

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts to showcase autism awareness exhibit



Montgomery, Ala.—March 28, 2023—Disability as an Ability Toward Success: Moms on the Move, also known as D.A.T.S.M.O.M., a 501(c)(3) organization, is proud to announce its historic partnership with the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts to feature the *Faces of Autism* Campaign in an exhibit that raises autism awareness through art beginning Saturday, April 1st, 2023 at 10:00a.m.

D.A.T.S.M.O.M. Founder Tametria Conner Dantzler created *Faces of Autism* to help eliminate stereotypes and preconceived notions about children and individuals on the Autism Spectrum. Public education on autism related issues is a focal point for this campaign that was also featured in all 10 Montgomery City-County public libraries in 2022.

"*Faces of Autism* is a way to humanize autism through artistry and connect the pieces by sharing educational facts, depicting autism symptoms or related behaviors and showing what the public may not see by looking at someone on the spectrum. I want to compel people to look at these faces and take action to help increase awareness and inclusion." Dantzler said.

Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts Head of Learning and Programs Emily Thomas says the *Faces of Autism* exhibit is just one example of how the museum is working toward more inclusive engagement for individuals on the spectrum. The exhibit will be featured the entire month of April for Autism Awareness and Inclusion Month.

"Partnerships with local and national organizations like D.A.T.S.M.O.M., Autism Support of Alabama, and Kulture City help us formulate inclusion programs. We have a sensory space in our current exhibition, *Ginny Ruffner: Reforestation of the Imagination*. We also have Kulture City Sensory bags available for check-out at our Visitor Service desk. These bags include noise-canceling headphones, fidgets, and visual cue cards," Thomas said.

Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts Assistant Curator of Education Elisabeth Palmer has worked closely with D.A.T.S.M.O.M. to prep the exhibit and says she's been educated in the process.

"While viewing the exhibit, I hope visitors learn that autism comes in many forms when they see these individuals and read about their unique experiences, which may challenge what visitors think they already know," Palmer said.

In conjunction with the *Faces of Autism* exhibit, a student art section with more than 20 submissions from children on the spectrum will also be featured. The museum will host two Arts for Autism art-making-classes for 20 children on the spectrum at 10:15a.m. and 11:15a.m.

Artist Braxton Barker of Montgomery, Ala. is donating his time and talent to share the stories of D.A.T.S.M.O.M. children. Barker, an Auburn University-Montgomery graduate, hopes that shedding light on the different faces of autism will encourage people to not only research autism, but to search within.

"I hope that anyone who sees this campaign will automatically relate in some way. I hope my art work encourages others to share more empathy and realize that love goes a long way," Barker said.

Faces of Autism is a part of the D.A.T.S.M.O.M. *Alabama Autism Safety Initiative*. Follow the campaign on our website www.datsmom.org, Facebook (DATS MOM), Instagram and Twitter (@datsmom). For additional information, please email info@datsmom.org or datsmom@datsmom.org

About Disability as an Ability Toward Success: Moms on the Move (D.A.T.S.M.O.M.):

Disability as an Ability Toward Success: Moms on the Move, also known as D.A.T.S.M.O.M., is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization serving more than 500 families of children on the autism spectrum (or with related developmental disabilities). The goal is to provide a platform to help parents and caregivers shift their children's disability into an ability by equipping them with the knowledge, support and tools needed to be effective advocates for their children. By providing free support, programs, enrichment activities, resources, parent training and services for children and young adults on the autism spectrum, we help families progressively navigate the autism journey. Some notable initiatives include the Alabama Autism Safety Initiative, the Conner Dantzler Autism Scholarship Fund and the Spectrum Sky Airport Training Program. D.A.T.S.M.O.M. has conducted autism training to more than 130 professionals, helping them better serve individuals on the spectrum.

About the Artist:

E-4 Senior Airman Braxton Barker was born and raised in Montgomery, AL. Barker says his love and passion for creating art started when he was introduced to it as a Baldwin Arts and Academics Magnet School student. There, he developed and honed his skill which led him to major in Graphic Art Design at Auburn University Montgomery. He is currently serving as a graphic designer for the U.S. Air Force Negotiation Center. Barker believes in giving back to his community and investing in the youth, in particular underrepresented and underserved youth. In addition to his significant contribution to the *Faces of Autism* Campaign, Barker will serve as the Lead Arts Instructor for D.A.T.S.M.O.M.'s latest initiative the *Au-Tastic Abstract Arts Program* that will debut in April for Autism and Inclusion Awareness Month.



D.A.T.S.M.O.M. CONTACTS:

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