



Zaniez Reveals Pioneering SITWALK “Work Study” Program: Empowering Autism Spectrum Adults Through Rescue Dog Walking, Animal Bonding and Entrepreneurship

Innovative Work Study Initiative Pairs Older Shelter Dogs with Neurodiverse Students to Foster Independence, Confidence, and Lifelong Bonds at Zaniez Farm Trade School

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wittmann, AZ - November 11, 2025

Zaniez, revolutionary nonprofit farm-based trade school dedicated to supporting autism spectrum families, today announced the launch of SITWALK, its inaugural work study program designed to transform lives through the power of human-animal connections and real-world entrepreneurship. As the first of three groundbreaking work study initiatives set to roll out in 2026, SITWALK equips adolescent and adult students on the autism spectrum with essential skills for independent living while providing a second chance to older rescue and shelter dogs adopted as beloved “farm school dogs.” The rescue dogs will live on the Zaniez School Farm with the other school animals as beloved pets.

At the heart of SITWALK is a unique dog walking business model that pairs these gentle, experienced shelter dogs—many overlooked due to their age—with motivated neurodiverse students eager to build confidence and purpose. Participants will receive hands-on training in animal care, client management, business operations, and safe walking techniques, all within the serene equestrian farm environment of Zaniez’s upcoming Revolutionary Farm Trade School, launching January 2026. This structured program not only teaches practical vocational skills but also cultivates emotional resilience, social interaction, and a pathway to sustainable income, enabling students to live as independently as they choose.

“Every individual on the autism spectrum deserves the tools to unlock their potential and step confidently into adulthood,” said Dana Shafman, Zaniez Founder and Spectrum Mom. “SITWALK is more than a job training program—it’s a bridge to self-sufficiency, where our students form profound bonds with rescue dogs that mirror their own journeys of resilience and rediscovery. We’re thrilled to launch this pilot program in the Fall of 2026 as the cornerstone of our work study program series, proving that with the right support, independence isn’t just possible; it’s transformative.”

Extensive research underscores the profound benefits of such interactions for individuals on the autism spectrum. Studies show that dog-assisted therapy significantly enhances communication and social skills, with 84% of experts reporting positive impacts on children and adolescents. For adults, these bonds reduce stress, agoraphobia, and depression while improving emotional regulation and overall well-being. Families with autism spectrum members also experience long-term gains in daily



routines, motor skills, and quality of life through animal-assisted activities. By integrating these evidence-based advantages into a vocational framework, ***SITWALK addresses critical gaps in Arizona's support system, where only 5% of autistic adults live independently and unemployment rates remain alarmingly high.***

The SITWALK program kicks off in the Fall of 2026 as part of Zaniez's full-day Adult Work Study Program, blending farm trades, life skills like cooking and laundry, and creative pursuits such as art and woodworking. Future work study initiatives will expand on this model, incorporating additional entrepreneurial ventures tailored to neurodiverse strengths. For visuals, including the vibrant SITWALK logo and engaging animation, visit the Work Study page at ZaniezKids.com.

Zaniez invites partners, donors, and families to join Zaniez autism spectrum education revolution. Zaniez phased openings begin January 2026, serving children (ages 3-12) in PHASE I planned to launch in January 2026, teens (13-18) in PHASE II planned to launch Summer 2026, and adults (19+) in PHASE III planned to launch Fall 2026. To learn more or to get involved, visit Zaniez today at ZaniezKids.com.

About Zaniez Farm Trade School

Zaniez is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) innovative farm trade school in Wittmann, Arizona dedicated to empowering individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and enriching the lives of autism spectrum families through farm-based vocational training, life skills education and weekly family fun nights and family support groups. With phased openings planned to begin in January 2026, Zaniez aims to serve children (3-12), teens (13-18), and adults (19+) in Arizona, fostering independence and rewarding careers. Focused on holistic development, Zaniez empowers individuals on the spectrum to thrive in adulthood with practical skills and community integration while also providing a fun, safe and welcoming place for autism spectrum families.

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WORK
STUDY



COMING
FALL
2026



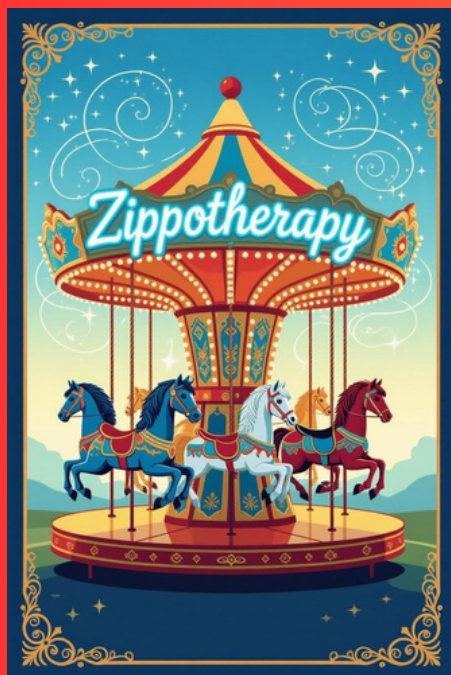
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