



Story Pitch/PhillyVoice

I am a consultant hired to promote **LaSalle University's Annual Autism Conference** (press release attached).

As I was working on the fundamental tasks related to the conference, I came upon a storyline that I think speaks to a wider audience.

Two years ago, a LaSalle professor (**Dr. Carole Patrylo**) was instrumental in recruiting a young man on the autism spectrum (Isaiah West) to apply for university admission.

Isaiah's promise was evident: a 4.0 GPA at Wyncote Academy and a nearly perfect SAT score. After multiple meetings between Isaiah's mom and LaSalle educators, Isaiah applied and gained acceptance into LaSalle. More importantly, he has been nurtured ever since through a special program at LaSalle called **Passport to Success**.

Passport is one of many services offered through LaSalle's **LADDER Family Center** -- founded eight years ago as a campus resource to support families with children who have special needs.

To help Isaiah navigate the university experience, *Passport* envelopes him with a mentor, an intern, and others who guide him through life's constructs (socialization, time management, personal care, and so on). Now a sophomore, Isaiah has made strides; he proudly resides on campus.

On April 5, Isaiah learned that he has been awarded a summer internship at SAP, the software giant with headquarters in Newtown. He's elated.

Allow me to provide more background. Four years ago, SAP launched a corporate initiative called **Autism At Work**. Its goal is to have 1% of its global workforce be represented by employees on the autism spectrum.

One of the drivers of the SAP initiative is **Peg Monaghan**. Peg's role is to create pilot programs to help students like Isaiah improve communication/life skills through interaction with SAP colleagues while developing their gifts and passions. In Isaiah's case, it is computer science.

The elements I have been outlining are not disparate. SAP (and Peg Monaghan) will be among the workshop presenters at LaSalle's May 5 Autism Conference -- *Building Bridges: Transitioning Toward and Through Adulthood*. **Carole Patrylo is Conference Co-Chair.**

As background, Isaiah comes from a single-parent family (dad deceased) of modest means. I am sure it wasn't all that long ago that his mother was exceedingly anxious about his future. Things are brighter now.

This is a story that requires a deft touch. Your readers can learn (and feel) what is possible when two organizations partner to lift up individuals with autism. The unanswerable question: what happens to Isaiah West -- without the one-on-one mentorship from LaSalle, without SAP embracing diversity?

If you are interested in pursuing this opportunity, please reach out to me in the next few days. I can connect you to Carole and Peg, both of whom are excellent resources. And you can have access to the extended LaSalle LADDER team who mentor Isaiah and to the young man as well.