



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

S.A.F.E. (Supporting Autism and Families Everywhere)

Phone: 570-535-0293

Email: Mknipfer@autismsafe.org

Website: www.autismsafe.org

August 22, 2025

S.A.F.E. Angels of Autism Honorees Selected

Wilkes-Barre, PA – On Saturday, August 9, 2025, S.A.F.E. (Supporting Autism and Families Everywhere) proudly celebrated its 30th Anniversary and its signature event, the Angels of Autism Gala. The evening honored individuals and organizations making transformative contributions to the autism community across Northeastern Pennsylvania.

This milestone event was held in celebration of three decades of unwavering advocacy, family support, and community impact, recognizing excellence in education, healthcare, business inclusion, philanthropy, and community service.

Angels of Autism: 2025 Award Honorees

The Angels of Autism Awards spotlight champions who embody hope, compassion, and progress in the autism space:

Beacon of Learning - This award recognized **Beth-Anne Harris - School Psychologist, Hazleton Area School District** as an outstanding School Psychologist for exceptional innovation in classroom practices and dedicated guidance in educating individuals on the autism spectrum.

Community Cornerstone in Philanthropy - This award recognized **K-Fab, Berwick, PA**, a private philanthropic organization for its outstanding support and funding of charitable organizations that benefit individuals on the autism spectrum.

Culture of Acceptance in Business - This award recognized **Coffee Inclusive, Pittston, PA** for demonstrating their commitment to fostering a genuinely inclusive environment for individuals on the autism spectrum—not only through employment, but also through innovative practices that break down traditional barriers and create meaningful opportunities.

Excellence in Wellbeing - This award honored **Dr. Thomas Davis, MD – Geisinger Complex Care, Danville, PA** who has demonstrated outstanding understanding, compassion, innovation, and care in serving individuals with autism.

Inclusion Matters in Education - This award honored **Bridget Brogan – Teacher, Pittston Area School District**, who fosters a supportive, inclusive environment in the general education setting. This award was sponsored by Brighter Journeys, who awarded Brogan with \$500.00.

Progressive Pathfinders - This award recognized **Samantha Reinhardt – Aquatic Program Coordinator YMCA and coordinator of SAFE swim, Wilkes-Barre, PA** who has dedicated herself to helping individuals with autism reach their full potential.

The Heart of the Community - This award recognized **Andrea Mussoline Romig, Weatherly, PA** for her dedication and hard work as a volunteer highlighting her passion and empathy in serving the autism community.

Special Recognitions

The Honorable Congressman Matt Cartwright received the *Angels of Autism Spectrum of Hope Legislative Champion Award* for his outstanding advocacy in autism-related legislation.

Ray Ostroski was honored with the *Lifetime Service Award* in recognition of over two decades of selfless dedication to the autism community.

Dolphus Teart received the *Advocacy Lifetime Achievement Award* for 30 years of committed service to advancing autism awareness and support.

30 Years of Impact: The Story of S.A.F.E.

Co-founded in 1995 by **Clair and George Shadie and Patricia and Joseph Gans**, inspired by their son's autism diagnosis, S.A.F.E. became the first and longest-standing autism support organization in Northeastern Pennsylvania. Their vision catalyzed services such as early intervention programs, ABA therapy, wraparound funding, and community education.

With support from leaders like Senators Arlen Specter and Rick Santorum, and the efforts of the Shadie and Gans families, S.A.F.E. helped fund groundbreaking therapies and advocated for statewide support networks. Their initiatives led to partnerships with Wilkes University, Children's Service Center, and Luzerne and Wyoming County MH/MR services, among many others.

Looking Ahead

S.A.F.E. continues to collaborate with universities, therapists, and medical professionals to enhance the quality of life for individuals on the autism spectrum and their families. This 30th anniversary Gala is not just a celebration—it's a reaffirmation of the organization's ongoing mission to support, empower, and include.

#30#

Photo IDs: P1900627 – Event Night Program

P1910048 - Left to Right - Scott Zoscin, Bridget Brogan, Kaitlin Snipas (on Behalf of Beth Snipas), Dr. Kate Zielinski

P1910090 - Left to Right - Kaitlin Snipas (on Behalf of Beth Snipas), Dr. Kate Zielinski, Lauren Volansky, Bridget Brogan, Forward is Dr. Brian Pepich, behind Maria Wujcik

P1910387 - Left to Right - Andrea Romig and Malinda Knipfer

P1910610 - Left to Right - Jolene Carey-Pace, Rainy Boyle, Brendan Karolchyck, Matthew Krispin, Anthony Melf, Sandra Nardone, Brian Boston, Julius Zuckerwar, Huyen Nguyen, Amy Baylor and Frank Bartoli

P1910615 Left Background, Anthony Melf, Jolene Carey-Pace, Huyen Nguyen, Rainy Boyle Front Left to Right - Left to Right - Sandra Nardone, Brian Boston, Frank Bartoli Behind Center - Julius Zuckerwar