|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Contact: John Krejcha  Autism Empowerment  Phone 360-852-8369  john@autismempowerment.org | 6511 NE 18th Street  Vancouver, WA 98661  (housed in The Arc of SW WA) | Autism Empowerment |

4th Easter Egg Hunt for Acceptance of All Abilities

# Autism Empowerment’s 4th Annual Acceptance & Inclusion Community Event empowers Children, Adults and Self-Advocates with Autism, Developmental Disabilities and Physical Disabilities.

## Expected to serve over 1,400 children and adults in the Portland metro area

Vancouver, WA, March 30, 2015: Autism Empowerment, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering the lives of youth, adults and families in the Autism and Asperger communities kicks off Autism Acceptance Month in April by hosting the FREE 4th Annual Easter Egg Hunt for Acceptance of All Abilities on Saturday, April 4th,2015 from Noon – 4 PM at McKenzie Stadium, 2205 NE 138th Avenue, Vancouver, WA 98684.

Much more than just an Easter Egg Hunt, this inclusion and acceptance event reduces isolation among families impacted by autism and other disabilities and positively promotes community connection and bonding. The theme is “Acceptance for All Abilities” and volunteers will wear purple “Ambassador for Acceptance of All Abilities” shirts. As of March 30th, 2015, over 60 cross-disability agencies, first responders and service providers from WA and OR had registered to exhibit, including Southwest Washington Disability Alliance, Northwest Health Foundation, Clark County Parent Coalition, The Arc of Southwest Washington, FACT Oregon, City of Vancouver Police Department and City of Vancouver Fire Department.

The “Ambassador for Acceptance of All Abilities” theme comes from Autism Empowerment’s vision of working toward an inclusive society that accepts and respects all youth and adults and empowers each person to reach his or her highest potential. Autism Empowerment offers innovative and inspiring programs, trainings, services and opportunities for leadership and volunteerism for those within and supporting the Autism and Asperger community.

“The Southwest Washington and Portland metro community really come together to rally around this event and to promote Acceptance and Inclusion for all,” says Autism Empowerment Event Director, John Krejcha. “In 2014, we utilized over 180 volunteers (many with autism or other disabilities) and served over 1,400 egg hunters and their families in the Southwest WA and Portland OR metro area. This Acceptance and Inclusion event is the largest Springtime Cross-Disability Event of its kind in the NW.” Autism Empowerment Executive Director, Karen Krejcha adds, “Everyone should have the opportunity to feel accepted and respected. Our event welcomes everyone and is for all ages, all abilities, all ethnicities. We have separate hunts for children, teens, adults and individuals with mobility issues. Attendees have fun, feel accepted and have the opportunity to meaningfully connect with Autism Empowerment, the Southwest Washington Disability Alliance and over 60 cross-disability nonprofits, clubs, first responders and local businesses who support inclusion and acceptance for all.”

In attendance to roll out the ceremonial first egg and participate in opening ceremonies include the Easter Bunny, US Representative Jaime Herrera-Beutler, State Representatives Brandon Vick, Jim Moeller and Ann Rivers, Mayor Timothy Leavitt, County Councilor David Madore, Councilmembers Jack Burkman, Anne McEnermy-Ogle, Alishia Topper and Bill Turlay.

Activities & Special Guests include: Egg Hunt, Cross-Disability Resource Fair, Rojo the Llama, Star Wars Oregon, Oregon Dream Ponies and safety demonstrations from AMR, the Clark County Sheriff’s Department, Clark County Fire Department and Clark County Police Department K-9 unit.

About Autism Empowerment

Founded in 2011 by a family with 3 of 4 members on the autism spectrum, Autism Empowerment is a grassroots 501(c)3 non-profit based in Vancouver, WA devoted to enriching and empowering the lives of youth, adults and families in the Autism and Asperger communities. Everyone on Autism Empowerment’s Board and in leadership roles is on the autism spectrum or closely related to someone who is. They offer positive, inclusive community programs, support services and innovative leadership and volunteer opportunities for those on the autism spectrum and their families. Autism Empowerment promotes four foundational pillars of positivity: Accept, Enrich, Inspire and Empower. For more information, visit [www.autismempowerment.org](http://www.autismempowerment.org). Facebook & Instagram: AutismEmpowerment or Twitter @AutismEmpowermt.

# # #