

Autism Walk & Fair is going virtual for 2020

By Ellen Sussman
Special to the Green Valley News

As the significance and contagion of the COVID-19 pandemic emerged in March, the annual Autism Walk and Resource Fair planned for April 4 at the Kino Park Sports Complex in Tucson had to be canceled.

With no known time frame as to when it will be safe to hold large in-person events, planners of the Autism Walk and Resource Fair have decided to host this year's event as a virtual online experience on Saturday, Sept. 26.

"We are creating a unique online interactive resource fair for our families to engage in and hear from our community providers, schools, state services and others so they still have the opportunity to make connections they would have at our in-person event," said Brie Seward, executive director of the Autism Society of Southern Arizona.

Ray Frieders, board president of the Autism Society of Southern Arizona, said a new website is being built to host the event.

"On the website, attendees will be able to watch the video of our opening ceremonies. They will also be able to access materials from each of our resource exhibitors. Each exhibitor will have their own page with their brochure, video and contact information,"



The 2020 Autism Walk and Resource Fair will be a virtual online experience on Saturday, Sept. 26.

Frieders explained.

Also, a series of Zoom webinars on Sept. 26 will let families hear from community providers as they would have done at the in-person event.

"We are also asking our attendees to walk on their own around their neighborhood on that day and share their photos with the hashtag #we-walk4autism," Frieders said. "It's all very exciting and we are proud to still be able to connect with our community in this way."

Autism is a complex developmental disability that typically appears during the first three

If you go

To register for the virtual event and for more information: Go to: as-az-org. There is a registration fee of \$20 for adults 18 and older and \$5 for ages 4 to 17. All funds raised stay in Southern Arizona. The Autism Society of Southern Arizona may be reached at 520-770-1541.

years of a child's life. It affects his or her ability to communicate and inter-

act socially with others.

Based on data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as of May 2018 autism affects 1 in 71 children in Arizona.

ONE FAMILY'S EXPERIENCE

The Espinoza family of Sahuarita plans to participate in September's virtual online experience.

When Arturo and Cynthia Espinoza's son Derek was 4 years old, they noticed some behaviors that didn't seem right. There was a slight delay in speech development, he

See **AUTISM, B8**

Behold, the chidish, boorish rich athlete

How childish some millionaire athletes can be.

Montrezl Harrell's temper tantrum at least called attention to this loser of a COVID-19-shortened pro basketball season.

But it was the outburst of a brat.

Harrell, a \$6 million-a-year employe of the Los Angeles Clippers, screamed in frustration at Luka Doncic of the Dallas Mavericks, an insult which, shorn of qualifying adjectives, came down to "white boy."

Such a juvenile display was an embarrassment to the National Basketball Association, or should be.

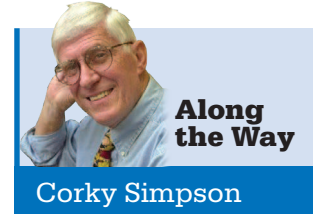
But you have to wonder if Doncic, his family or his hometown of Ljubljana, Slovenia, had any idea what Harrell was talking about — at least the deeper, racial meaning.

Though doubtful, maybe Montrezl was paraphrasing Keats, in his *LaBelle Dame sans Merci*, a ballad; to wit:

"I saw pale kings and princes, too, Pale warriors, death-pale were they all."

OK, not likely. I'm sure the alibi will be that Harrell was trying too hard, that he was overly intense, etc.

After all, Doncic's Mavericks won the game, 135-133, and Doncic contributed 10 assists to zero for Harrell. They both



Along the Way

Corky Simpson

scored 13 points.

Gentleman that he is (and at \$6 million a year should be), Harrell apologized for calling Doncic a "white boy."

And Doncic, gentleman that he is, accepted.

Luka, by the way, earns \$7,683,360 a year, so maybe that softened the blow.

In this outlandish generation of wealth in sports, it's interesting to note that Babe Ruth's highest salary was \$80,000 in 1930. All he did was save baseball, the national pastime.

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Some time back, a senior citizen golfer was overheard telling his buddies over coffee, "I shot a 66 ... but I didn't play No. 16, 17 or 18." That would still be an excellent 15-hole score, for a lot of us.

Corky Simpson is a veteran journalist who writes a column for the *Green Valley News*.

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AUTISM

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was sensitive to some fabrics, he didn't feel pain and seemed fine when he had a fever.

"Derek was diagnosed with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder. He was high functioning and that made it more challenging and harder to get help,"

Cynthia said. "He's very social and very trusting, so we have to watch him. He'll talk to anyone,"

Communication in children with autism ranges from no useful form of communication to very advanced language abilities, but little ability to use language in a social manner.

Four years ago, the Espinoza family moved to Sahuarita from Yuma,

which Cynthia said added yet more challenges as they had to start anew with speech therapists, doctors, therapists and organizations.

Derek is now 11 and in sixth grade at Sahuarita Intermediate School, where he does well academically.

The family had attended three previous Autism Walks and Resource Fairs

in Tucson and planned to take part this past April.

"We've always tried to make autism a positive thing for Derek and we'll take part in this new virtual online experience," Cynthia pointed out.

Premiere Retirement Planning and Wealth Management returns as the title sponsor; Tucson ER & Hospital is the presenting sponsor;

Helping Hands Behavioral Therapy, Tucson Electric Power and Tucson Federal Credit Union are gold sponsors, and the Pima County School Superintendent's Office of Dustin J. Williams is the education sponsor.

"As a parent of a child with autism I can speak first hand about the need for strong community support ... the Autism Society

of Southern Arizona is that support. I am humbled and honored to announce our newly launched partnership with ASSA. Our goal is to increase awareness about this resource so that families across Pima County can benefit from it," Williams said.

Contact Green Valley News freelance reporter **Ellen Sussman** at ellen2414@cox.net.

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