

A Walk in Their Shoes

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Developmental disabilities are diverse chronic conditions that arise before adulthood -- specifically before the age of 22 -- which consist of physical and/or mental impairments.

Individuals with such disabilities can experience difficulties with communications skills as well as social interactions, motility and motor skills, learning, behavior patterns, self-help, and independent living. Autism spectrum disorder is a condition in which the brain is impacted on how the individual perceives and socializes with others. The term “spectrum” also is in relation to a wide range of severity based on characteristics and symptoms. So, in the United States where 1 in 6 (17 percent) children are diagnosed with at least one developmental disability or developmental delay (CDC), how can society help aid these individuals to ensure them a secure future?

A Walk in Their Shoes is an organized fundraiser being coordinated by two Perry High School students, Holly Nadinic and Ruby Tozzi, through Perry Service Learning (PSL), in collaboration with Footprints Center for Autism. PSL is a senior only elective that utilizes “volunteer opportunities to promote social involvement through education and service,” allowing students to execute civic engagement and interaction “...by working for justice, becoming advocates, and affecting change” (“Perry Service Learning”). Footprints Center for Autism is a nonprofit health organization and school located at the Perry School District, at Manchester West, Perry, Ohio. Footprints is “dedicated to providing educational and therapeutic services to individuals with autism and other developmental disabilities” (“Footprints Center for Autism”),

as well as supplying “comprehensive collaborative and child-centered programming for children in our community ages three to twenty-two,” says Erin Bolyard, Executive Director.

The purpose of “A Walk in Their Shoes” is for “families and community members to come together to support...raise funds, and awareness... for FCA,” according to Nadinic. All the earnings will go towards the general operating cost of the school. A joint effort by Nadinic and Tozzi, who join forces with other local organizations such as Biggby Coffee and IGA to provide refreshments, and PSL and FCA to provide additional resources - and a grant of 400 dollars and an editing account for Canva was provided by PSL.

There will be many provided opportunities to further assimilate an understanding of the cause, “While participating in the walk, participants can stop at various booths to learn about FCA, autism, and other spectrum disorders, etc.” (Nadinic). Such booths will include a Biggby Coffee - providing 200 cups of coffee, an occupational therapy (OT) table led by the FCA OT Team, Music Therapy - educational booth, and various developmental disorder tables.

There will also be various activities and sales for all ages, like a bake sale where the community can provide bake-goods, a student-made craft sale involving customizable mugs, a dark room - understand uses for sensory relief, in addition to available registration and tee-shirt pickup. There is also an option of a monetary donation box.

All events are to enable attendees to engage with straight-forward understanding of Autism as well as other disabilities, with the full intention of doing the best to ensure the needs of others are met. So, join A Walk in Their Shoes on March 11th from 10:00AM to 12:00PM in the Perry High School Field House. All proceeds will benefit Footprints Center for Autism.

Works Cited

CDC. "CDC's Work on Developmental Disabilities." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, 25 Sept. 2019, www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/developmentaldisabilities/about.html.

"Footprints Center for Autism." *Footprints Center for Autism*, footprintscenterforautism.com/.

"Perry Service Learning." *Perry Service Learning*, perryservicelearning.weebly.com/.