



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## April Is National Autism Awareness Month

PATTY RITCHIE April 3, 2017



April is National Autism Awareness Month, a time when people across the country join to increase understanding and acceptance of autism spectrum disorder, also known as autism. This developmental disability affects a person's ability to communicate and interact with others. It is one of the fastest growing developmental disorders in the United States, affecting one in every 68 children.

Throughout Autism Awareness Month, you can do your part to bring attention to the disorder. Here are a few ways:

Participate in a community event: Throughout the nation and in our region, there are a number of events—including walks, community gatherings and educational seminars, among others—that provide opportunities for people to learn more about and advocate for those affected by autism.

Sport the Puzzle Ribbon: The “puzzle ribbon” was adopted in 1999 as the universal sign of autism awareness. According to the Autism Society, which created the ribbon, the puzzle pattern symbolizes the complexity of the autism spectrum and its many colors and shapes signify the diversity of the individuals and families who live with the condition.

Become informed: One of the biggest things you can do to help raise awareness is to educate yourself about autism. Organizations like the Autism Society and Autism Speaks offer a wealth of information on their websites about the disorder.

Spend time with someone affected by the disorder: There’s no better way to learn about autism than spending time with someone diagnosed with the disorder. By learning about their lives, and their own experiences, you can gain insight and increase acceptance.

While National Autism Awareness Month lasts just 30 days, it is important to always work to raise awareness of the disorder and support the individuals and families who are faced with it. For more information on Autism Awareness Month, visit my website, [www.ritchie.nysenate.gov](http://www.ritchie.nysenate.gov).