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# WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE  
IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCE

Welcome to our April newsletter, dedicated to World Autism Awareness Month! Throughout this month, we celebrate and raise awareness about Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), a lifelong neurodevelopmental condition that affects individuals in unique ways. At the forefront of this month-long campaign is World Autism Day, observed annually on April 2nd.

World Autism Day serves as a pivotal moment to foster understanding, acceptance, and inclusion for individuals with autism worldwide. Established by the United Nations in 2007, this day encourages communities to come together to celebrate the diversity of those on the autism spectrum and to promote awareness of the challenges they may face.

In this newsletter, we'll share a spotlight, provide valuable resources, and offer ways you can get involved in spreading awareness and acceptance. Join us as we honor the strengths and resilience of individuals with autism and work towards a more inclusive world!



# UNC CHARLOTTE SPOTLIGHT

## Leslie Ann Bross, Ph.D., BCBA-D



Leslie Bross, PhD, BCBA-D, is an Assistant Professor of Special Education in the Department of Special Education and Child Development at UNC Charlotte and director of the Graduate Certificate in Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) program. She teaches undergraduate and graduate classes on topics related to classroom management, transition, evidence-based practices, and single-case research design methodology. Leslie's research focuses on ways to support individuals with ASD during their transition to adulthood in the areas of postsecondary education, competitive employment, and community integration. Her research occurs primarily in applied, community-based settings in collaboration with autistic young adults and their families.

At UNC Charlotte, Leslie serves as the Best Buddies faculty advisor and leads a loosely structured social club for autistic young adults called Connections Club. Please email Leslie at [lbross@charlotte.edu](mailto:lbross@charlotte.edu) to be added to the Best Buddies or Connections Club listservs.

## ON CAMPUS



Best Buddies in North Carolina offers One-to-One Friendship and Leadership Development programs for individuals with and without intellectual disabilities.

The **UNC Charlotte Best Buddies chapter** can be viewed in North Carolina chapters on the main Best Buddies International site or through Niner Engage.

For more information on Best Buddies, please visit <https://www.bestbuddies.org/>.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### Autism Symposium

The Latest Advances in Strengths-Based Interventions to Empower Clients!

4th Annual • Live in Chicago or Virtual • April 18-19, 2024



## GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

This graduate certificate is a 12-credit hour fully online program.

Students are prepared to:

- Work as public school teachers in a broad range of educational settings
- Work as human service agency personnel implementing research-validated intervention strategies for children, youth, and adults in community agencies
- Implement research-validated instruction/intervention strategies for children, youth, and young adults with ASD
- Assess the effectiveness of individualized instruction/intervention programs for individuals with ASD

If you would like more information on the Graduate Certificate in ASD, please visit: <https://spcd.charlotte.edu/graduate-certificate-autism-spectrum-disorders-asd/>.

Note applications are due through the Graduate School by August 1, 2024 to begin taking classes in Fall 2024 (no spring admissions).

## LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS



The Charlotte TEACCH Center serves individuals on the autism spectrum. Services include diagnostic evaluations, treatment planning and implementation, education, consultation, employment services, training opportunities, and research.



The Autism Society of North Carolina strives to improve the lives of individuals with autism, support families, and educate communities.

## CHARLOTTE 5K RUN/WALK



**Superheroes for Autism**  
Sat April 13 2024

Besides being an opportunity to exercise and have fun, this race raises funds for the Autism Services of Mecklenburg County (ASMC). ASMC is a not-for-profit organization that has been providing housing and services for adults with autism in Charlotte since 1979.

## HIDDEN DISABILITIES SUNFLOWER



**Hidden Disabilities Sunflower** is a symbol for non-visible disabilities.

People can share that they have a disability or condition that may not be immediately apparent – and that they may need a helping hand, understanding, or more time in shops, at work, on transport, or in public spaces

[Check out the CLT airport Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Program.](#)

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Podcast: My friend Autism



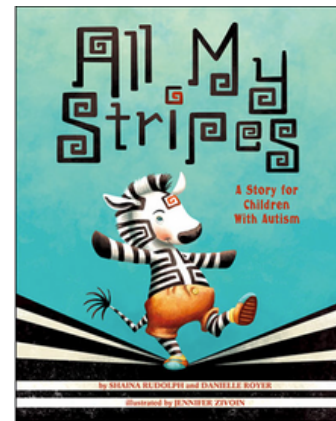
Orion Kelly hosts **My Friend Autism**, a podcast that aims to raise awareness and acceptance in the autism community. With his perspective as an advocate with autism, he shares insights on topics like avoiding burnout, workplace discrimination, and busting autism myths.

## Journal: Autism

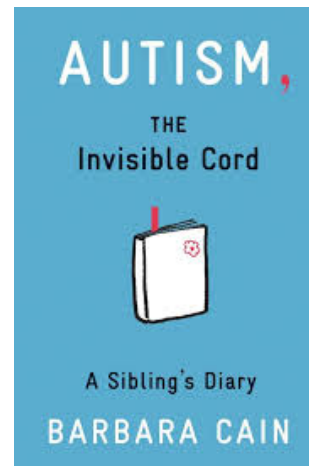


This interdisciplinary journal publishes research of direct and practical relevance to help improve the quality of life for individuals with autism or autism-related disorders.

## APA recommended Children's books on Autism:



A helpful story for kids with autism spectrum disorders as they follow a young zebra who learns to understand how he is different from the rest of his classmates.



This story follows 14-year-old Jenny as she describes her day-to-day life with her younger brother, Ezra who has autism.

