

# BATTLEFIELD PROCLAIMED FIRST AUTISM-FRIENDLY CITY IN MISSOURI

On April 19, 2016, city of Battlefield Mayor Debra Hickey and the Battlefield Board of Aldermen officially proclaimed Battlefield "The First Autism Friendly City in Missouri." The proclamation occurred during April's Autism Awareness Month. Battlefield City Hall was filled to capacity with an emotional audience as Mayor Hickey made the official proclamation

Autism is a big deal in Battlefield. Not only does Mayor Hickey have a grandson with autism, but council member and author, Dr. Linda Barboa, was instrumental in co-founding the non-profit, Stars For Autism, an organization with a mission to provide education and support for families living with autism.

In addition, Battlefield citizen and champion bowler, Trey Brand, also has autism. Brand, who is only 13, has been making headlines for his skill in bowling "perfect" 500 games.

Autism is the fastest growing developmental disability in the world today, with more than 3.5 million Americans living with autism. Fueled by an initiative of Stars For Autism, a new program in Battlefield will offer free training to virtually every citizen to help the public understand and support individuals on the autism spectrum and their families.

Battlefield's Autism-Friendly Project, led by Dr. Linda Barboa, will include collaboration with STEPS CARE, the city Advisory Park Board, Springfield Public Schools, The Office of Emergency Management of Greene County, and other organizations, to assure that the city activities, businesses, churches and programs are autism friendly. The team will offer assistance to the City of Battlefield, in obtaining a sensory friendly park design and equipment.

"As the 'Nana' to an autistic grandson, I see the need for families living with autism to have support and encouragement as they go about their daily lives. If we can educate our community members, our city employees, our emergency responders, our retail and restaurant establishments, so they have a greater understanding of ... the needs of families living with autism, we can go a long way in improving the quality of life for the family members and the autistic individuals," says Mayor Hickey.

For more info, contact Dr. Linda Barboa, (417)848-8887, DrBarboa@aol.com. This article reprinted with permission from the June 2016 Missouri Autism Report. For more information, visit [www.moautismreport.com](http://www.moautismreport.com).

In March 2017, a "Train the Trainer" is planned in Battlefield to help other cities who want to duplicate this program. For more information, visit [www.stars4autism.com](http://www.stars4autism.com).



The city of Battlefield won a 2016 MML Innovation Award for becoming an autism-friendly city. Learn about their project and other winners on pages 20-21 of this issue. Pictured (l-r): Dr. Linda Barboa, city of Battlefield alderman and founder, Stars For Autism; Battlefield Mayor and MML Board Member Debra Hickey; Jan Luck, president, Stars For Autism.

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