



**6<sup>th</sup> Annual Walk Now For Autism Kick-Off Party Scheduled for August 15**  
*Refreshments, Fundraising Tips and Concert by Music for Autism on Agenda*

**For Immediate Release**

**HOUSTON, TX (June 30, 2009)**—Autism Speaks, the world’s leading autism advocacy organization, today announced the Houston Kick-Off Party will be held Saturday, August 15 from 2:00-4:00 p.m. at The Westview School.

“We’re so excited about the kick-off party. Respite care will be provided during the walk presentation, where we’ll share tips on fundraising and what to expect on walk day,” says Nikhi Young, Texas Walk Manager, Autism Speaks. “Walker materials and healthy refreshments will be provided. But the highlight will be a family-friendly concert provided by Music for Autism featuring pianist Jade Simmons.”

Simmons, a pianist, was named Music For Autism's first Spotlight Artist, in appreciation of her support of the mission of the charity. Known for her musical creativity and electrifying stage presence, pianist Jade Simmons is committed to expanding the boundaries of Classical music. Her debut record for E1 Music (formerly Koch Records) titled *Revolutionary Rhythm* features an eclectic mix of American works for piano and was released nationwide on March 24, 2009.

“Music for Autism is committed to raising public awareness and improving the quality of life of individuals with autism and their families through music,” says Robert Accordino. “We sponsor interactive concerts, specifically tailored to be ‘autism-friendly’ and to enrich the lives of those with autism. The kick-off party concert will be our first in Houston, and we look forward to continuing our fully subsidized programming in the Houston area in the years ahead.”

The Houston Walk Now for Autism, which will take place Saturday, October 24<sup>th</sup> at Reliant Park, is sponsored by The Therapy Place, McLane Co. and Best Buy. Toys “R” Us, Toys “R” Us Children’s Fund, *Parade Magazine* and Babies “R” Us proudly serve as national sponsors of the Walk Now for Autism Speaks program.

To sign up as an individual walker or a team captain, or to donate, visit [www.walknowforautism.org/houston](http://www.walknowforautism.org/houston).

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### **About Autism Speaks**

Autism Speaks is the nation's largest autism science and advocacy organization, dedicated to funding research into the causes, prevention, treatments and a cure for autism; increasing awareness of autism spectrum disorders; and advocating for the needs of individuals with autism and their families. Autism Speaks funds more than \$30 million each year in new autism research, in addition to supporting the Autism Treatment Network, Autism Genetic Resource Exchange, Autism Clinical Trials Network, Autism Tissue Program and a range of other scientific and medical programs. Notable awareness initiatives include the establishment of the annual United Nations-sanctioned World Autism Awareness Day on April 2 and an award-winning, multi-year national public service advertising campaign with the Ad Council. Autism Speaks' family services efforts include the Autism Video Glossary, a 100 Day Kit for newly-diagnosed families, a School Community Tool Kit and the distribution of community grants to local service providers. Its government relations department, through its Autism Votes initiative, has played a critical role in securing federal legislation to advance the federal government's response to autism, and has successfully advocated for insurance reform to require insurers to cover medically-necessary autism therapies. Each year, Walk Now for Autism Speaks fundraising events are held in more than 70 cities across the country, as well as Canada and the United Kingdom. [www.autismspeaks.org](http://www.autismspeaks.org)