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Events slated for Autism Awareness, Acceptance Month

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Rebecca Roberts, of Dallas, Tx., (right) a music education major at Western Kentucky University works with Renaldo Teixeira, 6, of Bowling Green during a class as part of The Kelly Autism Program located at the Suzanne Vitale Clinical Education Complex on Sept. 19, 2012. In recognition of Autism Awareness and Acceptance Month, the LifeSkills Run/Walk for Autism will be held on April 15 to benefit the CEC.

Daily News File

Two events in recognition of Autism Awareness and Acceptance Month will be held in Bowling Green on April 15.

The 16th annual LifeSkills Run/Walk for Autism will begin at 8 a.m. at the Bowling Green Ballpark, and a free screening of the documentary film “In a Different Key” will be at 2 p.m. at The Capitol Theater.

The LifeSkills Run/Walk for Autism benefits the programs of the Suzanne Vitale Clinical Education Complex (CEC) at Western Kentucky University.

Laura Reynolds, chair of the Run/Walk, said the vision of the CEC is to build a world where all individuals flourish as valued members of their community.

“The CEC is a place where families are accepted and supported while navigating unique challenges that others may not understand,” Reynolds said.

She said the CEC enhances socialization and communication while enriching the quality of life for individuals and families impacted by autism and other neurodiversities.

“The run/walk is our annual fundraiser, and it is a time for families to come out to a safe environment where everyone is accepted,” she said. “Many families and schools create teams and rally around their loved ones to support neurodiversity.”

Reynolds said the event has something for everyone, including a BG Road Runners Grand Prix race, which is a 4-mile run that begins at 8 a.m.; a 1-mile children’s run

that takes place inside the ballpark at 9:05 a.m.; and a 1-mile family fun walk/run at 9:30 a.m.

The awards ceremony for the 4-mile run will begin immediately after the 1-mile walk/run.



Rich Pond Market's food truck will also be at this year's event.

To register and for additional information, visit www.wku.edu/runforautism.

Hosting the documentary "In a Different Key" is LifeWorks at Western Kentucky University, a two-year transition academy for young adults with autism who want to work and live independently.

"We (LifeWorks) help them to make that transition ... from being dependent on parents to becoming valued, contributing members of society," said LifeWorks Executive Director David Wheeler.

Wheeler said the documentary is about a journalist and mother who tracks down Donald Triplett, the first person who was ever diagnosed with autism, now an elderly man in rural Mississippi. She wants to learn if his life story holds promise for her own autistic son.

“The documentary itself does a great job of showing a dark history, but it also offers hope and light for the future,” Wheeler said. “It really defines how people with autism have been viewed and treated by society, but it also gives great examples of how they are also a valued part of society. I think this documentary will speak to a lot of people. It’s a great documentary to watch together as a community.”

Other sponsors of the screening include LifeSkills, The Warren County Public Library, Lynn and Dennis O’Keefe and Ernie and Julie Small.

A panel discussion will follow the documentary.

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