

# AUTISM ACCEPTANCE MONTH And THE 'R' Word

*The GRACE Foundation of New York and  
Eden II Programs Launch  
Joint Campaign to Replace the “R-Word”  
During  
Autism Acceptance Month*

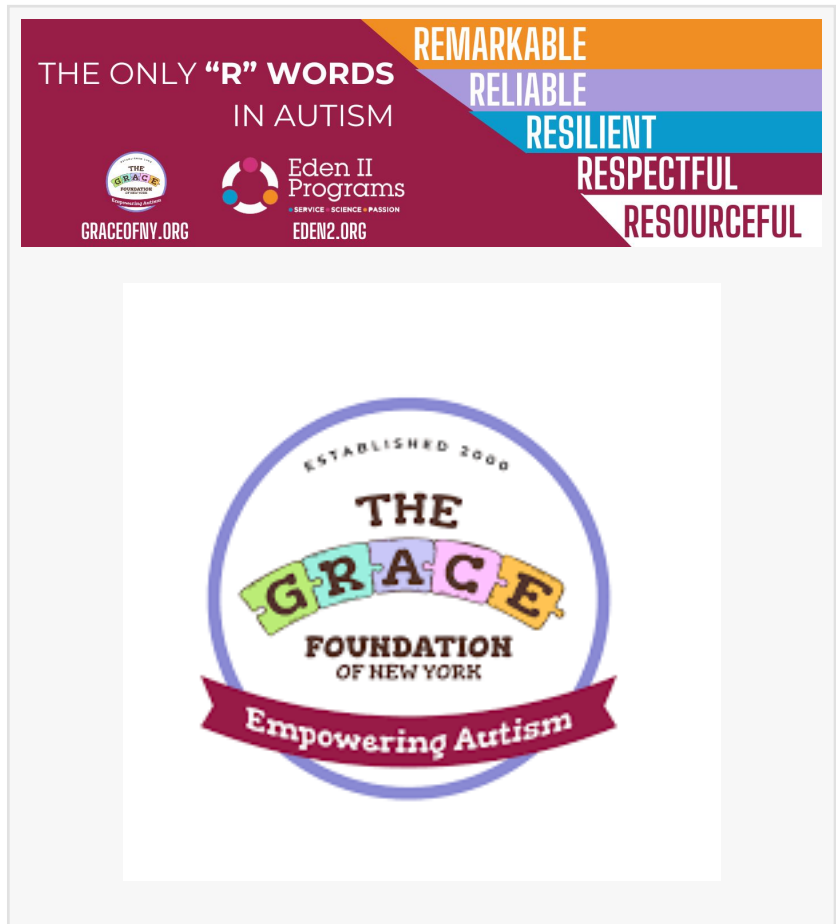
STATEN ISLAND, NY, UNITED STATES, March 24, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In recognition of Autism Acceptance Month, two of Staten Island’s leading autism service organizations — [The GRACE Foundation of New York](#) and [Eden II Programs](#) — have joined forces to launch a powerful public awareness campaign aimed at changing the narrative around the harmful use of the “R-word.”

Through a series of billboards, yard signs, and community messages across Staten Island, the campaign challenges the resurgence of the slur in mainstream culture and replaces it

with words that reflect the true character and strength of individuals on the autism spectrum. The campaign’s billboards boldly declare: “THE ONLY ‘R’ WORDS IN AUTISM” Remarkable...Reliable...Resilient...Respectful...Resourceful

The message is simple but powerful: the words we choose shape how people are seen, treated, and valued. We are also proud that the campaign has been echoed locally by New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities, which has embraced the use of positive “R” words, further recognizing and reinforcing the message of this community-driven initiative

Participants from both organizations were instrumental in creating the campaign after sharing that they are hearing the “R-word” used again in everyday conversations, online platforms, and even in schools. Their response was clear — change the language and change the narrative.



“This campaign was driven by our participants,” said Cathy Del Priore. “They want the world to see them for who they truly are, remarkable individuals who are resilient, reliable, and resourceful members of our community. Words matter, and this campaign is about replacing harmful language with words that reflect dignity and respect.”



The billboard campaign is part of a larger effort recognizing that autism acceptance is not just for one month — it is something that should be practiced every day. Alongside the billboards, yard signs will appear across neighborhoods and community spaces, encouraging residents to proudly display the message and join the movement for respectful language and acceptance.

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*Cathy Del Priore*

#### A Collaboration Rooted in Community

The partnership between GRACE and Eden II reflects a shared commitment to advocacy, education, and

empowerment for individuals with autism and their families.

For more than 25 years, The GRACE Foundation of New York has been dedicated to supporting children, teens, and adults with autism spectrum disorder through programs that promote independence, vocational training, community engagement, and meaningful life experiences.

Eden II Programs has been a cornerstone of autism services on Staten Island for decades. Celebrating 50 years this year, Eden II provides lifespan services including preschool and school programs, adult day and employment supports, residential services, and, most recently, programs for an aging population, helping individuals with autism and developmental disabilities live fuller, more connected lives.

“This campaign reflects what happens when organizations come together with a shared purpose,” said Joanne Gerenser. “At Eden II, we believe in empowering individuals with autism to advocate for themselves and for one another. This initiative gives our participants a powerful voice and reminds the community that respect and acceptance must always come first.” said Joe Borelli, former minority leader of the NYC Council.

Eden II Associate Executive Director, Randy Horowitz echoed that sentiment. “Our participants are leading this message,” Horowitz said. “They are showing the community that autism is not defined by outdated stereotypes or harmful words. It’s defined by resilience, by reliability, and by

people who deserve to be understood and respected.”

### Changing the Narrative

With autism now affecting 1 in 31 children, organizations like GRACE and Eden II say it is more important than ever to promote acceptance and respectful language.

" I want to recognize the outstanding efforts of Grace and the entire Eden II community, whose impact is felt every day across Staten Island, New York City, and Long Island. Their dedication to supporting individuals with autism and developmental disabilities is truly inspiring. At the same time, we applaud our partners at the Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) for leading the statewide “Choose Another ‘R’ Word” campaign, raising awareness and promoting respect and inclusion for individuals with disabilities across New York State" said Joe Borelli, former minority leader of the NYC Council.

By replacing the harmful slur with Remarkable, Reliable, Resilient, Respectful, and Resourceful, the campaign aims to spark conversations across schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods.

The organizations hope the message will inspire others to rethink their language and join them in creating a culture of acceptance.

Because when communities choose better words, we want to create a better world for everyone.

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