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The New Children's Museum Awarded \$5,000 Autism Speaks Grant *Grant Will Fund Accessible School Visits*

SAN DIEGO – August 28, 2018 – Autism Speaks, the world's leading autism science and advocacy organization, awarded The New Children's Museum a \$5,000 grant to fund accessible school visits.

"Autism affects an estimated 1 in 68 children in the United States," said Larissa Kerstetter, San Diego Market Lead for Autism Speaks. "We are thrilled to partner with organizations like The New Children's Museum that offer integrated programming that enables children with autism the ability to be exposed to art and the creative process alongside other classmates."

The Museum hosts many kinds of group visits for schools, social service groups and other organizations with children and families with special needs or other life challenges. The Autism Speaks grant for \$5,000 will enable the Museum to expand its school visits offerings by incorporating an **Accessible School Visits** initiative for targeted classrooms. Through open play on commissioned works of art and hands-on art-making, the Museum helps promote crucial 21st century skills such as creativity, confidence, collaboration, critical thinking and resiliency.

"These skills are particularly important for children on the autism spectrum or with other special needs to help them actively participate in the world," said Tomoko Kuta, Deputy Museum Director of The New Children's Museum. "The Museum is strongly committed to being a community resource and a safe space for these children to play, learn and engage with others."

With the grant and expansion of its Accessible School Visits, the Museum will work with Autism Speaks to target specific schools and classrooms to ensure the students benefit from experiences similar to their peers, allowing them to integrate with their classmates and other children in the Museum and assist with socialization.

The Museum will also host a Kick-off Party, with museum access, on September 15th for registrants and teams of this year's **Autism Speaks San Diego Walk**. The walk is the world's largest autism fundraising event dedicated to improving the lives of people with autism and ensuring people of all abilities have access to the tools needed to lead "their best lives." This year's San Diego walk will be held October 21st at NTC Park with a goal of raising \$160,000.

Related Programming

The Museum's **pARTners in Creativity** program hosts group visits from social service and other organizations with children and families struggling with special needs or other life challenges. Include Autism, San Diego Center for Children and San Diego Youth Services are among the current pARTner organizations who focus on children with

special needs. Regularly scheduled visits to the Museum help children build confidence, interpersonal skills and problem solving as they explore art and art-making.

The Museum also hosts **Accessibility Mornings** quarterly at the Museum for children and families from their **pARTner** organizations and around the County. With a variety of high-sensory activities and designated sensory-break zones, Accessibility Mornings give special needs families the opportunity to explore the Museum with comfort and safety before the Museum opens to the general public. The most recent was held this past week on August 25, 2018 with over 100 attendees.

About Autism Speaks

Autism Speaks is dedicated to promoting solutions, across the spectrum and throughout the life span, for the needs of individuals with autism and their families. We do this through advocacy and support; increasing understanding and acceptance of autism spectrum disorder; and advancing research into causes and better interventions for autism spectrum disorder and related conditions. We empower people with autism and their families with resources, online tools and information covering the life span. Go to AutismSpeaks.org to learn more, donate or join a fundraising walk.

About Autism

Autism, or autism spectrum disorder, refers to a broad range of conditions characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech and nonverbal communication. We now know that there is not one autism but many subtypes, and each person with autism can have unique strengths and challenges. Most are caused by a combination of genetic and environmental influences, and many are accompanied by medical issues such as GI disorders, seizures and sleep disturbances. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates 1 in 68 children is on the autism spectrum.

The New Children's Museum

The New Children's Museum is a new model of children's museum whose mission is to stimulate imagination, creativity and critical thinking in children and families through inventive and engaging experiences with contemporary art. The Museum opened in 1983 in La Jolla as the Children's Museum/Museo de los Niños and reopened downtown as The New Children's Museum in 2008. The Museum brings families together in a rich educational environment that fosters creativity — blending the best elements of children's museums, contemporary art museums and community resources. The Museum collaborates with contemporary artists on an ongoing basis for art installations and educational programs for children. In 2018, the Museum is celebrating 35 years in San Diego and 10 years as The New Children's Museum. To learn more, visit thinkplaycreate.org or follow them on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/newchildrensmuseum) or [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/newchildrensmuseum).

About School Visits at The New Children's Museum

The Museum works with nearly 200 schools/groups each year to offer a wide range of opportunities for thousands of young students to experience the Museum's interactive exhibitions and art-making activities. At least 50% of the visitors come from schools designated as Title I, schools where 40% or more of the student body are classified as low income.

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