

April is Autism Awareness and Acceptance Month

For many years April has been known as “Autism Awareness Month” and has been recognized globally. In recent years, there has been a strong push from the self-advocate community as well as their families and caregivers to evolve the month’s purpose to not just generate awareness, but to achieve greater acceptance for Autism.

This year, Autism Nova Scotia, Autism Nova Scotia, South Shore Chapter and the SSRSB will be promoting April as Autism Awareness and Acceptance month, and integrating a new colour into the previous “shine blue” message. Based on feedback from autistic self-advocates, the colour red, which signifies autism acceptance, has been added to the promotional material with the message, “Shine Blue, Wear Red”.

We encourage you to join our campaign by shining blue lights and wearing red clothing. Pictures, videos and stories can be shared on social media using the hashtags #ShineBlueNS and #WearRedNS.

Why Shine Blue & Wear Red NS?

Building upon the Shine Blue NS movement, this year we will also Wear Red NS, bringing together the strengths of two international movements for awareness and acceptance for the autism community and autistic people of all ages. Building awareness helps to build understanding, acceptance and inclusion for us all. This April, let’s rock our red clothes and shine blue lights in support of autism awareness and acceptance.

And if you wear blue clothes or shine red lights? That’s great too! Let’s shine bright, together!

Ways to Shine Blue & Wear Red NS:

Wear blue or red clothes

- Ask your family, friends, classmates and colleagues to wear blue or red
- Wear blue or red ties, scarves, shirts, pants, shoes, hats, jackets, bracelets, earrings, necklaces, lipstick... you name it!

Shine blue or red lights

- Change your outdoor and/or indoor white lightbulbs to blue or red light bulbs
- Decorate your interior with balloons, ribbons and streamers
- Create blue or red window displays
- Print and place our [poster](#) in your window to show your support

WHAT IS AUTISM?

Autism Spectrum Disorder is considered one of the most complex neurological disorders that affect one's ability to communicate and interact with people and their environments. This disorder can impact how people understand what they see, hear and otherwise sense. According to the DSM –V the previous three Domains have become two:

1. Social/Communication deficits.
2. Fixated interests and repetitive behaviors.

This can result in difficulties with social relationships, communication and behaviour.

According to the Centre of Disease Control Autism prevalence is on the rise with recent figures being 1 in 81. According to the latest news release, CTV- Thursday March 26, 2014 – the rate of increase in Canada and the United States is considered to be 1 in 69.

The population of persons on the South Shore is growing in accordance with the current prevalence figures of 1/69. Families and educators and community partners need resources and a great deal of interagency support. We must work together in our effort to provide the best primary care possible to those individuals with autism across their lifespan, as well as their educators and care givers.

Autism affects not only the family of the child with Autism, but all those who interact with the child, including teachers, teacher assistants, classmates, caregivers, health care providers, bus drivers, future co-workers, etc. The more we can support our students and their families the better the chance we will have for a positive outcome, not only for our students but also for our entire community.

It can be difficult to imagine a life where the first human experience one feels upon waking each morning is anxiety. Your first thoughts and emotions are filled with fear—how will my day begin? How will my day proceed? And finally, how will my day end? This fear is felt each and every day, throughout your lifetime. Facing the fear of the unknown can be paralyzing.

The anxiety of living with the unknown and the inability to manage it can lead into fight, flight or freeze behavior. All too often this is what people living with autism and their families experience on a daily basis.

From the moment of awakening, there are sensory impressions and external stimulation inflicted upon us from our outside environment—from the bright lights in our bedroom to traffic sounds through the windows. And this stimulation continues, and intensifies throughout the day as we travel to and from school.

For people living with Autism, the experience we call daily living can be very confusing, resulting in the inability to cope and thrive in our ever-changing world.

Please see below **IDEAS for Schools in Developing Autism Awareness:**

I - INFORMATION

D - DIRECTION

E - EDUCATION

A - ADVOCACY

S - SUPPORT

FOR AUTISM

April 2nd is World Autism Awareness Day. Across the world many schools, businesses, etc. will be lighting their spaces with a Blue Light to symbolize World Autism Awareness Day. Perhaps a lamp in your classroom with a blue light bulb could bring attention to Autism Awareness. Light It Up Blue! Shine a Light on Autism!

Educate Yourself and Your Students about Autism.

1. Read books and magazine articles about autism to your class.
2. Allowing students to create an Autism Awareness Visual Bulletin Board. This could be in the entrance of the school or the main office. Each classroom can have a Special Bulletin Board created by their students for Autism awareness.
3. School Assembly allowing students to highlight Autism Spectrum Disorder and how to be a friend to those with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Create Autism Awareness Flags to hang at the assembly.
4. Classroom projects on Autism.
5. Create a classroom blog on Facts about Autism. Create a blog on how to be a friend to someone with ASD.
6. Create a video with students on Autism Awareness.
7. Create a video on how peers can help students with Autism Spectrum Disorder.
8. Allow your students to share their personal story about having autism if they so wish. Perhaps create a presentation about having autism for their class or school.
9. Perhaps creating a Pic Collage on, "What it means to Have Autism Spectrum Disorder." Students with asd can create a pic collage and present it to their class if they wish.
10. Generate a list of strengths of those who have ASD.

11. Generate a list of Famous people with ASD.
12. Create World Autism Awareness Flags and hang them outside the classroom doors.
13. Older students can advocate for change.
14. Learn about issues that affect individuals with autism and their families in your area, nationally or in other countries.
15. Write letters to policy makers, government agencies to advocate for services and resources.
16. Create Autism Awareness Merchandise such as: handmade autism awareness jewelry, ribbons, brooches, etc.
17. T-Shirt Art - using white t-shirts paint/decorate the front to symbolize Autism Awareness and wear the t-shirt on April 2nd. Perhaps a t-shirt contest? April 2nd is World Autism Awareness Day—Light it up blue to focus on the needs of people living with autism. Wearing RED t-shirts, for acceptance, installing blue light bulbs in the classroom lights—blue light bulbs can be purchased in your local hardware stores, etc.
18. Window painting – paint classroom windows demonstrating Autism Awareness
19. Share your ideas on how to bring Autism Awareness with others.

We Can Make a Difference Together

As UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon has stated, "autism is not limited to a single region or a country; it is a worldwide challenge that requires global action."

We encourage everyone to take some action, however small it may be, in recognition of World Autism Awareness Day this year. By doing so, we can all help improve the lives of individuals affected by autism, now and for the future.

Sincerely,

Catherine Rahey on behalf of our Student Services Team: Darren Haley, Christine Hirsh, and Connie Bird Ann Wentzell

WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY: UN World Autism Awareness Day Resolution

On December 18, 2007, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 62/139, tabled by the State of Qatar, which declares **April 2 as World Autism Awareness Day (WAAD)** in perpetuity.

This UN resolution is one of only three official disease-specific United Nations Days and will bring the world's attention to autism, a pervasive disorder that affects tens of millions. The World Autism Awareness Day resolution encourages all Member States to take measures to raise awareness about autism throughout society and to encourage early diagnosis and early intervention. It further expresses deep concern at the prevalence and high rate of autism in children in all regions of the world and the consequent developmental challenges.

World Autism Awareness Day shines a bright light on autism as a growing global health crisis. WAAD activities help to increase and develop world knowledge of the autism epidemic and impart information regarding the importance of early diagnosis and early intervention. Additionally, WAAD celebrates the unique talents and skills of persons with autism and is a day when individuals with autism are warmly welcomed and embraced in community events around the globe.

By bringing together autism organizations all around the world, we will give a voice to the millions of individuals worldwide who are undiagnosed, misunderstood and looking for help. Please join us in our effort to inspire compassion, inclusion and hope.

The Premier of Nova Scotia has proclaimed that the month of April is Autism Awareness month. April 2nd will be the Eighth Annual World Autism Awareness Day!