



Gahanna

Proclamation

Autism Acceptance Month

April 2021

WHEREAS: National Autism Awareness Month was first established in April 1970 to raise awareness about Autism spectrum disorders and increase understanding and acceptance of individuals with Autism; and

WHEREAS: In 2021, the Autism Society of America shifted the focus to “Autism Acceptance Month,” in an effort to ignite acceptance and change through improved opportunities in education, employment, accessible housing, affordable health care and comprehensive long-term services for persons with Autism; and

WHEREAS: As the fastest growing developmental disorder in the United States, Autism affects more than three million people (including an estimated 1 in 54 children), can cause challenges with verbal and nonverbal communication, social interaction, and repetitive behaviors; and

WHEREAS: Autism can affect any person regardless of race, ethnicity, gender or socio-economic background, and each person and family affected by Autism should have access to reliable support, information, and opportunities to live up to their greatest potential; and

WHEREAS: Recognizing that members of the Gahanna community within the Autism spectrum may require the assistance of first responders, the Gahanna Division of Police completed six hours of agency-wide training entitled *Autism Awareness and Response: Police Interactions with Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder* with instructors who all have children within the Autism spectrum; and

WHEREAS: Gahanna residents Gwendolyn and Gene Harshaw have become tireless advocates for families impacted by Autism, having first begun to research resources available for Autism in the spring of 2000, when their son, Zayne (then age 4) was diagnosed with Autism; and

WHEREAS: The Harshaw family has been voluntarily engaged in advocacy for the special needs community in Central Ohio, serving as coaches and parent mentors for various organizations, searching out opportunities to further spread their message of empowerment and increased community involvement for families impacted by Autism; and

WHEREAS: In 2020, Gwendolyn Harshaw was awarded the 2020 Margaret Burley Family Impact Award from the Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence (OCALI), and accepted a personal invitation from Franklin County Public Health Commissioner Joe Mazzola to sit on the Public Health Equity Advisory Board; and

WHEREAS: Gahanna resident Zayne Harshaw has inspired audiences all over the State through his brilliant guitar performances, demonstrating how his gift of music has helped him to overcome perceived limitations of Autism and reaffirming the message of his band, Blue Spectrum, that "life is not meant to be viewed through the single lens of a diagnosis but to be lived through the Spectrum of potential, promise, and purpose"; and

WHEREAS: The City of Gahanna is honored to observe Autism Acceptance Month in the hope that it will lead to a better understanding and acceptance of the disorder and to address the diverse needs of individuals and families affected by Autism.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Laurie A. Jadwin, Mayor of the City of Gahanna, Ohio, do urge Gahanna citizens to join me in recognizing awareness of Autism, increasing the knowledge of programs that support individuals with Autism and their families, and fostering acceptance of families impacted by Autism through support and opportunities in everyday life. I do hereby proclaim the month of April 2021 as

Autism Acceptance Month

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the City of Gahanna, Ohio, to be affixed on this **5th day of April** in the year of Our Lord, Two Thousand Twenty-One.



Laurie A. Jadwin, Mayor

