

# Grammy Award-Winning Singer-Songwriter Presents The Ryder's Room Gala, Building Awareness for Autism Spectrum Disorder

LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, July 31, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Grammy Award-winning singer-songwriter and Newark native Faith Evans will present the Inaugural Ryder's Room Gala, in conjunction with her foundation, Ryder's Room Inc. and The City of Newark at The Newark Museum of Art on Saturday, September 27, 2025, from 6:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m., 49 Washington Street in Newark, New Jersey.

As the founder and Chief Executive Officer of Ryder's Room Inc., Faith Evans established the foundation eight years ago in 2017. Based in Los Angeles, CA, Ryder's Room Inc. takes its name and inspiration from the founder's son, Ryder, who is now 18 years old and was diagnosed in early childhood with autism spectrum disorder, a neurodevelopmental condition characterized by differences in social communication and interaction. Evans and the Ryder's Room team and its Board of Directors aim to raise awareness surrounding various national issues related to autism spectrum disorder and various related disabilities. The organization also seeks support in the areas of medical care, economic development, social services, and political awareness and advancement issues, especially in the Black and Brown communities, where the resources and support of disabilities are limited. Additionally, Evans and the Ryder's Room team host monthly support group meetings for parents of children with different abilities.

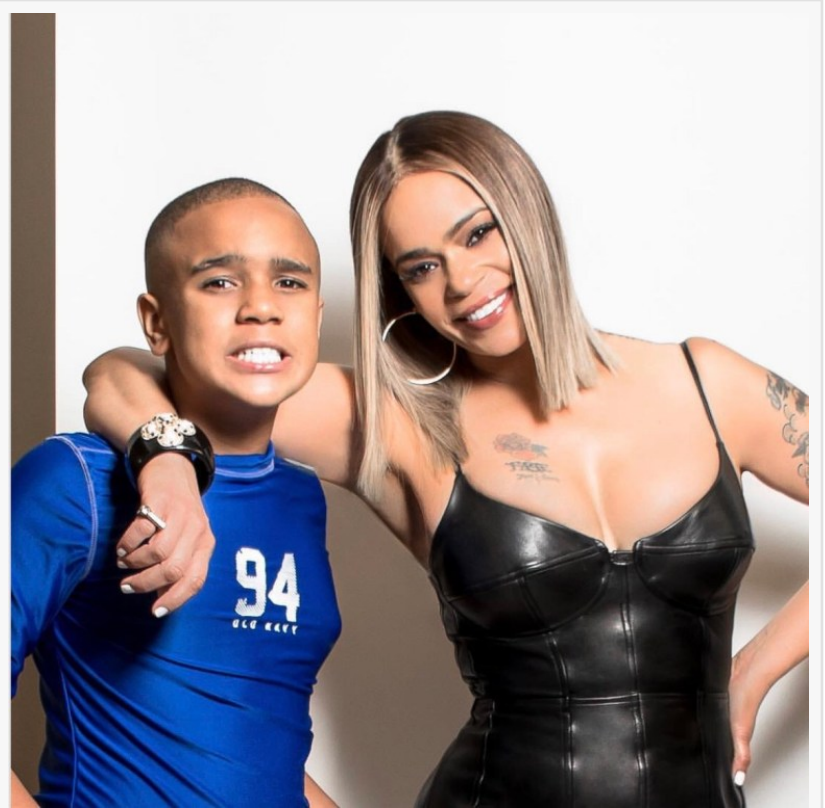
For the past 18 years, Faith Evans has spent most of her time caring for her son and family and advocating for autism spectrum disorder and other disabilities, hence the formation of her foundation, Ryder's Room Inc. "As many of my family, friends and business associates know, I am a mother first, there is nothing more important to me than my family," says the mother of four. "I've been on this journey with Ryder for more than 17 years, along with my newly adopted



Founder and Chief Executive Officer  
Faith Evans

family of parents, adults, and children who are also managing and navigating a series of struggles, hardships, and challenges surrounding this disorder. We are doing our best to support each other through this journey. Ryder is doing well and I'm proud of his growth and advancement."

This year's Inaugural Gala theme: "Awaken The Fire: Ignite, Empower and Elevate" will be hosted by Grammy Award-nominated recording artist MC Lyte, who will serve as the Mistress of Ceremonies. The entertainment lineup includes Comedian and Actor Mike Epps and Rapper and Songwriter Freeway with more entertainment to be announced in the coming weeks.



Faith Evans and son, Ryder

The five esteemed honorees include Newark Mayor Ras J. Baraka, who will receive the Elevate Award. Mayor Baraka is recognized nationally as a thought leader in the field of urban revitalization. He has also gained acclaim for his commitment to reducing crime in Newark and reimagining public safety by treating it as a

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I've been on this journey with Ryder for 17 years [autism spectrum disorder], along with my newly adopted family of parents, adults, and children who are doing their best to manage this disorder.”

*Faith Evans, founder and Chief Executive Officer*

public health issue. Mayor Baraka opened the Shani Baraka Women's Resource Center to provide complete care for women and families in crisis and transition. Under his leadership, the city has also undertaken a major effort to provide holistic care for residents without addresses. While serving as Mayor of Newark, he was also President of NJ Urban Mayors Association, and now its President Emeritus; Executive Board Member for NJ League of Municipalities; Co-Chair, National League of Cities Reimagining Public Safety Task Force; U.S. Conference of Mayors – Vice Chair for Ports, Transportation and Communications Committee; and Member, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Local Government Advisory Committee.

Liza Lawrence will be presented with the Impact Award. Lawrence is an award-winning healthcare executive, community advocate and visionary nonprofit leader with more than 15 years of experience in healthcare operations and deep-rooted commitment to autism awareness and advocacy. She is the founder and CEO of Perfect Connection, a 501(c) (3) nonprofit

organization established in 2019. Perfect Connection was born from Lawrence's firsthand experience navigating the complexities of raising two sons on the autism spectrum. Determined to ensure that other families have better access to resources, education, and support; she created the organization as a comprehensive platform for change. Under her leadership, Perfect Connection has directly impacted the lives of more than 500 children.

Maliaka Mitchell will receive the Empower Award. As the founder of Maliaka & Associates, she provides culturally competent, person-centered behavioral services across South California, including skills training and parent mentorship. Mitchell holds a Master of Science in Counseling with a focus on Rehabilitation and has contributed her expertise to initiatives such as police disability training, international outreach and work at Children's Hospital Los Angeles. Mitchell is a dedicated advocate, educator, and leader with more than 20 years of experience in the developmental disability field. With expertise in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) and a foundation in special education, she has impacted countless lives through evidence-based interventions, program development, and inclusive advocacy.

Andrew Burger will be presented with the Encourage Award. Burger is a gifted artist, dedicated educator, and powerful voice within the autism community. Andrew, who is autistic himself, was nonverbal until the age of 4 and received special education services throughout his school years. He holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Painting and Graphic Design from the Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University and creates stunning artwork on commission. In addition to his artistic pursuits, Burger serves as a Registered Behavior Technician, working in both school and home settings to support individuals with multiple diagnoses. His journey, passion, and advocacy reflect the heart of Ryder's Room mission.

Safiyyah Muhammad will receive the Inspire Awards. Muhammad is a nationally respected disability policy advocate, transition specialist, and Accessibility Navigator. She is the founder of Urban Matters Advocacy & Action (The UMAA Network) and a proud mother and grandmother



Top Row - Left to Right: Newark Mayor Ras J. Baraka (honoree), MC Lyte (Mistress of Ceremonies), Mike Epps (Entertainment), Freeway (Entertainment); Bottom Row - Left to Right: Liza Lawrence (honoree), Maliaka Mitchell (honoree), Andrew Burger (honoree),

raising five neurodivergent children across the lifespan. A Partners in Policymaking graduate, Certified Autism Travel Professional, and NJLEND Fellow, Muhammad also served on the ADA Advisory Council at the Newark Museum of Art. She is a founding member of the National Black Disability Coalition and a former chair of NJCDD's Ad Hoc Committee on Equal Access. Her work centers lived experience, disability justice, and the fundamental right to belonging.

For more information on Ryder's Room, visit [www.rydersroom.org](http://www.rydersroom.org).

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