



2010 Arizona Walk Now for Autism Speaks Event Overview and How Proceeds are Helping Families Now

Autism Speaks and the Southwest Autism Research & Resource Center (SARRC)

In a rare collaboration, Autism Speaks & SARRC partner for the *Arizona Walk Now for Autism Speaks* to raise funds and awareness to support children and families affected by autism. It is the belief that together we are smarter, and by combining the resources, skills and talents of the two organizations we make the largest impact in Arizona.

Now in its sixth year, the collaborative goal for 2010 is \$550,000. We look to corporate sponsors/partners and family/friend teams to help us achieve this goal.

Arizona Walk Now for Autism Speaks

Autism Speaks' *Walk Now for Autism Speaks*, the nation's largest grassroots autism walk program, is our signature fundraising and awareness event, taking place in communities across the United States, as well as in Canada. Over \$27 million was raised in 2009; five percent of funds raised goes towards overhead and staff. *Walk Now for Autism Speaks* is a unique fundraising event which provides a safe and fun day for friends and families who are affected with autism.

The day includes a 5K walk with a one-mile family fun route and Community Resource Fair with educational sources and creative child-friendly activities: a true "one-stop-shop" for friends and families affected by autism. Toys "R" Us and Babies "R" Us proudly serve as the national sponsors of the Walk Now for Autism Speaks program. Sprouts Farmers Market is the Arizona walk's visionary sponsor and will be joined by Nature's Best, Mercy Care Plan and HOPE Group, among others, in supporting this year's event.

Powered by volunteers, friends, and families with loved ones on the autism spectrum, this successful grassroots fundraising effort not only generates vital funds for autism research but also raises awareness about the increasing prevalence of autism and the need to accelerate research funding to combat this complex disorder.

Walk Accomplishments:

- Since its inception, the Arizona walk has raised almost \$1 million for the local community
- The Arizona walk resource fair is one of the largest in the country, with more than 40 participating autism service providers
- Arizona continues to have one of the most impactful school outreach efforts, effectively promoting autism awareness to more than 110,000 families throughout Maricopa County
- Since 2006, the Arizona walk has promoted a multi-cultural event, providing materials and support to ensure that mono-lingual Spanish-speaking families are able to participate.

Improving the Quality of Life for Families in Arizona and Beyond

Nationally, Autism Speaks uses proceeds to advance family services through grants and free online tool kits, research into the causes and treatments for autism and advocacy projects that will improve the quality of life for families affected by the disorder. Through SARRC, dollars raised support programs that benefit the local autism community in areas such as research, school outreach and vocational and adult programs. Autism Speaks hosts 80 walks annually in the United States and Canada; Arizona is one of two markets where Autism Speaks collaborates with a local partner.

Walk Proceeds Benefiting Arizona Families Now

- **Expansion of the FRIEND Program from Scottsdale to the East Valley:** This inclusive social skills curriculum provides opportunities for students on the autism spectrum to improve social communication skills in a natural setting, supported by peers, parents, educators, and therapists. An easy-to-use manual describes how to develop and implement a FRIEND group for students in grades k-12 during lunch and recess. It is instrumental in helping children find success in the school and social setting.
- **Vocational and Life Skills Programs for Young Adults and Adults:** SARRC's vocational and life skills training academy provides community-based job training programs for adolescents ages 13 to 18 and helps foster skills necessary for independence and success amongst clients with autism.
- **Genetic Research:** As a national leader in participant recruitment for a variety of pharmaceutical and genetic autism research projects, SARRC's research team continues to advance research into the causes and effective treatments of autism by providing research subjects. Proceeds from the walk assist with covering the comprehensive intake costs associated with research, which averages 40 hours per participant.

Did you know...?

- Autism is the fastest growing developmental disorder, affecting 1 in 110 children born today; in Arizona one in 100 children are affected
- Despite the high prevalence and growing health care costs associated with caring for a child with autism, autism research receives less than 5% of funding earmarked for many, less prevalent childhood disorders.
- More children will be diagnosed with autism this year than with AIDS, diabetes & cancer combined
- A new case of autism is diagnosed nearly every 20 minutes in the United States.

About SARRC

The Southwest Autism Research & Resource Center (SARRC), founded in 1997, is a nonprofit, community-based organization dedicated to autism research, education and resources for children and young adults with autistic spectrum disorders (ASDs) and their families. SARRC undertakes self-directed and collaborative research projects, serves as a satellite site for national and international projects, and provides up-to-date information, training and assistance to families and professionals about ASDs.

About Autism Speaks

Autism Speaks is the nation's largest autism science and advocacy organization. Since its inception only five short years ago, Autism Speaks has made enormous strides, committing over \$131 million to research and developing innovative new resources for families through 2014. The organization is dedicated to funding research into the causes, prevention, treatments and a cure for autism; increasing awareness of autism spectrum disorders; and advocating for the needs of individuals with autism and their families. In addition to funding research, Autism Speaks also supports the Autism Treatment Network, Autism Genetic Resource Exchange and several other scientific and clinical programs. Notable awareness initiatives include the establishment of the annual United Nations-sanctioned World Autism Awareness Day on April 2 and an award-winning "Learn the Signs" campaign with the Ad Council which has received over \$200 million in donated media. Autism Speaks' family resources include the Autism Video Glossary, a 100 Day Kit for newly-diagnosed families, a School Community Tool Kit, a community grant program and much more. Autism Speaks has played a critical role in securing federal legislation to advance the government's response to autism, and has successfully advocated for insurance reform to cover behavioral treatments. To learn more about Autism Speaks, please visit www.autismspeaks.org.