



NEWS RELEASE

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Greater Lansing Celebrates April as Autism Awareness Month. Plan Your Trip to the Most Sensory-friendly City in Michigan!

LANSING, Mich.— The Greater Lansing region prides itself on being a welcoming community and it is our goal to provide the best experience to all guests that visit. According to the Centers for Disease Control, 1 in 44 children are diagnosed on the autism spectrum. Therefore, in 2017 the Greater Lansing Convention & Visitors Bureau began a collaboration with regional attractions to provide a supportive and welcoming environment for those with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), developmental disabilities, sensory processing disorder, and other neuro-diverse individuals and their families. Multiple attractions have joined the partnership including: Impression 5 Science Center, Celebration Cinema, NCG Cinema, MSU's Abrams Planetarium, MSU Museum, Potter Park Zoo, Michigan History Center, State Capitol Building, Lansing Art Gallery & Education Center, the Lansing Lugnuts, Preuss Pets and Wharton Center for Performing Arts.

The GLCVB has supported Xavier DeGroat, an autism awareness advocate who has created the Xavier DeGroat Autism Foundation and in February of 2022 opened the Autism History Museum in the Meridian Mall. The museum, the first of its kind, offers a timeline of the awareness of autism and celebrates prominent figures who live with ASD. DeGroat's Foundation will help counsel, rehabilitate, and provide financial guidance to local individuals with autism.

Additionally, the GLCVB has partnered with the Mid-Michigan Autism Association (MMAA), Residential Options, Inc. (ROI) and Michigan State University (MSU) to facilitate local trainings for front line hospitality staff, in order to further enhance the visitor experience for people on the autism spectrum and their families. Over 1,400 individuals have undergone the training to better meet the needs of our neuro-diverse guests.

"The Greater Lansing community takes great pride in having numerous offerings tailored to the growing number of neuro-diverse guests and their families," said Julie Pingston, President and CEO. "It is our hope to continue to develop and conduct ASD training for our hospitality partners and encourage sensory-friendly activities by our attractions."

The Greater Lansing community will be celebrating Autism Awareness Month this April with the following sensory-friendly activities as well as a robust calendar of sensory-friendly programming throughout the year.

- April 9 – Falconers Program at Potter Park Zoo
- April 16 – Sensory Friendly Movie (Sonic 2) at Celebration Cinema
- April 19 – Sensory Friendly Spartan Concert at MSU's Fairchild Theatre
- April 23 – Sensory Friendly Movie (The Bad Guy) at Celebration Cinema
- April 24 – Sensory Friendly Shows (2) at Abrams Planetarium

For a complete schedule of ongoing sensory-friendly activities and attractions, including information on restaurants and virtual tours of over 50 area locations produced by AbleEyes, please visit <https://www.lansing.org/things-to-do/sensoryfriendly/>.

The vision of the GLCVB is to inspire everyone to celebrate and love Greater Lansing as much as we do! Which goes hand in hand with our mission, to positively impact our community's quality of life by developing the region as a visitor destination.

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