

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS

April 12, 2011

Proclaim April 2nd as World Autism Awareness Day and the Month of April as Autism Awareness Month

World Autism Awareness Day and Autism Awareness Month shine a bright light on autism as a growing global health crisis. The different activities surrounding Autism Awareness helps to increase and develop world knowledge of the autism epidemic and impart information regarding the importance of early diagnosis and early intervention. These activities also help to drive much needed funding for research and resources to the County's most vulnerable residents.

Autism is a severe developmental disorder marked by communication difficulties, an adherence to routines and a lack of interest in socializing with others. No one knows what causes the disorder, but many experts now believe one or more environmental factors trigger autism in genetically susceptible children. This disorder impacts more than sixty-four million people worldwide and impacts one in ninety-one children and one in fifty-eight boys.

According to the US Centers for Disease and Control, before the 1990s the prevalence of autism was estimated at one in two thousand. However, today autism spectrum disorders are thought to affect six per one thousand people, with overall autism prevalence twenty times higher than past estimates. The number of people known to have autism has increased dramatically partly due to changes in diagnostic practice.

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In California, someone is diagnosed with the disorder every twelve minutes. According to a new state study, California saw a twelve-fold increase during the past two decades in the number of autistic people who are receiving services through regional centers. The dramatic rise in autism has broad implications for California families, taxpayers and social service agencies. From 1987 to 2007, the number of children and adults with autism served by regional centers rose from 2,701 to 34,656 notes a study released by the state Department of Developmental Services. This is a 1,148% increase; by contrast, the state's general population grew by 27% percent during that timeframe.

Special Needs Network, Inc. is a non-profit, community-based organization that has been on the forefront of assisting low-income and working families impacted by this incurable disorder and is proud of its accomplishments which include providing much needed advocacy training, outreach and resources to more than 15,000 Los Angeles County residents, many of whom live at or below the poverty line.

Special Needs Network, Inc. will celebrate Autism Awareness Month with a series of events that are designed to continue to raise awareness of autism and related disorders and share critical information regarding the importance of diagnosis and early intervention. This organization has been on the forefront of assisting families impacted by this incurable disorder and has celebrated many accomplishments which include providing much needed advocacy training and resources to those facing the challenges of living with and caring for loved ones with autism.

I THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

Proclaim April 2nd as World Autism Awareness Day and the month of April as Autism Awareness Month throughout the County of Los Angeles, and in doing so, join Special Needs Network in this effort to promote awareness of the autism epidemic and the importance of early diagnosis and early intervention.

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