



Autism Nature Trail

A Nature Trail for all at Letchworth State Park

Connecting the Autism Spectrum Disorder Community to the Natural World

The Autism Nature Trail (ANT) will encourage visitors to experience nature in a way uniquely suited to individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), as well as those with developmental disabilities. **The ANT** will welcome everyone, young and old, to experience the inspiring, engaging and calming qualities of the natural world.

Letchworth State Park is among New York's premier scenic destinations, attracting nearly 850,000 visitors each year. **The Autism Nature Trail** will originate adjacent to the Humphrey Nature Center. The Nature Center interprets the spectacular landscape found within Letchworth State Park, encourages deeper exploration, and expands the public's appreciation for the natural environment. The Autism Nature Trail will further enhance this mission by welcoming to the Park a community that has been historically underserved in terms of recreational space and engagement with nature.

In 2018, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimated that one in 59 school-aged children are on the autism spectrum. According to Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods* (2005), many young people in today's world are experiencing a "nature deficit disorder," and this is especially true for those on the autism spectrum.

Employing Nature to Create a Cutting-Edge Experience for the ASD Community

Considered by leading experts to be an original and model approach in engaging the ASD community, **the ANT** will feature a series of independent stations designed by a nature play specialist and landscape architects, in consultation with academics, practitioners and family members. Stations will incorporate the natural surroundings of Letchworth State Park to promote visual, auditory and tactile exploration. They will provide a range of cognitive, experiential and social activities, while embracing the beauty and tranquility of the park. **The Autism Nature Trail** will add a much-needed positive and non-threatening dimension for individuals and families living with ASD and other disorders, allowing them to experience the physical, emotional and social benefits of being more fully engaged with nature and each other.

The Campaign to Build the Autism Nature Trail

The Campaign to Build the Autism Nature Trail at Letchworth State Park is a unique public-private partnership created to construct the ANT and support ongoing maintenance, operations and specialized programming. To date, the campaign has raised \$2 Million of a projected \$3.9 Million needed for the project. The public phase of the campaign is now active, with plans to raise the additional **\$1.9 Million**.

To learn more about the **Campaign to Build** the Autism Nature Trail at Letchworth State Park or to donate to the project, visit: <https://autismnaturetrail.com/>.



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