



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

Hundreds of Community Members Gather at Phil "Scooter" Rizzuto Park to Raise Awareness for People with Autism and Developmental Disabilities

JOSEPH P. ADDABBO JR. June 4, 2025



Senator Addabbo and CB 9 Chairwoman Sherry Algreto lead a walk to raise awareness about autism and developmental disabilities.

The third annual Autism and Developmental Disabilities Walk and Resource Fair took place at Phil "Scooter" Rizzuto Park on May 31, 2025, in South Richmond Hill, where over 400 people from the community attended the event. State Senator Joseph P. Addabbo Jr. led the gathering together with Community Board 9, and its Chairwoman, Sherry Algreto, who was

the creator and visionary for the event.

The goal was to increase awareness about autism and developmental disabilities while promoting understanding and recognizing people with these conditions. This mission is especially important to Algreto, who has an autistic son.

“So many families have children with autism or developmental disabilities, and they don’t know how to access all of the resources that are available to them,” Algreto said. “So, my main goal was to connect them to these resources, but it was also to give the community an opportunity to show their support for those affected by autism and developmental disabilities and increase the understanding of these groups and their needs, and advocate for more programs and tools which are needed but not available yet.”

The program began with a prayer by Stephen Mootoo of KBM Ministries. That was followed by the pledge of allegiance and the national anthem by the Junior ROTC of Richmond Hill, and the reading of a poem called “We See You,” written by Algreto. Several elected officials or their representatives were present including Councilwoman Lynn Schulman, who presented a certificate of recognition to Algreto’s son, Joseph.

“This event exemplifies the strength and compassion of our community,” Senator Addabbo said. “It’s inspiring to see so many people come together, not only to raise awareness but to advocate for meaningful change. Autism and developmental disabilities are part of our community fabric, and it’s our responsibility to ensure these individuals have access to the care, resources, and opportunities they deserve.”

Councilwoman Mercedes Narcisse of Brooklyn was also in attendance. She championed legislation (Int. 273-B) requiring the NYPD to provide officers with training on recognizing and interacting with individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

Representatives from Assemblyman David Weprin's Office and Congressman Gregory Meeks' Office were present, along with Tom Gretch, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Queens Chamber of Commerce, and Captain Abdessamad Dian, the XO of the 102nd Precinct.

The entire event displayed a shared dedication to building a more inclusive environment for everyone in the community. During the walk around the park (two times) participants showed their support for autism and developmental disabilities while families and caregivers received vital information and services at resource tables.

Senator Addabbo stated his commitment towards improving public health and his disability rights advocacy. He emphasized the need for enhanced government support of organizations which serve this population.

"The expansion of policies that provide better education and healthcare along with job opportunities must remain a priority," he said. "All people deserve success so our duty as policymakers and community members becomes creating opportunities for them to thrive."

The Senator also announced funding from his office and its cooperation with the Parks Department to install unique sensory play equipment at Phil "Scooter" Rizzuto Park/Smokey Oval, an idea which originated at a previous autism walk at the site.

The event showcased various local organization booths which provided families with information about early intervention programs as well as educational and employment services and family support resources. These included Mercy Drive Inc., Emblem Health, U.N.I.T.Y FEC, New York Life (Indra Puran), Trinidadian and Tobagonian USA, Caribbean Cabana, and the River Fund.

Complimentary snacks were provided by Fazee's Delight, Singh's Roti Shop, Trini Delite, and McDonald's. Music was provided by DJ Bill Knight. Social Media influencers Ken Rampersaud and Leon Jameson Suseran spread coverage of the event.

Alfredo extended thanks to her husband, David, for his support with the event and her daughter, Emily, who made all the signs for the walk. She also thanked the entirety of Community Board 9, but especially District Manager, James McClelland.

The annual walk has become increasingly important and widely recognized because the community acknowledges the important need to address the issues faced by individuals and families dealing with autism and developmental disabilities. Senator Addabbo and Chairwoman Alfredo extended their sincere thanks to all the community members who came together to make the event possible, along with the support of the 102nd Precinct. They look forward to an even bigger and more successful event next year.