Greetings Bearkats,

We hope this newsletter finds you, your family and your friends safe and healthy during these unprecedented times. World Autism Awareness Day was held on Monday, April 2nd, however we recognize the month of April as Autism Awareness Month. In this week’s Mosaic issue, we take a closer look at the disability and issues that those with Autism face. Additionally, as a part of our Coronavirus special, we look at how the virus has been affecting minority communities.

Happy Reading!

Jordan Chang; He/Him/His
Assistant Director
Center for Diversity & Intercultural Affairs
Recognizing National Autism Awareness Month
By Carlos Perez

Every April, World Autism Month is celebrated, beginning with the United Nations sanctioned World Autism Awareness Day on April 2. Throughout the month, opportunities to increase understanding and acceptance of people with autism are heard and voiced.

What is Autism?

Autism is a complex, lifelong developmental disability that typically appears during early childhood and can impact a person’s social skills, communication, relationships, and self-regulation. Autism is defined by a certain set of behaviors and is a “spectrum condition” that affects people differently and to varying degrees.¹

While there is currently no known single cause of autism, early diagnosis helps a person receive the support and services that they need, which can improve quality of life.

One of the main contributors to this month is the Autism Society. In 1970, the Autism Society launched an ongoing nationwide effort to promote autism awareness and assure that all affected by autism are able to achieve the highest quality of life possible. In 1972, the Autism Society launched the inaugural National Autistic Children’s week, which evolved into National Autism Awareness Month (NAAM).² They continue their efforts to spread awareness, promote acceptance, and ignite change.

CELEBRITIES BATTLING AUTISM

Anthony Hopkins  Daryl Hannah

Issues become apparent when dealing with acceptance and discrimination of those with Autism. Although many laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and the Rehabilitation Act have been passed to end discrimination, it is still a major problem.

During this month, we encourage our readers and SHSU community to self-educate themselves on autism so that we can all do our part to support those with Autism.

¹ https://www.autism-society.org/what-is/
"Autism can’t define me. I define autism.” Kerry Magro, a best-selling author of “Defining Autism from the Heart” and professional speaker on disability related topics was diagnosed with Pervasive Developmental Disorder-Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS) a form of autism, at the age of 4. He is an inspiration to many individuals suffering from disabilities and advocates for the awareness of challenges through books, ted talks, and consults in films such as “Jane wants a Boyfriend.”

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability that can cause significant social, communication and behavioral challenges. According to the Centers for Disease Control, autism affects about 1 in 54 children in the United States. Symptoms appear at the age of 2 or 3, but symptoms can emerge as early as 18 months. Children that suffer from autism experience difficulties that affects learning capabilities. Educational expenses are an estimated $12,000 per public school student in America. For a student that suffers from autism, the cost is a staggering extra $8,600.

As General Sam Houston states, “The measure of life is its service.” Kerry Magro exemplifies our institutional motto to lengths beyond what is expected from him. Obstacles he has faced are written and verbalized across the nation to help others with challenging disabilities. No matter our circumstances, like Kerry Magro, we can overcome adversity and provide a better life for others.

A Question to Ponder:

With an advancing educational system, how can we lower the cost and effectively teach students with autism to ensure they receive a legitimate education?

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3 http://kerrymagro.com/
4 https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/facts.html
5 https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=66
6 Economic Burden of Childhood Autism Spectrum Disorders (Article)
In honor of Autism Awareness Month, this week’s video features Benji Gans in the Ted Talk titled “When Autism Speaks.” When Benji was diagnosed with Autism, his parents were told that he would never speak again. Yet, he beat all the odds and here he is taking the stage at Ted Talk speaking about his experience. Benji tells us about himself and says he is fluent in Hebrew, plays several instruments and has amazing memory power. Benji shows that you can beat all the odds even when things seem impossible. This is a perfect lesson for everyone, let alone students in college because it goes to show that even when we feel we cannot do something because everyone says we cannot, we can still accomplish anything we put our mind to.

SELF-REFLECTION

01
Has there ever been a time where you accomplished something when everyone else told you that you couldn’t?

02
What do you think is the first step in accomplishing a goal that seems impossible?

03
What are 3 words that describe a person that has beat the odds?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CG5Vdi2BfY4

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CG5Vdi2BfY4
The autism ribbon symbol is a jigsaw ribbon (answer: ribbon #2) with several bright colors that include red, yellow and blue. It symbolizes awareness of autism among those directly affected by it and even those who have not heard of the disorder until they were told what the cool jigsaw puzzle ribbon design is all about.

It is used to spread awareness about the disorder of autism, often letting everyone know that whoever is sporting the ribbon is someone who understands the disorder and is making a statement that they are supporting the cause.

Interested in knowing about the other ribbons?
1. Breast Cancer Awareness Ribbon
2. Autism Awareness Ribbon
3. Sexual Violence Awareness Ribbon
4. Down Syndrome Awareness Ribbon

Can you guess which ribbon represents Autism Awareness Month?

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8 https://www.healthguideinfo.com/living-with-autism/p86993/
AUTISM AWARENESS
THROUGH THE PICTURES

By Kayla Smart

January 5, 2018

In 2011, The Smithsonian Institution started its “Morning at the Museum” program which offers early entry and sensory-friendly activities to those on the Autism spectrum of any age. The Institute is the first to develop programs that make museums more accessible for those with developmental disabilities.

9 https://act.autismspeaks.org/site/SPageServer/?pagename=walk_about&wmenu=sec_abt_walk
A nurse in Cremona, Italy, takes a moment in this photo posted to Instagram by photographer Paolo Miranda. Italy’s healthcare system has been severely tested by the coronavirus pandemic. Source: CNN Website/ Paolo Miranda via Instagram @PaoloMiranda86

October 21, 2018

Canadian artist Niam Jain with his mother Nina Jain. Niam is a world-renowned artist living with Autism. He has limited speech and comprehension skills but he has found a way to communicate through his abstract art.

April 8, 2020

Merced Police Department in Merced, California decorate their patrol cars in multi-colored jigsaw puzzle patterns in support of Autism Awareness Month.

11 Resilient People. “Niam Jane shows no boundaries with his Autism”
12 Merced Police Department. KMPH.com
SHSU SPOTLIGHTS

Each week, we will highlight two SHSU entities that are doing great work at the institution! Additionally, we’ll sit down with our individual spotlight!

By Tiana Hale

Student Spotlight:
Sneha Srikanth

Sneha Srikanth is a senior who is majoring in Biomedical Science with a concentration in Pre-Medicine. Her future goals include graduating and attending medical school next spring. She currently serves as the Vice President for Minorities in Medicine, an organization in which she co-founded.

We sat down with Sneha for a few questions!

Tiana: What is your favorite thing about Sam Houston State University?
Sneha: “My favorite thing about attending the university is the amount of opportunities for me here on campus.” - Sneha

Tiana: What are you involved in on campus?
Sneha: “Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., Beta Beta Beta National Biology Honor’s Society. The Honors College and I also conduct research with Dr. Harper involving the immune system.” - Sneha

Organization Spotlight:
NAACP

This week we would like to highlight the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Unit 6816 for all that they do here on campus! NAACP is a national organization that primarily focuses on Civil Rights Advocacy with objectives of educating and advocating for the students of Sam Houston State University as well as members of the surrounding community. They host various programs that range from resume building workshops to fashion shows to voter registration campaigns every year.

Founded in 1909, NAACP is the oldest and largest civil rights organization in the nation. However, the Unit 6816 was founded here at Sam Houston State University on October 18, 1986. NAACP strives to create a safe space for all people and encourages the importance of voting.

Additionally, Congratulations are in order for Unit 6816 of NAACP for winning the ‘Outstanding Diversity Organization’ at this year’s annual Sammy Awards!
HOW CORONAVIRUS IS AFFECTING MINORITY COMMUNITIES

By Jordan Johnson

I spent last Thursday evening at home browsing through my social media accounts when I saw that Entertainment Mogul, Diddy and CNN Political Commentator, Van Jones were on Instagram Live together. As someone who is fascinated at the crossover between pop culture and politics, this intrigued me so I tuned in to their livestream. There main discussion was coronavirus’ impact on the African American/Black community. The longer I tuned in, the more fitting that I saw to include bits and pieces of that information into today’s Mosaic!

As the coronavirus continues to rip through the nation leaving behind thousands of victims in its path, black communities have been infected and their residents killed at a disproportionate rate across the country. Cities that have reported a high number of cases among black communities include New Orleans, Chicago, Milwaukee, and many more. In Chicago, an estimated 72% of Covid-19 deaths have been among blacks, who make up just 30% of the city’s population. Although we know that underlying health issues and limited access to treatment also partly explain why so many coronavirus victims are African American/Black. Diddy’s Instagram live session with Van Jones motivated me to do some further research into the virus’ impact on African American/Black communities.

“Health disparities have always existed for the African American community, but here again with the crisis now – it’s shining a bright light of how unacceptable that is,” Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said Wednesday. African American/Black communities carry a higher burden of some chronic disease that predisposes them to more serious complications of coronavirus. In addition to this, a National Institute of Healthy study found that hospitals in predominantly Black neighborhoods are more likely to close down that those in predominantly White neighborhood.

According to data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics compiled by the Center for American Progress, African Americans/Black people are overrepresented compared to the overall population in the food service industry, hotel industry, taxi drivers and chauffers. These are the “essential workers,” which I’m sure we have heard a lot about recently. While the majority of American citizens have been placed on “stay at home” orders, essential workers still report to work.

In addition to the above-mentioned issues, better access to health care, housing disparities, and educational opportunities are all conversations that need to occur post-coronavirus so that we may move toward a more equitable future.

SCHOLARSHIPS

By Charlotte Ford

Each newsletter, we will provide scholarship opportunities. If your area or department would like to submit a scholarship opportunity, please contact us at diversity@shsu.edu.

1) Center for Diversity & Intercultural Affairs: How has the Novel Coronavirus Affected you?

Want a chance to win a $25 Amazon Gift Card? Record a video explaining what you have been doing in adjusting to the CDC Guidelines on Coronavirus. Once you’ve recorded your video, share it on your social media account and tag us (@SHSUDiversity) to enter this drawing. We will be giving away 3 amazon gift cards!

2) Program Council Star Search!

By entering Program Council Star Search, you get a chance to show off your amazing talent AND get a chance to win our $500 scholarship! Rules/Guidelines are in the pictures below. If you have any questions, please contact Program Council at pc@shsu.edu.
3) American Association of School Personnel Administrators (AASPA) – Leon Bradley Scholarship

The Association of School Personnel Administrators (AASPA) will annually award up to two scholarships of $3500.00 each to assist a minority college student seeking his/her initial teaching certification and/or endorsement.

Please find the application and more information about the scholarship at www.aaspa.org/leon-bradley-scholarship

4) The Walt Disney Company UNCF Corporate Scholars Program

Deadline for this application is April 15th.

Please find the application and more information about the scholarship at http://www.uncf.org/DisneyScholars
# UPCOMING EVENTS

**APRIL 15th – APRIL 21st**

*IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO PROMOTE AN UPCOMING VIRTUAL EVENT, PLEASE CONTACT CHARLOTTE FORD AT **CNF022@SHSU.EDU***

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My name is Edwin Cantu, Coordinator of the Center for Diversity & Intercultural Affairs, and I serve as the Advisor for the Diversity Council. As we are currently accepting applications for the upcoming 2020-2021 Diversity Council, I wanted to share a few words on what the Diversity Council does and my role as their Advisor.

The Diversity Council is a student programming board tasked with creating and hosting diversity programs for the SHSU student body. Some of the monthly programs we host are our history/heritage month celebrations, as well as our Chat & Chew series. Each council member also gets the opportunity to lead the team by hosting their own event relating to a diversity topic they care about. Previous events include a Cultural Fashion Show, an Abilities Expo, PRIDEfest, Painting with a Diverse Twist, and many more. Lastly, as part of being on the Diversity Council, you get the opportunity to travel to a regional or national conference, where you will get to network with students and professionals from across the country in the hopes that we bring back best practices and programming ideas to Sam Houston State University. As the Advisor, I can easily say that working with the students is my favorite part of the job. Being a SHSU alum, there were many faculty and staff members here who took the time to invest in my future and now that I am on the other side of the student experience, I get the chance to pay it forward and invest in our Diversity Council students.

One important quality we look for in a Diversity Council member is a student who is doing their best to make the most out of their collegiate experience. If being a part of the Diversity Council sounds like something you would like to do, please visit our website: www.shsu.edu/diversity to download the application and get the Job ID Number for the Jobs4Kats posting!

Best,

Edwin Cantu; He/Him/His
Coordinator
Center for Diversity & Intercultural Affairs
VISION: The Center for Diversity & Intercultural Affairs at Sam Houston State University seeks to strengthen and enrich the Bearkat community through educational programming, vast cultural experiences and support for traditionally underrepresented populations.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES: The Center for Diversity & Intercultural Affairs hopes to engage the Sam Houston State University community through the following guiding principles:

- **Access:** Providing services, resources and unique programming for traditionally underrepresented populations at Sam Houston State University
- **Holistic Education:** Educate students to understand what diversity truly means and give students the knowledge and training required to promote social justice in all areas of diversity including culture, race, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, physical ability, etc.
- **Support:** Encourage an appreciation for and celebration of diversity in all of its unique forms.

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