



## 2026 AutismOklahoma Walk Fundraising Guide

*AutismOklahoma Walk: A Fundraiser to Connect the Spectrum*

### Welcome to the AutismOklahoma Walk

For families impacted by autism, every step forward matters. Since 2008, the AutismOklahoma Walk – Oklahoma's largest autism event – has been the place where our community comes together to connect, learn and celebrate.

Whether this is your first AO Walk or you're a returning team, thank you for being part of a movement that creates connection, belonging and opportunity for thousands of Oklahomans.

At AutismOklahoma (AO), your family's dreams are ours. We walk with you for life – from diagnosis through adulthood – creating meaningful, joyful opportunities for individuals on the autism spectrum and supporting families every step of the way.

### Our Mission, Vision & Values

**Mission:** Investing together to grow, learn, and serve the families of Oklahoma impacted by autism; creating opportunities for those on the autism spectrum to find community connections and live meaningful, joyful lives.

**Vision:** Quality of life, for life, for every individual in Oklahoma on the autism spectrum.

### Core Values:

- Dignity & Respect
- Belonging
- Community
- Creativity & Innovation

These values guide everything we do, and they are at the heart of the AO Walk.

### Why We Walk

The AO Walk connects families to critical services, supportive programs and other families who truly understand. Whether you're just beginning your autism journey or continuing a lifelong one, this event is a place to:

- Connect
- Belong
- Thrive

### Fueling Accessible Programs That Change Lives

Every dollar you raise stays right here in Oklahoma: 100% local, 100% impactful.

Funds raised through the AO Walk support 75+ free or nearly free programs and events, serving more than 4,500 Oklahomans each year. These programs help individuals on the autism spectrum:

- Build life and vocational skills
- Develop social skills and friendships
- Explore interests in STEM, arts, and recreation
- Experience joy, confidence, and community

### Walk With Us – Wherever You Are

Join us in person or from wherever you are. When we walk together, we strengthen our community and open doors for even more Oklahomans impacted by autism to live meaningful, connected, joy-filled lives.

Let's #ConnectTheSpectrum together.

## 2026 Theme: Emojination 😊✨

A playful blend of emoji and imagination, Emojination celebrates creativity, self-expression and the many ways people on the spectrum communicate and connect.

Have fun with this theme in your:

- Team name
- T-shirt design
- Social media posts
- Fundraising events

## Team Roles & Checklists

### Team Captain Checklist

- Register your team at [AO Walk Website – link coming soon]
- Join the [AutismOklahoma Team Captains Group](#) on Facebook
- Recruit team members
- Set your team fundraising goal
- Keep your team motivated and informed
- Attend the monthly virtual team captain sessions

### Team Member Checklist

- Send fundraising letters to potential donors
- Add your team fundraising link to your:
  - Social media bios
  - Email signature
  - Create and share a Facebook Fundraiser
  - Thank every donor (templates below!)

 Did you know? The #1 reason people don't give is simply because they aren't asked.

## Who Should You Invite to Join or Support Your Team?

Start by making two lists:

1. The important people in your life
2. People you know who are impacted by autism in any way

These are the folks most likely to say yes.

To get started, think about all areas of your life:

Work:

- Supervisors
- Coworkers
- Professional groups
- Vendors
- Clients

Family:

- Parents & in-laws
- Siblings
- Aunts, uncles, cousins

Community:

- Friends & neighbors
- Local businesses
- Gym members
- Civic or social clubs
- Church members

Service Providers:

- Physicians & dentists
- Occupational, speech & physical therapists
- Mental health professionals

Education:

- Teachers & professors
- Teacher aides
- Classmates
- PTA members
- Extracurricular clubs
- School administrators

## Fundraising Ideas

Tried & True:

- Garage sale
- Poker night or game night
- Chili cook-off
- Cake walk

Additional Creative Ideas:

- Spirit Night at a local restaurant or coffee shop
- Emoji-themed bake sale or lemonade stand
- Dress-down day at work (donation to participate)
- Raffle or silent auction (gift baskets, services, experiences)

- Trivia night (emoji trivia, pop culture, family-friendly themes)
- Kids' art sale or craft fair
- Birthday fundraiser on Facebook or Instagram
- Employer match ask

#### Simple Fundraising Plan (One Week Boost)

- Day 1: Donate \$25 to your own team
- Day 2: Ask 3 family members for \$25
- Day 3: Ask 5 friends for \$15
- Day 4: Ask 5 coworkers for \$10
- Day 5: Email 15 contacts asking for \$10
- Day 6: Ask your employer for \$75
- Day 7: Ask two favorite businesses or organizations for \$25 each

*Small steps add up quickly!*

#### Using Social Media to Amplify Your Impact

- Share short reels or videos of your team preparing
- Post clips of:
  - Designing your team shirt
  - Team members sharing why they walk
- Always close with:
  - A request to donate
  - A link to your fundraising page

*Personal stories inspire generosity.*

#### Raise funds and earn prizes!

- Level 1: raise \$50 to earn an enamel pin
- Level 2: raise \$100 to earn a t-shirt
- Level 3: raise \$500 to earn an insulated 32 oz water bottle
- Level 4: raise \$1,500 to earn a canvas tote bag
- Level 5: raise \$5,000 to earn all of the above + 10 shirts and 10 enamel pins to share with your team

#### Top raisers:

OKC: golf cart start + \$250 Visa gift card

Tulsa: golf cart start + \$250 Visa gift card

**Overall: Spectrum Spirit Award - additional \$500 OKANA gift card**

## T-Shirt Design Contest

One of the most fun traditions of the AO Walk!

- Raise at least \$250 to qualify
- Submit a photo of your team's shirt design to [info@autismoklahoma.org](mailto:info@autismoklahoma.org) by the deadline
- Celebrity judges select winners in four categories
- Winners receive prizes and recognition

### Timeline

- Submission: Monday, June 15, 2026 (11:59 p.m. CST)
- Winners announced: Friday, June 20, 2026

*Winners announced via our social media, e-newsletter and text. Be sure to follow and subscribe.*

- Instagram: @autismoklahoma
- Facebook: [facebook.com/autismoklahoma](https://facebook.com/autismoklahoma)
- Email updates: [autismoklahoma.org/stay-in-touch](http://autismoklahoma.org/stay-in-touch)
- Text: text AOK to 59575

## Keeping Your Team Motivated

- Share fundraising updates every Monday
- Celebrate milestones (first \$100, halfway there, goal met!)
- Break big goals into smaller, achievable steps
- Remind your team who and why you are walking
- Thank team members often
- Make it fun: games, challenges, matching days

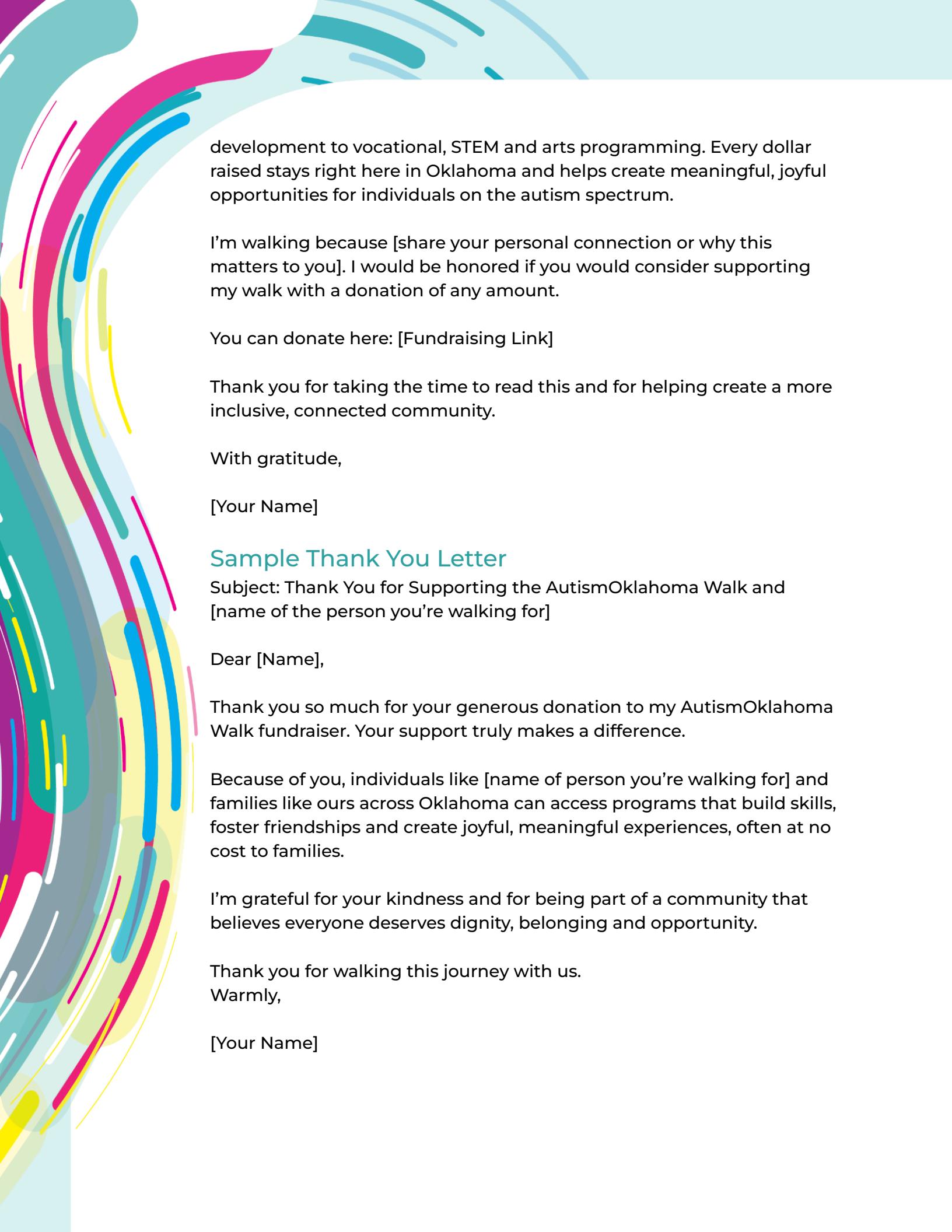
## Sample Fundraising Letter

Subject: Join Me in Supporting AutismOklahoma and [name of the person you're walking for]

Dear [Name],

I'm reaching out to share something that means a great deal to me. This year, I'm participating in the AutismOklahoma Walk, a fundraiser that supports individuals and families across Oklahoma impacted by autism.

AutismOklahoma provides more than 75 free or nearly free programs each year – everything from social opportunities and life-skills



development to vocational, STEM and arts programming. Every dollar raised stays right here in Oklahoma and helps create meaningful, joyful opportunities for individuals on the autism spectrum.

I'm walking because [share your personal connection or why this matters to you]. I would be honored if you would consider supporting my walk with a donation of any amount.

You can donate here: [\[Fundraising Link\]](#)

Thank you for taking the time to read this and for helping create a more inclusive, connected community.

With gratitude,

[Your Name]

### Sample Thank You Letter

Subject: Thank You for Supporting the AutismOklahoma Walk and [name of the person you're walking for]

Dear [Name],

Thank you so much for your generous donation to my AutismOklahoma Walk fundraiser. Your support truly makes a difference.

Because of you, individuals like [name of person you're walking for] and families like ours across Oklahoma can access programs that build skills, foster friendships and create joyful, meaningful experiences, often at no cost to families.

I'm grateful for your kindness and for being part of a community that believes everyone deserves dignity, belonging and opportunity.

Thank you for walking this journey with us.

Warmly,

[Your Name]

## Frequently Asked Questions

Why does the AO Walk matter?

Since 2008, the AO Walk has connected thousands of Oklahoma families to resources, service providers, and community opportunities. It celebrates individuals on the autism spectrum, honors their uniqueness, and fosters a powerful sense of belonging.

How many people are impacted by my efforts?

According to the CDC, 1 in 31 children is diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. Everyone knows a family impacted by autism—your support reaches farther than you may realize.

What does AutismOklahoma do?

AO creates opportunities for individuals on the autism spectrum to find community connections and live meaningful, joyful lives through innovative educational, vocational, social, STEM, and arts programming.

Where does my money go?

AutismOklahoma is a statewide nonprofit founded in Oklahoma 24 years ago. We are not affiliated with any national organizations, so all funds stay local. AO serves more than 4,500 Oklahomans annually, with 95% of programs offered free or at minimal cost.

**Thank you for being part of the AutismOklahoma Walk family. Every step, every dollar, every story helps connect the spectrum.**