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## Lorain native and her husband spread awareness during Autism Awareness Month

By Briana Contreras  
*The Morning Journal*

In conjunction with Autism Awareness Month, a group of juniors at Horizon Science Academy of Lorain were educated April 9 on autism and how to identify and understand the developmental disorder. Author Maritza Molis, a Lorain native who lives in Fairview Park, shared with students a novel she wrote in 2018. The novel tells her journey in the life of having an autistic child, Jaiden Jacob, 12. The book is titled "Autism in Our Home: The Making of a Bittersweet Family."

Molis and her husband, Kevin Molis, spoke with Horizon students about her novel, their experience caring for Jaiden — who was diagnosed with a level 3, or highest, form of autism — and about autism spectrum disorder.

They know what autism looks like and how they can spread awareness and educate others.

Students also asked questions and shared their experiences of knowing someone with autism and how to properly handle certain situations.

### Learning

Aurelie Colvin, intervention specialist at Horizon, said each year during Autism Awareness Month, she wants students to become more aware of autism.

Colvin said the more students understand and are aware, the more they accept those who have differences.

Students also can spread the message on this disorder and other disorders to classmates and family. Having parents who are educated on autism, and have a child of their own living with the disorder, can be a great way to hear the stories first-hand, Colvin said.

Maritza and Kevin Molis recently began their journey as autism parent mentors who share their story with others on how to properly handle an autistic child.

However, reaching out to younger generations can promote further awareness and acceptance of the disorder, the couple said.

Educating youngsters and young adults also can help decrease bullying or being treated differently, they said.



Briana Contreras - The Morning Journal

Maritza and Kevin Molis, autism parent mentors, speak with students at Horizon Science Academy in Lorain on April 9 on behalf of autism and how to properly identify and understand the developmental disorder.

### Sharing the experience

Through their book, the Molis family is sharing their experiences and knowledge.

Kevin Molis, who is Jaiden's stepfather, recalled taking time for himself and his wife to learn how to handle certain situations with Jaiden.

This caused emotional stress when first finding out of Jaiden's diagnosis at an early age, Maritza Molis said.

Jaiden's level 3 diagnosis of autism requires substantial support.

Those with this form have a lack of communication skills and display repetitive or restrictive behaviors.

In order to make things easier for themselves and Jaiden, the couple learned how to handle their situation.

While researching, they learned of programs and resources that could benefit autistic children, but very little that educate parents on the disorder or their own mental health during these times, Kevin Molis said.

Maritza Molis decided to share her experience in a parent's point-of-view on how to handle certain situations that are challenging or overwhelming when having an autistic child.

When children are first diagnosed with autism, it's easy to have a hard time and feel lost, she said.

"Through my book and our experiences, I want to tell these parents not to give up," Maritza Molis said. "My book and method provides a faith-based approach so parents can find that hope and peace in their lives while also being educated."

The couple said they also focus on promoting positivity and fun while informing others because the journey has more positives that outweigh the challenges.

"Any experience should call for positivity and laughter," Kevin Molis said. "We all need laughter in our lives."

### Support system

Having a great support system within their family, friends and two sons Julian Jacob, 18, and Sebastian Molis, 7, also makes the journey better, the couple said.

Kevin Molis said the book provides enough information for parents to where they should never have to say, "If I knew then what I know now."

Martiza Molis is working on two more books on autism.

The couple not only educates through events and books, but through their YouTube Channel and iTunes podcast under Autism Dadda.

They can also be reached by email at MolisFam@gmail.com