Why Autism?

Why Autism - It is well known that millions of people around the world are affected by autism, either directly or by personal connection. The Center for Disease Control estimates that 1 in 59 people under 21 are on the autism spectrum, making it the fastest growing developmental disorder in the United States. For Philadelphia Eagles Chairman and CEO, Jeffrey Lurie, it is personal. With autism in his own family, Lurie knows many families are dealing with this fast-growing issue and has seen firsthand the difference the right resources can make.

The Eagles are taking autism very seriously and are exploring the best ways to leverage our brand and abilities to bring people together to drive critical resources and funding. We want to give a voice to families who live with autism – the ones who are out there every day advocating, promoting, supporting and seeking out opportunities for their loved ones.

One organization can’t do it alone, so we are partnering with thought leaders to advance scientific breakthroughs. Together all of us can shift from autism awareness to action for transformational impact, not only in Philadelphia, but throughout the country and the world.
**Jeffrey Lurie**

Going into last year's inaugural Eagles Autism Challenge, I was excited to experience the tremendous support for our cause and the potential successes we would enjoy as a team. Today, I am thrilled to report that 2018 exceeded our expectations! Thanks to the commitment of nearly 25,000 donors and more than 3,300 participants, together we raised more than $2.5 million in our very first year.

I am incredibly grateful to every participant, player, sponsor and fan who rode, ran, walked, donated, spread the word and embraced our mission. In just one year, we made significant strides towards changing the world for people living with autism. Those strides will continue to thrive here in Philadelphia.

One hundred percent of the money raised went to Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Drexel University and Jefferson Health - the Eagles Autism Challenge Founding Beneficiary Partners - in support of their research efforts. We look forward to continuing those key partnerships and we're also excited to expand our reach by accepting applications from other area institutions advancing autism research.

We are committed to being good stewards of autism philanthropy, which includes partnering with a scientific liaison and peer review team to evaluate projects to ensure outcomes. What we learn here in Philadelphia will be shared nationally and globally to have the broadest impact.

When we pull together, we truly can transform lives. When we all work together, we can make a difference. Since I was touched by autism have surpassed my expectations. The Eagles Autism Challenge is so much more than just a one-day event. Whether it's sensory bags for games and concerts, the first-ever sensory-inclusive Open Practices at Lincoln Financial Field, or partnering with Philadelphia Orchestra and the Mann Center for the Performing Arts for a sensory-sensitive concert, we're shifting from awareness to action and driving inclusion and neurodiversity — not only in our organization, but with partners throughout the region.

It's truly an honor to be associated with the Eagles Autism Challenge. I'm proud of what we were able to do in our inaugural year, but we are just getting started. I am so excited for what is yet to come in 2019 and beyond. I look forward to seeing you on May 18th, because together we are changing the world.

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**Ryan Hammond**

I was thrilled to return to the organization this past year to lead the Eagles Autism Challenge as its Executive Director, having started my career with the Eagles 20 years ago.

Over the past 10 years, I've become passionate about autism and helping families affected live their best lives. Jeffrey Lurie's vision and the unique opportunity to leverage the platform of the team to create a positive connection to autism and advance research is what initially brought me home, but the interactions I have every day with families who are touched by autism have surpassed my expectations.

The Eagles Autism Challenge is so much more than just an event. Whether it's sensory bags for games and concerts, the first-ever sensory-inclusive Open Practices at Lincoln Financial Field, or partnering with Philadelphia Orchestra and the Mann Center for the Performing Arts for a sensory-sensitive experience, we're shifting from awareness to action and driving inclusion and neurodiversity — not only in our organization, but with partners throughout the region.

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**Lincoln Financial Group**

Since 2002, Lincoln Financial Group has been a proud sponsor of the Philadelphia Eagles. Our connection to the team goes much deeper than just the naming rights to the stadium, through. Through our long-standing partnership, our organizations have joined forces in support of many charitable programs and the community.

Lincoln Financial views each day as an opportunity to bring Abraham Lincoln's ideals of strength, courage, integrity, respect and optimism to life — both inside and outside our organization. We believe we have a larger role to play in building vital communities through philanthropy. We were thrilled to become the presenting sponsor of the Eagles Autism Challenge last year as a natural extension of our partnership with the Eagles organization, as well as furthering our company values.

The challenge aims to transform the lives of those touched by autism and their families. Lincoln Financial is so very proud to have played a key role, not only as the presenting sponsor, but many of our employees actively participated by raising money, volunteering on-site and spreading the word on social media.

We're excited about the future, as well as continuing to play a leading role in the ongoing growth of the Eagles Autism Challenge. We are relying our employees and they are ready to lead the charge, contributing in a variety of different ways again. Today, we feel passionately about this cause and there are no limits to what we can achieve!
Throughout his life, Philadelphia Eagles Center Jason Kelce wasn’t connected to anyone on the autism spectrum and didn’t know too much about it. All of that changed when he met his wife Kylie. Kylie has been an autism advocate for most of her life, a passion that was launched when she made friends as a child with a neighbor, Tim, who has autism. “Tim was my introduction to autism,” Kylie has reflected. “Ever since, I have just taken part in anything that has to do with autism, autism awareness, because it’s so near and dear to my heart.” Today, Tim is a huge fan of Jason’s, and they’ve become an important part of each other’s lives. Tim walked Kylie’s mother down the aisle at Jason and Kylie’s wedding. “The first time I met Tim, I knew that he was a big part of Kylie’s family,” Jason recalls. “I wanted to impress him and I wanted to make sure he liked me.” One the biggest lessons Jason says he’s learned from getting to know Tim and from participating in the Eagles’ autism-related work (including firing up the crowd and riding in the event) is “how large a part of our community, how large a part of our society this is, how many people are affected by it, how many families are affected by it.”
Thomas Bryne

Tom Bryne began working for the Eagles at Lincoln Financial Field in 2011, just after he graduated from high school. “When I first started, they started me at different areas, we had ticket-taking, guest services, and ushering,” Tom said. It was an exciting opportunity and challenge for him. Tom is on the autism spectrum, and he was hired long before the Eagles began to publicly emphasize their autism initiatives. One of the first employees to self-identify as being on the spectrum, Tom has paved the way for others, creating a safe space for them to see their own opportunities and know that there is a place for them within the Eagles organization. Today, Tom works in the same section of seats week after week, and his experience at Lincoln Financial Field speaks volumes about the way inclusivity is valued within the organization and among fans. As Tom has said, “I’m close with the fans coming in. They look forward to seeing me. When they come into the game, they like getting a high-five from me before the game starts. A lot of people come by and say hi to me, we talk about the game for a little while.”

Kathleen Tarzwell

Kathleen isn’t a professional fundraiser. In her own words, “I’m a single mom, with a middle class income.” Her nine-year-old son Braeden has autism spectrum disorder, so Kathleen felt compelled to fundraise on behalf of Braeden. When she first set out she was afraid of failing to meet a fundraising goal. “It was a huge fear of mine, sitting in front of the computer… I didn’t think I could raise $2,500,” she recalls. “How could I, with a small network, ever find that many people to donate?” But in the span of just January to May, by tapping her own network and the networks of her family and friends, Kathleen raised an astounding $14,200 for the Eagles Autism Challenge, and ultimately secured a spot in the Top 15 Fundraisers. “It made me feel hope,” she says of those months, as she received donation after donation. “Hope, in a way where people are believing in so much more than the challenge. They’re believing in me and in the future of autism and the field of autism.”

Kathleen has also had the support of Wipfli, CPAs and Consultants, where she works, and Wipfli will be involved in the 2019 challenge as well. “In addition to being a Community Partner level sponsor for the event, Wipfli was a Top 20 Team in fundraising,” Kathleen says of the 2018 challenge. “Team Wipfli had 22 participants, 490+ donors and we raised $27,444!”

The day of the Eagles Autism Challenge is a cherished memory for both her and Braeden (who were also on the field for the Eagles Championship Moment at the Season Opener). Kathleen is determined to fundraise again for the 2019 challenge, and ideally to break her previous record. “I’m going to continue to live that Eagles Autism Challenge life 365 days of the year. If I raise more than last year, great, if I don’t, I’ll try the next year.”
Friday Night Kick-Off Party

The weekend’s events began with the Kick-Off Party Friday night in HeadHouse Plaza at Lincoln Financial Field for packet pick up. The Panasonic Club was host to the dinner and ceremony, where Eagles’ owner Jeffrey Lurie welcomed everyone and spoke to why autism is an important issue to him, his family and the entire Eagles organization. In addition to good food and fun music, there were appearances by Eagles players, coaches, alumni, cheerleaders and mascot SWOOP, along with photo opportunities with the Lombardi Trophy from the 2018 Super Bowl Championship win and a silent auction for very special items. Friday night set the tone and got everyone ready for the main event.

“The challenge aims to transform the lives of those touched by autism and their families, and Lincoln Financial is so very proud to have played a key role.”

— Dennis Glass, President and CEO of Lincoln Financial Group
Where riders had to be 18 or older for the longer rides, those ages 13 and over were able to participate in the 15-mile ride. Riding up Broad Street, they went around City Hall, then down the Ben Franklin Parkway. After going past the Philadelphia Museum of Art, riders rode through University City and across the South Street Bridge to head back to the finish line on the 50-yard line at Lincoln Financial Field.
President of Eagles Social Responsibility, Christina Weiss Lurie at the starting line for the Wawa Shorti 30-mile ride.

Riders wanting more than 15 miles, but not ready for 50 miles, could find the perfect fit with the 30-mile ride starting off on the same route as the 15-mile riders (up Broad Street, around City Hall, down Ben Franklin Parkway and past Philadelphia Museum of Art). They then headed on Kelly Drive to ride down Manayunk’s historic Main Street, returning via Martin Luther King Drive, to ride through University City and cross the South Street Bridge to head back to the finish line on the 50-yard line at Lincoln Financial Field.

MILE RIDE
AMOUNT RAISED
$395,142

Philadelphia Eagles Wide Receiver Alshon Jeffery crossing the finish line.
For those looking for the ultimate physical challenge, 50-mile riders started off on the same route as the other two rides (up Broad Street, around City Hall, down Ben Franklin Parkway, past Philadelphia Museum of Art). Their route then took them through the scenic suburbs of Chestnut Hill, turning around in Plymouth Meeting, to go down Manayunk’s historic Main Street, returning via Martin Luther King Drive, through University City, and across South Street.
Philadelphia Eagles Legend Harold Carmichael finishing the 5K walk/run on the 50-yard line.


The family-friendly 5K course, including children ages three and up, was an exciting way to end. Starting at Lincoln Financial Field, runners/walkers made their way through the neighborhood surrounding the stadium, returning to the finish line on the 50-yard line at Lincoln Financial Field. Eagles Quarterback Nate Sudfeld took special pride in being the first player to cross the finish line for the 5K. Other Eagles participants included Jake Elliott, Rodney McLeod and Jason Kelce.

$1,295,684
Finish Line Celebration

When participants crossed the finish line at the 50-yard line of Lincoln Financial Field, an on-field celebration and festivities were waiting. The Lombardi Trophy from the Super Bowl LII Championship win was available for photo opportunities, along with appearances by Eagles players, coaches, alumni, cheerleaders and mascot SWOOP. There were inflatables, sensory-friendly and sponsor activation tents, photo booths and virtual reality games. Following the awards ceremony and closing remarks from Jeffrey Lurie, Interscope recording artist (and relative of defensive tackle Haloti Ngata) Alex Aiono performed a fun concert for participants.
Looking Ahead To 2019

In 2019 and beyond, the Eagles Autism Challenge looks to build upon the foundation set in year one and reach new heights – both in fundraising and impact. Changes for the 2019 event, scheduled for May 18, include a Sensory Walk - a shorter course with reduced noise levels and multiple rest stops - plus, in addition to the three founding beneficiaries, funding will be expanded to other qualifying institutions.

As we look to instill neurodiversity throughout the organization, the Eagles Autism Challenge is more than just one day. The aim is to be sustainable every day, year-over-year. Sensory bags with items such as fidget and squeeze toys, sunglasses, earplugs, crayons and coloring pages are now available on every game day along with the ability to borrow noise-cancelling headphones and a dedicated sensory-sensitive space has been established at Lincoln Financial Field for all events – not just Eagles football games – enabling people with autism and their families to more fully enjoy the experience. A permanent, state-of-the-art space is being developed for the future.

This is just the beginning as we look forward to building on the process and elevating the profile of Philadelphia globally.

To date, over $650,000 has already been raised. Events have included:

- Sweepstakes for an Eagles Super Bowl LII Championship Ring
- Philadelphia Orchestra, special sensory-friendly performance at The Mann, entitled “A Championship Season” – featuring a special appearance by Jason Kelce, with a portion of ticket sales going to the Eagles Autism Challenge.
- Open Practices on two dates in August were sensory-inclusive for the first time and raised funds through general donations and towards special experiences.
Founding Beneficiaries

In the inaugural year, Eagles Autism Challenge looked to partner with recognized thought leaders in autism in Philadelphia as beneficiaries for the funds raised. Rather than choosing just one institution, it was understood that greater success could be achieved by working together. The three Founding Beneficiaries (Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, Drexel University and Thomas Jefferson University and University Health) bring together a coalition of top researchers and scientists in the field in order to bring fresh ways of thinking and additional resources to the field of autism research. With the foundation Eagles Autism Challenge has established, outreach and development (and participating beneficiaries) can continue to grow and evolve, elevating Philadelphia to greater heights in the autism research space.

John Fry
President
Drexel University

“Research supported by the Eagles Autism Challenge could make all the difference for many children with autism spectrum disorders, as we explore ways for people of all ages impacted by autism to pursue fulfilling lives, and more than that, the Eagles Autism Challenge brings all of us — Drexel University faculty, students, professional staff, and alumni — together with others in the community working at the forefront of childhood-autism research and with this funding will be able to continue to push that progress forward.”

Madeline Bell
President and CEO
Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia

“When it comes to making breakthroughs, Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia believes there is strength in numbers. A pivotal event for all those affected by autism spectrum disorder, the Eagles Autism Challenge not only helps raise critical funds for research and care, but also provides an opportunity for an entire community of supporters to come together and demonstrate the power of awareness in action.”

Stephen Klosko
President and CEO
Thomas Jefferson University and Jefferson Health

“We are proud to be one of the Founding Beneficiaries of the Eagles Autism Challenge, with all of us coming together on this important and vital initiative to improve lives. Jefferson Health’s experts are at the forefront of childhood-autism research and with this funding will be able to continue to push that progress forward.”

In order to truly fulfill the mission of transformational impact, there is a philanthropic responsibility for transparency and accountability. Therefore, in July, Dr. Emmanuel DiCicco-Bloom was named the scientific advisor for the Eagles Autism Challenge. Having developed a peer review panel of leaders from across the country to review the research proposals, Dr. DiCicco-Bloom and his team evaluate all projects as part of the funding award process. What is learned and developed by the coalition will then be shared nationally and globally so that everyone affected by autism can benefit from these collaborative efforts.

Dr. Emmanuel “Manny” DiCicco-Bloom

2018 Raised Funds

$2,500,000
Total raised from inaugural Eagles Autism Challenge to be directed to beneficiaries
Eagles Autism Challenge Scientific Review Panel

Under the direction of the Eagles Autism Challenge’s scientific advisor, Dr. Emmanuel Dicicco-Bloom, leading scientists were identified from across the country and as far as Canada whose expertise matched the areas presented in the proposals received from beneficiary institutions. There was a total of eight proposals submitted for funding and the scientists selected for the panel were assigned to roles such as lead reviewer, secondary reviewer and reader for each of the proposals. The scientific peer review panel convened in Philadelphia at the NovaCare Complex in January to complete the final step of the review process and meet as a group to ensure each proposal funded would achieve measurable outcomes and have a transformational impact in the field of autism.

- All beneficiary organizations were required to submit full proposals for funding consideration
- Leading scientists specializing in the areas represented in the proposals were recruited from across the country to serve on the review panel
- All research proposals were evaluated for measurable outcomes and transformational impact in the field of autism
- Scientific experts traveled to Philadelphia to participate in the peer review panel
- Projects were recommended to be funded and feedback was provided

Eagles Autism Challenge Peer Review Panel of Experts

Susan Bookheimer, Ph.D
University of California, LA
Professor of Cognitive Neuroscience
UCLA Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences

Heather Cody Hazlett, Ph.D
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
Assistant Professor Psychiatry & Psychology
Carolina Institute for Developmental Disabilities

Susan Hyman, M.D.
University of Rochester Medical Center
Professor of Pediatrics; American Board of Pediatrics

Connie Kasari, Ph.D
University of California, LA
Professor of Human Development and Psychology
UCLA Graduate School of Education & Information Studies

Matthew J. Maenner, Ph.D
Center for Disease Control and Prevention - Developmental Disabilities Branch, National Center of Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities

Eric Morrow, M.D., Ph.D
Brown University
Assistant Professor of Biology; Associate Professor of Psychiatry & Human Behavior

Sarah Spence, M.D., Ph.D
Boston Children’s Hospital, Harvard Medical School
Assistant Professor of Neurology
Department of Pediatrics; Harvard Medical School; Co-Director; Autism Spectrum Center

Julie Lounds Taylor, Ph.D
Vanderbilt University Medical Center
Associate Professor of Pediatrics and Special Education; Associate Director; OIDD; Biostatistics; and Bioinformatics Core E; Deputy Director of Organizational Research and Interventions, Vanderbilt Initiative for Autism, Innovation, & the Workforce (AIW)

Lonnie Zwaigenbaum, M.D.
University of Alberta, Canada
Professor & Director of Autism Research Center

2018 Eagles Autism Challenge Research Projects

Drexel University
- Maternal diet patterns during pregnancy associated with autism
- Employment support for low-resource youth with ASD
- Addressing the unmet needs of young children with autism in underserved communities

Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia
- Adaptive intervention approach for children with autism and disruptive behavior
- Biological mechanisms underlying comorbidity of Autism Spectrum Disorder and Epilepsy
- Biobehavioral markers of Anxiety and ADHD in Autism Spectrum Disorder

Jefferson Health
- Sex chromosome mediators of Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Measuring Sensory Features in Autism: Validity and Reliability Testing

2018 Eagles Autism Challenge
EaglesAutismChallenge.org
"Fundraising for the Eagles Autism Challenge is personal. As a parent with a child on the spectrum, there are gut wrenching days when I feel I cannot do anything to create a better world for my child. There are many good organizations out there promising one thing or another but who am I to trust? When I heard about the Challenge, the people, their heart and integrity behind the mission, I knew, without a doubt this is the most relevant and trustworthy cause I can invest my time and money in. I felt confident in reaching out to all my networks and asking for their investment as well. I know this is a solid way for me to help create a better world for my son and those who come behind us on this journey. I will help out when you feel strongly about something."

This is an organization I feel confident in reaching out to all my networks and asking for their investment as well. I know this is a solid way for me to help create a better world for my son and those who come behind us on this journey. I will help out when you feel strongly about something.

Robert Gordon, Top Fundraiser

FUNDRAISING

Donações

FUNDRAISING (continued)

Impact Report

2018 Eagles Autism Challenge

EaglesAutismChallenge.org

2018 Eagles Autism Challenge

Impact Report

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