

# AAAED Announces The 2021 Edward M. Kennedy Community Service Award Honoree Frist Center for Autism & Innovation

*Vanderbilt University's Frist Center for Autism and Innovation will be recognized for workplace achievements in neurodiversity and autism October 15th*

WASHINGTON, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, USA, September 14, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The American Association for Access, Equity and Diversity ([AAAED](#)), an organization of equal opportunity, diversity and affirmative action professionals, announced that the Frist Center for Autism and Innovation, engineering technologies and transforming the workplace – inspired by neurodiversity, at Vanderbilt University, will receive the Edward M.

[Kennedy](#) Community Service Award at the association's annual awards ceremony. The awards celebration will be held on Friday, October 15, 2021 during the AAAED's 47th National

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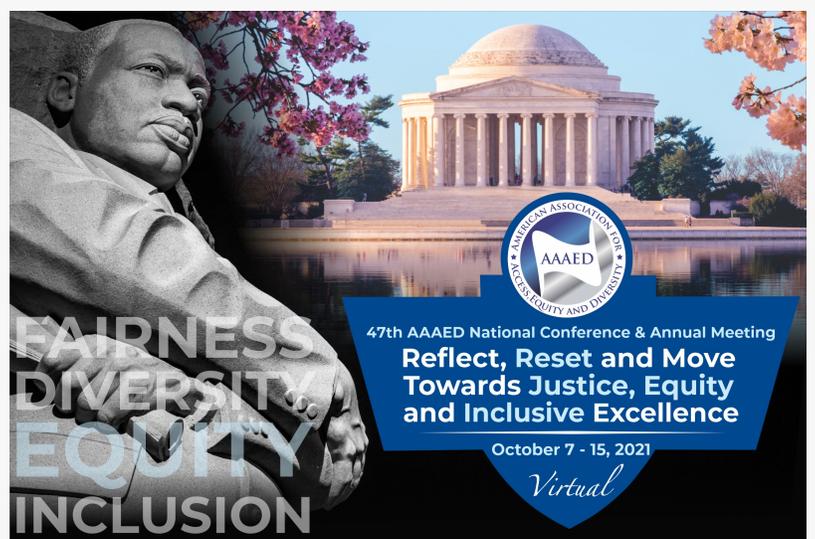
We are delighted to honor the Frist Center for its contributions to innovative engineering research on the neuroscience related to autism and opportunities created by having a neurodiverse workforce.”

*Dr. Richard Anthony Baker,  
President, AAAED*

[Conference](#) and Awards Ceremony (October 7 – 15, 2021), themed “Reflect, Reset and Move Towards Justice, Equity and Inclusive Excellence.” The awards program will be held virtually from 2:00 pm – 3:30 pm ET. The program is open to the press. “We are delighted to honor the Frist Center for its contributions to innovative engineering research on the neuroscience related to autism and the opportunities created by a having a neurodiverse workforce,” said Dr. Richard Anthony Baker, president of AAAED.

The Edward M. Kennedy Award is presented to an individual or organization demonstrating outstanding community service. The Award is named for the late

Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA), who was a champion of equal opportunity and the rights of



AAAED 47th National Conference Logo

individuals with disabilities. Previous recipients of the Award include Disability:IN (2020), Deb Dagit, President, Deb Dagit Diversity, LLC; and BOSMA Enterprises, Navigating Blindness (2019); The Southern Poverty Law Center (2018), The Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission (2017), Wright State University (2016), Georgia State University (2015), and The Honorable Kathleen Martinez, U.S. Department of Labor (2014).

The Frist Center for Autism and Innovation, engineering technologies and transforming the workplace – inspired by neurodiversity, at the Vanderbilt University School of Engineering, brings engineers, business scholars, and disabilities

researchers together with experts in neuroscience and education to understand, maximize, and promote neurodiverse talent. From a strengths-based – as opposed to deficit-based – understanding of autism and neurodiversity, the Center sees opportunities for innovation in technology and in workplace practices.

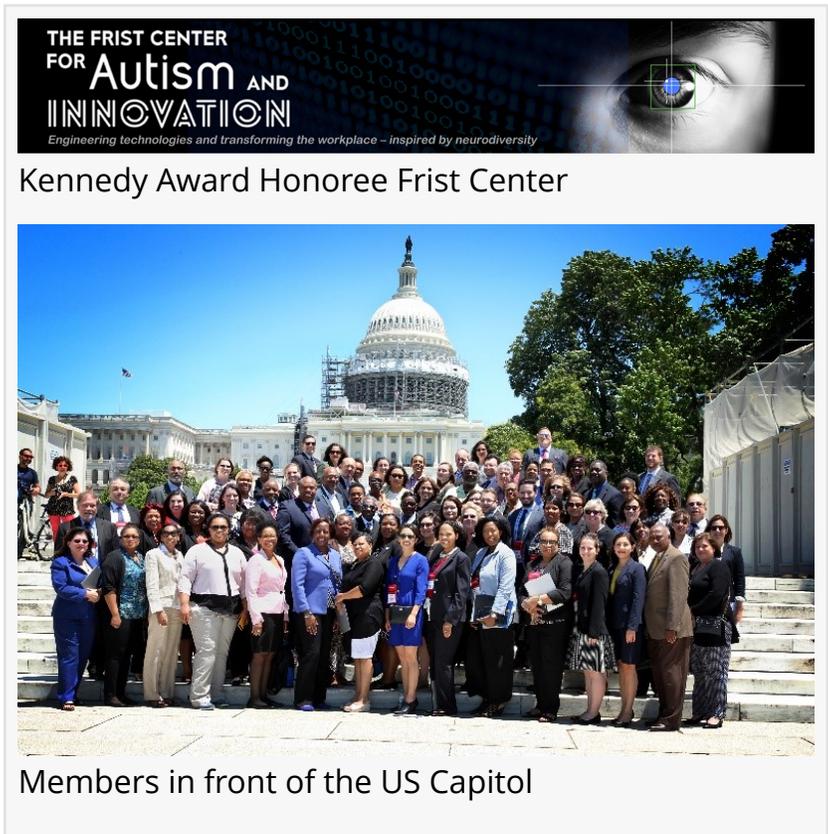
Primary areas of focus for the Frist Center’s work include:

- Inventing and commercializing new technologies that enable autistic and other neurodiverse people to gain employment, succeed at work, and achieve their full potential;
- Studying and understanding neurodiverse capabilities, and inventing and commercializing algorithms and systems that are inspired by those capabilities;
- Developing policies, tools, trainings, and workplace practices that recognize and enlist neurodiverse people and talents in the workforce;
- Demonstrating, documenting, and disseminating a community-based approach—including employers, self-advocates, researchers, policy makers, agencies, and organizations—to simultaneously enhance the bottom line for business and the quality of life for autistic individuals.

The Frist Center for Autism and Innovation contributes to the school’s Inclusion EngineeringSM mission through research in neurodiversity, workplace practices, and related areas.

The AAAED 47th National Conference and Awards Ceremony is open to the press. For more information or to register for the Conference, go to:

[https://www.aaaed.org/aaaed/Conference\\_Agenda1.asp](https://www.aaaed.org/aaaed/Conference_Agenda1.asp).



To purchase a ticket for the awards ceremony, or to be a sponsor, click here:

<https://www.aaed.org/aaed/Sponsorship.asp>

There is no charge for news media, but they are asked to register at

<https://web.cvent.com/event/b3824076-d018-4321-81ee-a0acb1498131/summary>

Founded in 1974 as the American Association for Affirmative Action (AAAA), AAAED is a national not-for-profit association of professionals working in the areas of equal opportunity, compliance and diversity. AAAED has 47 years of leadership in providing professional training to members, enabling them to be more successful and productive in their careers. It also promotes understanding and advocacy of affirmative action and other equal opportunity laws to enhance the tenets of access, inclusion and equality in employment, economic and educational opportunities. AAAED is the longest-serving organization for the Equal Opportunity Profession. Its tagline is "Advocate. Educate. Activate."

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