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## PRESS RELEASE

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Tuesday, September 20, 2016

### **BROWN UNIVERSITY AND THE DANIEL JORDAN FIDDLE FOUNDATION FOR ADULT AUTISM ANNOUNCE NEW ENDOWMENT FUND FOR THE ARTS**

#### **Foundation Gift Supports Theater Programs to Benefit Autistic Adults**

**Providence, RI** — Brown University [Department of Theatre Arts and Performance Studies](#) announced today that [The Daniel Jordan Fiddle Foundation](#) (DJFF), the nation's first not-for-profit organization to exclusively focus on adult autism, will establish a new endowment fund at Brown University. This fund will add to DJFF's existing endowed program initiatives at Rutgers University, Yale University, and the University of Miami.

With a gift of \$100,000, The Daniel Jordan Fiddle Foundation Adult Autism Theater and Performing Arts Fund at Brown University will be established. The fund will support programs, education, and performance experiences in the Brown University Department of Theatre Arts and Performance Studies (TAPS). The activities will benefit young adults and adults diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). It will also provide experiential and educational opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students to work directly with the adult autism population. The DJFF Fund will enable Brown University students and participants from the [Artists and Scientists as Partners](#) program in Rhode Island to learn the methodology of master teacher Elaine Hall, Founder of [The Miracle Project](#). TAPS Senior Lecturer Julie Adams Strandberg will supervise this endowed program.

The DJFF university endowment initiatives continue to expand the Foundation's mission for a global focus on adult autism. Designed to increase awareness, opportunities, and knowledge about aging and autism, each of the four DJFF endowed programs serve a specific area relating to adult autism: research, program development, fostering creativity and expression through the arts, and counseling and resources for family members of adults on the spectrum.

Founded in 2002 by Linda J. Walder, a pioneer in the adult autism arena, The Daniel Jordan Fiddle Foundation has blazed trails to develop, fund, and advocate for programs and public policy related to all aspects of adult life such as job training, residential living, the arts, recreation, health and wellness, and socialization. DJFF is named in honor of Linda's son Danny who was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and passed away at age nine.

The DJFF endowed program funds are opening new doors with the establishment of in perpetuity adult-autism-focused collaborations with the nation's leading researchers and practitioners at renowned universities. They are poised to lead and address critical issues in adult autism and will advance the creation of new research and model programs to expand opportunities for the diverse adult autistic population.

Founder Linda Walder says:

Our aim is to ensure that for generations to come there will be an impactful focus on adult autism. Today there are millions of autistic adults, and we need to do more to understand adult autism and to create as many paths as we can for adults to participate in and contribute to community life. It is a matter of human rights for all autistic adults to be accepted for who they are and to live the fullest lives possible.

### **DJFF Endowed Programs Target Diverse Population of Autistic Adults**

On September 7, 2016, with a gift of \$100,000, The Daniel Jordan Fiddle Foundation Adult Autism Family Support Fellowship and Resource Guide Fund was established at Rutgers University School of Social Work (SSW). Its purpose is to train SSW graduate students to work as clinicians specifically focused on improving outcomes for family members of adults diagnosed with autism. The fund will support the work of 3-4 fellows annually, who will be known as The Daniel Jordan Fiddle Foundation Fellows. The Fellows will work directly with family members of adults diagnosed with ASD to address the concerns and challenges they face as caregivers.

The fellows also will create and update bi-annually a web-based resource guide for families, organizations, and agencies. The resource guide will be featured on the Rutgers SSW website, so that the community at large also can benefit. The fund's programs will be led by Dr. Cathryn Potter, Dean of Rutgers School of Social Work, and by SSW Professor Mark W. Lamar.

In 2014, DJFF launched its Endowed Programs commitment with a \$100,000 gift to the University of Miami's Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD) to spearhead further development of their world-renowned adult autism initiatives and establish much-needed new programs and services for adults. Run by Deborah Chin, [The Daniel Jordan Fiddle Foundation Transition and Adult Programs](#) at UM-NSU CARD support adult-related program development, such as [Project EAARN's Employment Boot Camp](#), an initiative that provides job training and assistance to employers, job seekers, and other professionals interested in improving employment outcomes for individuals with ASD. Dr. Michael Alessandri heads the UM-NSU CARD program.

Also in 2014, with a gift of \$100,000 to Yale University Medical School, DJFF established the nation's first-ever research fund specifically dedicated to study adult autism. [The Daniel Jordan Fiddle Foundation Adult Autism Research Fund](#) is led by Roger J. Jou, MD, PhD, at the Yale Child Study Center. Dr. Jou is a leading autism researcher, and one of the few physician-scientists in the nation who has dedicated his career to the research and care of adults living with autism. With the help of the DJFF endowed fund, Dr. Jou is currently running various social programs for adults on the spectrum as part of his research work, including [Community Autism Socials at Yale](#) (Project CASY).

### **More Foundation Initiatives**

In addition to their endowed programs, The Daniel Jordan Fiddle Foundation also has developed the following initiatives:

The Daniel Jordan Fiddle Foundation Leader in Adult Autism Award will be presented annually at the Autism Society of America's national conference to an inspirational person, service provider, or employer in the field of adult autism. The first honoree, Matthew Resnik of [SMILE Biscotti](#), accepted his award on July 15, 2016, at the ASA conference in New Orleans. SMILE Biscotti (an acronym for Supporting Matt's Independent Living Enterprise) was co-founded by Matt, who is autistic, and his parents in 2013 as a way for him to hone his work skills, learn to support himself, and save for his own place to live. Since then, Matt and his six co-workers with autism and special needs have sold more than 150,000 biscotti online and in a growing number of retail locations across the U.S.

The Daniel Jordan Fiddle Foundation Ignition Grant Programs at UJA-Federation of New York are now in the fifth year of awarding a \$10,000 grant in partnership with UJA-Federation to new and innovative programs that are designed to be replicable models. Past programs have focused on health/nutrition, exploration of Jewish culture through the arts, socialization, and dating. The newest program will be geared to employment training for adults with more significant challenges.

To learn more about these program models, contact Elise Hahn-Felix at [hahn-felixe@ujafedny.org](mailto:hahn-felixe@ujafedny.org).

For additional information about The Daniel Jordan Fiddle Foundation, visit  
[www.djfiddlefoundation.org](http://www.djfiddlefoundation.org)

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