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Welcome Autism Colloquium

John M. Dunn

*Western Michigan University, john.dunn@wmich.edu*

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• Good afternoon and welcome to Western Michigan University for what is a timely and significant topic. I am delighted that our Department of Psychology and its community partner Residential Opportunities Inc. chose this conference as a way to reach out to the community and mark Autism Awareness Month.

• Autism research and treatment has been a particular focus of our Department of Psychology for many years. I think today's broad range of presenters from the academic research and community treatment arenas illustrate the kind of network our researchers have established.

• They've been looking at autism long enough to know the complexity of the topic and how important it is to reach out to the full range of people in our community for whom autism is a critical element in their daily lives--teachers, parents, the medical community and especially those for whom autism is a personal challenge. I know it was our conference organizers' hope that this event would attract all of you who represent those differing segments of the population and can share your perspectives. We're glad you're here.

• I can predict that WMU's work in the autism arena will only grow in the coming months and years. You may be interested to know, for instance, that the new dean of our College of Education and Professional Development will come to us this summer with an extensive background in autism spectrum disorders. He spent five years earlier in his career working in the South Dakota Autism Project, delivering clinical and field-based support to children with autism and other developmental disabilities, as well as families and educators throughout the state.
• Enjoy your afternoon here. I hope you leave us with new ideas, new resources and a determination to come back. You are always welcome on the campus of Western Michigan University.