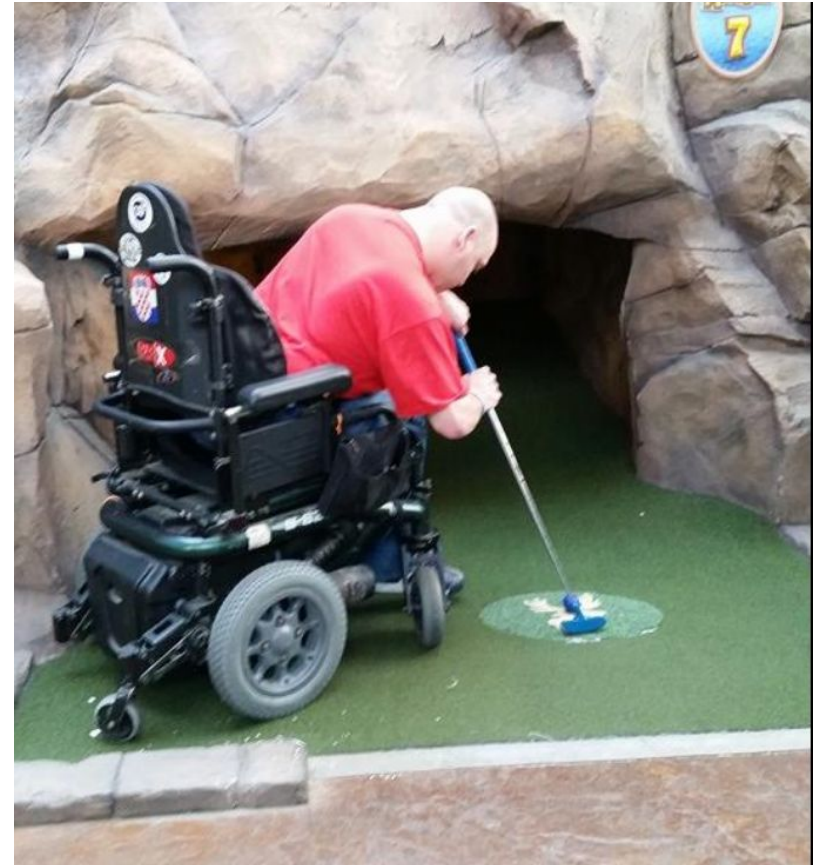
(Douthwaite, 1996; Shaw et al., 2020)



(Fialka, 2016)



(Fialka, 2016)



Why Create Inclusive Environments
and Events?



**Because It
Matters!**

(Fialka, 2016, p. 233)



(Causton & Tracy-Bronson, 2015, p. 97)

Inclusive Halloween

What is Halloween?

Goals for the Event

- Create a trick or treating experience for all community members where everyone can participate.
- Create a judgement free atmosphere where everyone is welcomed for who they are.

Considerations made during planning

Volunteer training and [information sheet](#)



Considerations made during planning

- Trick or treat rooms - spooky and happy
- Trick or treat items - editable and non-editable



Considerations made during planning

- Adaptive games - Capture the Ghost
- Accessible games - adaptive scissors, precut pieces, large glue sticks, large markers



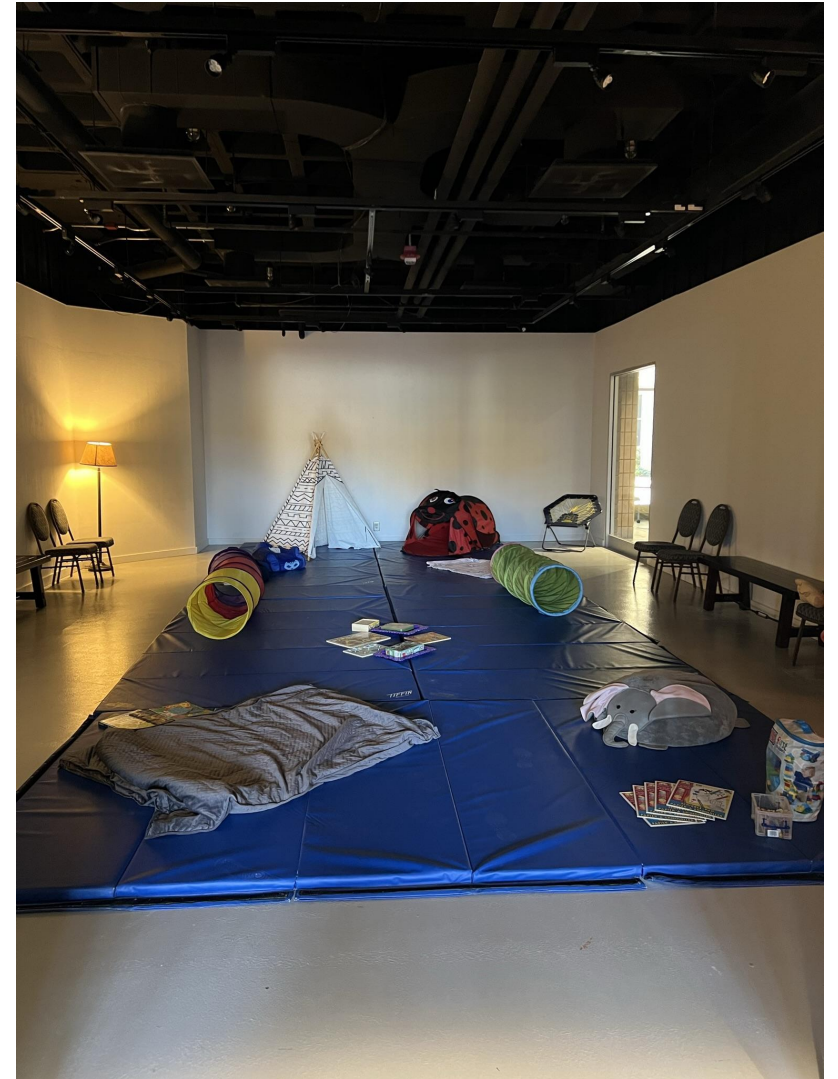
Considerations made during planning

Outdoor sensory area - silent disco, water beads, ribbon dancing, digging for treasure in a pool



Considerations made during planning

Sensory room - lowlights, comfortable seating, tents, pillows, books, books in braille, coloring materials



Considerations made during planning

Changing area for older children and adults who use briefs

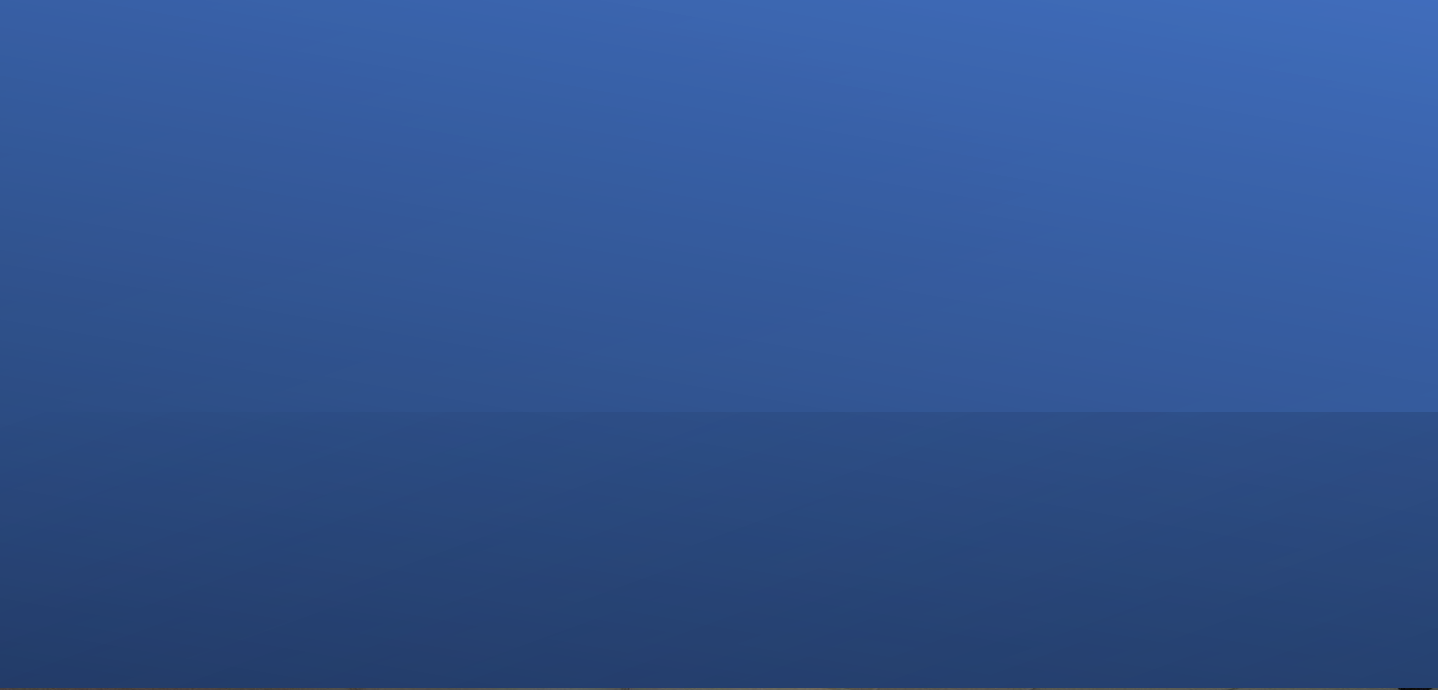


Considerations made during planning

Food - gluten free, nut free











A large, solid orange circle is positioned on the left side of the slide, partially cut off by the edge. It contains white text.

After the
event we
wondered...

What did community members and volunteers
think about Inclusive Halloween?



What did community members say?

- “My favorite moment was when a little boy who liked my son's costume gave him a hug. Neither of them were concerned with their differences. They just showed one another kindness and friendship and had a moment of connection based on shared interests. It was very sweet.”
- “My son is almost 30 years old and loves Halloween. He is deaf and autistic and this is the first time that we could truly enjoy Halloween without having to explain his challenges. I was brought to tears by the warmth and compassion of the entire process. It was truly a remarkable experience for both of us and we look forward to next year and any other events that may be planned in the future. Thank you!”
- “Thank you for letting us enjoy a party where no one will judge a person for acting out due to the anxiety of the unknown at a party.”

What did community members say?

- “Everyone made my son feel special during this event. He had such a smile the whole time. This day was priceless for him since he’s an older kid.”
- “It was so nice to have a place that was already predispositioned to accommodate!”
- “The kindness the staff and workers all showed. The generosity and the sense of inclusion and community. But mostly, how happy and safe to be themselves all of the little ones seemed to feel.”
- “We could all feel safe and not embarrassed how my daughter Amelia acted.”

What did volunteers say?

- “It gave a deeper understanding that the activities that we participate in are not always accessible to our community members with disabilities.”
- “I have a child on the spectrum at home, but this gave me a wider view of the folks that have challenges with these seemingly typical childhood experiences.”
- “It increased my awareness of inclusivity and gave me additional tools and frame of reference to more consistently be conscious of inclusivity needs (quiet spaces, removing chairs from tables for wheelchairs/adult strollers.”
- “My attention to the Deaf Community was heightened beyond what it has ever been. I met many intelligent people who all deserve a safe way to communicate their thoughts and feelings who were nonverbal or deaf. As a student studying literacy, this has really broadened my understanding of conversation and what truly matters in our communities.”

What did volunteers say?

- “The experience made me want to volunteer and be a better community member. Such events make people feel welcomed and loved. In my career, I hope to give back to others through volunteer work such as this.”
- “A mom was crying when she approached our table and she was saying how amazing it was to see her son have some independence at the event. She said she wished there had been events like this when he was little but she was so happy to see him excited. She said that just knowing he wasn't going to be asked to say anything and could simply point or take something from the tables was amazing. She could see him relax more after each experience!!”
- “The comradery of the community agencies that came together to help these young men, women, and adults.” (favorite part)

Officer Friendly Day

The Intersection of Autism and Law Enforcement

1 in 5 autistic adults report coming in contact with law enforcement officers at least once by their mid twenties (Rava et al., 2017)

Individuals with ASD are NOT more likely to commit crimes than neurotypical peers (Ghaziuddin et al., 1991; Mouridsen, 2012)

Twice as likely to be victims of crime compared to neurotypical peers

May engage in illegal activities without understanding it is illegal (Mesibov & Sreckovic, 2017)

Heightened Concern of Calls Involving Autistic Individuals

Common Characteristics of ASD:

- speech and communication delays
- stereotyped repetitive behaviors both physical and verbal
- hyper or hypoactivity to sensory input such as sound, light, or touch
- poor eye-contact
- inflexibility or over-adherence to routines (APA, 2013)

Law enforcement officers may misinterpret those characteristics as:

- Defiance
- Showing lack of respect
- Threatening

Common Calls Involving Individuals on the Spectrum

Elopement and wandering

Autistic individuals are at a 10 times higher risk for drowning than individuals without autism

Crisis Call

Escalated challenging behaviors

Suspicious Person

Person exhibiting unusual behavior

Goals behind Officer Friendly Day for our Autistic Community

- We want our community members on the spectrum and their families/caregivers to engage in a fun event in a judgment-free atmosphere, where everyone is welcomed and valued for who they are.
- We want individuals with autism to have the opportunity to engage with law enforcement officers and become familiar with their uniforms and vehicles, so that in the event of an emergency they are familiar with the sights of police vehicles and uniforms.
- We want autistic individuals and families/caregivers to have the opportunity to ask law enforcement officers any questions they have about safety and disclosure.

Goals for Law Enforcement during Officer Friendly Day

- Opportunities for law enforcement officers to interact with autistic individuals and build relationships with them prior to emergency situations.
- Opportunities for law enforcement officers to become more familiar with the characteristics of autism so that when they are on a call that involves someone on the spectrum, they may be more comfortable recognizing possible signs of autism and engaging with autistic individuals.

Click for [More Info](#)

Join us!
[click here to register!](#)

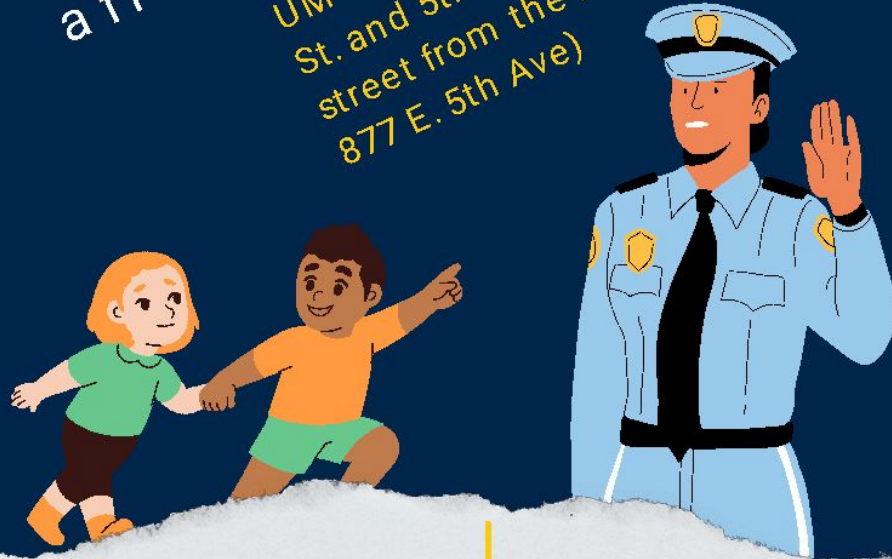
go.umflint.edu/officerfriendlyday2023



Officer Friendly Day!

a free family friendly event

UM-Flint parking lot at Saginaw St. and 5th Ave (across the street from the Family Dollar at 877 E. 5th Ave)



A free community event to build relationships between police officers and people with autism.

Enjoy food, police vehicle tours, mock pull-overs, games, story time with officers, and more!

Saturday,
May 6th
2023
1:00 pm - 3:00 pm



Considerations Made During the Officer Friendly Day Planning

- Opportunities for autistic individuals, law enforcement officers, and families to interact
- Provide engaging activities for various ages
- Share information about safety with community members
- Share information about autistic individuals with law enforcement officers
- Be sensitive to the needs of autistic individuals throughout the event (inclusive food options such as gluten free, nut free)
- Prime individuals on the spectrum for the [event](#)



Law Enforcement Vehicles



Activities





New this year... Interactive Safety Village



Techtopia





Interactions



911

STATE POLICE

19-





Safety With the Police



AUTISM & WANDERING PREVENTION TIPS

promoting safety in the home & community

49% wander

Similar to the wandering behaviors in seniors with dementia or Alzheimer's, children and adults with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are prone to wandering away from a safe environment. Because many children with ASD have challenges in areas of language and cognitive function, it is critical for parents to understand ways to keep their child or adult with autism safe.

- prevention
- education
- response

Install Home Safeguards

Install secure locks (exterior doors), home security system or door/window chimes; fence yard; secure gates; keep garage opener out of reach; use baby monitors and visual prompts like simple stop signs.

Secure Personal Safeguards

Have wearable identification on your child; temporary tattoos are great for field trips and other outings; Check with local law enforcement to see if they offer tracking devices.

Create Community Awareness

Alert trusted neighbors, and introduce them to your child; fill out an alert form for local police; include a current photo and unique characteristics, likes, fears, and behaviors; alert the school, and bus drivers.

Remain Hyper Vigilant

Stay on extra high alert during warmer months, holidays, vacations, camping trips, transition periods, outdoor gatherings, a recent move to a new home or school, visiting an unfamiliar setting, public outings.

Initiate a "tag, you're it" system during family gatherings and transitions. Tag one responsible adult to closely supervise your child for an agreed-upon period of time.

Identify Triggers/Teach Self-help

Be aware of any known triggers that could prompt fleeing (loud noises, bright lights, fears, etc.) and work towards teaching your child safe alternative ways to respond.

For an individual who demonstrates bolting behaviors due to fear or stress, etc., use aids, such as noise-cancelling headphones, and teach calming techniques using favorites topics or items.

Teach Safety Skills

Enroll your child into swimming lessons. Final lessons should be with clothes and shoes on.

Use social stories to teach individuals with autism ways to stay safe, and use favorite objects or tools to demonstrate when it's outside time versus inside time.

Call 911

Remain calm and always call 911 immediately if an individual with ASD is missing; law enforcement should treat each case as "critical."

Law enforcement agencies are encouraged to contact the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children at 1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678) for additional assistance.

Search Water First

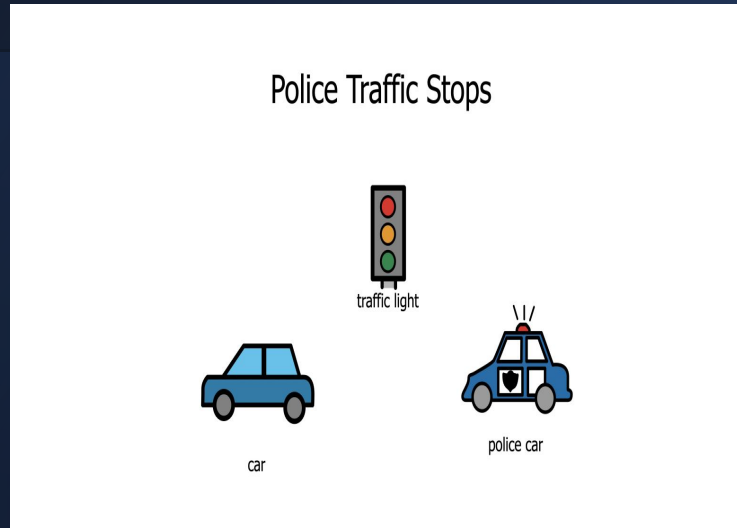
Immediately search areas that pose the highest threat first, such as nearby water, busy streets, train tracks, and parked cars.

NATIONAL AUTISM ASSOCIATION

For more tips and resources, visit nationalautism.org.

Information Sharing

Simulated Pull-Over Opportunity



After the
event we
wondered...

What did community members, law
enforcement officers, and student volunteers
think about Officer Friendly Day?



“One little young man, I went down to play with, he was doing a little car city, and he was driving his little cars around, and he had them all on the line, and I took the one in the back, and I drove it myself to connect with him. He took it right back, put it right back in the line because where he's at he needs that organization. And the parents explained it to me, but they didn't explain it in an offensive way. ‘Why did you do that?’ They knew my intentions clearly. But even if they didn't know, **you could just tell that the way they communicate about their child being on the spectrum, was just so impressive.**”
– Officer Volunteer

“The officers were all very nice and kind and it was great to see so many municipalities represented”
-Community Member

“That my son got to see the officers portrayed in a good way”
-Community Member

“It was a **judgement free environment** which I really liked. **It definitely was inclusive.** Every single thing that I could think of was there. Even opening the bubble containers, which was the station I was at, was inclusive.”
-Student Volunteer

Impact

“I think working with other future educators is really exciting, and the facilitators are very, very passionate about issues that many children and people with disabilities go through within this country. **So, seeing their passion and seeing how much they care about these issues really resonated with me and inspired me to do my own research.**” - Student Volunteer

“So, I think that as I go forward, hopefully in my teaching career I can do things like this, and **I can be a community member that connects everybody.**”

- Student volunteer

“We have a duty to de-escalate. We have a duty to ensure safety for everyone. And for this population, our community members, they need a little bit more patience from us. And so, that was really just reinforced by Officer Friendly Day. **My desire is to expose it to as many officers as possible.**”

– Officer Volunteer

Inclusion and Relationships

“We've had training that mentioned autism and being on the spectrum and interacting with individuals. But, **I had never been part of, in my entire career of an outreach effort, that tries to bring [together] law enforcement with those on the spectrum and their families, because it's also about the families.** And again, it's about service. It's about providing service and keeping people safe...” – Officer Volunteer

“I think I even heard some parents saying that was **the most their kid has ever interacted in an open community setting like that.** So, just having those opportunities. And then, they can maybe decide, maybe we can branch out a little bit. They did well here. Like a good starting point to lead into other events.” – Student Volunteer

“I just have a **genuine appreciation** for individuals that are on the spectrum and their families.”
- Officer Volunteer

“...connect the families to have people that they can communicate with, or people they know that their kids can play with together. Just build relationships between people.” – Student Volunteer

Learning Opportunities

“You don't know what you don't know. And so, a lot of times officers don't know about people with autism, and they have limited experience with them. **Events like this really drive home that,** especially with the interactions and the conversations and the smiles and the laughs.” – Officer Volunteer

“The patience and understanding and almost the insight that the family has. And again, that's another takeaway. **Listen to the family members.**” Officer Volunteer

“...it did get me thinking about how would kids in my classroom with autism react. **How can I support kids with autism within my own classroom?** So, it really got me thinking about my future as a teacher.” – Student Volunteer

Safety

“...at the end of the day the mission of any police agency and the Department of Public Safety isn't to have feel-good days. It's life safety. **The greatest benefit (to OFD) is an enhanced life safety.** If we were to pull up tomorrow on that little boy that was eating that pizza, and he was to see a police officer or if I was to see him, and he was on a street corner and in a bad place, he's not gonna see me and run into traffic.”

– Officer Volunteer

“Oftentimes, when you're put into a situation you meet people, different types of people or different challenges that different people may face, it can be awkward at first just because you don't quite know what to say or how to say it. But, this certainly reinforces that I've done this before. So, **it's much easier to interact and communicate with the families and the people that are affected by autism.**”

– Officer Volunteer

“And so using patience, realizing that if we leverage patience, that transcends on the street. So, **as we come in contact with individuals that are on the spectrum on the street, that's a time to take a deep breath, to turn down your radios and listen and connect.** We can be very aggressive very quickly, because we're going call to call. But you'll save more time by taking these techniques that we learned, and then the interaction that just reinforced all of that classroom stuff that took place at Officer Friendly Day.” – Officer Volunteer

Spreading Officer Friendly Day to other Communities

Officer Friendly Day Event Guide *Tips to Hosting your own Successful Event*



What is Officer Friendly Day?

Officer Friendly Day is a free, family-friendly event to celebrate autism and build relationships between autistic individuals and their families and law enforcement officers. This event is geared toward individuals with autism and their families. It is an opportunity for individuals on the spectrum (all ages) and their families/caregivers to engage with law enforcement officers, explore their vehicles, and engage in fun activities.

Why Create an Officer Friendly Day?

There are a lot of reasons to create your own Officer Friendly Day. Here are a few:

- (1) To give autistic individuals the opportunity to engage with law enforcement officers and become familiar with their uniforms, vehicles, and job, so that in the event of an emergency they are familiar with the sights of police vehicles and uniforms as well as the overall duties of law enforcement officers.
- (2) To give autistic individuals and families/caregivers the opportunity to ask law enforcement officers questions they have about safety and autism disclosure

[Officer Friendly Day Event Guide](#)

Inclusive Events are Everywhere



Community Outreach for a more Inclusive Society

Questions and Answers



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Thank you!



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