



WALK WITH ME

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Walk With Me Event Kicking Off 75th Anniversary of Easter Seals North Texas

FORT WORTH – January 29, 2014 – The annual Walk With Me event on Saturday, March 1 at Grapevine Mills Mall will mark a special milestone for Easter Seals North Texas. Not only will Walk With Me attendees be walking to raise support for Easter Seals North Texas' services for individuals with disabilities, but after the one-mile fun walk, they'll participate in a small celebration to commemorate the nonprofit's 75th anniversary.

Easter Seals North Texas is a non-profit organization providing services for children and adults with disabilities and their families in North Texas since March 3, 1939. Each year, over 4,000 individuals of all abilities are able to live, learn, work and play in our communities through assistance via Easter Seals North Texas' autism treatment program, child development center, outpatient rehabilitation, employment services, home care services, CLASS case management, North Texas Travels and Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) services. Easter Seals North Texas is an affiliate of the national organization, Easter Seals.

"We encourage individuals of all ages and abilities to join us for our annual Walk With Me. It's a great opportunity for the entire family to put their steps toward raising support for individuals with disabilities in our community. Plus, this Walk With Me will be extra special for all attendees as we will celebrate our 75 years of serving North Texas," said Donna Dempsey, president and CEO of Easter Seals North Texas.

Walk With Me registrants will walk alongside Honorary Ambassadors – Ryan, Juddy, Cole, Ryan, David and Madison—a child or an adult with a disability who has benefited from Easter Seals North Texas services. Walk With Me begins at 8:00 am inside Grapevine Mills Mall (entry near the AMC Grapevine Mills 30 Theatre), followed by the one-mile fun walk and a small 75th anniversary celebration complete with cake.

Registration is \$25 per adult, which includes a souvenir t-shirt. Children up to 12 years old can register for free! To register, start a team or to donate, visit WalkWithMe.org/NorthTexas or call 817-759-7914.

WALK WITH ME HONORARY AMBASSADORS:

- **Ryan:** When Ryan was two and a half years old he was diagnosed with Autism. He was nonverbal so he was unable to communicate his needs to others, play with friends, or tell his parents that he loved them. Since entering the Easter Seals North Texas Autism Treatment Program at age 3, his parents have seen his personality blossom. Ryan's family no longer worries about the quality of life their creative and adventurous little boy will lead. Now, his future is bright and his possibilities are endless.
- **Juddy:** Five-year-old Juddy is a very outgoing girl who is constantly smiling and enjoys playing with baby dolls. Juddy was four years old when she was diagnosed with a speech delay, due to her inability to communicate with her family. The communication barrier would often lead to Juddy becoming frustrated when she was not understood. Since beginning Speech-Language Therapy at Easter Seals North Texas, Juddy's speech has improved significantly, which has enabled her to effectively pronounce her words and to speak clearly. Juddy now asks for help instead of becoming frustrated and even likes to have fun with her family by mimicking them.

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- **Cole:** At seven weeks old, Cole suffered a traumatic brain injury when his family's car was hit by a drunk driver. But that hasn't kept him from enjoying his two great passions in life: people and sports. As someone who loves to interact with people, Cole craved community involvement and aspired to work in a position that would give him the relationships he desired. So he looked to Easter Seals North Texas for help. With the assistance, guidance and persistence from his Easter Seals North Texas job coach, Cole landed a job at his neighborhood Home Depot.
- **Ryan:** Ryan met most milestones on time but once he entered preschool, several noticeable behavior issues arose. After numerous incomplete diagnoses, doctors finally determined that Ryan met criteria for an Autism Spectrum Disorder. The following year, he was diagnosed with an autoimmune condition called PANDAS in addition to Asperger's Disorder. Since starting occupational therapy, speech-language therapy and Applied Behavior Analysis therapy at Easter Seals North Texas, he has made substantial improvements, and is being considered for his school's gifted and talented program!
- **David and Madison:** Shortly after David was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy at the age of 2, he was enrolled in Easter Seals North Texas Preschool along with his little sister, Madison. By being in our inclusive preschool, David has made significant improvements, and Madison is learning in the same environment that he is—a preschool where children of all abilities learn and where differences are seen as ordinary.

ABOUT EASTER SEALS NORTH TEXAS: As a nonprofit organization, Easter Seals North Texas is always ready to provide expert help, hope and answers for individuals with disabilities and their families. It's who we are, and what we have been doing for 75 years in North Texas. Each year, over 4,000 individuals of all abilities are able to live, learn, work and play in our communities through assistance from our autism treatment program, child development center, outpatient rehabilitation, employment services, home care services, CLASS case management, North Texas Travels and Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) services. For more information about local services and to support children and adults with disabilities, visit www.ntx.easterseals.com, connect via www.facebook.com/EasterSealsNorthTexas or call 1-888-617-7171.

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