

**WITH HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION AND FEW OPPORTUNITIES AHEAD FOR
YOUNG ADULTS WITH AUTISM, ONE LOCAL NONPROFIT IS NOW OFFERING
TECH TRAINING SCHOLARSHIPS – AND HOPE FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE**

*The UPS Foundation Awards \$25,000 Grant to the National Foundation for Autism Research (NFAR)
Providing Tuition Assistance for Their Software Testing Training Program, and
Creating a New Pool of Exceptional Talent for San Diego's Tech Market*

San Diego, CA – The end of the school year is usually filled with excitement for the future ahead for graduating seniors. However, for those with autism, leaving high school more often means facing uncertainty and limited services, supports, and opportunities.

“Unemployment for those with autism is as high as 85%, yet individuals on the autism spectrum have skills well suited for the technology field,” noted Juan Leon, National Foundation for Autism Research (NFAR) co-founder and president, and Stanford Business School Alumni. **“High intelligence, attention to detail, and logical thinking can make them exceptional employees for tech companies.”**

Many young adults with high functioning autism (HFA) are isolated at home after high school, playing video games or watching television instead of making use of their skills and abilities. NFAR's groundbreaking **Software Testing Technical Training Program** for young adults with autism uniquely integrates work expectations and social skills development into a technical skills curriculum and provides critical experience that can help students be successful when they enter the job market.

In an effort to help increase access to this important local program, **The UPS Foundation, the charitable arm of UPS, presented NFAR with one of their largest grants awarded this year.** The \$25,000 grant will allow NFAR to offer tuition assistance to students enrolled in the intensive, 5-month vocational program that combines more than 180 hours of instructor-led, hands-on training with real life applications, and which can lead to careers in software testing and other technical professions.

“This is a population that is currently and historically unemployed, which only further limits their opportunities,” said Jay Bautista, Sales Director, Corporate Retail Solutions for The UPS Store and a parent of a child on the spectrum. “We are honored to support NFAR's efforts in creating a new generation of employees that can benefit the San Diego tech industry, and also make a lasting difference in the lives of those in our community.”

“Finding meaningful employment not only offers people with autism a job, but also builds self-esteem, helps them develop a social network of co-workers, and allows them to gain a level of financial independence,” added Leon. “This grant from The UPS Foundation couldn't have come at a better time, and will help NFAR provide much-needed hands-on training, as well as expand opportunities for those with autism in today's workforce.”

Employing Those with Autism is Good Business

Businesses around the globe, including tech giant Microsoft, are finding that employees with HFA often have the talent needed to thrive in the tech community. Employment prospects in the industry continue to grow, especially here in the local San Diego market.

“We are preparing our students to walk into an office and be able to contribute as an employee,” explained Leon. “We want to make it easy for both the company and individual to work together, and can

offer companies a variety of options to address their needs - ranging from direct employment (either full-time or part-time) and on-site contract employment, to locally outsourced off-site testing services.”

Businesses interested in learning more about the Technical Training Program and their students should email Juan Leon directly at juan.leon@nfar.org.

Enrollment is Open Now

Enrollment for the next Software Testing Technical Training Program session, which begins August 3, is now open and more information about scholarships and program details is available at www.NFAR.org or by emailing info@nfar.org.

Each year, The UPS Store awards \$125,000 on behalf of the UPS Foundation to organizations committed to change. In 2014, UPS and its employees, active and retired, invested more than \$104.2 million in charitable giving around the world. Visit the UPS Foundation online at www.UPS.com/foundation.

Fast Facts

- Autism now affects 1 in every 68 children in the U.S., with a new child being diagnosed every 11 minutes
- The number of teens and young adults with autism has increased tenfold over the past ten years and nearly half a million autistic children will reach adulthood in the next decade
- **Unemployment for those with autism is as high as 85%**, yet individuals on the autism spectrum have skills well suited for the technology field, such as high intelligence, attention to detail, and logical thinking that can make them exceptional employees for tech companies
- Research studies funded by the National Institutes for Mental Health (NIMH) and the Department of Education (DOE) indicate that **as many as 1 in 3 young adults** with autism have no job experience, college, or technical education within seven years of leaving high school; **a poorer outcome than those with any other disability**
- NFAR’s groundbreaking **Technical Training Program** uniquely integrates work expectations and social skill development into a technical skills curriculum and provides critical experience that can help students with autism be successful when they enter the job market.

About the National Foundation for Autism Research (NFAR)

NFAR was established in 2003 to serve the critical needs of families and their children with autism. NFAR is committed to increasing local awareness, information, support, and services to improve the quality of life for persons living with autism or an autism spectrum disorder. Since 2005, NFAR has invested more than one million dollars throughout the San Diego community to positively impact the living and learning environment for thousands of people with autism. NFAR’s main fundraising event, the San Diego Race for Autism, will be held on March 19, 2016 in Balboa Park in advance of April’s National Autism Awareness Month. www.NFAR.org. www.raceforautism.org

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