



# World Autism Awareness Day

*Inclusive Quality Education for All*

Global Virtual Event: Friday, 8 April 2022, 10 - 11:15 am EST

## Biography

### Moderator & Panelists

#### Claire Barnett



Claire Barnett is a neurodiversity and disability advocate with a focus on how businesses promote disability empowerment.

Barnett is #ActuallyAutistic, ADHD, and a service dog handler. She is currently a Forte Fellow at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Kenan-Flagler Business School, where she is pursuing her MBA full-time. After graduation from business school, she plans to join Boston Consulting Group in Washington, D.C.

She has written on disability topics for the HuffPost and USA Today, and has spoken at dozens of conferences. In her TEDx Talk on "[Why Autistic Unemployment is So High](#)," she presents the current state of autistic unemployment, lends a personal perspective on the hiring process, and shares insights that will help any business recruit and employ neurodivergent talent.

Barnett is a 2019 cum laude graduate of Vanderbilt's Peabody School, with a Bachelor of Science in Human and Organizational Development. She is the Visiting Fellow at Vanderbilt's Frist Center for Autism and Innovation.

## Aberlardo Apollo I. David, Jr. [MOccThy, OTRP]



Prof. David established the [Academia Progresiva de Manila](#) and the [Independent Living Learning Centers](#), schools for students of various abilities and backgrounds, in key Philippine cities. He established the Rehabilitation and Empowerment of Adults and Children with Handicap Foundation, Inc., which provides underprivileged families access to a network of health and education services. He is the recipient of numerous awards in the areas of education, health and public service, including the United Nations Public Service Award, the Development Academy of the Philippines Award, and research award from the International Developmental Pediatrics Association Congress. Prof. David is a member of the Philippine Department of Education's EducForum, which shapes the country's COVID-19 plans for education recovery. He serves as Assistant Professor at the graduate school of the University of Sto. Tomas, Manila. He received his Master of Occupational Therapy from the University of Queensland, Australia.

## Lauren Melissa Ellzey



[Lauren Melissa Ellzey](#) (she/her) is an autistic self-advocate, educator, author, and social justice activist. Through writing and presenting, she engages across lines of difference, highlighting the inequitable systems that oppress queer, BIPOC, and disabled folks. Her work as social media influencer, @Autienelle, has crossed paths with Penn State, PINE Program (NYU), Reframing Autism, Out 4 Undergraduate, Pima County Health Department, NeuroClastic, Cripple Media, AbleZine, Inclusion Festival, the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, and more. As an Instructional Support Specialist, she provides consultation and professional development on autistic K-12 inclusion. Her debut young adult novel, *Boy at the Window*, emphasizes the importance of belonging for queer, neurodivergent youth of color. In all, she hopes to co-create a society where autistics nurture autistics as we strive toward true inclusion.

## Diana Ringe Krogh



Diana Ringe Krogh joined the [LEGO Foundation](#) in 2014 driven by the desire to make an impact on the lives of children. She has held various positions in the LEGO Foundation and is currently the Head of LEGO Collaboration & Social Ventures.

In her role, she leads the Foundation's partnership with the LEGO Group and other entities in the LEGO branded ecosystem to unlock the potential of the LEGO Brand to, through a collaborative approach, make a positive impact on children and to become a Global Force for Learning through Play by 2032.

Through [Social Ventures](#), she leads the Foundation's work to accelerate bold social innovations with Learning through Play based methodologies, such as LEGO Braille Bricks, that shine a positive light on children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and that focus on uplifting and supporting children with SEND and their families.

Prior to joining the Foundation, Diana established organizations to deliver on EU projects through strategic partnerships with universities and university hospitals as well as private/public partnerships.

## Gerardo Gaya Real



Gerardo Gaya Real is the Founder and CEO of [Iluminemos por el Autismo](#), Member of the Presidents Assembly of the COAMEX (Mexican Coalition for Disability Rights), Spokesperson for Gemiini Learning Systems in Latin America and TEDx Speaker.

He founded Iluminemos por el Autismo in 2015 after his son was diagnosed with autism. It is one of the leading nonprofits in Mexico and Latin America for raising autism awareness, providing support to families, and addressing public incidence.

He is a sought-after keynote speaker and interviewee on autism awareness, family empowerment and inclusion. His work has received numerous accolades, including the MTV Chiuku Awards, "Latino America Verde" Awards, "Caracol de Plata" from CEMEFI, among others. In 2021, his CNN en Español interview with Camilo Egaña won an Emmy.

## Video Contributors



**[Dr. Mapy Chavez Askins](#)** [CABAS® ARS, BCBA-D, QBA, BCAP, IBA]

Founding Director, [Alcnzando Inc.](#), Peru/U.S.

Current project: [We are Alcnzando!](#)

Social media: [IG](#)

Dr. Mapy Chavez Askins holds a Ph.D. from Teachers College Columbia University (New York) in Applied Behavior Analysis and the Education of Students with Autism. She is currently the Founding Director of Alcnzando, a nonprofit organization that works with children with autism and their families in Spanish-speaking communities.

Dr. Chavez Askins has spent the last 27 years studying, working and conducting research in the Autism field. For the last 15 years she has been successfully disseminating awareness and knowledge about Autism and Applied Behavior Analysis in Spanish-speaking countries through research, teaching, and through Alcnzando. Her research studies include language acquisition, social skills instruction, the development of perspective talking skills, the quality of teacher instruction, effective inclusion practices, and the education of parents and professionals. Results from her research studies have been published in numerous journals, as well as presented at conferences throughout the world, among them: the International Society for Autism Research, the Annual Convention of the Association for Behavior Analysis, and the Mexican Congress of Behavior Analysis.



**[Major Dodson](#)**

Actor, U.S.

Social media: [IG](#), [Twitter](#)

MAJOR DODSON is an actor. He is best known for his role of Sam Anderson on AMC's International smash hit series "The Walking Dead." Other projects include LEFT BEHIND, "American Horror Story," and "Revolu6on." Dodson is currently featured in the inspirational drama TYSON'S RUN, where he plays the 15-yearold lead character Tyson who is on the autistic spectrum.



## **Rasmus Haugaard**

Chairman, [North Denmark Chambers of Commerce, Denmark](#)

Rasmus Haugaard is an attorney, Ph.D. and the Chairman of the North Denmark Chambers of Commerce, the largest business organisation in Northern Denmark.

As chairman, Rasmus works to ensure the right framework for the current and future development of North Denmark, especially on strengthening the development of labour force market and pairing untapped talent with companies in all industries within the northern region.

Besides Rasmus' passion and commitment to the regional community affairs, he is one of the leading figures of the legal world, and has more than 20 years of experience providing legal advice to private and public corporations, public authorities and institutions across Denmark within real estate law, corporate and commercial law and public law. Additionally, Rasmus is the author of a number of books and articles on various legal topics.



## **Deepti Ganesh Kakkirala**

Application Development Associate, Accenture, India

Deepti Ganesh Kakkirala is from India. She is 22-years old adult on the autism spectrum. Deepti has mild-moderate autism with disability percentage of 50. She is a graduate in Computer Applications and currently working as an Application Development Associate at Accenture, Mumbai. Having fulfilled her ambition of working in an inclusive MNC, she aims to perform well and grow professionally, personally & be financially independent. Her hobbies are playing keyboard, cooking, listening to music, swimming, doing yoga & gardening.



## **Swathi Vellal Raghunandan**

Founder and Director, [Ishanya India Foundation, India](#)

Swathi Vellal Raghunandan is the Founder and Director of Ishanya India Foundation, a not-for-profit organization working with Persons With Disabilities (PWDs) in Bangalore. Apart from special education, Swathi works very closely with parents, counselling them on various aspects of the diagnosis, caregiving a child with disability, empowering them by bringing in the importance of self-compassion while caregiving. Swathi has done several podcasts on mental health.

Swathi Vellal holds a Master's degree in Special Educational Needs and Inclusion from University of Northampton, U.K. and a Master's degree in Clinical Psychology from Christ University, Bangalore. She is a very keen researcher and has presented papers in various national and international seminars and has published a paper on 'Autism and echolalia' in the Good Autism Practice Journal of the British Institute of Learning Disabilities. She also has a chapter named 'Inclusion of Young People with Autism Spectrum Disorder at Workplace: Challenges & Strategies' published in the book "Disability and Inclusion: from rationale to reality".



## **Thorkil Sonne**

Founder, [Specialisterne Foundation, Denmark](#)

Social media: [FB](#), [LinkedIn](#)

Thorkil Sonne became a social entrepreneur after his youngest son was diagnosed as autistic at the age of three. He founded Specialisterne Denmark in 2004 and Specialisterne Foundation in 2008 to solve the social challenge of lack of inclusion for autistic and neurodivergent persons. The vision is a world where people are given equal opportunities in the labour market and the goal is to enable one million jobs by 2030.

Specialisterne Foundation is a NGO associated with the UN Department of Global Communications and works in particular according to Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 8 "Decent Jobs and Economic Growth" in the framework of SDG 17 "Partnerships for the Goals".

Thorkil Sonne is chairman of Specialisterne Foundation. He is a World Economic Forum Schwab Foundation Social Entrepreneur and an Ashoka Globalizer Fellow. Thorkil has contributed to a number of books and articles, such as Harvard Business Review "[The Case for Hiring Outlier Employees](#)" and "[The Dandelion Principle: Redesigning Work for the Innovation Economy](#)".



## [Charlotte Valeur](#)

Chief Executive, [Global Governance Group](#)  
Founder, [Institute of Neurodiversity \[ION\], Switzerland](#)

Charlotte Valeur has over 35 years of experience in finance, primarily as an investment banker in Denmark and UK. She is an experienced FTSE Chair, Non-Executive Director, and corporate governance expert, serving on a variety of boards – as well as delivering training and advising boards in corporate governance through her company Global Governance Group. Charlotte has been a director of eight public companies, including three appointments as the Chair. She has taken part in a complete restructuring of NTR Plc, the sale of REG Plc to BlackRock, and, as Chair, overseen an \$8bln Merger of Kennedy Wilson Europe Real Estate Plc with its US NYSE listed parent. Charlotte also has board experience with a range of unlisted companies including international engineering firm Laing O’Rourke, BT Pension Fund, Chair of Institute of Directors U.K., Founder, and Chair of Board Apprentice, and Founder of Impact of Neurodiversity.



## [Jean Winegardner](#)

Board President, [Partnership for Extraordinary Minds](#)  
Office Manager, [Autistic Self Advocacy Network \[ASAN\], U.S.](#)

Jean Winegardner is an autistic mom to three delightfully neurodivergent children, who brought her into the world of disability advocacy as she learned about what they need and want out of life. She is passionate about furthering acceptance and embrace of disabled children and adults. Jean has a master’s degree in print journalism from the University of Southern California. She and her husband live in Maryland. She enjoys movies, reading, running, and small, amusing rodents.



**[Jordyn Zimmerman](#)** [M.Ed]

Director of Professional Development, [The Nora Project, U.S.](#)  
Social media: [FB](#), [LinkedIn](#)

Jordyn Zimmerman (she/her) is a recent graduate from Boston College, where she earned her Master of Education. Before graduate school, she interned at the National Disability Rights Network and completed her bachelor's degree in Education Policy at Ohio University. As a nonspeaking autistic student who was denied access to effective augmentative communication until she was 18, Zimmerman has personal experience challenging the educational status quo, which is featured in the 2021 documentary, This Is Not About Me. Zimmerman also serves as the Director of Professional Development for The Nora Project, is on the board of CommunicationFIRST, and is passionate about ensuring every student is able to access effective communication and exercise their right to a truly inclusive education.



**Oliver Akello**

Occupational Therapist, [Silver Bells, Rwanda](#)  
Social media: [FB](#)



**Sarah Ahmad Bawazeer**

Lead Therapist, [Namaee Center, Saudi Arabia](#)  
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**[Maria Fernanda Chang](#)**

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**[Prof. Irwanto](#)**, Ph.D.

Researcher and Psychologist, [Atma Jaya Catholic University of Indonesia, Indonesia](#)



**[Deirdre Kempen](#)**

Principal and Founder, [Shelanti Private School, South Africa](#)  
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**[Kavitha Manjunath](#)**

Special Educator, [Academy for Severe Handicaps and Autism \[ASHA\]](#), India  
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**[Brian Middleton](#)** [M. Ed, BCBA]

Educational Consultant, [Bearded Behaviorist, U.S.](#)  
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**[Pooja Panesar](#)** [BCBA/QBA/DBH-C]

Founder and Director, [Kaizora Centre for Neurodevelopmental Therapies, Kenya](#)



**[Shravan Roy](#)** [ASD]

Self-advocate, Intern at [SOREM, India](#)  
Social media: [IG](#)



## **Donny Mardonius and N. Anfield Wibowo**

Father and son, Indonesia

Media: [FB UNICEF Indonesia story](#), [Media Indonesia](#)

## **United Nations Representatives**



### **Melissa Fleming**

Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications, UN

Social media: [IG](#), [Twitter](#)



### **Maria-Francesca Spatolisano**

Assistant Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, UN