



For immediate release



Premier proclaims World Autism Awareness Day

Event marks Autism Awareness Month and 10th anniversary of BASE

Hamilton, Bermuda, April 1, 2010 – Premier Paula Cox, MP, JP, today proclaimed World Autism Awareness Day in Bermuda in a special ceremony on the steps of City Hall, Hamilton.

Bermuda joined autism communities around the world in celebrating the fourth annual World Autism Awareness Day (WAAD) – an event established by the United Nations in 2008 that aims to bring the world's attention to autism, an incurable neurological and developmental disorder that affects an estimated 35 million people worldwide.

The event, which featured performances by Prospect Primary School, marked the beginning of Autism Awareness Month in Bermuda and coincides with the 10th anniversary of Bermuda Autism Support & Education (BASE). The organisation was formed in 2001 to raise awareness of autism and provide support for families, educators and professionals.

Reading from the official UN proclamation, the Premier said that autism around the world is growing and affects as many as 1 in 150 people with a child is diagnosed with autism every 20 minutes. She said the economic impact of the lifelong disorder was “enormous” in terms of care and treatment, with the bulk of costs coming in adulthood.

She said: “The aims for World Autism Awareness Day are to inform the general public about the global health crisis of autism, stress the importance of early diagnosis and early intervention, and to celebrate the unique talents and qualities of individuals with autism.”

BASE consultant Susannah Cole said that WAAD and Autism Awareness Month were an opportunity to “deepen our understanding and acceptance of autism and to celebrate the hard work and dedication of families and professionals who support individuals with autism spectrum disorders”.

She said: “Autism awareness stories in the media largely focus on children with autism, but people with autism are children, teenagers, adults, men, women, scientists, engineers and the unemployed. People with autism have their unique sets of strengths and weaknesses, and they also have incredible potential.

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“As BASE celebrates its 10th Anniversary, it is actively fulfilling its mission to increase public awareness of autism and help to ensure that individuals on the autism spectrum are given opportunities and resources to achieve their full potential.”

As part of Autism Awareness Month, BASE is bringing in leading autism teacher, consultant and author **Dr. Paula Kluth for a special one-day workshop**. The \$35 session - *You're Going To Love This Kid: Educating Students with Autism In Inclusive Schools* - will be held at Mount St Agnes Academy on April 16 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Dr. Paula Kluth works with teachers and families to provide inclusive opportunities for students with disabilities. In the workshop participants will learn practical ways of supporting students with autism spectrum labels and other disabilities within a general education classroom. Participants can register online at www.bermudaautism.org

BASE also announced yesterday that with the **generous support of reinsurance company Allied World and The Bank of Bermuda Foundation**, it will be able to provide an opportunity for children with autism to attend summer camp this year alongside their peers. In partnership with Child and Adolescent Services and WindReach, it means that a safe and enjoyable summer camp experience will finally be accessible to children with autism.

BASE has also made it easier for people to access information and resources about autism by **relaunching and expanding its website** (www.bermudaautism.org)

Ms. Cole explained: "Bermudaautism.org is now a comprehensive online clearing house of resources for people with autism as well as parents, professionals and educators." The site includes a complete guide to the resources, services and support available in Bermuda as well as a 24-hour autism news feed, a new BASE YouTube channel and links to leading online learning programmes.

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For more information about BASE visit www.bermudaautism.org

For more information about World Autism Awareness Day, visit www.worldautismawarenessday.org

For more about Paula Kluth, visit www.paulakluth.com