



ERNIE ELS
ELS FOR AUTISM





AUTISM THE FACTS

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD), commonly referred to as autism, are both general terms for a group of complex disorders of brain development. Each case of autism is unique, characterized by wide varieties and combinations of: social issues; speech and language impairment; sensory processing dysfunction such as hypersensitive hearing, touch, taste or perception problems; intellectual disabilities; motor coordination and attention difficulties; behavioral challenges, such as self-injury, aggression and self-stimulatory behaviors; and physical health issues such as sleep and gastrointestinal disturbances. Some individuals with ASD are known to excel in visual skills, music, math and art.

- One in 88 children and one in 54 boys are affected by autism
- Autism is the fastest-growing serious developmental disability in the U.S.
- An estimated 2 million individuals in the U.S. are affected
- ASD occurs in children of all racial, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds
- More children will be diagnosed with autism this year than with AIDS, diabetes and cancer combined
- The symptoms vary widely from child to child and range from mild to severe
- Statistics indicate that the probability of having a second child with autism is 2 - 8%

THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY DETECTION

Early identification and intensive early intervention and treatment can result in significant positive outcomes for many children with ASDs.

Symptoms can often be detected by 18 months of age or earlier. When parents first suspect that early signs of autism may be present, they should discuss these concerns with their pediatrician and ask for an autism screening.

Facts and information are based on statistics from varied sources including the U.S. Centers of Disease Control and Prevention and the prevalence statistics from the Child & Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative and Autism Speaks.



The Els for Autism Foundation

The Els for Autism Foundation was established in 2009 by Liezl & Ernie Els shortly after their son Ben was diagnosed with autism. The Foundation has since embarked on a catalytic philanthropic project; the establishment of a state-of-the-art Center of Excellence with a local, national and global reach.

The Foundation is in the middle of a capital campaign to finance the development.



Our Mission

Els for Autism is committed to helping people on the autism spectrum fulfill their potential to lead positive, productive and rewarding lives, through:

- Understanding the causes of autism and facilitating the development and delivery of treatment therapies, educational programs, training programs, and sports programs as well as residential and independent living programs.
- The development of global outreach programs that will facilitate the sharing of best practices and programs with the global autism community and beyond.
- Raising awareness of autism and promoting the value, acceptance and inclusion of people with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

The Els Center of Excellence

Once completed The Els Center of Excellence will be a world-class facility with world-class programs that will help individuals on the autism spectrum, both locally and internationally, fulfill their potential to lead positive, productive and rewarding lives. The Center will combine the vital components of:

- ✉ **EDUCATION:** A uniquely designed and individualized on-site educational program for 300 students on the autism spectrum, ages 3-21; comprising of a Lower and Upper School and using a public charter school model so that students of all economic backgrounds can enroll. An early intervention program will be incorporated for children ages 0-3 and a transition to adulthood program will focus on equipping Upper School students with life, vocational, communication and social skills.
- ✉ **APPLIED RESEARCH:** A dedicated program focusing on determining best practices in education and therapy and delivering practical approaches to the wide range of issues and challenges that children and adults with autism and their families face everyday.
- ✉ **GLOBAL OUTREACH:** The Center has been designed to be a hub for a multi-faceted global outreach program focused on the sharing of best practices and programs with the global autism community and beyond. State-of-the-art technology, including video-conferencing, will be utilized throughout the Center to disseminate and gather applied research findings, share lectures from autism experts, conduct 1:1 sessions with families around the world and connect the global autism community on emerging issues.
- ✉ **MEDICAL, THERAPEUTIC & PROFESSIONAL SERVICES:** Individuals will benefit from a continuum of services, all accessible on one campus thanks to an on-site medical and professional component that will house neurologists, speech therapists and other specialists providing treatment services for individuals of all ages with an ASD. This will also be a resource for the wider autism community to utilize.
- ✉ **ADULT SERVICES:** An on-site Life Span services program to help graduates over age 21 successfully transition to all aspects of adult life through transitional independent living models, which include employability, natural supports, self-determination, life skills training and housing options.

The Els Center of Excellence is now moving from concept to reality! Construction began on the The Els Center of Excellence in Jupiter, Florida, in spring 2014. Funds are in place for the construction of the Lower School and Center of Excellence Auditorium building and the goal is to have these in operation by mid 2015. In the meantime, capital fundraising continues to ensure a continuous build schedule for the Upper School, the sports facilities, the medical and professional component and the adult services program.

The Center will integrate unique architectural components to create a learning environment designed specifically for children on the spectrum. For example:

- ✉ The Center is being designed to support easy navigation; visual cues are incorporated and routes will be simple and predictable. Sensory walls and floor patterns will be used to further support way-finding.
- ✉ The flow and layout of the building and classrooms will minimize students' exposure to highly active areas; which can be stressful to children with ASDs.
- ✉ Special LED lighting will be used versus conventional fluorescents, which can trigger learning and behavior issues in some children with ASDs. There will be an emphasis on natural light and strategically placed windows.
- ✉ A special sensory integration (SI) room will foster and allows sensory/motor development through the use of a variety of equipment including a climbing wall, a ball/foam pit, an inlaid spring floor and moveable swings. Through the use of these tools the goal is to stimulate the child's nervous system and ready the child's body and mind for learning.

- 1 40 classrooms with a student / teacher ratio of 2.5:1 in the Lower School, 4:1 in the Upper School.
- 2 Golf will be used as a life-skills development tool and the Center will feature practice facilities including a driving range, putting green, short game area and practice holes.
- 3 Physical activity will be integral to school-life; students and the community will enjoy an air-conditioned gymnasium, athletics field, play courts and swimming pool.
- 4 Life-skills training will be taught in specially designed learning labs to promote independent living and deliver vocational training.
- 5 The state-of-the-art auditorium will provide a hub for ASD professionals to disseminate and gather applied research findings and best practices and connect the global autism community via lectures and video-conferencing.
- 6 Every classroom in both the Lower and Upper school is equipped with state-of-the-art technology including interactive cameras for observation. This coupled with the observation rooms built into the Lower School will allow resident experts, visiting scholars and researchers to examine issues and develop practical approaches to the wide range of challenges that individuals with autism and their families face everyday.
- 7 Eight video-conferencing suites will allow for a range of global outreach activities including remote therapy sessions, student to student communication and think tank sessions.
- 8 The Center will accommodate an international placement program focused on sharing best practices with visiting students and professionals working in the field of autism.
- 9 The medical and professional services facility will provide a continuum of services to students and the wider autism community.
- 10 The adult services and vocational training facility will deliver on-site housing and transitional adult programs as an extension of the Upper School curriculum.



Autism is not GameOVER its #GameON!

In 2013 children and young adults on the autism spectrum in over 20 cities across the U.S. took part in a new innovative program called the Els for Autism #GameON Autism Youth Golf Clinics. Working with The PGA of America and The First Tee, these FREE clinics were enjoyed by nearly 200 beginner to intermediate players ranging from 6-23 years of age. Clinics included 30-40 minutes of golf, 15 minutes of bodily/kinesthetic activity and a healthy refreshment. The program, especially tailored for individuals on the spectrum, is aimed at developing life skills, encouraging social interaction and promoting healthy living and has received positive feedback from kids, parents, teachers and golf professionals alike.

The program is set to grow through developing relationships with golf partners such as Trump Golf, Troon Golf and The TPC Network, and pairing them with autism organizations in their local markets. Els for Autism's goal is to ensure that young people on the autism spectrum have access to golf not just on the day of our events but year round.



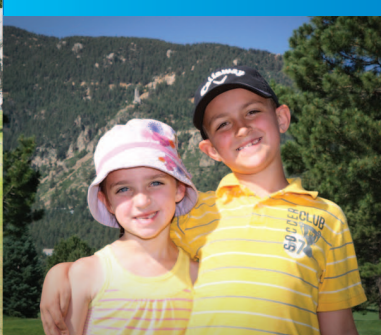
"We are eternally grateful to the parents, host courses, First Tee and PGA of America whose generosity created so many magic moments for young people on the spectrum. To see a child's face light up in every city and know that we worked together to positively impact the life of a child and their family in a very tangible way was simply amazing."

Mary Kay Willison, Tournament Director, The Els for Autism Golf Challenge

“Thanks so much for including Potencia Academy today in the clinic. Students and adults alike had a wonderful time! My son, who is a student at Potencia, had so much fun that he now wants to take golf lessons!! We just may make it a family affair!”
Janice Meeks, Executive Director, Potencia Academy, Greenacres FL



“The Help Group kids had a fantastic day on the driving range thanks to the Els for Autism #GameON Golf Clinic. They were excited to be in such a beautiful setting with wonderfully supportive pros from Trump LA who introduced them to the game of golf. Our young golfers had a terrific time and left with a great sense of accomplishment.” *Dr. Barbara Firestone, The Help Group President & CEO, - attended the clinic at Trump National Golf Club, LA*



“I try not to cry in public because I'm not a pretty cryer, but I was tearing up on the way home. Miles was all smiles after the clinic. Thank you so much for today's clinic. It has opened up a whole new world for him. When he got home, he unpacked his goody bag and is still wearing his hat. He is hooked! We would have never known that he likes golf. Who knows? Someday he may even participate in the tournament. Again, thank you for the clinic. We will remember this day for many years to come.” *Michelle Parris, mom to Miles who attended the clinic at Atlanta Athletic Club*



PGA

The First Tee



Gifts both large and small help us deliver on our mission to help individuals on the autism spectrum around the world fulfill their potential to lead positive, productive and rewarding lives.

There are a number of ways to become part of the family of major donors that support Ernie and Liezl Els deliver on their vision to create The Els Center of Excellence; a game-changing resource and leading example of what should be available to individuals with an autism spectrum disorder.

Our family of major donors will have their name permanently associated with The Els Center of Excellence through their inclusion on the Center's Donor Recognition Wall; a focal point within the new Center.



To discuss donor opportunities please contact:

Mary Kay Willson, Els for Autism

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Donations can be made:

- Online at: www.ElsForAutism.com
- By check (made payable to 'Els for Autism') and addressed to:

Attn: Foundation Controller

Els for Autism

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