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## **Panera Bread to Host "*Pieces of Hope for Autism*" Fundraiser for Cincinnati Children's Hospital**

CINCINNATI, OH—(April 2, 2017) - In honor of National Autism Awareness month, the 21 Panera Bread bakery-café's in Southwest Ohio / Northern Kentucky will host the "[Pieces of Hope for Autism](#)" campaign. From Monday, April 3rd through Sunday, April 9<sup>th</sup>, 100% of proceeds from each Puzzle Piece Cookie sold will be donated to the [Kelly O'Leary Center \(TKOC\) for Autism Spectrum Disorders at Cincinnati Children's](#). Puzzle Piece Shortbread Cookies are unique to the area and can be purchased in local Panera Bread bakery-café's during the campaign, and/ or pre-ordered online at [www.covelli.com/Autism](http://www.covelli.com/Autism).

This is the Cincinnati region's first year participating in "Pieces of Hope for Autism" that the Ohio-based franchise, Covelli Enterprises, conceived in 2011. Over the last six years Covelli has donated more than \$1.2 million to autism charities in its local communities through this grassroots initiative. In Cincinnati this year, the campaign is projected to generate nearly \$40,000 for TKOC at Cincinnati Children's, which provides state-of-the-art diagnostic programs, treatment services and support for children and teens with autism.

"Our Panera Bread family is thrilled to support Cincinnati Children's Kelly O'Leary Center with our local campaign during National Autism Awareness Month," said Sam Covelli, Owner/Operator of Covelli Enterprises, the largest franchisee of Panera Bread. "The Covelli team of bakers created this specialty cookie as a way to show support for those affected by autism in our communities. That is what we strive to do at Panera Bread, make a positive difference in the community through our products and bakery-café's."

The money that Panera donates to TKOC will be used to support two important initiatives. The first is to expand its Early Intensive Behavioral Intervention program to include more children. This is an evidence-based intensive program for preschool aged children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) to improve their communication, learning, social, play, and self-help skills. The second initiative is to provide ASD-training to staff of local museums, theaters, and other recreational activities interested in partnering with TKOC to make their programs more friendly and inclusive for children with developmental disabilities.

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“Panera’s *Pieces of Hope* is an exciting way for our staff, patients and families to kick-off Autism Awareness Month in April,” said Julia Anixt, MD Director at the Kelly O’Leary Center at Cincinnati Children’s. “We are excited that this campaign will both raise awareness about ASD in our community, and support treatments at our center that improve outcomes for children with ASD.”

Throughout the months of March and April, Cincinnati Children’s TKOC is also Panera’s Operation Dough-Nation partner in the Cincinnati market. Funds collected from register coin boxes at all [21 Tristate area bakery-cafes](#) will be donated back to TKOC at Cincinnati Children’s to further support the autism campaign.

**About Covelli Enterprises**

Covelli Enterprises is the largest franchisee of Panera Bread, LLC, with more than 300 bakery-cafés in Ohio, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Florida, South Carolina and Georgia. In 2016, Covelli Enterprises donated more than \$28 million to non-profit organizations. [www.covelli.com](http://www.covelli.com)

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