

The event also displayed the school's ongoing "Rainbow of Ribbons," where individuals from all over the country wrote messages along a piece of ribbon that is hung along a line for all event attendees to see within the facility. The symbolic impact of both the cookie and ribbon campaigns allowed ELIJA staff, parents and board members of the school to get a sense of just how large the scope of support for autism awareness reaches.

Sana Shadded, the lead clinical supervisor of The ELIJA School, stressed the importance of spreading awareness during community events.

"Lot's of people have heard of autism at this point, but a lot of people don't really understand what that means and what autism looks like," she said.

In what she classified as a science-based environment, Shadded also emphasized how significant it is to educate others, because outside of this school's environment, many students don't have the same support in their educational setting.

Having a strong community support system seems to be a common theme reinforced by many advocates at the event, especially Councilman Gary Hudes who attended the autism awareness event in hopes of helping The ELIJA School raise awareness.

"Promoting autism awareness is natural for all of us in the town," says Hudes, adding that students from MacArthur High School have shown their support by wearing blue shirts in support of autism awareness month.

ELIJA Director Debora Harris Thivierge addressed the crowd at the cookie event and reinforced the need for advocates.

"Autism is more of an impact than anything out there that's related to children, and so we need everyone's support on a daily basis," she said. "For our parents here at the ELIJA school, it's a struggle every day, but it's a struggle of love because we love our kids."

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