

CELEBRATING AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH WITH DDI

BY JENNIFER LOW

April marks Autism Acceptance Month, a time to celebrate diversity and acknowledge the unique contributions of individuals with autism. In Greenvale, **Sanjana Vaswani** exemplifies the spirit of this month. As a dedicated member of the **Developmental Disabilities Institute (DDI)** family, she joined the Board of Directors in December 2023. Her commitment is deeply personal, as her son, Rohit, has been a recipient of DDI's services for over 18 years since his autism diagnosis at the age of three.

DDI, a nonprofit organization, has been a beacon of support for over 60 years, serving the emotional, educational, therapeutic, and vocational needs of individuals with autism and developmental disabilities. Founded by parents, it has grown into a multi-site agency helping more than 1,600 children and adults daily. The agency prides itself on its tailored approach, recognizing that each individual has unique needs and deserves a fulfilling life.

The organization's strength lies in its dedicated workforce made up of people inspired by purpose and its commitment to providing the highest standard of care. This April, as we embrace Autism Acceptance Month, let us celebrate the exceptional work of DDI and the vibrant community it serves. **For more information, visit <http://www.ddiny.org>.**

SPORTS SECTION

GAME ON FOR AUTISM

GET YOUR GAME FACE ON

BY JUSTIN WASSERMAN



Like many 17-year-old boys, I love sports. I've played just about everything, from golf and hockey—where I compete at the varsity level—to football, which is my favorite sport to watch. My parents, myself and my two brothers Jason and Jordan love to watch the Miami Dolphins play on Sundays during NFL season. Jason is a wonderful boy but unfortunately has struggled with many things in his life due to the fact he has autism. Yet he is still like many teenage boys who love to play and watch sports. One day in my freshman year of high school I came home from school and I saw my brother Jason on the couch watching Miami Dolphins 2010 highlights. It got me thinking that maybe there is a way I could combine playing sports with helping special needs kids. So it hit me... I decided in 2021 that I was going to organize a flag football fundraiser at East Hills Park. My mom always says "get your game face on" so I decided to name the event GAME ON For Autism. This June will be our fourth annual event and we will contribute all funds raised to Camp Kehilla, a summer camp on Long Island for children with special needs. I've worked hard with the help of my family and friends and we've raised over \$100,000 in our three events. This year it will be my last year running the event since I am graduating high school but my younger brother Jordan is excited to keep it going. It is one of my favorite days of the year seeing children grades K-8 play flag football for an important cause. Children come from many towns in Long Island to play such as Roslyn, East Williston, Syosset, and Plainview. Last year we had a mom competition as well. We are always hoping to grow the event to raise money and awareness. Anyone is welcome to come support even if you don't play flag football there is a DJ, pizza, an ice cream truck, and a silent auction. The best part of this year is that the event is on June 1st which is my 18th birthday.

For more information please follow my Instagram account for event updates and registration @game_on_for_autism

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