

# Autism forum eyes laws, services

By DENNIS YUSKO Staff writer, Published 1:00 am, Friday, January 8, 2010, Times Union

CLIFTON PARK -- Capital Region residents are invited to a free Autism Seminar and Forum that meets starting at 10 a.m. Saturday in the [Gowana Middle School](#).

U.S. Rep. [Scott Murphy](#), state Sen. [Roy McDonald](#), and state Assemblymen Bob Reilly and [George Amedore](#) will join local caregivers, educators and experts at the three-hour event. It begins with a panel discussion, and after that, those in attendance can join an open forum to share comments, their experiences and suggestions on how to improve autism services.

One topic of discussion is expected to be how state and federal laws address the needs of those affected by autism and other developmental disabilities. Speakers also will talk about services now available, what's needed to further autism research and the importance of early intervention.

[Richard McDonald](#), principal of [Arongen Elementary School](#), will serve as master of ceremonies.

The following panelists will make presentations from 10:30 a.m. to 11:15 a.m.: [Valerie Muratori](#), executive director of Saratoga Bridges, which provides services to those with developmental disabilities; [Kristen Christodulu](#), director of the state University at Albany's [Center for Autism and Related Disabilities](#); [Tom Funciello](#), a board member and former executive director of [Newmeadow Saratoga School](#), which serves pre-school children with special needs; Jennifer Yanazzo, a special education teacher and national board certified behavior analyst at Newmeadow Saratoga School; and [Mary Ann Allen](#), executive director of Wildwood Programs, which offers services to those with neurologically based developmental disabilities.

Family testimonials will take place from 11:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. Participants can register at the beginning of the event to share comments.

Gowana Middle School is located at 970 Route 146.