University honors autism educators

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In honor of Autism Awareness Month, authors and important educators are bringing fresh educational perspectives highlighting their own personal journeys teaching individuals and erasing stigmas for individuals with autism.

Because of this the university's program associate, Eileen Farmer for the Center Of Excellence On Autism Spectrum Disorder–shosted and organized an event, "Author Reception Honoring Dr. Fred Volkmar & Dr. Ruth Eren." They spoke on both their journeys in composing these pieces as well as some of the hardships they faced while doing so.

"This was my way to showcase some of the books that direct chairs recently published," Farmer said. "By bringing these people together was just a way to welcome our supporters around our area and around the campus and showcase some support for our publishers."

Every year they strive to encourage a better understanding, due to the various amounts of research that teachers could be doing prior to handling these types of situations.

"The purpose of the book was really to introduce autism to teachers who were new to the field and had never had a course in autism and they find these children in classrooms," Eren said.

Throughout this meeting audience members and guests were able to understand that even though there are positives to spreading awareness, direct labels can also be harmful.

"At the end of the day, I just think people are people," Jeannie Job from Special Academic Programs said. "We shouldn't have to label it as much and it's heart–breaking when we can be so misunderstanding of people, kids, adults, whoever."

Publishing newer research is important as well. The authors spoke about how COVID–19 and online teachings compare to todays in–person teachings and how different they were.

"It's been awesome and kind of fascinating to see the geopolitics of autism," Dr. Fred Volkmar said. "It's really been a pleasure to work here at the center and Southern just to see how welcoming people are and how supporting people are."

Volkmar is also a part of the Asperger Syndrome Adult Transition Program board at Chapel Haven Shleifer Center, a private nonprofit agency that focuses on empowering adults with disabilities to live independent lives.

Catherine Sullivan–DeCarlo the vice president of admissions and marketing at Chapel Haven and a professor at the university, said that Volkmar's presence was vital to ASAT.

"His skills and knowledge were instrumental for creating our Asperger Syndrome Adult Transition Program and curriculum," Sullivan–DeCarlo said. "We really value the expertise here."

With widespread misconceptions still surrounding autism and its causes, Volkmar urged audience members to spark positive conversation.

"I've been in the business for years and we haven't found the cause yet. We're closer, but we haven't found good treatments," Volkmar said. "People are doing better, so, why not really talk about something positive?"

Looking back on his journey, Volkmar reflected on the border landscape of autism research and advocacy.

"It's been fascinating to see the kind of ups and downs of the geopolitics of autism and it's really been a pleasure to work here at the center and also in Southern and define how welcoming people are and how supportive people have been," Volkmar said.



PHOTOS | BRIANNA WALLEN

Center of Excellence on Autism Spectrum Disorders Director Fred Volkmar and Founder Ruth Eren in the SCSU Education Center on Thursday, April 25.



Professor Catherine Sullivan-DeCarlo and Author Fred Volkmar in the SCSU Education Center on Thursday, April 25.

Students hosts donor drive



PHOTOS | CONTRIBUTED

Nursing major Amanda Rondini a senior and nursing major Maria Santos Veloso, a senior in the Adanti Student Center on Wednesday, April 23.

By Victoria Cruz
Contributor

On Wednesday April 23, the Pre–Health Society partnered with DKMS and the National Student Nurses Association to host a bone marrow and stem cell donor drive.

DKMS is an international nonprofit organization dedicated to combating blood cancer by registering potential donors and funding life–saving treatments.

"DKMS is doing an amazing job," nursing major Maria Santos Veloso, a senior, said. "My grandfather actually passed with blood cancer two years ago, so I think this is very important just having donors willing to donate and save a life. I'm glad to be participating in this and helping more people."

According to NPR, 70% of patients rely on anonymous donors for their treatments, indicating that DKMS offers a second chance to patients in need.

"With over 12 million registered donors, DKMS has succeeded in doing this more than 110,000 times to date by providing blood stem cell donations to those in need," DKMS.org said.

The organization covers all costs for donors who are called upon to donate, ensuring that financial barriers do not stand in the way of saving a life.

The event aimed to raise awareness about the importance of becoming a donor and provided students with an opportunity to join the fight against blood cancer and other blood disorders.

The sentiment was shared by nursing major Amanda Rondini, a senior and the vice president of the National Student Nurses Association here on campus.

"To me, this is really important because when I go out into the field as a nurse we must strive for equitable care for everyone," Rodini said. "Being a social justice school it is important to promote equitable care and I think it starts within the community."

Health equity was a central theme of the drive. Statistics from NAACP reveal a stark disparity in donor match rates among racial groups: the likelihood of finding an unrelated matching donor is 77% for Caucasian patients, but only 23% for African American patients. That is more than a 50% disparity.



Maria Santos Veloso and student swabbing to get on donor registry.

The beauty of being a diverse school allows students the opportunity to contribute to shrinking the gap. By encouraging students from all backgrounds to register, the university community directly contributes to increasing donor diversity. As everyone should have the opportunity of finding a lifesaving donor.

The bone marrow and stem cell drive is part of an ongoing effort to educate and mobilize the campus. More donor drives are planned for the fall semester, offering additional chances for students to get involved.

So be on the lookout for the next event and opportunity to take part in this life–saving mission.

With every new donor registered, the chances improve for patients still waiting for a match. The success of this event highlights how the community can come together to make a real difference

Visit DKMS.org to learn more and donate to join the fight against blood cancer today. Any contribution today whether joining the registry or donating money, could be someone's second chance tomorrow.

Upcoming events

Clear Your Clutter

On April 30, join the Wellbeing Center for "Clear Your Clutter Day" and embrace the calm that comes with simplicity. In this hands–on workshop, students will explore practical strategies to organize their surroundings and release what no longer serves them—creating space for peace, clarity and a more focused mind. This event takes place from 2–3:30p.m. in Adanti Student Center Room 201.

Senior Art Exhibition

The exhibit is up from Thursday, April 24 –Thursday, May 8, 2025. Gallery hours are Monday–Thursday, 11:00 a.m.–4:00p.m. at the Buley Art Gallery basement level.

A Taste of Conn Hall

Celebrate the essence of Asian American and Pacific Islander culture with delicious cuisines. Each Thursday during the Southern observation of Asian American and Pacific Islander Month, students will get to enjoy a specialty lunch menu inspired by AAPI chefs including David Chang and Sheldon Simeon. Lunch prices are $13 if students are not on a meal plan. The event takes place from 11:00a.m. – 2:00p.m. and will repeat weekly until May 1.

Women's Track & Field

The NE10 Outdoor Women's Track & Field Outdoor Track & Field Championships will be taking place on May 2 until 10:00a.m. – May 3, 10:00a.m. in Manchester, New Hampshire.

Senior Honors Convocation

The annual celebration of students who have been selected by faculty for exemplary academic achievements. The ceremony is scheduled for Sunday, May 4, at 2:00 p.m. in the Lyman Center with a reception and light refreshments to follow in the Adanti Student Center ballroom.