

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



CONTACT:

Lauren Lewis

Autism Alliance of Michigan

248-436-5602

Lauren.Lewis@aaomi.org

www.AAoMi.org

**2nd ANNUAL AUTISM HERO FAMILY WALK EXPECTS OVER 2000 WALKERS IN
CELEBRATION OF MICHIGAN'S AUTISM HEROES**

SOUTHFIELD, MI—Autism Alliance of Michigan (AAoM) will host its 2nd annual Autism Hero Family Walk, presented by DTE Energy Foundation and premier sponsor Integrated Manufacturing & Assembly (IMA), at the Detroit Zoo on Sunday, July 31, 2016. Families will be able to enjoy live entertainment, games, arts and crafts and photo opportunities with dozens of super hero guests while taking a scenic 1-mile walk through the Detroit Zoo. This year, AAoM is adding an Autism Resource Fair to the event with over 20 autism providers on site to provide resources and information.

Michigan is home to over 60,000 individuals living with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). AAoM is quickly leading Michigan to become a destination state for families affected by autism, to gain access to the highest quality of care, education, employment, and community...essentially, the same high standards we hold for any Michigan resident.

The annual Autism Hero Family Walk is a time for the autism community in Michigan to come together in celebration of its heroes in Michigan—those affected by ASD, providers and doctors, parents and grandparents, siblings and friends.

Timeline of Event:

- **7:00AM**—Registration opens
- **8:30AM**—Opening ceremony begins
- **8:45AM**—Walk takes off
- **11:30AM**—Event concludes

The event is free and AAoM is committed to ensuring no family is left out of this celebration. There is a suggested donation of \$15 per walker for those who would like to make a contribution to AAoM.

Dr. Colleen Allen, President and CEO of AAoM values the collaboration between AAoM and the Detroit Zoo: "Autism Alliance of Michigan is excited to partner with the Detroit Zoo again for our 2nd annual Autism Hero Walk. The Detroit Zoo is the ideal venue for such a significant community event, allowing families to gather, collect resources, and enjoy the many attractions of a favored destination for so many families living with autism. We have been long time partners with the Zoo, having recently awarded our Autism endorsement seal for the many safety trainings we have conducted with staff, volunteers, and local law enforcement and autism friendly materials for families to access every day of the year. The community events give our families opportunity to enjoy the same day to day activities as any other family - furthering our mission to improve access, opportunity, and inclusion across our state."

A special thank you to the Autism Hero Walk presenting sponsor DTE Energy Foundation. "As a long-time advocate for families and individuals impacted by autism, the DTE Energy Foundation is proud to be the presenting sponsor of the Autism Hero Family Walk for our second year," said Faye Nelson, Vice President, DTE Energy and board chair and president of the DTE Energy Foundation. "We applaud the Autism Alliance of Michigan for shining a light on the heroic efforts of those impacted by autism to overcome many challenges - from educational opportunities to medical care to securing employment."

Integrated Manufacturing & Assembly (IMA) is back as the Walk's premier sponsor for a second consecutive year. Jim Comer, IMA's President and CEO, stresses the importance of this corporate and community partnership: "One of our corporate pillars at IMA is giving back to our communities where we live and operate. We applaud the Autism Alliance of Michigan in furthering the agenda of education and support for families and the community affected by autism. We hope our sponsorship of events like this will help shine light on these true heroes."

For more information, to register and to donate, visit: www.AAoMwalk.com or contact Lauren.Lewis@aaomi.org.

About Autism Alliance of Michigan

The mission of Autism Alliance of Michigan is to lead collaborative efforts across the state that will improve the quality of life for individuals with autism through education, comprehensive services, community awareness, inclusion efforts, and coordinated advocacy.

###