



ERNIE ELS
ELS FOR AUTISM





AUTISM THE FACTS

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD), is characterized by deficits in social communication and social interaction as well as restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities. Each case is unique and may present with a wide variety or combination of: difficulties in processing sensory information with sensitivity to sound, touch, taste, and smell; behavioral challenges, such as self injury; motor coordination and attention difficulties; and physical health issues such as sleep and gastrointestinal disturbances. ASD presents with a wide range of intellectual capabilities from intellectually disabled to superior abilities. Some individuals with ASD are known to excel in visual skills, music, math and art.

- One in 68 children and one in 42 boys in the U.S. are affected by autism
- Boys are 5 times more likely to have ASD than girls
- 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%
- Recent studies show that most children are diagnosed after age 4, despite the fact that ASD can be diagnosed much earlier

THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY DETECTION

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

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 for 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 PGA TOUR golfer Ernie Els and his wife Liezl shortly after their son Ben was diagnosed with autism.

Els for Autism has foundation offices in the U.S., Canada, South Africa and the UK. The Foundation's overarching mission is to help people on the autism spectrum fulfill their potential to lead positive, productive, and rewarding lives.

In the U.S., to help fulfill its mission Els for Autism is building a state-of-the-art Center of Excellence in Jupiter, FL, with a local, national and global reach and 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:

- 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.
- Understanding the nature of Autism Spectrum Disorder, raising awareness, and promoting the value, acceptance and inclusion of people on the spectrum.

The Els Center of Excellence

The Els Center of Excellence is a world-class facility hosting leading-edge programs. Based in Palm Beach County, Florida, the Center is on track to be a game-changing resource in the field of autism and a leading example of what should be available to individuals on the spectrum. The 26-acre campus will ultimately feature:

- A Lower School*
 - An Upper School
 - An Auditorium Building*
 - Two playgrounds*
 - A golf practice facility
 - Gymnasium
 - Cafeteria
 - Athletic field
 - Swimming pool and pavilion
 - Sensory garden and pavilion
 - Play courts
 - A medical and professional services building
 - An adult services building*
- * opened August 2015

THE STORY SO FAR

Groundbreaking for the Center took place in March 2014 for the first two buildings - the Lower School and the Auditorium Building, and these opened along with the two playgrounds in August 2015. The golf practice facility is under construction and will open in 2016. Capital fundraising continues to secure funding for the Upper School, the sports and recreational facilities, the medical and professional services building, the adult services component and the programs and services thereof.



- 1 40 classrooms across the Lower and Upper Schools with a low student/teacher ratio.
- 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 is taught in specially designed learning labs to promote independent living and deliver vocational training.
- 5 The state-of-the-art auditorium provides 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 allows for a range of global outreach activities including remote therapy sessions, school to school communication and think tank sessions.
- 8 The Sensory Arts Garden Environment (SAGE) will feature art elements specially designed to be experienced via touch, sight, hearing, smell, and movement. The Pavilion, equipped with a catering kitchen, will be a multi-purpose space available for classroom/studio use, hosting receptions and events, and vocational training.
- 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, transitional housing and adult training and recreational programs as an extension of the Upper School curriculum.



The Els Center of Excellence

THE APPROACH: HOLISTIC & GLOBAL

Even before the dedicated buildings are in place, the Center is bringing together the critical components of early intervention, education, sports and leisure, applied research, transition to adulthood, medical and professional services, and adult services all on one campus. The wrap-around services that the Center provides are not only focused on the individual with autism, but their family and the professionals that work with them.

Having all the essential components on one campus, with the integrated programming and continuity of service that this allows, is not only a game-changer for the local autism community, but makes the facility the perfect hub for a variety of global outreach activities that ensures the Center's positive influence is felt far beyond the boundaries of its walls. Once the dedicated buildings are in place this influence will be magnified!



THE DESIGN

The Center integrates unique architectural components which create a learning environment designed specifically for individuals on the spectrum and which gives them every opportunity to thrive and succeed.

The Center's state-of-the-art technology not only helps create a rich learning environment for the students on campus but facilitates the gathering and sharing of best practices in education and therapy with individuals on the spectrum, their families and the professionals that work with them, across the U.S., and internationally.

THE AUDITORIUM BUILDING

Equipped with state-of-the-art digital video/audio conferencing equipment, this building is the hub of The Els Center of Excellence global outreach activities. It includes:

- A 20,000 square foot building with office, meeting, therapy, and conference space
- 300-seat auditorium with state-of-the-art technology including digital video-conferencing
- 3 teleconferencing suites for distance program development, monitoring, and support
- Dedicated rooms for visiting researchers, scholars, and professionals sharing best practices in the field of autism
- Office space for the Foundation's development and programming staff



THE LOWER SCHOOL



Known as The Learning Center at The Els Center of Excellence, the Lower School provides a uniquely designed, on-site educational program for up to 150 students on the autism spectrum ages 3-14. The school is a public charter school and is free to attend. Once the Upper School is built the Center will be able to host an additional 150 students, ages 14-22, bringing the total capacity to 300. The Lower School features:

- A 33,000 square foot building with 20 classrooms, 10 therapy rooms, and a multitude of specialty classrooms and labs
- Observation rooms in every classroom and several individual therapy rooms
- Classrooms located in separate wings away from highly active common areas
- State-of-the-art technology; interactive whiteboards, video cameras for observation and video conferencing
- Specialty classrooms including music, art, computer lab, and media production
- Life skills training lab with full kitchen and washer/dryer
- Hooks installed in each classroom for sensory swings
- A sensory gym with foam pit, in-laid spring floor, and moveable swings – used to stimulate the child's nervous system and ready their mind for learning
- Acoustiblock liner installed within the walls throughout the building to reduce noise transmission
- High lying windows in classrooms to reduce distractions, yet ensuring natural light
- Use of LED lighting throughout the building to reduce sensory overload
- Herb garden run by students in our outdoor classroom
- Two playgrounds fitted with swings, climbing structures, tunnels, and picnic tables, and plenty of balls and riding toys to work on gross motor skills and motor coordination



The Els Center of Excellence Programs

Using the new Els Center of Excellence as its base, Els for Autism has developed, and is rolling out, a number of innovative evidence-based programs for families and individuals across the life span. These currently include:

GOALS: Global Outreach Autism Learning Services

Through our GOALS program, families near and far have the opportunity to gain access to a highly qualified trans-disciplinary team of professionals that work together to develop a unique and individualized program for their child with autism. Families participate in an intensive one week comprehensive evaluation, program development, and program implementation coaching, followed by ongoing monthly teleconferencing support.



JUMP START: Early Intervention Services

Jump Start provides evidence-based, early intervention services to children ages 15-36 months that are at risk for or have been diagnosed with ASD. This classroom and home-based program provides instruction that builds on individual strengths to teach new skills, improve behaviors, and remediate areas of weakness. Parent involvement is key to the success of Jump Start and specific programming are offered to help families understand their child's behavior and needs. Resources, support, and training is offered to enable parents to work and play with their child more effectively through naturalistic every day activities.



BASE: Behavior Analytic Services & Education

Applied behavior analysis (ABA) is the application of learning principles to bring forth positive behavior change that is socially significant. For individuals with autism, ABA techniques can produce improvements in communication, social relationships, play, self-care, school and employment. The BASE program includes individual behavior therapy sessions at the Center, in the home, and community. BASE services include functional behavior assessments, positive behavior intervention plans, intensive 1-1 therapy sessions, functional communication training, social skills groups, and parent training in effective behavioral strategies. Training and consultation on the application of the principles of applied behavior analysis is also provided to teachers and other professionals.



REACH & TEACH THROUGH THE ARTS

A unique therapeutic arts program featuring creative music, art, and dance/movement therapy, as well as musical theatre, tailored specifically to the unique interests and needs of individuals on the autism spectrum. Exploration of



music, art, movement and drama can facilitate personal growth for people on the spectrum in many areas including gross and fine motor skills, speech and language through song, memory and mental agility, social skills, confidence, and self-expression. Individual and group sessions are available to the students on campus as well as the wider autism community – both young and old.



ADULT PROGRAMS & SERVICES

Provides support and assistance to adults on the spectrum to successfully transition to all aspects of life through independent living models. The Center utilizes a transdisciplinary approach to assist adults in preparing for the world of work through pre-employment skill courses, job search assistance, employer training, and on-the-job coaching. Adults can learn independent living skills within the domains of building and maintaining relationships, managing personal finances, preparing meals and other household chores. Recreation and leisure programs provide adults with opportunities to learn to socialize with friends while participating in activities such as golf, cooking classes, computer and video production classes, and art and music therapy.



TEAM: Teaching Educational Autism Methods

The TEAM program provides learning opportunities for college students needing placement for internships, externships, practicum work, and student teaching. Students enrolled in programs for occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, music therapy, nursing, applied behavior analysis, and special education will engage in hands-on learning with highly qualified and experienced staff. Online presentations and webinars on a variety of topics will also be accessible, through our digital resource library, to parents and professionals around the world.



OUTREACH CONFERENCING SERVICES

Our state-of-the-art Auditorium Building provides the space and technology to host a wide range of conferences, meetings, and events. It is purpose built to enable researchers and professionals, from the global autism community, to gather and disseminate information on cutting-edge practices and evidence based interventions to meet the needs of individuals on the autism



spectrum. The Center's audio/video conferencing technology means that parents, professionals and researchers from around the world are able to engage and interact in real time with our events or watch recorded seminars housed in our digital resource library. The Auditorium is also available for rental to the community to conduct outside conferences, seminars, workshops, and events.



ERNIE ELS #GAMEON AUTISM™ FITNESS

Is an innovative, family-supportive, research-based fitness and wellness program for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). It incorporates the use of traditional fitness equipment, as well as music, dancing, and video games as a means of motivating student participation in fitness activities including cardiovascular, strength training, flexibility, and common recess games.

Individuals with ASD often lack opportunities for physical activity due to high levels of intensive therapy involving stagnant activities throughout each day. In addition, many individuals with ASD have high incident deficits in motor planning and coordination leading to an aversion to organized sports activities. Although these individuals may shy away from physical activity and organized sports, it is imperative to create programs that use evidence based practices to get them active, moving and practicing social skills. Individual and group classes are available.



ERNIE ELS #GAMEON AUTISM™ GOLF

This innovative program has been developed in collaboration with PGA REACH and The First Tee and is especially tailored for individuals on the spectrum. Infused with evidence-based practices for teaching golf to people with ASD, #GameON Autism Golf is designed to build self-esteem and confidence in a fun, welcoming and supportive environment; encouraging participants to learn golf skills while practicing specific autism learning concepts, including: communication, regulatory, motor and social skills. Once complete, the golf facility at The Els Center of Excellence will be the hub for this exciting program.

In the meantime, one-hour introductory clinics are offered under the guidance of Els for Autism staff members throughout the U.S., Canada and South Africa. An extended Ernie Els #GameON Autism™ Golf program curriculum is also taught by golf instructors, specially trained in the program, and features nine group lessons that take place over a four and a half week period. Working with a team of golf partners and autism organizations this comprehensive program is being piloted by Els for Autism in seven cities across the U.S. and will be ready for roll-out in 2016.

The initiative has been made possible thanks to the support of Golf Challenge donors across North America, New York Collaborates for Autism, Adams Golf, The Honda Classic, Southwest Airlines, PGA REACH and The First Tee.



“I wanted to thank you for the time you have taken to put this program together. Our students truly enjoyed the program and many have generated a true interest in the game. For some of our kids, this is the first activity they have been willing participants in many years.” *Eddie Necci, Newmark Education, whose students attended the pilot program in Northern N.J.*

“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*



“We are forever grateful to the parents, host courses, First Tee and PGA REACH whose generosity is creating so many magical moments for young people on the spectrum. To see a child's face light up in every Golf Challenge city and know that by working together we are positively impacting the life of a child and their family, in a very tangible way, is simply amazing.” *Mary Kay Willson, Tournament Director, The Els for Autism Golf Challenge*

“It is very difficult to get Joshua to do anything new and I am grateful Joshua found yet another arena he can be comfortable interacting with people. I would have never expected it to be a golf course but I am thrilled. Anytime he is willing to leave the house it is an achievement. Keep doing what your doing but know you are making a difference for a kid like mine.” *Parent of a child that attended the pilot program in Northern N.J.*



“My hope is that your program grows and grows, and serves as a role model to inspire other autism programs to come for a variety of activities and camps. The extracurricular piece is really lacking for our kids. They deserve to play sports with strong, knowledgeable, compassionate instruction.” *Parent of a child that attended the pilot program in Northern N.J.*





Gifts both large and small enable us to deliver on our mission to help individuals on the autism spectrum fulfill their potential to lead positive, productive and rewarding lives. There are a number of ways to become part of the family of donors that supports Ernie and Liezl Els in delivering and sustaining The Els Center of Excellence. Opportunities exist around the capital campaign to help complete the construction of the Center as well as the development and implementation of programs and services.

To discuss donor opportunities please contact:

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Donations can be made:

- Online at: www.ElsForAutism.com
- By check (made payable to 'Els for Autism') and addressed to:
Els for Autism Foundation
The Els Center of Excellence
18370 Limestone Creek Road
Jupiter, FL 33458

Accessing Programs & Services

Many of our programs and services at The Els Center of Excellence are accessible to individuals, families, professionals, researchers and organizations across the US and internationally. Please contact us if you would like more information about the programs and services outlined in this brochure.

For more information on programs and services please contact:

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Els for Autism is a US public charity (EIN #26-3520396), recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as exempt from Federal tax under Section 501(c)(3) of the tax code. Donors should consult their tax advisor to determine whether they are eligible to claim a deduction associated with their donation.



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