



## OAR Awards 2022 Peer Education Grants

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ARLINGTON, VA – The Organization for Autism Research (OAR) is pleased to announce the recipients of its [2022 Peer Education Grant](#) program, open to teachers, administrators, parents, youth group organizers, and autism professionals interested in organizing an autism awareness initiative in the school or other community-based areas. In this previous cycle, OAR expanded its commitment to educating students by awarding grants ranging from \$500 – \$5,000 for those conducting programs in their local communities. This year, OAR is awarding eleven grants totaling \$25,552. Over the years, OAR has continued to help educate more than 167,000 students and peers from both the peer education resources and grant program.

Congratulations to the 11 grant recipients!

**Deanna Ragland,  
Holt Junior High LINKS  
Holt Public Schools, Holt, MI**

Ragland will use the materials and grant for general education in a peer mentoring program in Holt, Michigan. The kits will be used to engage and help educate 7-8<sup>th</sup> graders and their mentors learn about autism and what they can do to support the community.

**Kristina Vargo  
Listening, Sharing, and Learning: Educating Teachers and Students about Autism  
Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, TX**

Vargo will carry out the project as a formal research study, engaging the students and teachers from a K-6<sup>th</sup> grade campus in Texas to see the impact of the *Kit for Kids* and *Autism Tuned In* on participants awareness and knowledge of ASD as well as the likelihood to reuse the materials in the future.

**Darla Farmer  
It's Cool to Care  
Hope For Three, Sugar Land, TX**

Serving public and private K-8<sup>th</sup> grade students and their educators, Farmer and the [Hope For Three](#), an autism advocacy organization, plan to curate an interactive and engaging program. This program will encompass anti-bullying and empowerment exercises, as well as strategic tips on how students can be better friends to those with differences.

**Ellen Zerafa  
Hawkins Elementary - Peer to Peer Program**

**Brighton Area Schools, Brighton, MI**

Zerafa and colleagues plan to use the grant to extend training, education, and awareness surrounding autism, school wide. They will take the initiative to change their current training program of mentors to be more widespread and longer to allow more students to participate and grow their knowledge of Autism throughout Brighton Area Schools.

**Michael Taylor**

**All Means All**

**Bryant Public School District, Bryant, AR**

The Bryant Public School District will educate students in grades K-8 from among 8 different schools in the district. The focus will be on how to promote diversity and inclusive practices, while administrators and teachers will work to lay the foundation of building a supportive community for their autistic students.

**Kathleen Lefcourt**

**Elk Hill Peer Education**

**Elk Hill, Goochland, VA**

Elk Hill teachers will use the materials and grant resources to help educate students about social skills. The program will be implemented in classrooms and will focus on providing information surrounding empathy, compassion, along with understanding the different needs of different people.

**Henry Yin**

**Peer Education Project**

**Peer 1 on 1 Norcal, Lafayette, CA**

Henry and the Peer 1 on 1 Norcal organization will be using the grant and resources to educate local volunteers. The organization plans to become a more autism-friendly community by increasing the discourse and awareness of how to support the autism community.

**Natalie Dohner**

**"Together We're Better" - The Arc Maryland & Garrett Park Elementary School**

**The Arc Maryland, Columbia, MD**

Focusing on K through 5<sup>th</sup> grade, Dohner and the team plan to engage the students at Garrett Park Elementary School in a program concentrated on promoting a welcoming, inclusive, and safe environment. The program will focus on combating bullying and providing resources that will administer to an ongoing fulfillment of inclusion, awareness, and commitment to autism throughout the school.

**AnnMarie Bates**

**2022-2023 MPPS Autism Acceptance Lessons**

**Central Michigan University, Mount Pleasant, MI**

Focusing on the effects community insensitivity has on the well-being of neurodiverse individuals with autism, Bates and colleagues plan to use the grant and materials to curate an autism education and acceptance outreach program with the local 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders addressing empathy and compassion.

**Yongsheng Gu**

**Knowing the Difference for Better Acceptance**

**Open Arms Helping Hands Corporation, Cumming, GA**

With the initiative to teach and promote ASD among peers, Gu plans to hold small camps for autistic children and peers to cultivate relationships. Alongside this, the program plans to have sessions engaged in the learning types of communication styles between autistic and non-autistic children within the local public.

**Terri Fullerton**

**Cub Scout Pack 211 Inclusion Training**

**Oxford Lions Foundation Inc., Oxford, GA**

Designated a place of belonging, Cub Scout Pack 211 and Terri plan to use the materials and grant resources to host 'Autism Awareness Night' activities. These nights will allow the local community to engage in inclusion and diversity activities, adaptive sports, and discussions around invisible disabilities to help build awareness around Autism.

For inquiries regarding the Peer Education Grant program or for more information on the next grant cycle, please [visit the website](#) or contact OAR at 571-977-5391; e-mail [programs@researchautism.org](mailto:programs@researchautism.org).

**About OAR.** OAR is a national, nonprofit organization formed and led by relatives of children and adults with autism; it is dedicated to promoting research that can be applied to help families, educators, caregivers, and individuals with autism find much-needed answers to their immediate and urgent questions. Committed to excellence in its services to the autism community, OAR seeks to fund applied research that will make a difference in individual lives; provide information that is timely, useful, and cost-efficient; and offer opportunities for the autism community to collaborate and make advances together. In short, OAR's mission is to apply research to the challenges of autism. Web site: [www.researchautism.org](http://www.researchautism.org).

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