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## Autism Rocks!

By [Fay Abrahamsson](#) Courier Senior Staff Writer

Family Style Concert Held to Benefit Pinchbeck Rose Work Program

Julie Hipp never planned to be the mother of a child with autism. She and her family weren't prepared to experience the loneliness, exhaustion, and misunderstanding that goes hand in hand with having a child with autism.

"We were very isolated," said Hipp. "People just don't want to be with you."

Society thinks kids with autism have behavioral issues, she says.

"That is a big misunderstanding," said Hipp, whose son, diagnosed at age two and now 17 years old, has made great strides along the way with behavioral therapy and treatment.

Hipp said that when her son was young, a friend's birthday party (if he was lucky to be invited at all) was a challenging event.

"He could only stay at the party maybe 10 or 20 minutes," she said.

Hipp said she is fortunate that her son has responded well to treatments. There is no cause or cure for autism, she said, but with the right strategies and tools, kids with autism can be very sweet and smart and can grow into capable, working adults who can learn to interface with other people and understand responsibility.

"Lots of things can be taught to people with autism," she said. "They just don't come naturally. You have to understand how they process information.

To help the cause of those with autism spectrum disorders (which include things such as classic autism, Asperger's syndrome, and Retts syndrome), a benefit concert to promote local musicians and support job opportunities for people with autism will be held next Saturday, July 24, from 3 to 7 p.m. at Pinchbeck Rose Farm at 929 Boston Post Road. The benefit concert, called Autism Rocks!, is designed to raise awareness and funds in support of its programs.

Pinchbeck's, established in 1929 by William Pinchbeck, closed in 2008 due to increased foreign competition. The following year, it reinvented itself as Roses for Autism, an organization that provides vocational training and employment for people with autism; it is the first of its kind in the state.

Lori Gregan, retail operations manager at Roses for Autism, said one out of every 100 children is born with autism and only 12 percent of adults on the autism spectrum are employed.

"Here we train people to have the skills to go out into the workplace," said Gregan.

Things such as how to dress for work, punch in, interact with supervisors and co-workers, and take directions are taught, said Gregan.

"These are things you and I take for granted, but are a challenge for people with autism," she said.

Growing, packaging, and selling roses, said Gregan, provides a real product to see and feel.

Gregan said the concert will be held outside in the Pinchbeck hayfield; she encourages attendees to bring their own lawn chairs and blankets. There will be food and beverages available for purchase and other special events and tours. Tickets are \$10 each; \$15 to receive a sample bouquet upon exiting the concert. All proceeds will support employment opportunities for people with autism. A rain date is scheduled for the following day, Sunday, July 25, same time and place.

For more information, visit [www.rosesforautism.com](http://www.rosesforautism.com).

Your Comments

If someone you know with autism has made progress through vocational training, share your story with the community.

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