



Proud Aspy Mom Newsletter | September 2022



College Scholarships For Students With Autism

Our daughter is in her first two years of college—just the beginning of the journey. And since we have a recent college graduate, I know how expensive education is. It can truly be unaffordable. Now add education expenses (close to \$200,000 for many 4-year degrees) to the many expenses families with ASD have for everyday resources (approximately \$75,000 annually) and it feels as if sending your loved one with ASD to college is essentially financially impossible.

We have a friend, Lisa Benson, Founder/CEO of The Benson Advantage, who guides students through the application process and, most importantly, scholarships. She recently asked our daughter to begin the process of applying for scholarships. Quite frankly, I was taken aback. With everything our family does to support our daughter, I had not thought about teaching her to focus on her own financial independence.

It turns out there are substantial scholarship opportunities for people with ASD. The descriptions are vast and provide a range of options for students on the spectrum seeking higher education. The truth is, at some point, we all have to pivot. Although my family and I are well aware of what needs to happen to help our daughter transition to adulthood, we

also know that it will take a REAL effort to TEACH our daughter to TAKE CHARGE OF HER OWN FOOTPRINT.

On top of the many scholarships, there are other ways to educate our loved ones. For example, take them to your bank and schedule an appointment to go over your checking, savings, money market, and other fiscal products. Spend time with a financial planner and ask them what expectations they have and, more specifically, what they want for their life and allow them to have fiscal freedom by creating a budget. Financial Independence!



Eliminating educational barriers for individuals with Autism

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INCIGHT has awarded more than 940 scholarships to students with disabilities pursuing higher education

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Improving the chances of an education for children who learn differently

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NBC Universal Tony Coelho Media Scholarship

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A series of scholarships aimed at improving the lives of people with learning disabilities

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Making A Difference For Autism

Autism and the Hispanic Population



This month is Hispanic Heritage Month, and I thought it appropriate to explore the impact of Autism Spectrum Disorder on the population as a whole. I am often asked how autism impacts minority populations. Of course, I cannot speak for all minorities or even my own race on this issue-however I can say there is significant data that supports the theory that minorities experience higher stress in our communities.

At the beginning of my journey, I would attend "supportive" conferences specifically directed at minorities who have loved ones with ASD. What I learned from the attendees and NOT the conference is that minorities do not feel heard.

In many cases, like in my own community, there is a specific love language among the Hispanic community, and often there is a language barrier as well. What is the pragmatic effect of this? Well, some of the challenges include:

- Explaining what ASD is and the evaluation process
- Educating parents on options in their specific language
- Understanding and respecting cultural norms
- Providing reasonable and affordable care plans and
- Sharing culturally supportive resources

While preparing for this newsletter and reviewing articles on this issue, I thought about the early years when I sat in rooms with mothers like me of all races—scared and confused. What I wanted, and many mothers like me at the time, was HOPE and CLARITY. Our overall system needs to listen to our Hispanic ASD families. When we DO a better job of listening, we find a better way to resolve or at least address challenges that lead to lasting POSITIVE approaches for future generations.

Until we reach that time, we can start by just finding one mother and asking her to share her story. Connectivity is always key to fostering better conversations!

Examining why Autism is Under-Diagnosed in the Hispanic Community

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Thank You Watson



I feel very blessed to have so many friends who care enough to listen to me. They see our family's journey and often send love taps to let us know they hear us and we are not alone. This past month, a dear friend, Spelman sister Chaundra Hughes, sent another inspirational story about a young autistic woman who followed her passion for beauty.

Aaliyah Alicia Thompson opened a beauty bar near Atlanta, Ga. Receiving the story and noting this young lady's exceptional talent makes my heart sing. There are so many ways we can promote talent for those on the spectrum. Unfortunately, many times we assume this population only has a skill set for general or low-paying positions. In fact, we rarely think about their creativity and colorful brains and how they might impact the world in a different way. Interestingly, our daughter loves everything beautiful and is quite creative in this space. We encourage her love of cosplay, design, and make-up. We love that, like her sister, she is enthralled by the theater.

Thank you Aaliyah for providing one more level of hope-by **LIVING YOUR BEST LIFE!**

[Read More About Aaliyah](#)

Podcast - If You Do The Work You Will Reap The Rewards



Finally this month I want to highlight a dear friend and colleague who is walking the same journey as my family. Nydia Nelson has a son on the spectrum. I met her almost 8 years ago at the beginning on my daughter's journey. At the time it was hard for her to process what my world was like. Now she has a small glimpse of what the reality of caring for an autistic person entails. Thank you Ms. Nelson for sharing your personal story. As I often told you, it will infinitely help another mother. If you do the WORK you will reap the rewards Keep sharing!

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