

## The Daily Apple

# School's cookie campaign hopes to raise autism awareness

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A favorite snack of children everywhere, cookies have become a tool for raising awareness about autism at one Long Island school.

The ELIJA (Empowering Long Island's Journey Through Autism) school follows a mission best represented by their motto, "Championing Hope, One Child at a Time." During autism awareness month, it's using some deliciously sweet treats to champion its cause.

On April 3rd, The ELIJA School in Levittown held a local event during their autism awareness week in order to launch the first day of their Championing

Hope Cookie Campaign. All members of the public were welcomed to the school to celebrate the launching of the campaign as well as take a tour of the facility.

The ELIJA School partnered with Brooklyn's Runner & Stone Bakery/Restaurant to create the delicious shortbread customized cookies. Parents chose a cookie shape -- ranging from an ice cream cone to a unicorn -- that best symbolizes the unique character of their children.

The parents of Anthony, a student at the school, chose a seagull to represent the "easy-going, free spirited" nature of their son, stating in their description that Anthony is "gliding through life with a smile on his face, and going wherever the winds take him."

At the event, the cookies were available for the public to purchase on spot or pre-order and all proceeds went directly to The ELIJA School and its community outreach services.

Robin Havens, a long-time autism advocate and parent, enrolled her son with The ELIJA School in 2006. Over the past seven years, Havens found what she calls an "incredible support system" for her family.

Havens found the cookie campaign to be a great way for the community to relate to the children explaining, "The cookie event is incredibly personal to each child. It's touching to see how every single family had their own thing that was important to them and their child, and that they took the time to find that symbolism for their child."

She and her husband Tom chose the shape of a guitar to best represent her son Jake because, she said, "music always brings a huge smile to his face. It's what he asks for when he wakes up in the morning and what soothes him to sleep in the evenings."