



As we embark upon April, a month dedicated to Autism Acceptance, I am filled with gratitude for the opportunity to reflect on the journey of Lifespire and the impactful strides we continue to make in the lives of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

April is an important time to shed light on Autism Acceptance, especially considering the staggering statistics. Autism is indeed the fastest-growing developmental disability in the United States, with an estimated 1 in 46 children identified with Autism Spectrum Disorder. These numbers underscore the urgency and importance of fostering an environment of understanding, inclusion, and acceptance for individuals on the autism spectrum.

Founded in 1951 by Ida Rappaport and Harry Kamish, Lifespire pioneered support for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDDs) within the New York City Public School System. Our founders' vision laid the groundwork for a legacy of compassion, empowerment, and advocacy that continues to guide our mission today.

While we initially began with Autism Awareness, our journey has evolved to encompass Autism Acceptance. However, there is still much progress to be made for the over 160,000 individuals within New York City and its neighboring counties who rely on our support and services.

Lifespire proudly represents over 131 certified sites in 7 New York Counties, nearly 900 employees, and serves approximately 5,000 people. These numbers reflect our commitment to providing comprehensive care and support to those in need, ensuring that each individual has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

At Lifespire, we are committed to spearheading new, innovative, and dynamic initiatives that empower those we serve to transcend barriers and embrace greater inclusion within New York City's dynamic societal infrastructure. Through collaborative efforts and unwavering dedication, we strive to facilitate what is possible today and lay claim to what may seem impossible for tomorrow.

As we celebrate Autism Acceptance Month, let us reaffirm our commitment to fostering a world where individuals with autism are valued, respected, and provided with the resources they need to thrive. Together, let us continue to champion acceptance, advocate for inclusion, and empower individuals with developmental disabilities to reach their fullest potential.

We at Lifespire are encouraged by so much that has been sustained and accomplished as well as all that is possible to achieve in the future through those who support and share in **this partnership of possibilities**.