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PRESS RELEASE

Monday, August 31, 2009

Northern Virginia Autism Summit participants will discuss changes needed in Virginia

“Autism is more than a child’s problem; more than a health problem; more than an insurance problem. This is plainly and simply the civil rights issue of the 21st century.” (Delegate David Poisson, 32nd House District)

Alexandria, Virginia --- On Monday, October 5, 2009, the **Virginia Autism Project (VAP)** will sponsor an Autism Summit at the Hilton Alexandria Mark Center, 5000 Seminary Road, Alexandria, VA 22311, from 6:30-8:30pm. To increase public awareness and education of autism related issues, the VAP will host Autism Summits throughout the State in 2009 and a January 2010 rally in Richmond is planned to promote the overwhelming need for improved services for autism in Virginia.

Who: Legislators, candidates, the insurance industry, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC), and the autism community will be participating.

The **Virginia Autism Project (VAP)** is a non-profit organization (501(c)) that focuses on educating, advising and collaborating with federal, state and local decision makers and the general public on issues and legislation that impact individuals with autism and their communities, while raising awareness about autism throughout Virginia.

What: At the Summit, we will:

- Discuss the need for improving autism services in Virginia, including insurance coverage;
- Meet our elected representatives and hear their ideas and initiatives with respect to autism services;
- Hear JLARC’s June, 2009 **Assessment of Services for Virginians with Autism Spectrum Disorders** and testimonials from parents, educators and service providers regarding the impacts of autism to families, schools and communities.

When: October 5, 2009 from 6:30-8:30.

Where: Hilton Alexandria Mark Center, 5000 Seminary Road, Alexandria, VA 22311.

Why: Autism is a complex, treatable, lifelong, neurobiological disorder diagnosed by a medical doctor. One in every 150 children (and 1 of 94 boys) is diagnosed with autism - more children will be diagnosed with autism this year than with AIDS, diabetes and cancer combined. The rates of autism in Virginia are increasing at an alarming rate, while many health insurance companies currently exclude meaningful coverage for autism treatments and therapies, such as applied behavior analysis (ABA). “We hope to inspire community leadership on the need for better services for individuals with autism in Virginia”, stated Pat DiBari, President of the Virginia Autism Project.

For more information about the Northern Virginia Autism Summit or the Virginia Autism Project, contact our regional points of contact our Northern Virginia Regional Director, Teresa Champion, 703/440-8843, teechamp@gmail.com or Lynn Miller, 301/404.1221. Join us at [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com/VirginiaAutismProject) (“Virginia Autism Project”)

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