

COMMUNITY

One in 68 children autistic

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Autism is on the rise, now affecting one out of every 68 children.

According to a new study completed by the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention, there has been a nearly 30 percent jump in autism rates in just two years.

Mary Rosswurm, a Zionsville resident and executive director of Little Star Center, Inc. in Carmel, knows the perils of autism well.

Little Star Center, Inc. is a nonprofit organization that helps the families and children affected by autism diagnoses every day.

She is also the mother of a 23 year-old autistic son, Brad.

Brad was diagnosed with a neurological condition at only four months old. It was then -- nearly 20 years ago -- that Mary first learned what autism was.

"They warned me that with the neurological condition, it could cause autism," she said. "But this was before the Internet, so all I had was two or three sentences in a book at the library. And the book didn't paint a very good picture."

Mary said she tried going to support groups, after feeling the blow of what her son's life could look like.

"I really thought my world was over," Mary said. Mary said autism has affected her whole

family, which is one reason why she is such an advocate for Little Star Center.

"Twenty years ago the support groups were like a pity party," she said. "But Little Star offers advice and mental support, even over the phone, for moms dealing with an autism diagnosis."

Little Star Center offers intensive autism intervention based on the principles of applied behavioral analysis and verbal behavior.

Mary said that autism has changed the face of childhood in America and around the world.

"Everyone is affected by it," she said.

When her son Brad was born, one out of every 10,000 children was thought to be autistic. In 2000, it was 1 out of every 110.

Mary is cautious to make a claim as to why these numbers have increased, but said that she doesn't believe it is because of vaccinations, as some celebrities have declared.

"Fifty percent of this increase is about better knowledge and better diagnosis, but that's not all," Mary said. "There's still something out there that we haven't discovered. These autism rates are even in countries outside of America that don't vaccinate like we do. And none of the scientific studies show any correlation with vaccines and autism."

To support children with autism, visit www.littlestarcenter.org.



Rosswurm

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Little Star Celebrates Autism Awareness Month



(Above) The staff and families of Little Star Center, Inc. stand in front of the non-profit's Carmel location to celebrate Autism Awareness month. (Left) Little Star Center, Inc. Executive Director, Mary Rosswurm, of Zionsville, shows a sign in support of the children affected by autism. Rosswurm is also the mother of an autistic son. (Right) One gold star and 68 blue stars were placed in front of the building, to show support for the new statistic from the CDC that claims one out of every 68 children are autistic. (Submitted photos)

