

Autism foundation raises public awareness of syndrome

A mother walks with her son near the water fountain at the Hotel Indonesia roundabout in Central Jakarta on Sunday (photo).

They joined dozens of other people who took part in a public awareness campaign titled Peduli Autis which was organized by the Indonesian Autism Foundation and the Putra Kembara mailing list community. The group distributed leaflets and stickers to passersby.

Psychologist Dyah Puspita, the manager of Mandiga school which provides education for autistic children, said that public awareness about this syndrome was very poor in Indonesia and that many parents denied their children had the illness.

"Problems concerning autism and autistic children are very complicated here, and we want to start by increasing public awareness about this syn-

drome," she said.

Dyah said that she hoped the campaign would help the public better understand autism and encourage them to be more supportive in the future.

"Autism is not a communicable disease, so autistic children should not be excluded from the community," the mother of an autistic child said at the event.

The event was part of a month-long campaign to mark the International Month of Autism.

Also attending the event was 27-year-old Oscar Dompus who has written a book about his struggle to cope with autism. Oscar encouraged children with autism to keep their spirits high and asked parents to be supportive and not to use violence as a way of dealing with their autistic children. — JP/01

