Autism Acceptance Month

These incredible people on the autism spectrum show the world that neurodiversity is a superpower. May their stories inspire you to celebrate differences – the Autism Society of America’s theme this year.

Greta Thunberg
Born January 3, 2003
Activist
Read more: https://bit.ly/2QAQvLU

Thunberg calls autism her superpower. In the I Am Greta documentary, she says, “Sometimes I feel that it might be good if everyone had a tiny bit of Asperger’s, at least when it comes to the climate.” She credits autism for her ability to stay hyper focused on the topic of climate change – she’s been passionately researching it since she was 9 years old – and to see the gravity of the climate crisis in black and white terms.

Armani Williams
Born April 15, 2000
NASCAR Driver
Read more: https://nas.cr/3dQq8Us

Williams is the first NASCAR driver openly diagnosed on the autism spectrum. Autism affects nerve cells and can result in different ways people think, act and feel. Williams says he relies on cues and the subtleties of feelings by observing gorilla families. Visiting them took her out of social isolation, and she learned social cues and the subtleties of feelings by observing gorilla families.

Satoshi Tajiri
Born August 28, 1965
Video Game Designer

Tajiri’s childhood obsession with insects earned him the nickname “Dr. Bug” growing up. As much as he enjoyed collecting bugs, he thought other people would be interested in a game where they collect and share characters. That game became the world-wide phenomenon, Pokémon.

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Dr. Prince-Hughes was diagnosed with autism at 38 years old. The diagnosis wasn’t even in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual until she was 30. Lack of understanding of her sensory issues and obsessive behaviors made her disconnect from the world and turn to alcohol to cope at a young age. Dr. Prince-Hughes says that working with gorillas helped her develop coping mechanisms for her Asperger’s syndrome. Visiting them took her out of social isolation, and she learned social cues and the subtleties of feelings by observing gorilla families.

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Dr. Prince-Hughes visited the zoo for years before she was eventually accepted into a zoo program for educating undergraduate college students. She then went on to get her master’s and PhD degrees in interdisciplinary anthropology. She has worked with the Jane Goodall Institute and is currently a professor at Western Washington University. Dr. Prince-Hughes has published many books, including her memoir Songs of the Gorilla Nation: My Journey Through Autism.

Thunberg was diagnosed with Asperger’s Syndrome, OCD and selective mutism. Initially, she wasn’t open about her diagnosis, and was bullied in school and had an eating disorder. She struggled with depression. Her life changed the day her school played a film about pollution in the ocean and she discovered her passion to save the environment. In addition to protesting and giving speeches around the world, she has reduced her carbon footprint by becoming vegan, upcycling and giving up flying.

Williams’s parents were so overwhelmed when doctors told them their son had autism when he was 2 years old. They worried that he would never be able to live independently, or even be able to ride a bike someday. However, a 2-week bike course for children with autism revealedWilliams’s need for speed – and he learned how to ride a bike in one day.

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Tajiri’s colleagues thought of him as “reclusive” and “eccentric.” While developing the game, he would work for 24 hours, then sleep for 12. Those extreme lengths paid off as the game that Nintendo was initially skeptical of has gone on to be one of the most successful, multi-billion dollar media franchises. There are Pokémon games, books, movies, merchandise, and more.

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