

ENDORSEMENTS

We sometimes forget that children with autism become adults with autism — and they are adults a lot longer than they are children. The Autism Nature Trail will provide a welcoming environment for visitors of all ages to experience the excitement, joy and comfort found in the wonders of our natural world. This unique form of direct and accepting engagement with nature in a world-class park adds a new dimension of exposure, with the potential of providing a lifetime of meaningful and fulfilling experiences.

~ **Joe Mantegna, actor and autism activist**
Honorary Board member for The ANT



I'm glad that my suggestions for the Autism Nature Trail have been integrated into the final design and overall plan. The Trailhead Pavilion as a pre-walk station is important since many autistic children need to know what they're getting into before they will engage. Cuddle swings and gliders are good choices for movement. I understand the cost involved in providing trained staff for the Trail, but its success depends on people who are passionate about nature who will get the children engaged.

~ **Dr. Temple Grandin, Colorado State University**

As the parent of one neurotypical daughter and two sons on the spectrum who are at different levels of functioning, it was always challenging to find activities we could do together as a family. When I was first consulted about the Autism Nature Trail at Letchworth State Park in New York State, I envisioned a place where one of my boys could be captivated by the water feature while the other studied the patterns of the Sunshine Slope while my daughter explored the adjoining Nature Center independently — all in a safe haven where a sudden outburst or meltdown did not mean that we would feel the need to pack up and leave. To have a park space intentionally designed for the enjoyment of individuals on the autism spectrum along with their families and friends is unprecedented — and long overdue.

~ **Ellen Bry, actress, mother, autism advocate**



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I feel so fortunate to have been asked to collaborate on this amazing project. As a professional who specializes in working with individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders, this project was a dream come true — the opportunity to help design rich, safe, immersive nature experiences where meaningful exploration is encouraged.

The composition of **The ANT** design team, which ranged from landscape architects to therapists, was an incredibly unique collaboration that fostered the development of something truly inspired. This Trail will provide individuals with ASD, their friends, and their families an oasis in a sometimes overwhelming and chaotic world and a chance to connect to one another and to nature.

*~ Amy Laurent, EdM, OTR/L (SCERTS Model collaborator)
University of Rhode Island, Department of Communication Disorders*

Two years ago, our school's Autism Team was asked to review very early plans for the Autism Nature Trail at Letchworth State Park, utilizing the expertise of our occupational and physical therapists, speech pathologist, counseling and administrative staff, and general and special educators. **The ANT** Planning Team thoughtfully integrated our recommendations into the final design and came back to us with updated information, thoroughly answering our questions about access, safety and staffing. Our professionals are looking forward to scheduling time for staff, students and families to take full advantage of this one-of-a-kind experience in nature.

*~ Winton Buddington, Principal
Bay Trail Middle School, Penfield - 2016 National School to Watch*

Nazareth College's Center for Civic Engagement is proud to partner with the Autism Nature Trail at Letchworth State Park. We are excited about the curricular and co-curricular connections our students will make through their involvement. Our students have the potential to make a difference in the lives of others while strengthening their learning by applying theories they're learning in their classrooms to the real world setting of **The ANT**. We look forward to further developing our partnership!

*~ Nuala S. Boyle, Director, Center for Civic Engagement
Nazareth College, Rochester*

Congratulations on an amazing accomplishment, and thank you for your love and dedication to this project! **The ANT** is going to serve individuals diagnosed on the autism spectrum and the entire community so well and will be the gold standard for similar endeavors going forward.

*~ Margaret Poggi, Head of School
LearningSpring School, New York City*