

**Rotary**

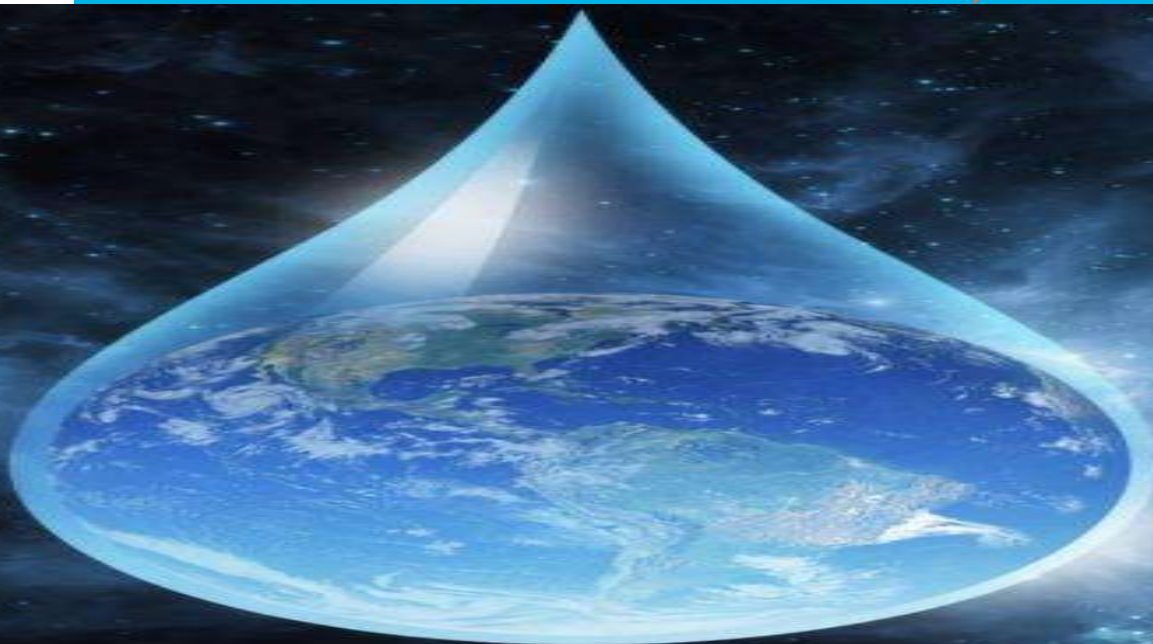
Rotary Club of Augusta



# March 31, 2025 Club Assembly



**THE MAGIC  
OF ROTARY**



**MARCH IS WATER, SANITATION, AND  
HYGIENE MONTH**



**Rotary**



**PLEDGE & INVOCATION by James T Richards**



# THE SUNSHINE REPORT

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Gould Hagler



**Rotary**



Rotary Club of Augusta



## *Member Anniversaries:* *Celebrating Years as a Rotarian*

Sreeni Doppalapudi - 2 years  
Erick Montgomery - 35 years

Presented By :

**Kerry Bridges & Tom Kiernan**

# VISITORS AND GUESTS

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# Rotary

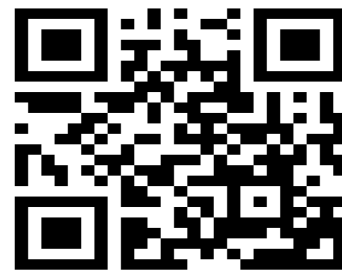


Rotary Club of Augusta

## Today's Challengers

### INSIDE CART CHALLENGER

**NEAL DICKERT**



**SCAN ME!**

Contribute to the blue buckets  
or online at [mycartfund.org](http://mycartfund.org)



### OUTSIDE CART CHALLENGER



# FOUNDATION MONDAY

## DONOR RECOGNITIONS

\$2,000 to 2,999.99 - one sapphire  
\$3,000 to 3,999.99 - two sapphires  
\$4,000 to 4,999.99 - three sapphires  
\$5,000 to 5,999.99 - four sapphires  
\$6,000 to 6,999.99 - five sapphires  
\$7,000 to 7,999.99 - one ruby  
\$8,000 to 8,999.99 - two rubies  
\$9,000 to 9,999.99 - three rubies

**DEJENIRO PIERCE PHF+3**





## **Women's History Month**

**Laverne Lewis Gaskins, a Rotarian since 2008 and a member of the Rotary Club of Augusta, Georgia is also a member of the American Bar Association's Representatives and Observers to the United Nations.**

**Gaskins recently attended the international United Nations 69<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women ("CSW") as an American Bar Association representative to the UN on March 10-20, 2025, in New York, and countries from across the globe.**

**The event's primary focus was to review the Platform for Action adopted in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women that was held in Beijing. The Platform for Action is a global comprehensive agenda for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.**



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**Dr Baris Olten**

Assistant Professor of Psychiatry  
Medical College of Georgia

# UNDERSTANDING AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

Baris Olten MD

Assistant Professor of Psychiatry

Medical College of Georgia

# What is Autism Spectrum Disorder?

- **Neurodevelopmental condition** affecting how people **communicate, behave, and interact socially**
- **Differences in brain development** lead to unique ways of seeing and experiencing the world
- It's called a “**spectrum**” because **abilities and challenges vary widely** from person to person





# How Do We Diagnose Autism?

- **Social communication difficulties:** Trouble with back-and-forth conversation, understanding body language, or making friends
- **Repetitive behaviors & focused interests:** May **repeat movements** (like hand flapping) or have **intense interests** in specific topics
- Signs emerge in **early childhood** (as early as 1 year old but typically diagnosed later) and these traits **impact daily life**



## How Common is Autism?

- **More common than many realize:** About **1 in 36 children** in the U.S. is identified with ASD
- Found in **all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups** – autism occurs across the board
- **More boys than girls** are diagnosed (around **4 times** more frequent in boys), though girls may be underdiagnosed.

# What Are the Risk Factors for Autism?

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- **Genetics and family history:** Autism often **runs in families**. Having an older sibling with ASD raises the chances for a younger child. Certain genetic syndromes (e.g. **Fragile X**, **Tuberous Sclerosis**) also carry higher risk
- **Older parents:** Children born to **older parents** – particularly older fathers – have a higher likelihood of autism
- **Before and around birth:** Some **pregnancy and birth complications** (extreme prematurity, low birth weight) or certain exposures (e.g. specific medications or infections during pregnancy) may increase risk

# The Biology of Autism – What's Happening in the Brain?



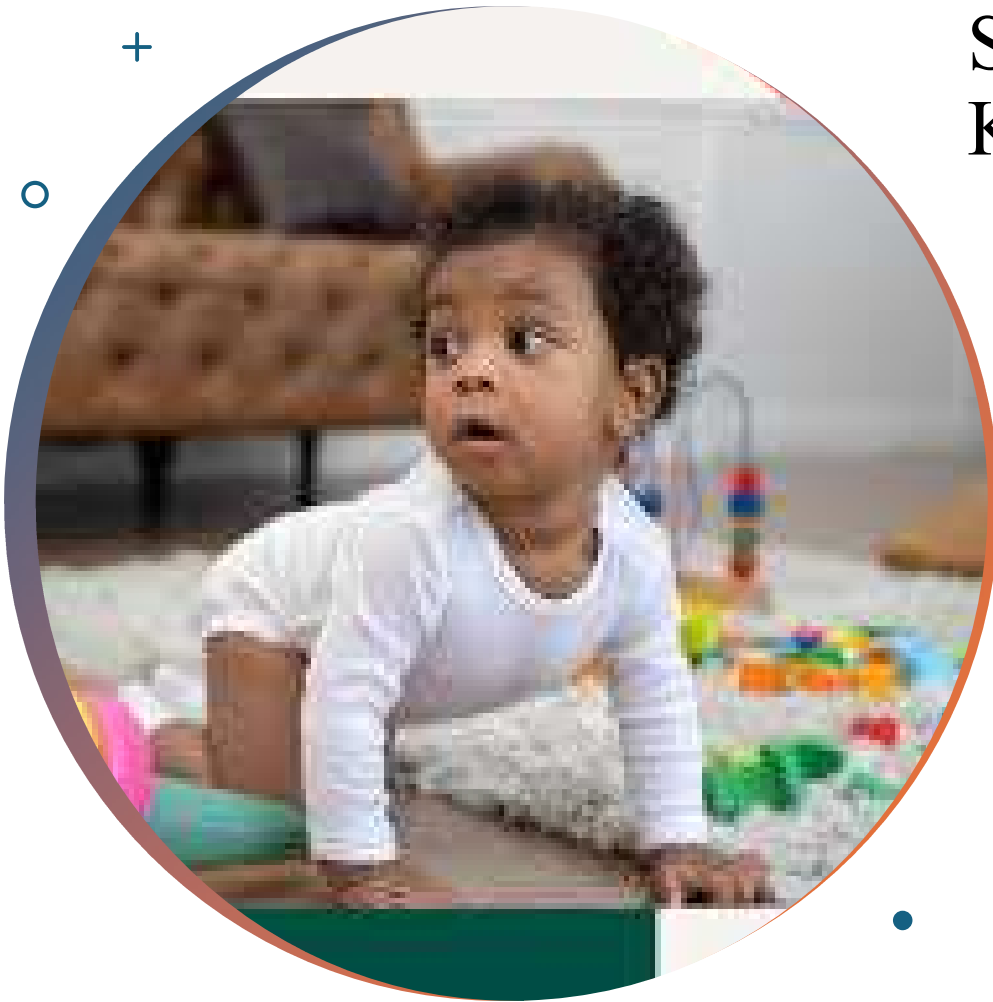
- **Brain connectivity differences:** In autistic brains, **nerve cells connect and communicate differently**. Some brain areas may be *over-connected* and others *under-connected*, affecting information processing
- **Brain development is altered early:** Studies find differences like **unusually rapid brain growth in infancy** or variations in brain structures (e.g. the **amygdala** and **cerebellum**) in some autistic people
- **Strong genetic basis:** Autism is **highly heritable** – twin and family studies show genetics explain most of the risk (estimated ~80% or more). Many genes (not one single gene) are involved in shaping the autistic brain.

# Daily Life – Challenges Autistic Individuals Face



- **Communication & social understanding:** May struggle with **conversation, making friends, or interpreting social cues** (like sarcasm or facial expressions)
- **Sensory sensitivities:** Ordinary sights, sounds, or textures can be **overwhelming**. (E.g. loud noises, bright lights, or certain fabrics might cause distress)
- **Need for routine & predictability:** Change can be very stressful – many thrive on **structured routines**, and unexpected events can lead to anxiety or “meltdowns.”
- **Being misunderstood:** Society’s lack of understanding can lead to **stigma, bullying, or isolation**, adding to the challenges autistic people face

# Autism Mysteries – What We Still Don't Know (and Lesser-Known Facts)



- **No single “cause” pinpointed:** We still don't know the **exact cause** of autism. It appears to result from a complex mix of genes and environment, but the precise recipe remains unclear.
- **No medical test yet:** Diagnosis relies on behavior because we have **no definitive lab test or biomarker** for autism. Brain research is ongoing to find objective markers, but nothing confirmed yet.
- **Autism in girls can look different:** **Girls and women are often underdiagnosed** – they may hide symptoms or have different traits. This is a lesser-known aspect; many autistic girls are missed in childhood
- **Lifespan and support gaps:** We need more knowledge about **autism across the lifespan**. For instance, what happens as autistic children become seniors? Services and research for autistic **adults** (jobs, independent living, aging) are still limited, leaving many questions

# Myth vs. Fact – Clearing Up Common Misconceptions

•**Myth:** “*Vaccines (or poor parenting) lead to autism.*”

•**Fact:** Vaccines and parenting styles **do not cause autism**; extensive research shows *no link* between the two. Autism is mainly a genetic variation in brain development.

•**Myth:** “*Individuals with autism lack emotions or desire for friendships.*”

•**Fact:** Most people on the autism spectrum **feel love, joy, and empathy** deeply. Many **seek social connections** but may struggle with social skills. They show care in their own unique ways.

•**Myth:** “*All autistic people are intellectually disabled (or savants).*”

•**Fact:** Autism **varies hugely**. Some autistic people have **average or above-average IQ**, others have intellectual disabilities. Only about **1 in 10** have extraordinary “savant” talents the majority have a typical mix of strengths and weaknesses, just distributed differently.

•**Myth:** “*Autistic individuals can’t live independently or succeed in life.*”

•**Fact:** **Many autistic people lead full, independent lives.** With the right support and opportunities, they go to college, work jobs, marry, and succeed in various fields. . For example, we have autistic professors, engineers, artists – autism doesn’t preclude achievement. It’s true some need significant support, but it’s not a life sentence of failure by any means.

# A Real-Life Story – Temple Grandin's Journey



- **Early challenges:** Temple Grandin was **diagnosed with autism at age 3** in the 1950s, when autism was poorly understood. As a child, she had **delayed speech**, sensitivities to touch, and intense focus on specific interests. Experts even advised placing her in an institution – but her mother refused
- **Support and growth:** With the help of her mother and dedicated teachers, Temple learned to speak and found ways to learn social skills. She developed a passion for **animals** – especially cows and farm life – and a talent for **visual thinking** (she describes her mind as thinking in pictures)
- **Extraordinary achievements:** Temple Grandin went on to earn a Ph.D. and became a **professor of animal science**. She revolutionized the livestock industry by inventing more humane cattle-handling systems (inspired by her own sensitivity to sensory details). She's also a prominent **autism advocate and author**, showing the world what autistic individuals can accomplish. Today, Dr. Grandin is a living example that **autistic people can not only succeed, but also drive innovation** and improve society.

# Summary & Take-Home Points

- Autism Spectrum Disorder is a **common (1 in 36 children) and lifelong** neurodevelopmental difference/disorder.
- **Core features:** Autistic individuals share difficulties with **social communication** and exhibit **repetitive behaviors or intense interests**, yet **each person is unique** in their abilities and needs
- **Causes & misconceptions:** Autism arises largely from **brain development and genetics** (it's *nobody's fault*). Myths like vaccines or cold parenting causing autism have been **debunked**
- **Support and acceptance:** With **early intervention, education, and acceptance**, autistic people can learn, grow, and achieve. Many live independent, fulfilling lives as part of our community. Society is moving toward greater inclusion – think “**different, not less.**”
- **Our role:** As friends, family, employers, and community members, we can **foster understanding** – be patient with communication differences, accommodate sensory needs, and appreciate the unique perspectives autistic individuals offer. In doing so, we help create a world where everyone can thrive.

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# **Highest Number of Raffle Tickets Sold for the Signature Fundraising**

**Dusting Young  
Pam Lightsey**

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**Thanks to all Rotarians who pledged or donated to the Rotarian Foundation on behalf of Rotary Club of Augusta for the Global Project for 2024-25 term.**

**GG2569565 - “MBot robots for primary schools”**

**Project:** 200 mBot robots for 200 schools for teaching program languages Scratch and Python

**Area of focus:** Basic education and literacy

**Host Club:** RC Beograd Čukarica, District 2483

**International Sponsor Club:** RC Warner Robins, D6920 Georgia/USA

**Delivery of donation planned for:** September 2025

**Person in charge:** PDG Vladimir Matić, RC Beograd Čukarica

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*Thank you for Providing Lunch for volunteers during their Rotary Week of Service at the Girl Scout Camp Tanglewood. Joining us at lunch to meet, greet and thank the volunteers was very special.*

*From*

*District Governor, Rotary International District 6910*

# Rotary



Rotary Club of Augusta



**Great opportunity for the graduating seniors to win the subject scholarship.**

Thanks to the generosity of the **Davis-Hilburn Foundation**, the **Dublin Rotary Club** is offering a **\$2,000 scholarship** to a graduating senior in our District.

Any senior in **Rotary District 6920** is eligible to apply. The scholarship is **not limited to one nominee per school or club**.

Details were emailed yesterday in my email to all members.



## Upcoming Club Meeting

- April 7 & 14, 2025 – Holidays due to Masters Week and Masters Recovery.
- April 21, 2025 - David Jackobsen, *President and CEO of the Ronald McDonald House Charities (RMHC) of Augusta* will speak about RMHC.

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# 2025 GEORGIA DISTRICT CONFERENCE

**APRIL 24-27, 2025**  
**JEKYLL ISLAND, GA**



**ALL 3 GEORGIA DISTRICTS UNITED TO CELEBRATE AND SERVE**

Georgia  
**Rotary**  
Districts



**Rotary**  
Rotary Club of Augusta



# MAGIC ALL AROUND

21-25 JUNE 2025 • CALGARY, CANADA





## THE FOUR-WAY TEST

*Of the things we think, say or do:*

*first*

Is it the **TRUTH**?

*second*

Is it **FAIR** to all concerned?

*third*

Will it build **GOODWILL** and  
**BETTER FRIENDSHIPS**?

*fourth*

Will it be **BENEFICIAL** to  
all concerned?