

# AUTISM IN ENTERTAINMENT CONFERENCE

**FRIDAY APRIL 5, 2024**



**SKIRBALL CULTURAL CENTER**

# PROGRAM OVERVIEW

2024 CONFERENCE

## **OPENING REMARKS**

Judith Uttal

## **KEYNOTE SURPRISE! AUTISM TURNED OUT TO BE MY STRENGTH**

Jorge Gutiérrez  
Emmy and Annie award winning  
animator, actor, writer, and director,

## **INSPIRATIONAL EMPLOYER**

Walt Disney Company will share their  
experiences hiring talent on the  
spectrum.

## **TALENT PANEL HOW WE DID IT**

Scott Steindorff will explore the  
journeys of Dani Bowman, Dani-Mation  
Entertainment, Alex Astrella, Blu Star  
Productions.

## **LUNCH**

Luncheon and Partner Tables

## **RESOURCES FOR BUSINESS & TALENT**

Michael Luna, DDS and Hilary Kokenda,  
Zavikon will explore employment  
supports available.

## **TALENT BREAKOUT TRACKS**

Actors  
Animation  
Film and TV  
Game Design

## **BUSINESS BREAKOUT TRACKS**

Large Companies  
Small Companies

## **FOR INQUIRIES**

EMAIL: [AUTISMINENTERTAINMENT@GMAIL.COM](mailto:AUTISMINENTERTAINMENT@GMAIL.COM)

# SPEAKERS

## **JORGE GUTIERREZ** KEYNOTE



Emmy and Annie Award-winning Jorge R. Gutierrez is a Mexican animator, painter, voice actor, writer and director. A CalArts Experimental Animation BFA & MFA graduate, Gutierrez has completed various films, cartoons, and paintings exploring his love affair with Mexican pop and folk culture. Gutierrez was Director & Co-Writer of the Guillermo del Toro produced animated feature *The Book of Life*, which earned him a 2014 Golden Globe Award nomination. Along with his wife and muse, Sandra Equihua, they created the multiple Emmy Award-winning animated series *El Tigre: The Adventures of Manny Rivera* for Nickelodeon. Gutierrez most recently created, wrote, and directed the event series *Maya and the Three* for Netflix which won 2 Annie Awards, and won 4 Emmys. Gutierrez is currently writing/directing a Netflix animated feature named *I, Chihuahua* with Gabriel "Fluffy" Iglesias.

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# SPEAKERS

## PRELIMINARY

Alex Astrella, Blu Star

Productions

Rebecca Beam, Zavikon

Dani Bowman, DaniMation

Entertainment

Domonique Brown, Actor

Susan Capps, AIE.

Johnna Cho, Warner Brothers

(Retired)

Elaine Hall, The Miracle Project

Thomas Harmonson,

Exceptional Minds

Paul Hemstreet, Home and

Yonder, Productions

Jamie Johnson, Game Gen

Jimmy Lifton, Visual Art Academy

Michael Luna, Department of

Developmental Services

Britton Payne, Nickelodeon

Marlene Sharp, Pink Poodle Prod

David Siegel, Exceptional Minds

Scott Steindorff,

Writer/Director/Producer

Diane Strand, JDS Creative

Joey Travolta, Inclusion Films

Judi Uttal, AIE/OCASG

Jason Weissbrod, Spectrum

Laboratory

Hilary Kokenda, Zavikon

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# ABOUT

## THE CONFERENCE

The Autism In Entertainment Conference, is a groundbreaking event that will take place on Friday, April 5, 2024 at the prestigious Skirball Cultural Center. This one-day, in-person conference will be bringing together industry leaders and advocates to explore ways to bridge the gap between the neurodiverse community and the entertainment industry. Our goal is to provide a platform that will empower individuals on the spectrum to showcase their talent and creativity and to help them find meaningful employment opportunities within the entertainment industry. Join us in breaking down the barriers and supporting autism in entertainment!

The conference is being organized by the Autism In Entertainment Working Group, led by the Orange County Asperger's Support Group with support from Zavikon. Zavikon is an employment agency whose mission is to place neurodivergent individuals and those with disabilities in career-oriented, meaningful jobs. Zavikon uses a supported placement model to set both employer and employee up for success. The conference is funded by a Department of Developmental Services (DDS) Grant designed to help Regional Center consumers find employment.

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# CONFERENCE GOALS

The conference is expected to draw 400 attendees consisting of qualified talent on the spectrum and their families and prospective entertainment industry employers.

For employers, the goals are to learn about:

- Abilities and skills of adults on the autism spectrum to actively contribute to employer goals and productivity.
- Workplace environment and hiring techniques that support successful hiring and employment of adults on the spectrum.

For adults on the spectrum, the goals are to learn about:

- Employers who seek to increase neurodiversity at their companies and to provide them with an opportunity to showcase their skills to employers.
- Job enablers and how they can help with their job search, motivation, and career development.

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# REGISTRATION

The conference is expected to draw 400 attendees consisting of qualified talent on the spectrum and their families and prospective entertainment industry employers.

Because of limited capacity and critical goals, attendees will be prescreened through an application process. Those interested should complete the [Application](#). Applications will be processed on a first-come, first-served basis determining eligibility based on the criteria below.

Below is a list of considerations for Talent applying to attend.

- Preference for adult talent on the autism spectrum who have a minimum of two years of education in a relevant entertainment field. (e.g. acting, animation, film, game design).
- Preference for Regional Center clients. However, we will welcome those who are not Regional Center clients as well.
- A maximum of one family member, caregiver, or staff may accompany the talent.
- Entertainment-related business professionals from any size company are encouraged to apply to attend.

This is a full day conference including breakfast, lunch and snacks. All costs are covered by the DDS Grant.

Apply for the Conference: [Click Here](#)

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# EDUCATIONAL PARTNERS

These Autism In Entertainment Educational Partners are fueling content and will be represented at the conference.

**BRAINSTORM  
PRODUCTIONS**

<https://.brainstormproductions.org>

**DANIMATION  
ENTERTAINMENT**

<https://danimationentertainment.com>

**EXCEPTIONAL  
MINDS**

<https://exceptional-minds.org/>

**GAMEGEN**

<https://gamegen.com>

**INCLUSION  
FILMS**

<https://inclusionfilms.com>

**JDS CREATIVE  
ACADEMY**

<https://jdscreativeacademy.org/>

**THE MIRACLE  
PROJECT**

<https://themiracleproject.org>

**SPECTRUM  
LABORATORY**

<https://speclabs.org/>

**VISUAL ARTS  
ACADEMY**

<https://thevisualartsacademy.com>

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# REGIONAL CENTER PARTNERS

These Regional Centers are assisting in the promotion and support of  
Regional Center Clients

**FRANK D  
LANTERMAN  
REGIONAL  
CENTER**

<https://lanterman.org>

**NORTH LOS  
ANGELES  
COUNTY  
REGIONAL  
CENTER**

<https://nlacrc.org>

**REGIONAL  
CENTER OF  
ORANGE  
COUNTY**

<https://rcocdd.com>

**WESTSIDE  
REGIONAL  
CENTER**

<https://westsiderc.org>

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# FOUNDATIONAL SPONSORS

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## **Department of Developmental Services**

Under the Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act, DDS is responsible for overseeing the coordination and delivery of services and supports to over 400,000 Californians with, or at risk for, developmental disabilities including cerebral palsy, intellectual disability, autism, epilepsy, and related conditions. The state's developmental services are designed to meet the needs and choices of individuals at each stage of their lives, and, to the extent possible, support them in their home communities, providing choices that are reflective of lifestyle, cultural, and linguistic preferences.

## **Orange County Asperger's Support Group**

The Orange County Asperger's Support Group is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for autistic teens, adults, and families in the community. We achieve this through providing support, organizing social activities, and education. Our goal is to empower the autism community by creating a safe and welcoming environment where individuals and families can connect with others who share similar experiences and challenges. We believe that through support and education, individuals with autism can achieve their full potential and become valued members of the community.

## **Zavikon**

Zavikon believes that there is a job for everyone to apply their talents and skills in a meaningful way. Our mission is to match qualified candidates with disabilities or those who are neurodivergent with employers who believe inclusion is the future. Zavikon is the bridge to inclusion.

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