

Rep. Bilirakis Joins Inaugural Observation of World Autism Day

WASHINGTON (2 Apr.) -- U.S. Rep. Gus M. Bilirakis today released the following statement on the inaugural observance of April 2, 2008, as World Autism Awareness Day.

"The inaugural observance of World Autism Awareness Day is April 2, 2008. Autism is a bio-neurological developmental disability that generally appears before the age of 3. It impacts the normal development of the brain in the areas of social interaction, communication skills, and cognitive function, causing difficulties communicating and interacting with others and engagement in repetitive behaviors.

"In addition to the social manifestations of the disease, individuals with autism often suffer from numerous physical ailments which may include allergies, asthma, epilepsy, digestive disorders, persistent viral infections, feeding disorders, sensory integration dysfunction, sleeping disorders, and more.

"While there is no conclusive evidence as to what causes autism, and there is not yet a cure, early intervention and treatment can help improve the symptoms related to autism. Those with infants and toddlers should watch for the early warning signs of autism, which include no big smiles by six months, no sharing of sounds, smiles, or facial expressions by nine months, no babbling by 12 months, no words by 18 months, and any loss of speech or social skills at any age.

"As a community, we can help raise awareness about autism and the symptoms associated with it. I encourage you to join in this year's inaugural observation of World Autism Day and share this information with those you know."

Learn more about World Autism Awareness Day by logging on to www.worldautismawarenessday.org or download a brochure [here](#).