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## Hollywood lends faces to local autism campaign at Jan. 26 gala

The number of children in California diagnosed with Autism jumped 243 percent between 1987 and 1998 (Centers for Disease Control, 2006). As it impacts more families in the Central Valley, a parent

group of Fresno State's [Central California Autism Center](#) (CCAC) launched the "Look Past the Mask" campaign to raise awareness of the often-misunderstood disorder.

The campaign will culminate at a masquerade ball hosted by the Clovis Castle Estate on Saturday, Jan. 26, from 5:30 – 11 p.m. featuring actress Leslie Easterbrook of "Police Academy" fame. Proceeds for the event, which is sold out, benefit the center.

The campaign, which invites others to look past autism to the individual, involved celebrities and local dignitaries taking photographs with specially commissioned masks to show their support for the cause.

The photos and autographed masks will be up for auction at the Jan. 26 event where Easterbrook will be joined by feature film director David Midell. They will share an exclusive preview of their soon to be released film, "NightLights," which tells the story of a 27-year-old autistic man.

Other celebrity participants providing mask for the campaign include Christopher Gorham ("Ugly Betty"), Piper Perabo ("Covert Affairs"), Taylor Wily ("Hawaii Five-0") and Temple Grandin, author and autism activist who visited Fresno State in 2010.

Silent and live auctions will feature donations provided by local companies and individuals. Art pieces created specifically for the event also will be up for auction, including pieces done with the help of children at CCAC.

The CCAC is a non-profit treatment and research center that provides principle-based behavior therapy for children 18 months to 14 years of age diagnosed with autism or a related disability.

"Most children receiving behavior therapy services improve their skills and abilities across many domains including language, motor skills, self-help skills, social skills, pre-academic skills and general learning skills," said Dr. Amanda Adams, CCAC director and Fresno State psychology professor.

Admission to Saturday's event includes a personal masquerade mask, full-service dinner, a Fresno State wine bar, music and dancing. The Clovis Castle Estate is located at 16393 Auberry Road.

For more information, contact Adams at 559.278.6773 or [aadams@csufresno.edu](mailto:aadams@csufresno.edu).

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