



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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****Interviews are available upon request.****

LEADING THE AUTISM AT WORK CHARGE IN SAN DIEGO, NFAR ANNOUNCES LAUNCH OF NEW PROGRAM THAT OFFERS A CRUCIAL PATHWAY TO EMPLOYMENT FOR YOUNG ADULTS WITH AUTISM, EXPANDING FROM SOFTWARE TESTING TO OTHER VOCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Based on the Success of their NFAR TECH Program, which has Placed 75% of their Graduates in Jobs with Local Companies such as Qualcomm, Solar Turbines, Viasat, and Others, NFAR Announces the Launch of NFAR WORKS on World Autism Awareness Day April 2

April 2, 2019 San Diego, CA – The alarming rise in the incidence of Autism has been well reported. So much so that now most people are familiar with the statistic that 1 in every 59 children in America has some form of Autism. What isn't so well documented is what the future will look like for these children once they reach adulthood and beyond. As the first wave of children who were diagnosed with Autism in the 1990s begin to reach maturity, we are starting to get a picture of what the future holds for those on the Autism spectrum and at least so far, that picture isn't a pretty one.

It is predicted that approximately 600 – 800 students with autism will be transitioning from high school to the San Diego community each year and will be looking for that next step.

“Unemployment for those with autism is as high as 85%, yet individuals on the autism spectrum have skills well suited for the technology field,” stated Juan Leon, NFAR TECH co-founder and Stanford Business School Alumni. “High intelligence, attention to detail, and logical thinking can make them exceptional employees for tech companies.”

Created in 2015, San Diego-based NFAR TECH -- a groundbreaking comprehensive training program that prepares young adults with autism for meaningful employment in the high-tech industry -- uniquely integrates work expectations and social skill development into a technical skills curriculum and provides critical experience that can help students with autism be successful when they enter the job market.

NFAR TECH has a proven track record of training individuals with autism in the technical and social skills necessary for entry level positions in software testing, **with 75% of graduates finding employment** and 78% earning their ISTQB certification.

Nationally, the Autism at Work movement is dedicated to creating more autism employment opportunities and is gaining momentum thanks to support by tech giants Microsoft and SAP. Locally, firms such as **Qualcomm, Solar Turbines, Viasat, UCSD, and Qualitest** are turning to NFAR TECH as they begin to see the importance of looking to this vast untapped market for qualified employees.

“While some might view autism as a disability, we really want to focus on our students’ abilities,” added Leon. “We know people on the spectrum have skills well suited for the technology field, they just need the training, the encouragement, and more importantly, the opportunity, to shine.”

Solar Turbines is just one of the local companies that has recognized the benefits of employing those on the spectrum, having hired NFAR TECH graduates in both paid internships and full-time positions. Jenny Eyes, Group Manager at Solar Turbines acknowledges that “one of the most exciting and rewarding parts of working with NFAR TECH is that the interns have really just become a part of our team, they are just like any other team member that we have. In fact, now when we hire additional graduates and bring them into our team, we haven't had to discuss the fact that they have autism or that anything is different. They are just team members like everyone else.”

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The Solar Turbines Team working with NFAR Tech graduates were honored in 2017 with the Solar Turbines Presidents Award, and were presented by their parent company with the Caterpillar's Award of Excellence for Inclusion and Diversity last year.

LAUNCH OF NFAR WORKS *ON WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY*****

With the goal to improve the employment outlook for people with Autism, today NFAR announces the launch of the new NFAR WORKS program, which expands upon the success of NFAR TECH to offer opportunities for those on the spectrum that have interests and skills beyond technology. In collaboration with the San Diego Regional Center, NFAR WORKS is an 11-month, comprehensive vocational training program for young adults with autism to provide students with the skill sets for employment.

Consisting of 4 major components – Technical and Basic Office Skills Training, Soft Skills Training, Work Experience and Vocational Training, and Job Readiness – the NFAR WORKS curriculum will be taught by hands-on training and solidified through repetition and work experience. The program was specifically created to help students identify areas they are currently best suited for and have an affinity towards.

NFAR WORKS students will be prepared to enter into common jobs found in most companies, including:

- Shipping & Receiving
- Production Assembly
- Copy/ Mail Centers
- Data Entry/Reporting
- Records Management/Processing
- Stock Management & Material Handling

“We want to make it easy for both the company and individual to work together. We will be preparing our students to walk into an office and be able to contribute as an employee,” explained Leon. “All they need is someone willing to give them a shot and a leader who is good at managing all types of people. Creating opportunities is critical if we are to make a lasting difference in the lives of those on the autism spectrum.”

The interest list for NFAR WORKS opens online today and the first session is scheduled to begin in Summer 2019.

HOW TO SUPPORT NFAR'S PROGRAMS

On Saturday, April 6, NFAR hosts its 15th annual Race for Autism Superhero 5K in Balboa Park. NFAR TECH was started with proceeds from this Race and a portion of this year's fundraising will go towards the launch of NFAR WORKS. The superhero-themed Race offers 5K and 1-mile family run options, a free educational resource fair, and family-friendly activities.

Primarily through the funds raised at the annual Race, to date, NFAR has invested more than **\$1.7 million dollars** in autism programs and services throughout San Diego County. NFAR has supported more than **900** initiatives locally that help those with autism by creating new learning and social opportunities, funding studies to improve treatment, providing outreach to under-served populations, and providing for the immediate needs at the classroom level. *To sign up for the race or to donate directly to NFAR, visit www.raceforautism.org.*

About NFAR

NFAR was established in 2003 to serve the critical needs of families and their children with autism, including increasing local awareness, information, support, and services to improve the quality of life for persons living with autism or an autism spectrum disorder. Since 2005, NFAR's main fundraising event, the San Diego Race for Autism Superhero 5K, brings the community together to offer informational resources and raise funding for the benefit of families and their children with autism. The Race will be held in Balboa Park on April 6 as part of Autism Awareness Month. www.raceforautism.org and www.NFAR.org.

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