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**EAGLES AUTISM FOUNDATION, WAWA, NOURYON TEAM UP TO OPEN NEW DOORS
FOR NEURODIVERSE EMPLOYMENT WITH NEW CENTER CITY POPCORN FOR THE
PEOPLE PRODUCTION FACILITY**

The former Wawa store at 9th & South Street has been transformed into a new facility that will create more jobs for individuals with autism and developmental disabilities



The [Eagles Autism Foundation](#), [Popcorn for the People](#), [Wawa](#), and [Nouryon](#) cut the ceremonial ribbon today on a new **Center City production facility** that will **create new employment opportunities for the neurodiverse community**. The groundbreaking, multi-million dollar project was announced by the four investment groups in August 2023 at Lincoln Financial Field.

In collaboration with the involved partners, Wawa has transformed its former 9th & South Street store into a production facility for Popcorn for the People, a nonprofit dedicated to creating meaningful and sustainable employment for neurodiverse individuals. The organization will hire and train adults with autism and developmental disabilities to cook, prepare, and package popcorn in the new facility, with **\$1 from every bag sold going towards the Eagles Autism Foundation** to help fund future community grants.

As part of the new initiative:

- Popcorn for the People will hire and train a dedicated staff of **25 employees** at the new facility within the first 6-12 months of operation.
- Wawa will provide support through its repurposed store, which will exceed **\$1.5 million** over the next five years.
- A newly branded **Popcorn for the People community vehicle** will travel around the region delivering product to events, creating even more employment opportunities for individuals.
- Popcorn for the People will further **expand its footprint** in and around Lincoln Financial Field.
- Popcorn for the People product in Wawa stores will **expand from 30 locations to as many as 75** across the Greater Philadelphia region.

“This partnership between the Eagles Autism Foundation, Popcorn for the People, Wawa, and Nouryon is going to change lives for generations of people in the neurodiverse community,” said **Jeffrey Lurie**, Chairman and CEO, Philadelphia Eagles. “This milestone took a lot of hard work and dedication on the part of so many people who work tirelessly to break down barriers that stand in the way of employment for individuals of all abilities. I am both proud and humbled to be part of this historic moment and hope the success that follows here will inspire others around the world to support neurodiversity in similar ways.”

According to a [2023 report](#) by the U.S. Department of Labor, at least **85% of individuals on the autism spectrum are unemployed**. This rate is the highest among any other disability.

“The Eagles Autism Foundation is proud to partner with organizations that not only believe in our mission but want to actively join us in turning awareness into action,” said **Ryan Hammond**, Executive Director, Eagles Autism Foundation. “It was clear from the beginning that all parties involved were aligned in making this happen. The collective effort and teamwork on behalf of everyone has brought us here today and will ultimately lead to new career opportunities for those with neurodiverse backgrounds.”

“For more than 40 years, Wawa has proudly hired neurodiverse individuals through its supported employment program, which has over 500 associates working across its chain,” said **Dave Simonetti**, Senior Director of Store Operations, Wawa. “Although the doors closed at our former Wawa store, we’re thrilled to open doors in a new way with opportunities for meaningful employment.”

Headquartered in Piscataway, NJ, Popcorn for the People is a nonprofit that consists of adults with autism and disabilities who are leading the way in manufacturing and distributing popcorn across the country. The organization was founded in 2014 by Dr. Steven Bier, Dr. Barbie Zimmerman-Bier, and their son with autism, Samuel, who were, at the time, searching for fulfilling career opportunities for Sam. When no company was willing to give him a shot, the Bier family came together to combine America’s favorite snack and a dream to serve the autism community and create opportunities for not just Sam, but others struggling with employment, too. In December 2019, the Eagles became the first pro sports team to partner with Popcorn for the People.

“We are grateful for the generous contributions of the Eagles Autism Foundation, Wawa, and Nouryon who have been instrumental in expanding our footprint into the Philadelphia market,” said **Mark Katz**, Board Chair, Popcorn for the People, COO & CFO, Vera Wang. “Popcorn for the People’s model demonstrates that neurodiverse individuals bring a unique and valuable skillset to the workforce. Together, we are creating employment opportunities and fostering inclusivity. This collaboration exemplifies the power of community and corporate partnership in creating positive social impact.”

Nouryon, an Eagles partner, has been a significant contributor to the Eagles Autism Foundation’s community grants program and generated more than a million dollars in funding for this project thanks to two separate \$250,000 matching gifts.

“Through our partnership with the Philadelphia Eagles and the Eagles Autism Foundation, we have built a relationship with Popcorn for the People and the neurodiverse community that continues to inspire us every day,” said **Charlie Shaver**, Chairman and CEO, Nouryon. “Being a part of this project, which went from an idea to a standalone production facility in less than three years, truly embraces the power of companies coming together for an important cause. Knowing that this location is a welcoming place of employment for a community that is often over-looked is not only heartwarming, but also a clear indicator that a need is being filled.”

Hand-crafted to perfection, Popcorn for the People's assorted flavors include classics like Caramel, Butter, and Kettle, as well as gourmet creations like Dark Chocolate Espresso, Chicago Baked Cheddar, and French Toast. All flavors are gluten-free and select ones are kosher and vegan.

About Eagles Autism Foundation

The Eagles Autism Foundation is dedicated to raising funds for innovative autism research and care programs. By providing the necessary resources to doctors and scientists at leading institutions, we will be able to assist those currently affected by autism, as well as future generations. The Foundation aims to inspire and engage the community, so together, we can provide much-needed support to make a lasting impact in the field of autism. Please visit EaglesAutismFoundation.org.

About Popcorn for the People

Popcorn for the People is a nonprofit social enterprise dedicated to creating meaningful and sustainable employment for autistic and disabled workers. Workers cook, prepare, and package bags of popcorn at a 4,000-square-foot processing center in Piscataway, NJ. Workers sell and sample the popcorn at numerous high profile locations, including Rutgers University Big Ten Football and Basketball, Applegreen Service Plazas, Kings and Hudson Theatres in NYC, New Jersey and New York airports, Lincoln Financial Field, Wawa, the Prudential Center, and Top of the Rock at Rockefeller Center, in addition to selling online at PopcornForThePeople.com.

About Nouryon

Nouryon is a global [specialty chemicals leader](#). Markets and consumers worldwide rely on our essential solutions to manufacture everyday products, such as personal care, cleaning goods, paints and coatings, agriculture and food, pharmaceuticals, and building products. Furthermore, the dedication of more than 8,200 employees with a shared commitment to our customers, [business growth](#), safety, [sustainability](#), and innovation has resulted in a consistently strong financial performance. We operate in more than 80 countries around the world with a portfolio of industry-leading brands. Visit our [website](#) and follow us at [@Nouryon](#) and on [LinkedIn](#).

About Wawa, Inc.

Wawa, Inc., a privately held company, began in 1803 as an iron foundry in New Jersey. Toward the end of the 19th Century, owner George Wood took an interest in dairy farming and the family began a small processing plant in Wawa, PA, in 1902. The milk business was a huge success, due to its quality, cleanliness, and "certified" process. As home delivery of milk declined in the early 1960s, Grahame Wood, George's grandson, opened the first Wawa Food Market in 1964 as an outlet for dairy products. Today, Wawa is your all day, every day stop for freshly prepared foods, beverages, coffee, fuel services, and surcharge-free ATMs. Wawa stores are located in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, Florida, and Washington, D.C. The stores offer a large fresh foodservice selection, including Wawa brands such as custom prepared hoagies, freshly-brewed coffee, hot breakfast sandwiches, specialty beverages, and an assortment of soups, sides, and snacks. [Forbes.com](#) ranks Wawa as #20 of America's Largest Private Companies in 2023, and one of Forbes 2023 America's Best Employers for New College Graduates and Women. For more information, visit us at Wawa.com, or follow us on [Facebook](#), [X](#), and [Instagram](#) at @wawa.

