Diversity Awareness Workshop: Focus on Autism

Monday, February 5th
Check In: 3:00 PM - 3:30 PM
Program: 3:30 PM - 5:30 PM
West Village Commons, Ballrooms A, B, and C

Video - TU Students: Life with Autism:
Current TU students share their perspective on what it is like to have autism. They talk about the challenges they face, the people who inspire them, and their career goals.

Coach Panel - Moderated by Trish Kane from Pathfinders
Hear the inspiring stories of current Towson University Athletic coaches whose children have autism.

Keynote Speaker: Anthony Ianni
Anti-bullying motivational speaker and the first known individual with autism to play college basketball.

In collaboration with the Men’s Basketball game for autism awareness.
February 10th at 2pm
Towson vs. Northeastern University.

Sponsored By: The College of Liberal Arts, Athletics and Disability Support Services.
With Support From: The Center for Student Diversity, Pathfinders and Hussman Center
Diversity Awareness Workshop: Focus on Autism

Schedule

3:00 PM—3:30 PM: Check-in

3:30 PM—5:30 PM: Video Footage of current Towson University Students

Panel of TU Athletic Coaches: Moderated by Trish Kane from Pathfinders

Keynote Speaker: Anthony Ianni

Video- TU Students: Life with Autism

Disability Support Services asked current TU students Ryan, Taariq, and Jonathan to share their perspectives on what it is like to have autism. They share some of their challenges such as being bullied, socializing with and understanding others. These students also describe some of their role models who range from parents to super heroes. Finally, they share their career goals and why they view having autism as something positive.

Keynote Speaker: Anthony Ianni

Anti-bullying motivational speaker and the first known individual with autism to play college basketball.

Anthony Ianni and his Relentless Tour - an initiative of the Michigan Department of Civil Rights - is one of the most sought-after anti-bullying and motivational programs in the state of Michigan and beyond.

At the age of 4, Anthony was diagnosed with Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD), a condition on the autism spectrum, and he was bullied as a child. Doctors told Anthony’s parents that he would barely graduate from high school, would never go to college or become an athlete, and would likely live in a group home when he grew up. His family was devastated but pledged they would help Anthony be successful, no matter what.

Despite the bullies, adversity and personal challenges, Anthony worked hard and never gave up. Not only did he earn his Bachelor’s Degree in Sociology from Michigan State University, he became the first athlete with autism to play Division I college basketball. At MSU, Anthony played for legendary coach Tom Izzo, winning two Big Ten Championships and a Big Ten Tournament Title, and was a member of the 2010 Final Four team. He was the recipient of the 2011 Tim Bograkos Walk On Award and the 2012 Unsung Player Award, and was named a 2013 Detroit Pistons Community Game Changer Finalist.

Anthony and the Michigan Department of Civil Rights seek to raise awareness of autism and the problem of bullying. Anthony has pledged his life and career to helping those who face similar challenges. He has been invited to tell his story and share his message across the country and has inspired countless individuals to “LYD” (Live Your Dreams.)
Panel of Coaches

**Don Metil**: Head coach Don Metil has made the Tigers into a consistent threat at the top of the Colonial Athletic Association (CAA) standings. Metil completed his fifth season by leading the Tigers to 27 victories and a postseason appearance in the NVIC Tournament. The autism cause is one that hits close to home for Metil as one of his children was diagnosed with PDD-NOS, which is on the autism spectrum. The "Aces for Autism" fundraiser asked fans to pledge either a flat amount or to take the TU Team Challenge and pledge per Towson's season totals. In 2016, the Tigers raised $1,769.75 dollars through its "Aces for Autism" program.

**Diane Richardson**: Diane Richardson is in her first year of coaching the Tigers. Richardson was most recently an assistant coach and the recruiting coordinator at West Virginia University during the 2016-17 season, leading the Mountaineers' 2017 recruiting class to being ranked No. 17 by ESPNW. Richardson earned her master’s degree in management from Central Michigan in 1984. She has also coached at George Washington, Maryland, and American. Richardson ran track at Frostburg and was the 1979 NCAA regional champion in the 200 and 400 meter races. She earned a spot on the 1980 US Olympic team, which did not compete in the games. The autism cause is one that hits close to home for Richardson as two of her children are on the autism spectrum.

**Pat Skerry**: Head Coach Pat Skerry has revitalized the Towson men's basketball program. Skerry led the Tigers to an 18-13 record in 2012-13. Not only was it the first winning season since 1995-96, it was also the largest single-season turnaround in NCAA Division I history. With one of his sons on the autism spectrum, Skerry has used his platform and teamed up with USF staffer Tom Herrion to start Autism Awareness in college basketball, which is now a national event where hundreds of coaches wear the prominent blue puzzle piece pin. Skerry and Herrion were honored with the National Association of Basketball Coaches (NABC) Guardians of the Game Service Award.

**Moderator: Trish Kane; Director of Programs –Pathfinders for Autism**

Trish Kane joined Pathfinders for Autism in September of 2010. She oversees the Resource Center and is directly responsible for coordinating the training programs and fun events. Since March, 1995, she has advocated for her son with ASD and offers an understanding of supports and accommodations that work when facing the challenges of going out to eat, visiting the dentist, etc. Trish has been providing an understanding of ASD since 2012; audiences include first responders, educators, library staff, various government agencies, and, since June 2016, hospital systems throughout Maryland. Trish served on the Board of Directors for The Abilities Network, a local Maryland community and vocational support organization from 2010-2015.