

MEDIA ADVISORY

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Local Celebrities Celebrate Halloween by Supporting Autism October 24-27, 2019

Children at Risk, Ottawa presents their **24th Annual Celebrity Pumpkin Contest!!** This popular seasonal fundraising event is being held from **Thursday, October 24 to Sunday, October 27**. For over 40 years, **Children at Risk** (a local charity) has been providing supports to **Autistic children** & their families in the Ottawa Region – filling in “the gaps” in services available through government agencies.

2019 marks an incredible **24 YEARS** that enthusiastic and talented local Celebrities, Politicians, Media Personalities and Businesses have been helping to recognize **October as Autism Awareness Month** by decorating, painting and carving orange orbs into gorgeous gourds! Veteran Carvers will be challenged by first-timers, with over **100 pumpkins** being transformed in the name of charity!! Participants include **CHEO, City Of Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson, Councillors Keith Egli, Stephen Blais, Diane Deans, George Darouze, Jeff Leiper, Laura Dudas and Jan Harder, Ottawa Senators, Ottawa 67's, RedBlacks and Fury** as well as **MPP's John Fraser, Lisa MacLeod, Jeremy Roberts, Vanier and Orleans Offices, MP Catherine McKenna** to name just a few - plus many other local businesses, radio, television and newspaper personalities. Participants compete for the lucky “Top Thirteen” list of carvers for 2019 and a Trophy for the Top Pumpkin Celebrity!

The pumpkin creations will be on display at **Merivale Mall** after our **Reception at 10 AM on Thursday, October 24** – then additionally at **Carlingwood Shopping Centre, Place d'Orléans and Billings Bridge Shopping Centre from Friday, October 25 to Sunday, October 27**. Visitors to the Malls can vote for their favourite pumpkin or celebrity by donating spare change. ****ONCE AGAIN**** this year will be Ballots for 3 Grand Prize Draws from all 4 Malls! ALSO Celebrities have donated “Prize Packages” for silent auction bidding (on-line www.childrenatrisk.ca) Our Auction Site this year is again with:

VONALITY ONLINE CHARITY AUCTIONS

With the support of the Pumpkin Celebrities and generous donations from our community, funds raised in the previous 23 **years total over \$155,951!** All proceeds will help Children at Risk “fill in the gaps” in publicly-funded Autism services with their Community-Based Special Projects, which include **Camp Kaleidoscope** – our All-Day Summer Camp, Family Support Groups, Information Seminars and Educational Training Workshops. Children at Risk recognizes the importance of supporting the whole family as they cope with the daily challenges of raising an Autistic child. With the funds raised through events like the Celebrity-Carved Pumpkin Contest, these children can be provided with the best opportunities to achieve their maximum potential!

Kids – Autism....Let's Help!

Not being able to speak is not the same as having nothing to say!

Other Participating Celebrities Include:

Kornicky & Mel - Rebel 101.7 FM
Author Rick Mofina
Tappa Hair Salon & Beauty Bar
Danielle Allard – Ottawa Musician
Ian Black (CBC Ottawa)

Matt Demers – Hollywood In The Valley
Stuntman Stu, Angie & Janel (Majic 100)
Eric Stacey – LIVE 88.5
Dean Brown (TSN 1200 AM)
Wayne Scanlan (Sportsnet.ca)

Tim & Colleen, Dylan Black – (boom 99.7 FM) Ally (JUMP! 106.9)

Sandra & Chris, Robbin & Ryan (KiSS FM) The Biggs & Barr Show (106.1 CHEZ)

1310 News, Wendy & Brendan (101.1 Country) Daytime - Rogers TV, Cable 22

Surgenor Barrhaven Chevrolet, Buick, GMC, Fatboys Smokehouse, Jays's Barber Shop, Capital Dodge

Tiny Hoppers Ottawa Lisgar, Barrhaven, Kanata Bridlewood, Findlay Creek & Kanata North

Lisa Zanon-Speech Therapy, Wine Rack - Merivale Mall & Rockland, Planet Fitness Merivale Mall

Family Harmonies Familiales, Hilton Garden Inn, Jennifer Chamberlain– RE/MAX Affiliates Realty

Algonquin & Prince of Wales Animal Hospitals, Capital Chordettes, Krista's Pearl World,

Quiltsetc, Subway, Showcase & Unique Accessories – Carlingwood Shopping Centre

Desjardins Caisee populaire Trillium, Sky High Roofing & Snow, Boomerang Kids Orleans

Gordon Kubanek & Michelle Peterson (Green Party) & Merylee Seville (People's Party)

Lynn Saxberg, Ken Warren & Joanne Laucius (Ottawa Citizen/Ottawa Sun)

Kids Up Front Ottawa, Kim Sheldrick, Sobriety House, Psychiatric Survivors of Ottawa

Creatrix Design Group , Oragami Owl, Trottier & Singh Families, RM Lawncare, Twice As Nice Cleaning

Sports Alumni Shaun Van Allen (Ottawa Senators) & Jock Climie (CFL & TSN Analyst),

Ottawa Safety Council, W.O. Stinson, Douvris Martial Arts (Riverside South & Orleans)

Vanier & Associates, On The Ball Pediatric Physio Kanata, Heart of Orleans BIA, Kim MacKenzie's Epicure,

Merivale Mall, Carlingwood, Billings Bridge, Place d'Orleans Shopping Centres

Cora Breakfast & Lunch – Lincoln Fields, Carol Kassis Pampered Chef, BASICS With Karen

Ottawa Police Service E Platoon Comms, Central, East & West

Bridlewood Trails, Oakpark & Stirling Park Retirement Community Residences

JJ Clarke, Stefan Keyes & Megan Shaw (CTV Ottawa News) Steve Warne SWP Podcast

Photo Opportunity - Celebrities have been invited, to deliver their pumpkin creations to Merivale Mall (Farm Boy Court) at **10:00 AM on Thursday, October 24th**. Joining us will be local **Singer/Songwriter Danielle Allard** ! Pumpkins will then be divided and transferred to Carlingwood Shopping Centre, Place d'Orléans and Billings Bridge for Friday, October 25 with voting/on-line bidding until 3 PM on Sunday, October 27.

Background -Autism is a lifelong neurological, developmental disorder that now affects **1 in every 59 North American children, with 1 in 42 boys** (boys more than 4 times more likely than girls to have Autism), **1 in 189 girls**. Autism occurs in all **racial, ethnic and socio-economic groups**. With a **new case every 20 minutes**, these numbers reflect more children being diagnosed with Autism than with AIDS, Diabetes and Cancer combined! Autism impacts the typical development of the brain in the areas of social interaction and communication skills. Children diagnosed within the Autism Spectrum Disorders are often - without help - unable to speak, relate to others, be aware of dangerous situations and even play appropriately with toys. **Children at Risk** continues to help Autistic children and their families in the Ottawa area - solely supported on fundraising and donations. **Children at Risk** strives to address the gaps in government services for Autism, providing representation and community supports. Responding to the need, we piloted our **1st All-Day Summer Camp in 2011 and increased our spots yet again in 2019, 400% from 2011!** Our Friendship Social Skill Therapy Support Groups help to provide the children with the tools to function in this complex world of communication and social interaction. Saturday Fun Club & Family Fun Nights offer Respite for Families – and recreational FUN for the children! Our Seminars explore existing and new interventions to provide information for parents, caregivers and professionals. Information and Knowledge can lead to Understanding and Support, assisting children with Autism so as to improve the quality of life for both the child and their family!