

Theater Program for Children with Autism and Related Disabilities

As part of his initiatives for 2012, Union County Freeholder Chairman Alexander Mirabella today announced the creation of the new Sensory Friendly Theater series of performances specially designed for children with autism and related disabilities at the Union County Performing Arts Center in Rahway.

April 2 is World Autism Awareness Day, commencing Autism Awareness month in the U.S.

"Exposure to the arts is an important way to help enrich the quality of life for young Union County residents who need special care and attention," said Freeholder Chairman Alexander Mirabella. "This series will enable youngsters to enjoy live performances with their families in a calming, supportive atmosphere."

Expanding public recreation opportunities for children with autism and other disabilities is one of the Freeholder Chairman's 2012 "Putting People First" initiatives.

The new series, which begins on June 10 with Tom Chapin and Friends, is designed according to guidelines that help to reduce

disturbances for youngsters who experience heightened sensory sensitivity. The Performing Arts Center is committed to creating a judgment-free zone with plenty of trained specialists who understand autism and similar disabilities.

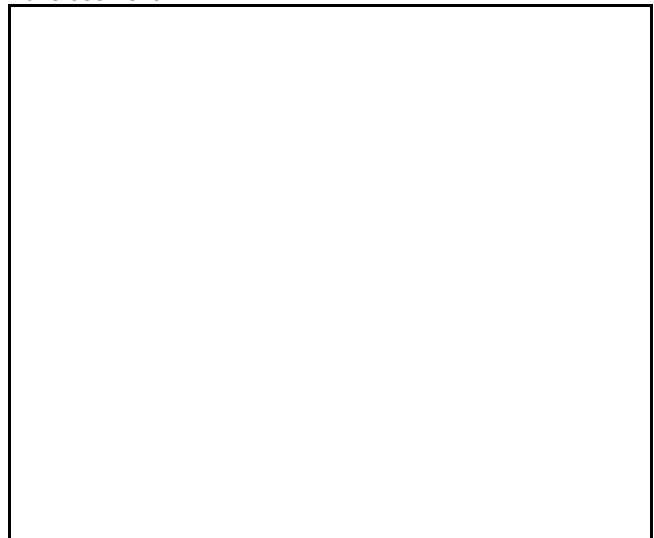
"The idea is to create an event that engages and celebrates individuals with autism and their families," said Mirabella, noting the series is the result of a collaboration between the County Parks Division and the Union County Performing Arts Center.

Paper Mill Playhouse and the Children's Specialized Hospital also assisted in making the program possible.

To design the series, Union County worked with Autism Friendly Spaces, LLC an organization that helps people with autism and their families partake in community activities.

The series of three performances includes Tom Chapin and Friends on June 10, Little

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Red Riding Hood and Other Stories presented by Pushcart Players on October 7, and Pinocchio presented by the New Jersey Ballet on November 4. All shows begin at 2 p.m.

Part of the cost of the series has been offset with County funding, helping to keep the price of admission affordable. All seats are \$8 per person.

The Union County Performing Arts Center is a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation operating in the historic Rahway Theatre. Conveniently located in downtown Rahway at 1601 Irving Street, this historic landmark is the cornerstone of the Rahway Arts District.

The theater is a beautifully restored 1920's era former vaudeville house and movie palace owned by the County of Union and managed by the nonprofit Union County Performing Arts Center.

For information on the Sensory Friendly Theater series visit the Sensory Friendly Theater web page or call the UC PAC box office, 732-499-8226. Information on all events and activities at UC PAC visit ucpac.org.

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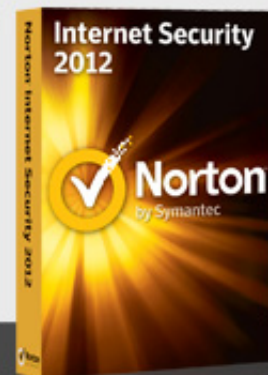
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