

## Halloween Bash Benefits ELIJA School for Autism

The ELIJA Foundation threw a "spooktacular" costume party filled with tricks and treats to benefit those affected by autism, including students at the ELIJA School in Levittown

By [Lauren Urban](#) | [Email the author](#) | October 31, 2011

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A "spooktacular" costume party, complete with all sorts of tricks and treats, was hosted by the ELIJA Foundation, a not-for-profit organization serving parents, educators, professionals and caregivers of children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) on Long Island, on October 28.

The Halloween gala was held to unite members of the autism community, as well as supporters of ELIJA, for an evening of frightening, family-friendly fun. At the same time, it served to raise awareness and to benefit those Long Islanders affected by Autism, including students of the [ELIJA School for Autism](#) in Levittown.

"It is important to raise awareness about autism and the foundation," said Keri Urban, a teacher at the Levittown school. "The gala gives us all a chance to acknowledge the dedicated parents, staff and community that contribute to the foundation and school in so many ways."

The gala, which was held at the Carlton in Eisenhower Park, East Meadow, was spearheaded by the foundation's director, Debora Harris.

"We always look forward to our annual gala, but this year is even more exciting with all of the Halloween-themed events that we have planned for families of all ages," said Harris. "We are sure to pull some great tricks out of our sleeves to make the night one that will never be forgotten."

Harris did not disappoint, as the gala featured psychic readings, a "danger" show, costume contests and raffles with prizes including a one-week trip to St. Marteen, an iPad 2, a 32" Samsung LCD HDTV and a \$200 American Express Gift Card. But Urban's favorite event of the evening was a video montage that was shown that showcases all of our students at the ELIJA School.

Councilman Gary Hudes helped hand out awards to acknowledge three prominent members of the Long Island Autism community. Dr. Dana Reinecke, a board certified behavior analyst, received the Champion of Hope Award. In addition to co-authoring books and book chapters in behavior analysis and Autism, Dr. Reinecke also designed the Achieve Degree for the Sage Colleges, which helps students with Autism who are academically capable but find a traditional college to be challenging.

Michael and Lynne Koufakis received the Champion of Hope Parent Award for their contributions and dedication to ELIJA and the Long Island Autism Community. Together, the Koufakis's have chaired numerous events and fundraisers, rallied community awareness and supported other schools, organizations and families affected by autism.


"It is important to have the gala because not only is it a fundraiser, it helps bring families and professionals together to really feel like a community," said Allison Schear, one of two clinical supervisors at the ELIJA School.

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To learn more about the foundation, visit [www.ELIJA.org](http://www.ELIJA.org). You can also check out the ELIJA School in Levittown on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/TheELIJASchool#!/TheELIJASchool?sk=info> or follow it on Twitter at @ELIJASchool.

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