



The CoAct Project

Hosted by The Marbridge Foundation

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Marbridge To Host Pulitzer-winning Author, Ron Suskind, to Speak About Autism

*Author chronicles his family's journey in connecting with their autistic son through animated films, a story told in the Academy Award nominated documentary, **Life, Animated**.*

AUSTIN, TEXAS: April 26-28, 2017, The Marbridge Foundation will host the fifth annual CoAct Project™, a national executive symposium to discuss best care practices, industry challenges, and build relationships to better care for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Best-selling author [Ron Suskind](#) and his autistic son, Owen, will serve as key-note speakers; they are the subject of this year's Academy Award nominated documentary [Life, Animated](#). Together they will share their astonishing story of how Owen, following a diagnosis of regressive autism at 3 years old, slowly learned language and emotional dynamics by studying animated Disney movies. And how through a series of startling breakthroughs, the family began to communicate with their lost son in movie dialogue.

"Autism now affects one in every 68 children in the United Statesⁱ. Currently at Marbridge, the autism diagnosis represents 25% of our resident population. We are eager to learn more from Mr. Suskind and his son Owen, and to explore the unknown capacities of the human mind," states Scott McAvoy, Vice President of Operations at Marbridge. "It is an honor to have Ron and Owen speaking at the CoAct Project this year, and to consider the impact this knowledge could have on so many individuals, their families and caregivers."

- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) refers to a range of conditions characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech and nonverbal communication, as well as by unique strengths and differences. There is not one autism but many types, caused by different combinations of genetic and environmental influences.
- Autism occurs in all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups, but is almost five times more common among boys than among girls.ⁱⁱ
- April is Autism Awareness Month

This year will serve as the 5th annual symposium of its kind at Marbridge, bringing together leadership, organizations and professionals in the field of intellectual disability, including Autism, Down Syndrome, Williams Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, seizure disorder and traumatic brain injury. "In our conversations with

industry partners, it is apparent that there are a host of topics and concerns we share,” said James Stacey, President of Marbridge. “In 2013, we decided it was time to establish a forum where we could discuss our commonalities and share best practices. We are committed to this collaboration moving forward, and to enhancing the lives of individuals with special needs.”

ABOUT MARBRIDGE

Founded in 1953, Marbridge is a non-profit residential community for adults with intellectual disabilities (www.marbridge.org). Located on 170-acres in south Austin, Texas, the campus consists of three interconnected communities providing varying levels of care—from semi-independent care, to assisted living, to skilled nursing and physical rehabilitation services. With over 250 residents, the population represents a diversity of diagnoses, including Autism, Down Syndrome, Williams Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, seizure disorder and traumatic brain injury. With the unique Life Options Program, Marbridge provides a distinctly different lifestyle that ensures that each individual has the opportunity to learn, experience and achieve a whole new life at Marbridge.

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ⁱ In 2016, the Centers for Disease Control's Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) reported that approximately 1 in 68 children in the United States has been identified with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). This rate remains the same as in 2014, which is the first time it has not risen.

ⁱⁱ On March 27, 2014, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released new data on the prevalence of autism in the United States. This surveillance study identified 1 in 68 children (1 in 42 boys and 1 in 189 girls) as having Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).