



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PADDLE FOR AUTISM MARKS A MILESTONE

HAMILTON, ON -- For our fiftieth birthdays, most of us are content with the well-wishes of family and friends, a nice dinner, even a surprise party. But for Ed Mahony, a special education teacher and college instructor who lives and works in Hamilton, such pedestrian celebrations just won't do.

He's making an *overnight* solo kayak crossing of Lake Ontario, from Niagara-on-the-Lake to Marilyn Bell Park in Toronto, to raise \$20,000 in support of recreational camp opportunities for children and adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

This crossing marks the first leg of a planned five-year project to kayak across all five Great Lakes raising dollars and awareness for Ontarians with ASD.

As an educator, Ed's life has been touched in many ways by individuals with ASD, and his enthusiasm for the work of Autism Ontario is catching.

"People with ASD, and their families, struggle in ways most of us can't even imagine," he says. "Because of their ASD, and the emotional and behavioural issues it can cause, they're unable to

(more)

participate in traditional day or overnight camp programs. Many Autism Ontario chapters provide supported and ASD-specific recreational camp opportunities in their communities, but there are still gaps in these types of services. *Paddle for Autism* is my way of helping to close that gap.”

Weather permitting, Ed will celebrate his 50th birthday by leaving Niagara-on-the-Lake from the foot of Melville Street at 9.00 p.m. on June 19, and paddle all night to reach Marilyn Bell Park on Aquatic Drive in Toronto at 10.30 a.m. on Saturday, June 20. Ed’s – and Autism Ontario’s – friends and supporters will be there to provide a fitting send-off and arrival.

If the weather is uncooperative, Ed will make the crossing the following week, June 26/27, with the same schedule.

Autism Ontario thanks Ed for his support of its recreational camping programs, and wishes him all the best for a safe and successful crossing.

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Paddle for Autism 2009

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About Autism Ontario

Since 1973, Autism Ontario has been the voice of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and their families, working to ensure that each individual with ASD is provided the means to achieve quality of life as a respected member of society. With member chapters serving thousands of members and supporters across the province, Autism Ontario is the largest collective voice for families whose children – from toddlerhood to adulthood – struggle to receive the necessary clinical and support services to meet their unique needs.