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## DIX HILLS

# Lacrosse Night To Promote Peer Socialization

### Hills vs. Autism fundraiser to promote socialization among kids on the spectrum

By Jacqueline Birzon

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Spring sports may have ended, but lacrosse lovers in the Half Hollow Hills School District will charge the field this summer to raise awareness and tolerance for autism.

The second annual Lacrosse Night for Autism is slated for July 17, when students in grades 5-8 and varsity high school players will play not for a trophy, but to help provide children on the autism spectrum with opportunities for socialization.

Sponsored by Hills vs. Autism, a charitable organization founded in 2012, the event will foster friendly competition between more than 20 teams of students from Half Hollow Hills and surrounding school districts, including South Huntington.

This year's tournament at Half Hollow Hills High School East is expected to double in size — and hopefully, in proceeds — from last year, event coordinator Paul Quinto said.

Last year's event raised more than \$5,000, which benefited peer socialization programs for children on the autism spectrum at the Fay J. Lindner Center in Glen Head.

Hills vs. Autism was founded one year ago, by then-13-year-old Drew Quinto, as part of a bar mitzvah project. Quinto tuned that one opportunity for good into an organization that has continued to give back on multiple occasions. Now, at age 14, the Hills East student has run at least three successful fundraisers in the name of autism awareness.

According to Quinto's father, Paul, the organization looks for opportunities that enhance the goals outlined in the group's mission statement, which is to promote tolerance and acceptance for children within the autistic spectrum.

Sticking true to its mission state-



Photo/Hills vs. Autism

Drew Quinto and his older brother, Corey, at last years Lax Night For Autism event at High School East.

ment, Hills vs. Autism recently provided players on the local Challenger Lacrosse team and their families with a pizza party as a way to foster socialization.

With Drew's older brother, Corey, on the spectrum, the Quinto family has seen first hand the need for socialization services.

"Children on the autism spectrum, that's one thing they have a problem

with, and as children get older there's not many programs for them," Paul said. "We're not going to be able to make a cure, but we can do something that helps them socialize and [promote] programs for socialization. It's something there's a big need for."

Most food for the event will be donated from local business owners, and certified referees from the Nas-

sau County Lacrosse Officials Association help ref the games for free.

Paul said corporate sponsors, the school district, and the board of education were instrumental in planning the second annual event.

Teams can register for the event, scheduled from 3-8 p.m. on July 17, online at [www.hillsvsautism.org](http://www.hillsvsautism.org). In case of rain, the event will be held Thursday, July 18.