

# HEALTH



A5  
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*Autism is a developmental disability that affects how people experience the world. There is no one way to be autistic. Some autistic people can speak, and some autistic people need to communicate in other ways. Some autistic people also have intellectual disabilities, and some autistic people don't. Students and staff at Spaulding Youth Services are helping share this information.*

## SPREADING AUTISM EDUCATION



Students and staff from Spaulding Academy meet with the Tilton Police Department.

Courtesy of Spaulding Academy

### AUTISM INFORMATION

- Those with ASD are at risk of having epilepsy, a neurological disorder characterized by frequent seizures. Between 20% and 30% of kids with autism develop epilepsy before adulthood, according to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke.
- In 2020, about 1 in 54 children was diagnosed with ASD, according to CDC data.
- Boys are about four times more likely to be diagnosed with autism than girls.
- Parent age seems to have an impact on the likelihood that their children will have ASD. One Swedish study found that men older than 55 were four times four times as likely to father a child with autism than men younger than 30, likely because older sperm have accumulated mutations that could lead to the disorder.
- Almost half of 25-year-olds with ASD have not held a paying job, according to a 2012 study in "Pediatrics."
- There are only two FDA-approved medications for autism-related agitation, risperidone and aripiprazole.
- Almost a third of 8-year-olds with autism have self-injurious behaviors, including skin scratching and head banging, according to a 2016 study of more than 8,000 children by Soke, Gnakub, et al.
- Children with autism are more likely to be diagnosed later and less often if they belong to a minority group. Early intervention is often the best way to help support normal development.
- Many studies performed over the last two decades have shown that vaccines do not cause autism.

### Spaulding Academy initiative encourages others to embrace kindness

By TEDDY ROSENBLUTH  
Monitor staff

With brightly colored posters and homemade baked goods, children at Spaulding Academy & Family Services embarked on a difficult mission – making the world kinder towards people with autism.

Spaulding Academy, a residential facility for children with various behavioral and developmental challenges, is home to several kids with an Autism Spectrum Disorder. In honor of National Autism Acceptance Month, staff and kids planned visits to local organizations to teach about the disorder and foster acceptance for the group. Their community tour, which started in April and extended through June, included visits to the Belknap Mill Quilters Group, the Tilton and Northfield Police Departments, and Tilton-Northfield Fire and EMS.

For many years, Spaulding has housed children with autism, creating opportunities for them to participate in sports, talent shows, grocery shopping and even horse back riding. For many children, this acceptance has been a transformative experience.

"The genuine relationships which (he) developed with many of the campus staff and students continues to be one of his favorite conversation topics," one set of parents said of their son's experience.



Spaulding Academy and Family Services presents a basket to the Tilton-Northfield Fire & EMS services.

This year, the Autism Society of America urged the public to shy away from the typical campaign that encourages awareness, instead focusing on the need for acceptance of the autistic community.

"While we will always work to spread awareness, words matter as we strive for autistic individuals to live fully in all areas of life," said Christopher Banks, President and CEO of the Autism Society of America. "As many individuals and families affected by autism know, acceptance is often one of the biggest barriers to finding and developing a strong support system."

Staff and students embraced the this year's acceptance month theme, "Lead with Kindness, Learn with Kindness" which "celebrates and supports acceptance, understanding and inclusion with daily acts of kindness."

This shift is aimed to help support opportunities in education, employment, accessible housing, affordable health care and comprehensive long-term services.

"The children learning and living at Spaulding are all special in their own individual ways, and this community event highlights what an amazing impact they make together as a group," said Amanda Champagne, Executive Director of Family Services. "Our staff is so proud of our children's willingness to promote acceptance and awareness of autism in Spaulding's local community."

### AUTISM IN NH

**124:** The number of childhood autism and ASD diagnoses between 2019 and 2020. This number is lower than years before, likely because the pandemic prevented residents from getting non-essential medical treatment for a period of time.

**84%:** the percent of newly diagnosed Granite Staters who were white.

**1%:** the percent of newly diagnosed Granite Staters who were older than 18 when they were diagnosed.

**84%:** The percent of newly diagnosed Granite Staters who were younger than 8 when they were diagnosed.