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## **ANY BABY CAN SA CELEBRATES 40<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY ON WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY**

*Nonprofit Commemorates Four Decades of Providing Critical Services at Walk for Autism*

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS – **Any Baby Can of San Antonio (ABC)** is kicking off a year-long celebration for their 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the Walk for Autism on April 2, which is also World Autism Day. The Walk, the largest of its kind, will take place from 8 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. at Texas A&M University-San Antonio. The community is invited to join hundreds of ABC supporters at the celebration. The celebration will include remarks from Senator José Menéndez, Sheriff Javier Salazar, a sensory village, music and dancing from DJ AXE6 and Grupo Folklórico de Bendiciones, and resources for all ages.

The Walk provides a safe and inclusive environment where all families can come together. Additionally, the Walk aims to raise much needed funds to help fuel ABC's ability to offer a lifeline to the growing number of requests for help from families in Bexar County and surrounding areas. Serving 16 counties in the San Antonio area, ABC remains the only agency in the region to offer critical access to care and comprehensive services for families of children with special healthcare needs including **case management, counseling services, funeral assistance, autism programs, sibling support and prescription assistance at no cost.**

COVID-19 has worsened the situation for many families, and pushed many parents of kids with special healthcare needs to the [breaking point](#). Since the start of the pandemic, ABC has experienced a drastic increase in need from families for specialty formulas, funeral assistance, cranial helmets, prescription medicines, and more. **More children will be diagnosed with autism this year than with AIDS, diabetes, and cancer combined.** One in 44 children nationwide will be diagnosed with autism this year. In Bexar and surrounding counties, over 30,000 individuals are living with autism.

"Any Baby Can celebrates four decades of helping families and we look forward to strengthening that legacy for many years to come," said Elyse Bernal, President & CEO of Any Baby Can. "While we have grown considerably from that young organization founded in 1982, one thing that has not changed is our ongoing commitment to deliver outstanding services to families in need."

ABC started in a small trailer behind Santa Rosa Hospital in 1982 by a special needs teacher, Marian Sokol, Ph.D, to help families in the community. To her surprise, she received over 500 calls within a matter of months for help– not only confirming but emphasizing the dire need for help and resources for kids with special healthcare needs. ABC has progressed through the years to continue to meet the evolving needs of families and children with special healthcare needs.

"What do you say about an organization that is moving mountains? I am a single mother and words cannot express how grateful I am to ABC. They have helped me afford the medications and equipment for my 4-year-old who was diagnosed with autism, as well as a cranial helmet for my baby daughter which my insurance didn't cover. ABC provided a lifeline. They remind me that there are good people in the world. Thank you so much for all that you do." – Alexa, Mother of Alma and Adrian.

Throughout the year, ABC will share 40 stories of resilience and hope from 40 families in hopes that it will help raise awareness, acceptance and funds to help children with special healthcare needs. Texas Health and Human Services cites autism spectrum disorder as the fastest growing serious, developmental disability. Even outside of the anniversary, 40 is a very special number for ABC because autism affects an estimated one out of every 40 children. San Antonio families need support now more than ever.

To learn more about Any Baby Can's 40 years of community impact, visit their [website](#). ABC is grateful for support from sponsors Amazon People with Disabilities, Community First Health Plans, University Health System, George Salinas Injury Lawyers, Ageless Living Home Health, Blue Cares, and the San Antonio Police Officers Association.

## **What is Autism**

What is autism? Autism, or autism spectrum disorder (ASD), refers to a broad range of conditions characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech and nonverbal communication. We know that there is not one autism but many subtypes, most influenced by a combination of genetic and environmental factors. Because autism is a spectrum disorder, each person with autism has a distinct set of strengths and challenges. The ways in which people with autism learn, think and problem-solve can range from highly skilled to severely challenged. Some people with ASD may require significant support in their daily lives, while others may need less support and, in some cases, live entirely independently.

## **About Any Baby Can San Antonio**

Raising a child with special healthcare needs is difficult. Finding help shouldn't be. Any Baby Can services are provided at no cost to families who have a childbirth through 17 years of age with ANY medical diagnosis, including a chronic illness, disability, developmental delay, or health risk.

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