

# T&T resident races in Sahara for autism



ALL FOR A CAUSE: Participants in the Marathon des Sables 2009.

DR GEORGE ARDAVANIS, an international engineering and finance consultant currently based in Trinidad, will participate in the 25th Marathon des Sables in the Sahara Desert from April 2 to April 12 to raise awareness and funds for the Autistic Society of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Marathon des Sables (MDS) (Marathon of the Sands) is a six-day, 254 km (156 mile) ultra-marathon, which is equivalent to six regular marathons. The longest single stage is 91 km (55 miles) long. This multi-day race is held every year in the southern Moroccan desert. It is considered the toughest foot race on Earth.

Dr Ardavanis has undertaken a number of expeditions which have been documented in books and articles. One of his recent expeditions involved ascending the highest peak in Mt Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, Africa (Uhuru Peak (5,895), where he proudly carried Trinidad and Tobago's flag.

Throughout his childhood, Dr Ardavanis was involved in sports competitively. In the late 70's, 80's, and 90's Dr Ardavanis completed his studies in Electrical Engineering

(BSEE, MSEE), Business (MBA) and Finance (PhD). He is a registered engineer with the Greek Chamber of Engineers as well as a registered economist with the Greek Chamber of Economists. His academic and professional life forced him to take residence in USA and then to travel around the world. He currently works as an international consultant in Engineering and Finance and resides with his wife in Port of Spain, Trinidad.

One of the main goals of Ardavanis's participation in the Sahara race is to sensitise people about autism in Trinidad and Tobago and to help raise funds for this cause.

Autism is a complex developmental disability that typically appears during the first three years of life and affects a person's ability to communicate and interact with others. There is no known single cause for autism, but increased awareness and funding can help families today.

International data indicate that the prevalence of autism is on the rise — one in every 150 American children, and almost one in 94 boys.

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## HEALTH

## Raising funds for Autistic Society

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The Autism Society of the US estimates that the lifetime cost of caring for a child with autism ranges from \$3.5 million to \$5 million, and that the United States is facing almost \$90 billion annually in costs for autism.

In Trinidad and Tobago, as of October 2007, there were over 300 families registered with the Autistic Society of Trinidad and Tobago, but local awareness remains relatively low and funds are needed to advance the cause of the Society.

April 2 is World Autism Awareness Day and Ardavanis will be observing it in the Sahara, running the Marathon des Sables for the children and their families. George appeals to all persons to help the cause and spread the word.

George is already sponsored by 3M (Trinidad and Tobago), WSP International (Sweden), Herne European Consultancy (UK) and Green Leader (UK) in this endeavour, whom he thanks for their financial and emotional support.

Fund raising is ongoing. At



T&T ON TOP: Dr George Ardavanis at the highest peak in Mt Kilimanjaro.

this time and until April 13, all individual (non-corporate) contributions made will be applied directly to the grant for the Autistic Society of Trinidad and Tobago.

To make a contribution, please make a deposit to the following account number: Republic Bank, George

Ardavanis, Account number: 340016748101.

For more information about the race, please check George's website at [www.xtreme.ardavanis.com](http://www.xtreme.ardavanis.com).

For information on the Trinidad and Tobago Society, please check out [www.autismtt.org](http://www.autismtt.org); and for information on autism, please visit [www.autism-society.com](http://www.autism-society.com).