



EMPOWER 25

SUMMIT AND CHALLENGE

fueled by **autism speaks**

TEAM CAPTAIN & PARTICIPANT GUIDE





welcome

TO THE EMPOWER CHALLENGE

We are so happy you are here! The Empower Challenge is more than just an event, you can choose to run, ride, or walk to make a lifetime of difference for people with autism. Join with friends, colleagues and the autism community to raise critical funds and demonstrate how together, we are creating a more inclusive world.

EMPOWER
SUMMIT AND CHALLENGE

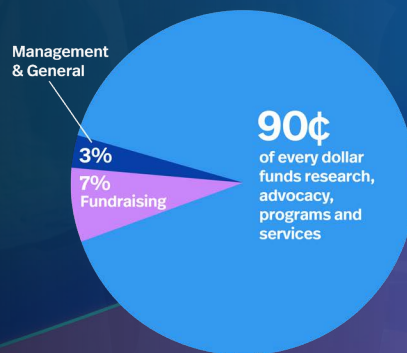
autismspeaks.org/empower



our mission & vision

Autism Speaks is dedicated to creating an inclusive world for all individuals with autism throughout their lifespan. We do this through advocacy, services, supports, research and innovation and advances in care for autistic individuals and their families. We envision a world where all people with autism can reach their full potential.

Designated a "give with confidence" charity



4-STAR RATING
highest nonprofit designation



HIGHEST LEVEL
of transparency



MEETS OR EXCEEDS
all 20 BBB standards



autismspeaks.org/empower





community

Through collaboration and partnerships we:

- Ensure access to reliable information and services across the lifespan
- Support research and innovation that drives towards improved quality of life and well-being for individuals with autism throughout their lives
- Leverage our assets through advocacy, partnerships and collaboration to support, extend and convene the work of service providers
- Accelerate delivery of solutions for adult quality of life needs, including transition, employment, housing and health and wellness
- Live and promote principles of diversity, equity, access and inclusion both in and outside of the organization

Through your support and those of your team, we can continue our work to improve wellbeing, equity and lifelong outcomes, amplify autistic voices and their needs and accelerate the delivery of impactful, scalable solutions to enhance the quality of life of all people on the spectrum.

We're here to help

(888) AUTISM2

help@autismspeaks.org

En Español (888) 772-9050

ayuda@autismspeaks.org

To find resources or make a donation go to autismspeaks.org or connect with us on social [@autismspeaks](https://twitter.com/autismspeaks)

get started

1. REGISTER:

Register as an individual, join a team or create your own team and choose your own personal challenge: *Cycle, Run or Walk*.

2. SET YOUR FUNDRAISING GOAL:

Set a goal beyond your registration fee to earn some great prizes!

3. PERSONALIZE YOUR FUNDRAISING PAGE:

Make your fundraising page stand out and inspire others to donate! Add a personal touch by including photos and a story that shows why Autism Speaks is important to you.

4. BUILD YOUR TEAM:

Invite friends, family, or co-workers to take on the Empower Challenge with you by joining your team or by making a donation.

5. LEAD BY EXAMPLE:

Show your commitment by making the first donation. This encourages others to follow your lead. Gifts of any size make a difference and will get you one step closer to reaching your goal.

Remember, our team is here to support you every step of the way. Reach out to your [local staff partner](#) with any questions!

EMPOWER
RIDE >>>>
CHALLENGE 25
fueled by autism speaks

All registered Cyclists will receive a finisher medal and T-shirt as part of their registration fee.

10 MILE COURSE:
\$75 registration fee,
increases to \$90 three
weeks from the event

30 MILE COURSE:
\$100 registration fee,
increases to \$115 three
weeks from the event

EMPOWER
RUN >>>>
CHALLENGE 25
fueled by autism speaks

All registered Runners will receive a finisher medal and T-shirt as part of their registration fee.

5K COURSE:
\$50 registration fee,
increases to \$60 three
weeks from the event

10K COURSE:
\$75 registration fee,
increases to \$90 three
weeks from the event

EMPOWER
WALK ////
CHALLENGE 25
fueled by autism speaks

Participants who raise \$100 will receive a Challenge t-shirt.

5K COURSE:
Open to walkers of all ages

REGISTER



FUNDRAISING
TOOLS



set yourself up for success

Just like preparing for an endurance event requires training, achieving your fundraising goal requires strategy!

SET MINI GOALS

Break down your fundraising goal into smaller monthly or weekly goals. This will help you stay on track and can create a sense of urgency when asking for donations.

Example: I have a goal of raising \$70 in the next 7 days and would love your support. Can you help me reach my goal?

CAST A WIDE NET

You never know who might be inspired by your story – friends, family, coworkers, neighbors, community members, local businesses, social circles – the list is endless. Go beyond your immediate connections and engage a broader audience. Remember, every dollar counts, and you never know who might become your next major donor.



MATCHING GIFTS

Many companies provide matching gifts to organizations of their employees' choosing. Check with your company and those of your donors to see if your team is eligible to receive matching funds.

TEAM SPONSORSHIP

Sponsorships play a very important role in the Empower Challenge. Not only do they allow businesses to receive marketing benefits and allow them to get involved in the community, but they also can help you reach your fundraising goal! Connect with your local staff team to receive a copy of our sponsorship request letter and form to help with your outreach efforts.

BECOME AN EMPOWER CHALLENGE VIP:

Grand Club: Become a Grand Club member when you reach \$1,000 and receive a Empower Challenge Pin and access to our VIP Area on Event Day.

Change Makers: You and your team can become Change Makers by raising \$5,000 and each member will receive a Empower Challenge Change Maker pin and access to our VIP Area on Event Day.

Champions Circle: Champions Circle honors the Top 5 Fundraising Teams and Individuals who go above and beyond. Members of this exclusive group will receive special recognition, day of perks, access to our VIP Area on Event Day to spotlight their incredible impact.

OUTREACH TRACKER



MATCHING GIFTS



FUNDRAISING TOOLS



tips to go the distance

Not sure how to kickstart your fundraising? No problem! Here are some fundraising ideas to help you reach your goal.

- 1. Connect with Your Local Autism Speaks Staff:** Our team is here to help you reach your goals! From brainstorming ideas, creating personalized verbiage or making an ask on your behalf, we are here to be a resource for you however needed.
- 2. Share your story:** Nobody knows your story and why Autism Speaks is important to you better than yourself! By sharing why you decided to take on the Empower Challenge you will encourage others to join you.
- 3. Be persistent and confident:** Did you know, most people need you to ask them three times before they donate? Don't be afraid to follow up with those who have not yet donated. People will donate to your page because of your passion for our mission, be confident in your outreach.
- 4. Get your employer involved:** Take advantage of your company's corporate match program or connect with your HR department to collaborate on ways you can get your colleagues involved.
- 5. Music for miles:** Encourage people to help keep you motivated by adding their favorite song (or least favorite) to your race day play list in exchange for a donation to your fundraising page.
- 6. Dine to donate:** Check in with your favorite restaurants to see if they would host a dine to donate evening and contribute a portion of their proceeds.
- 7. Pennies for change:** Ask your friends and family to put aside their spare change from now until race day and show how much a little at a time adds up.
- 8. Hone in on your hobbies:** Turn your passion or hobby into a fundraising initiative! Host a yoga class, karaoke night, guitar lessons or trivia night and instead of a registration fee ask for a donation to your page.
- 9. Hold a fundraising event:** Host a garage sale, bake sale, car wash, or cook-off as a way to engage your community to help raise awareness and funds.
- 10. Share fundraising and training updates on social media:** Keep your Facebook friends up to date on your fundraising and training progress and celebrate those who have donated to your page.
- 11. Encourage sharing to expand your network:** Ask your friends and family to share your fundraiser with their networks. The more people who share your fundraiser, the larger your audience becomes.
- 12. Calendar day fundraising:** Find a photo of a calendar online to share on social media and ask your friends to pick a day (or two!) that will represent the amount they will donate to your page.
- 13. Start a letter-writing or email campaign:** Send a personalized message to family, friends, coworkers and everyone you know to ask them to support your team.

SOCIAL MEDIA



MATCHING GIFTS



FUNDRAISING TOOLS



email & social media campaigns

Emails and social media posts are great tools to use to encourage others to support you and provide a quick and easy way to share your story. Create your own message, use the sample below or check out our other email/social media customizable messages linked below to help you succeed!

Send

To

Cc

SUBJECT: Run, Ride or Walk for a Cause – Let’s Make the Miles Count!

Dear _____,

I am excited to share that I will be participating in the 2025 [CITY] Empower Challenge fueled by Autism Speaks on [EVENT DATE] at [LOCATION].

The Empower Challenge is more than just an event, participants can choose to run, ride, or walk to make a lifetime of difference for people with autism and I have taken on the [INSERT PARTICIPATION TYPE (i.e.10 Mile Ride)].

The mission Autism Speaks is close to my heart, as they have been committed to creating an inclusive world for all individuals with autism throughout their lifespan through advocacy, services, supports, research and innovation, and advances in care for millions of autistic individuals and their families for the past twenty years.

[INSERT PERSONAL STORY ABOUT WHY YOU ARE JOINING THE CHALLENGE]

I am looking forward to bringing my team together at the [CITY] Empower Challenge and I hope you will support my efforts in making a difference! There are many ways that you can help:

- Register to join my Empower Challenge Team [INSERT TEAM LINK] and encourage your friends and family to join you.
- Make a donation to my fundraising page [INSERT LINK TO FUNDRAISING PAGE] to help me reach my goal.
- Join me at the event to help raise awareness and show your support for the autism community.

Thank you for your consideration! Together, we are creating a world where all people with autism can reach their full potential.

Sincerely,
[NAME]



fundraising tools & resources

Use these essential resources to help you crush your fundraising goals!

FACEBOOK FUNDRAISING

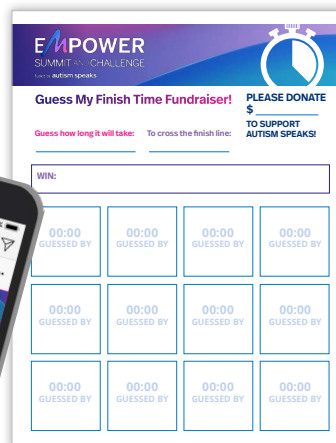
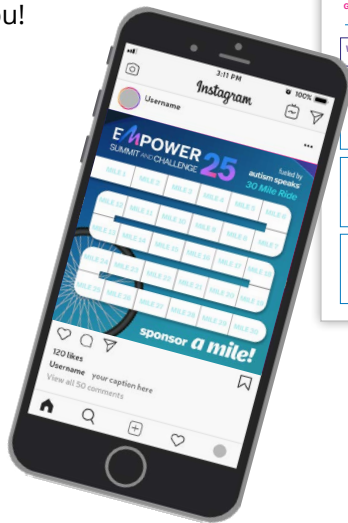
Facebook Fundraisers make raising money easier than ever. You can create a Facebook Fundraiser directly from your Fundraising Center! Share your fundraiser often so your friends and family can help you reach your fundraising goal even faster. Click the button below to learn more.

SCHEDULE, SEND AND POST MESSAGES

Sending emails and social media messages to family and friends is one of the most successful ways to fundraise. Pick from one of our templates (or create your own), select recipients, schedule and send. Selecting a template and messaging is fast and easy, so you'll be able to send more messages (and raise more money) than ever!

SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS

Download shareable graphics and cover images to post on social media. Make sure you include a link to your fundraising page to allow friends and family to donate directly to you!



MATCHING GIFTS

Make your dollar go twice as far! Many employers offer matching gift programs to their employees as part of a corporate giving program. To learn more about our matching gift program and how you can double your impact, click on the button below.

READY TO USE RESOURCES

Check out our downloadable fundraising templates to help you with your fundraising outreach! From flyers to fundraising worksheets and social media posts like *Sponsor a Mile* and *Fill My Running Shoe*, we've created materials to help you succeed.



- MATCHING GIFTS
- FACEBOOK FLYER
- SOCIAL MEDIA
- FUNDRAISING TOOLS

Empower Challenge frequently asked questions

What is the Empower Summit & Challenge?

The Empower Summit & Challenge is more than just an event — it's a pivotal moment for the autism community. This ground-breaking two-day event is dedicated to advancing knowledge, inspiring action and uniting the autism community in a fearless resolve toward meaningful change.

DAY ONE, the Summit, offers a conference style format with engaging sessions led by leading experts and advocates, covering essential topics around health and wellness, advocacy and workplace inclusion. The day culminates with an evening reception that celebrates our "Champions of Change" and highlights the impactful work being done in the autism community.

DAY TWO, the Challenge, gives participants the choice to run, ride or walk with your community to raise funds, drive awareness and demonstrate what inclusion and belonging looks like. Enjoy a fun-filled festival with entertainment, activities and resource fair — there's something for everyone!

What are the different ways to participate in the Empower Challenge?

Registration is now open for all participation types through the website. Below are the registration types for the Empower Challenge:

- Walk
- 5K Run
- 10K Run
- 10-Mile Ride
- 30-Mile Ride

Is there a fee to participate?

The Empower Summit & Challenge is a fundraising event and there are different requirements depending on how you participate.

- **Walk:** No registration fee, fundraising is highly encouraged – every participant that raises \$100+ will receive a T-shirt
- **5k Run:** \$50, increases to \$60 three weeks from the event
- **10k Run:** \$75 registration fee, increases to \$90 three weeks from the event
- **10-Mile Ride:** \$75 registration fee, increases to \$90 three weeks from the event
- **30 Mile Ride:** \$100 registration fee, increases to \$115 three weeks from the event

All registered runners and cyclists will receive a finisher medal and T-shirt as part of their registration fee.

Is there an age restriction to register?

Run/cycle minimum age is 13 years old with parental consent and accompanied by parent/guardian.

What Tools are available to help me fundraise?

Whether you are new to fundraising or a seasoned fundraiser, having tools and support is always critical. An Autism Speaks staff member will be there with you every step of the way providing support on different ways to fundraise, including: Facebook Fundraising, utilizing your Autism Speaks fundraising page, matching gifts and more!

FUNDRAISING
TOOLS



Empower Challenge frequently asked questions

If I cancel my registration, what happens to my donations?

Donations and registration fees are non-refundable and non-transferable.

Are donations tax-deductible?

All donations are tax-deductible in the same calendar year your donation was processed to the extent allowed by law. Please work with your tax professional to determine what deductions you are eligible for.

How Do I Donate?

There are several easy ways to donate:

- **Donate online** to a specific team, individual participant or Empower Challenge via their fundraising page.
- **Donate on Event Day:** cash, check and credit card donations are accepted.
- **Donate via Mail:** Please make checks payable to Autism Speaks and mail to:
Autism Speaks Walk
PO Box 199, Rocky Hill, NJ 08553

- **To credit a particular team or individual,** please be sure to include an offline donation form found on that individuals' fundraising page or a note that states: *[CITY] Empower Challenge, Individual or Team to Credit*

PLEASE DO NOT SEND CASH IN THE MAIL.

Donations can also be turned in on Event Day. Please make sure an offline donation form, found on the participant homepage, accompanies each donation to ensure proper credit. We strongly encourage all participants to mail their donations to the Rocky Hill, NJ address indicated above under the "How do I donate?" question prior to event day.