



The Tommy Foundation

Embracing families living autism

1390 Columbia Ave, Lancaster, PA 17603 www.tommyland.org



About Us

WE FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT ASSETS IN THE WORLD ARE PEOPLE, AND WHILE THERE IS A PLACE FOR RESEARCH IN ALL MOVEMENTS, INVESTING IN HUMAN BEINGS WILL ALWAYS YIELD THE GREATEST RETURN.

Started in 2005 by two parents of a child on the severe end of the autism spectrum, The Tommy Foundation has grown from a small dream in Lancaster, Pennsylvania to now an award winning foundation with connections all across the United States.

Winners of a March 2010 Pepsi Refresh Project grant of \$50,000, the Tommy Foundation are producers of the Oscar qualified film “The United States of Autism,” and are a family centered organization focusing on what we call the 3 A’s of Autism – Awareness, Action and Advocacy. Our collegiate programs are designed to assist current families as well as bring talent into the autism movement long term, and we endeavor to reach minority families in as many ways as possible.

We aim to embrace individuals on the spectrum who classify themselves as neuro-diverse, as well as individuals who can not speak for themselves and their families, and everyone in between. It is a tightrope to balance the interests of so many groups, yet we find that everyone can agree that we are all looking to help our children and selves reach our greatest potential. This is what we mean by our message “embracing families affected by autism”.

The Tommy Foundation continually seeks to embrace individuals on the entire autism spectrum, educate families and individuals to handle the condition, and to empower all those who desire to advocate for the autism movement.



At a Glance

Organization Founded	2005
President	Sugey Cruz-Everts
Number of families directly assisted	Approximately 300+
Phone call support hours	Over 300
Attendees at support events	Over 3000
Number of people trained to recognize, handle, and work with individuals with autism (These individuals all gain between 16 – 360 hours of experience)	Over 150
Autism awareness media impressions	Over 10 million
People exposed to neuro-diversity advocates	Over 200
Number of doctors and healthcare workers developed (The average doctor receives approximately 7 hours of training in medical school working with autism. Ours gain between 60 – 180 hours of experience)	Over 25
Number of graduate students and researchers guided into related autism fields	Over 50
Approximate annual budget	\$60,000



Programs

Support Meetings & Online Support

We offer once a month support meetings in person as well as a 24-7 online support page on Facebook so that families and individuals can have questions answered and share situations with our staff and other families. There are additionally two other support pages, one that includes professionals and another that focuses on events and news about the condition.

Number of people served per year: 800+

College Trainings and Programming

We offer established training programs with Students for Autism at Franklin and Marshall College and LINK at Elizabethtown College, both programs that connect children with autism and related conditions with a “buddy” that they can interact with on a 1:1 basis. This helps with one of the areas of challenge with autism specifically—social interaction. Other trainings are available by contacting our staff at sugey@tommyland.org

Number of people served per year: 150+

Community Trainings and Awareness

We offer training programs upon request to community groups such as businesses that want to learn how to treat and connect with potential clients with special needs; libraries, churches, organizations, community groups and more that want to establish programs or figure out ways to have better outreach for the special needs community. To set up a training, please contact sugey@tommyland.org

Number of people served per year: Ranges from 10-100 per year.



Family Centered Events

We offer a variety of programming that includes

Small community get-togethers that encourages families to interact with one another and build relationships

- Examples include: Bowling, swimming, movie nights, cook-outs

Mother/Father themed activities to encourage relationships with these groups

- Moms Night In – movies, games and reflection time
- Dads Events – basketball, leisure activities followed by sit-down chats with other dads or paternal figures/guardians to discuss issues they might be facing.

Pre-Teen/Teen Groups to encourage social interaction and communication skills. Additionally teens have been encouraged and helped to help then plan activities at one of our larger events with the aide of a College buddy from Students for Autism.

- Star Wars Day
- Harry Potter Day
- Game Day Lock In Day with Comic Book Store

Larger Themed events 4 times a year (Halloween/Harvest Activity, Holiday Event with Students for Autism, Spring Autism Walk & Festival and Summer Activity).

- Halloween/Harvest Activity is a combination dress-up/costume and craft day. Families and individuals engage in a number of crafts including origami, cookie decorating, carnival games and more. Teens from our Teen Program also set up booths to engage with the community and learn organizational and social interaction skills.
- Holiday Event with Students for Autism (F&M College). Similar to the Halloween Fest but with a focus on the Winter Holidays (Christmas and Hanukkah in particular).
- Spring Autism Walk and Festival, this happens every year in April during Autism Awareness Month. The aim and focus is on the 4 As of Autism – Awareness, Action and Advocacy. The Walk helps families share in and spread awareness in the Lancaster Community. The Expo allows providers and families to interact and thus take action in their lives by become aware of programming that companies have for individuals with autism and their families. The Festival allows families and individuals to engage with one another with sensory friendly activities and games. This past year 1100 people attended this event alone!
- Summer activity. This one changes from year to year depending on partnerships that we develop and needs that our members wish us to address. They include:
- Swimming events in partnership with various Recreational Centers in the area.



- Skateboarding Clinics in partnership with Get On Board.
- Community Day sponsored by families that live in an area that allows us to do cook-outs, games and activities.

Sensitive Santa. One to one Santa experience for individuals with more profound needs and care and that alternatively could not take part in traditional Holiday experience. We are the longest running Sensitive Santa Program and the only one that caters to the need for many families to have this be 1:1.

- Santa is a grandfather of children on the autism spectrum
- Our photographer is a father of a child with multiple special needs.
- An occupational therapist is on site as well to assist.
- All sessions are done by pre-scheduled appointment on 2 consecutive days. Sessions are either 15 minutes long if the individual can handle it or 30 minutes if the individual needs more time because of additional sensory challenges.
- Partnership with Toys For Tots Lancaster so that each individual gets a present through the program.

Number of people served per year: 1500

Annual Mini-Conference

We offer an annual conference typically in March that allows families, professionals and the community at large to attend to gather information on a variety of hot topics at the moment in autism that families and individuals have expressed are their areas of greatest need. Past topics have included:

- Wandering Prevention
- Bullying Prevention
- Autism in the Family
- IPAD Training (address communication challenges)
- Keynote speakers (typically a chance to hear from someone directly affected by Autism)
- Puberty and Sexuality Training



Emergency Fund

We offer families or individuals funds to address emergency needs when they have limited resources or come upon sudden dire financial stress. In the past families have sought emergency funding for:

- Food needs for families that can not afford it that month
- One time emergency assistance with housing needs (if for example they would otherwise be evicted and left homeless with their special needs child(ren)).
- Clothing for families or individuals that need it in emergency situation which have included:
 - Family had their trailer blow up and they had no place to live and lost all their belongings
 - Family had their house burn down and lost all their belongings
 - Single mom had lost 3 jobs because of her own health related diagnoses and 2 children with special needs and was almost evicted.
 - Families with multiple children with special needs who have gotten to point of foreclosure or eviction from their homes because of the cost of therapy for their loved ones.
 - We are also in partnership with a group called Alyssa's Bedtime Stories that provides pajamas, books and dental supplies to families in need. Typically we have served up to 80 families with this program.

Scholarships

- IPADS or other communication tools for pre-verbal children
- Camps for kids that specifically address an area of need within autism (communication, sensory, social interaction for example)
- Funding for families to attend trainings on autism at larger conferences in PA.



Staff

Sugey Cruz-Everts

Co-Founder and President, The Tommy Foundation

Sugey is a NYC native who moved to Lancaster, PA in 1996 and has made the area her home since graduating Franklin and Marshall College in 2000. She co-founded The Tommy Foundation, named in honor of her special needs son, because of a growing need for autism awareness, advocacy and action especially in the areas involving the needs of families and individuals who are living with an autism or related diagnosis. Sugey is involved in all areas of the organization and coordinates the support meetings and groups as well as family programming and events and provides trainings to local Colleges for their 1:1 programs with children with special needs.

Richard Everts

Co-Founder and Vice President, The Tommy Foundation

Rich is a PA native who spent most of his formative years in Lancaster County and then returned in 1996 when he attended College at Franklin and Marshall College. Rich co-founded The Tommy Foundation alongside his wife Sugey to address the serious need for support for families and individuals affected by autism living in their county. Rich has used his additional talents in multi-media and technology to spread awareness about Autism by successfully producing and completing a film entitled “The United States of Autism” which even made it to Oscar Qualification. The film takes an intimate look at 21 families and individuals affected by autism across 11,000 miles of the United States and looks at various issues facing each one.

Today Rich continues to help develop The Tommy Foundation brand via his multi-media efforts and assists with events—especially ones tailored at getting more fathers of special needs individuals involved with their loved one.

Shelly Koch

Director of Autism Services.

As a mother of 2 boys, one of which is profoundly affected by autism, she found it to be an absolute necessity to learn to advocate in all areas of need for her child and family. It is imperative that parents have the knowledge and coaching they need to ensure their entire family is receiving the adequate supports and services needed to thrive. She is thankful to have The Tommy Foundation as a venue to share the knowledge she has acquired over the 8 years she has been a part of the autism community participating in educational, behavioral and legislative advocacy.



Support Services

Kira Crispino

Kira grew up in Lancaster County and is a graduate of Manheim Township High School. After attending Kutztown University, she received a BFA in Communication Design. She worked in the advertising industry for a number of years before deciding to go back to school and obtain a teaching degree. She attended Gwynedd Mercy College and began teaching until the birth of her son. Since then, Kira has been a full-time mom to her two children, one of whom has a diagnosis of autism.

Holly Kuch Stockwell

Holly has been active with The Tommy Foundation since 2013. A mom to two boys, she previously worked for the Commonwealth of PA at the Lancaster County Assistance office, and with the PA Department of Health. Holly also volunteers with PA Parent to Parent and the United Disability Service Foundation.

Kim Shank

Kim is a Lancaster County native who is the mom to two girls with special needs. She has worked as an occupational therapist with both geriatric and pediatric community in the area. She uses her background to assist both with our support services and with trainings in the community particularly concerning how sensory processing issues affect individuals with special needs.

Other Staff

Treasurer	Christina Brown
Events	Megan Hull-Burg, Jin-young Lee
Grants	Jennie Heydt
Web	Thomas Cook
NYC Outreach	Katiana Harrison



Recent Community Partnerships

Alyssa's Bedtime Stories
Autism Cares Foundation
Autism Treatment Center of America
Behavior By Design
Central PA Avengers
Face Value Comics
Fulton Theatre
Get On Board
Joni and Friends
Lancaster Archery Academy
Lancaster Public Library
Leisure Lanes Bowling
L.I.N.K. at Elizabethtown College
Melody of Autism
Natural Play Therapy
New Story School
Orrstown Bank
P.E.N. (Parent Education Network)
PerformCare
Robert Naseef, Ph.D
Schreiber Pediatric Rehabilitation Center
Students for Autism, Franklin and Marshall College
T.A.C.A. (Talk About Curing Autism)
Ware Center at Millersville University



In the Media

Lancaster Online Articles:

About our President:

http://lancasteronline.com/news/sugey-cruz-everts-advocate-for-families-living-with-autism/article_c9ada5be-abe1-5a1b-83cc-5d7d513f64c2.html

Our President has Award named in her honor at Franklin and Marshall College for their Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMCA)

<https://www.facebook.com/notes/omca-group-fm/sugey-cruz-everts-award-new-omca-award-2015/10153545931591487>

Schreiber Pediatrics News

<http://www.schreiberpediatric.org/links/blogs/an-aspiring-actor-with-down-syndrome.html>

About our Film “The United States of Autism”

New York Times

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/09/movies/richard-evertss-united-states-of-autism.html>

Los Angeles Times

<http://articles.latimes.com/2013/aug/15/entertainment/la-et-mn-us-of-autism-review-20130814>

Williamsport

<http://sungazette.com/page/content.detail/id/576837/Local-artist-creates-designs-for-upcoming-film-about-autism.html?nav=5154>

Jansen Media

<http://www.janson.com/wp/2013/03/14/a-fathers-tireless-efforts-bring-encouragement-to-families-affected-by-autism-in-new-documentary/>

Hollywood Reporter

<http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/review/united-states-autism-film-review-599101>



About Students for Autism

<http://www.the-college-reporter.com/2012/11/04/new-club-dedicated-to-spreading-autism-awareness/>

About Autism Generally

Intelligencer Journal

<http://www.nacbhd.org/NewsArticleDetails.aspx?mode=article&id=70656>

About Our Events and Programs

Edge of Autism

http://lancasteronline.com/news/local/edge-of-autism-event-draws-to-buchanan-park-for-awareness/article_64f34c74-098c-11e6-bb6a-1bb363673fcc.html

<http://www.livingwellwithadisability.org/2011/03/activities-for-every-end-of-the-spectrum/>

<http://www.townlively.com/edge-of-autism-walk-festival-seeks-participants/>

Sensitive Santa

<http://ads.ingleonline.com/AdDesk/Htmlfiles/Readers/article.epc?id=94265>

http://lancasteronline.com/lancaster/news/tommy-foundation-offers-sensitive-santa-visits-to-children-with-sensory/article_b2862e57-d0d9-534c-86de-bd11e4211e5d.html

IPAD Training

http://www.autismcaresfoundation.org/many-thanks-to-the-tommy-foundation/?doing_wp_cron=1474301624.6847269535064697265625