



For Immediate Release

Els for Autism Foundation® Hosts Autism Recognition and Response Training for South Florida Law Enforcement

Jupiter, Fl (January 7, 2022) On Wednesday, December 15, 2021, Els for Autism, on their Els Center of Excellence campus hosted autism recognition and response training for 57 law enforcement officers from across South Florida. Autism is the fastest-growing developmental disability in the United States, affecting 1 out of 44 children, according to the Center for Disease and Control (CDC). The University of Miami – Nova Southeastern University Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (UM-NSU CARD) sponsored this training and made it available free of charge to law enforcement officers. The Center for Autism and Related Disabilities from Florida Atlantic University also provided assistance with this training.

The training was instructed by Bart Barta of Autism Safety 101, Inc. Mr. Barta is a retired law enforcement commander from the Coral Gables Police Department and the proud father of an adult son with autism. Mr. Barta is a nationally recognized instructor and has trained more than 10,000 first responders from across the United States how to better recognize and respond to individuals with autism.

The training addressed the many challenges that affect individuals with autism, and how too often their behaviors and communication challenges can be misunderstood by first responders. Drowning is the number one cause of death for individuals with autism. This training stressed the urgency of promptly responding to missing person calls involving children and adults with autism. In this training, Mr. Barta also stressed the importance of coordinated search and recovery response and provided tips and strategies for recovering missing persons with autism.

Mr. Barta said, “People with autism are a rich part of the diversity that makes up so many communities in our nation. It’s imperative that law enforcement officers have a better understanding of the unique challenges faced by individuals with autism. Without training specific to autism, law enforcement officers may misinterpret behavior or communication challenges as noncompliance, guilt, or simply being disrespectful. This training is designed to provide a higher degree of safety for first responders and individuals with autism.”

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Photography: Can be downloaded for editorial use at: <https://elsforautism.smugmug.com/PR/>

Website: www.elsforautism.org

Social Media: [Twitter](#) ▪ [Facebook](#) ▪ [Instagram](#) ▪ [YouTube](#)

Els for Autism Foundation

The Els for Autism Foundation was established in 2009 by PGA TOUR golfer Ernie Els and his wife Liezl (residents of North Palm Beach, FL) shortly after their son, Ben, was diagnosed with autism. The Foundation's overarching mission is to help people on the autism spectrum fulfil their potential to lead positive, productive and rewarding lives. Els for Autism has offices in the U.S., Canada, South Africa, and the UK. To help fulfil its mission, Els for Autism is building a state-of-the-art Center of Excellence in Jupiter, FL, with a local, national and global reach.

The Els Center of Excellence

The Els Center of Excellence is a world-class facility hosting leading-edge programs and services for people on the autism spectrum and their families. The campus contains thoughtfully planned spaces designed to meet the specific needs of individuals with autism—from a possible early diagnosis, to their school-aged years, and throughout adulthood. The Center hosts two, non-profit, tuition-free Palm Beach County charter schools that serve students with autism using evidence-based practices. The Rupert Education Wing hosts The Learning Center at The Els Center of Excellence, serving students with autism ages 3-14 (thelearningcenter.org) and the Shanken Education Wing hosts The Learning Academy at The Els Center of Excellence, serving students with autism ages 14-21 (tlacad.org).