Autism Awareness Month | April

Autism Awareness Month is dedicated to promoting acceptance of and raising awareness about autism.

HISTORY AND MEANING
The Autism Society, founded in 1965, began a nationwide awareness campaign in the early ’70s focused on promoting acceptance, inclusion and appreciation of people with autism spectrum disorder. Congress officially recognized Autism Awareness Month in 1984 after years of campaigning by the Autism Society. Autism Awareness Month, held annually in April, coincides with World Autism Awareness Day on April 2. ¹

RESEARCH AND SUPPORT RELATED TO AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER AT VANDERBILT

Kennedy Center for Research on Human Development
Located at Peabody College, the Kennedy Center is one of the nation’s leading centers on research around learning and development. The center’s Treatment and Research Institute for Autism Spectrum Disorders conducts interdisciplinary research on autism and provides services to individuals with autism and their families. Additionally, the center has many faculty members affiliated with the Vanderbilt Brain Institute and researchers working in the field of educational neuroscience, which helps convert findings from neuroimaging into viable strategies for children with learning disabilities.

Susan Gray School
Founded in the late 1960s, the Susan Gray School, which was previously named the Peabody Experimental School, opened with a mission to educate children with disabilities alongside their typically developing peers. The school’s approach to neurodiverse education includes support for children with autism, informed by research from Peabody College and the Kennedy Center.

Frist Center for Autism and Innovation
Vanderbilt launched the Frist Center for Autism and Innovation in November 2018, a new center at the School of Engineering focused on supporting and developing the neurodiverse talents of individuals with autism. Alumna Jennifer R. Frist, BS’93, and husband William R. “Billy” Frist donated $10 million to endow the center, the largest gift of its kind at Vanderbilt to support research within the engineering and innovation scope. The center combines academic research and business innovation to identify and understand the capabilities of individuals with autism and enhance the 21st century workforce through engagement of autistic talent.

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Psychiatry Autism Research Team
Part of the Vanderbilt University Medical Center’s Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, the Psychiatry Autism Research Team is dedicated to understanding, supporting and embracing the social, sensory and emotional experiences of individuals with autism.

AUTISM DATA
Principal investigators from Vanderbilt Kennedy Center’s Treatment and Research Institute for Autism Spectrum Disorders found in a study through a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network, that the current prevalence of ASD is 1 in 59 children in the United States and 1 in 64 children in Tennessee.

RESOURCES AND ORGANIZATIONS
Vanderbilt
Best Buddies
Best Buddies Vandy Med
Department of Special Education, Peabody College
Frist Center for Autism and Innovation
InclusAbility
Lyrical Movements
MOSAIC Recruitment Program
Next Steps at Vanderbilt Ambassadors
Special Olympics Vanderbilt
Student Access Services
Student Accessibility Advocates
Student Council for Exceptional Children
Susan Gray School

Nashville
ACEing Autism at Centennial Tennis Court
Autism Tennessee
Electronic Recycling Solutions
Metro Parks Disabilities Programs
Special Olympics Tennessee
Tennessee Council on Autism Spectrum Disorder
Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities
Tennessee Disability Coalition
Tennessee Family Solutions
Tennessee Inclusive Higher Education Alliance
The Arc of Davidson County and Greater Nashville

National
American Autism Association
Autism Research Institute
Autism Society
Autism Spectrum Disorder Foundation
National Association for the Dually Diagnosed
National Autism Center at May Institute
National Autism Society

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON AUTISM AWARENESS AND ACCEPTANCE, VISIT:
• autism-society.org/get-involved/national-autism-awareness-month/
• autismacceptancemonth.com/about/

This resource is part of a toolkit created by Equity, Diversity and Inclusion to highlight religious and cultural observances that members of our community may practice. This toolkit is not meant to be exhaustive, but instead to provide a general overview of how we can support staff, faculty, students and postdocs. We continually refine this information and welcome your suggestions.

For more information, please contact Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at edi@vanderbilt.edu. For more information on the university’s policy on religious holy days and observances, contact the Office of the University Chaplain and Religious Life at religiouslife@vanderbilt.edu or Human Resources at human.resources@vanderbilt.edu.