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AUTISM AWARENESS: SHINE A BLUE LIGHT ON AUTISM

April 1, 2011 by cpehrson

If you look up on the hill Saturday in Logan and see a blue Aggie “A” lit up, there’s a good reason for it... it is in recognition of worldwide Autism Awareness Day, April 2, 2011.

The USU Aggie “A” isn’t the only building that will be shining with blue lights on April 2nd. Prominent buildings across North American and the world — the Empire State Building in New York City, the CN Tower in Toronto, Canada, and the Christ the Redeemer statue in Rio de Janeiro, among others — will turn their lights blue to raise awareness for autism and to commemorate World Autism Awareness Day.

The lighting of the “A” is just one of the ways that Cache Valley residents can observe Autism Awareness Day. Over 9,000 flyers were sent out to area schools along with blue glow bracelets inviting families to become involved on Saturday and join in a walk in downtown Logan to raise awareness of autism. Event organizer Jill Drysdale, mother of a child with autism, invites families to put on blue clothes and have their children wear their glow bracelets to help “Light it up Blue” for autism. Families can come at 7:00 to the Bluebird Restaurant and eat dinner and then everyone can join in a walk in the downtown area. “We simply wanted a great location that people will be able to see all the blue, and realize there must be a good reason we all care so much about Autism Awareness.”

In 2011, every one in 110 children are diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). More children will be diagnosed with autism this year than with diabetes, cancer, and AIDS combined. It is the fastest growing developmental disability in the world, with approximately 67 million people worldwide affected by it.

Jill’s son, Dax, was diagnosed with autism at a very young age and attended the CPD’s Up to 3 Early Intervention program and the ASSERT preschool at the CPD, a state-of-art preschool program that works with children with autism, ages 3-5 years old. He now attends a kindergarten classroom in Cache Valley. Jill wants to help others recognize what autism is and to have more compassion and empathy when they see a child with ASD. She says that many times when she is with Dax in stores and at the playgrounds and parks, they “have been given more than their share of dirty looks over what they would probably describe as odd or unacceptable behavior. Sometimes parents come and make it a teaching experience for their children. These are the parents who own my heart.”

Families and individuals are encouraged to learn more about autism during the month of April which is Autism Awareness Month. Autism information and resources are available online.

Note: This is the 1st in a series of CPD blogs on autism throughout the month of April.