

# Family, supporters take local stride for cause of autism

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More than 100 people participated in the first annual Stride 4 Autism, an event aiming to raise awareness for autism in Northern Nevada. Participants left the Starbucks on Prater and Sparks Blvd. at 7 a.m. and walked three-and-a-half miles to the Starbucks on Vista, arriving at about 11 a.m.

"We had people lined up and ready to go," said Lori Kuhre who, with her husband Gary, founded [www.Stride4Autism.com](http://www.Stride4Autism.com), the local non-profit group who put on the event.

Lori and Gary have a five-year-old autistic child named Joshua. They were inspired to start a non-profit organization when Joshua was diagnosed with autism over a year ago.

Since their employer-sponsored insurance does not cover autistic children – a problem Gary and Lori say many parents of autistic children face – Gary is walking to Washington, D.C. to raise awareness of autism. Once Gary arrives in Washington, estimated to be in October, he plans to lobby legislators to change insurance regulations so that insurance companies will be required to cover autism.



**Tribune/Debra Reid**

Gary Kuhre said his son Joshua, victim of Autism, should have full health insurance coverage for the disease.

He has already spoken with the offices of top state politicians including Sen. Harry Reid and Sen. John Ensign.

Gary left Saturday morning at about 5 a.m., Lori said. He plans to cover about 30 miles daily, mostly walking along interstates.

"He's totally prepared," Lori said.

Participants of the event expressed "encouragement and support for Gary," she said.

Joshua, however, was sad to see his father go.

Joshua "is having a little bit of a hard time," Lori said. "He is a little moody and sad. He misses his daddy already."

One of [www.Stride4Autism.com](http://www.Stride4Autism.com)'s main priorities, Lori said, is to educate the public about autism.

"A lot of people got information they didn't know was available to them," Lori said about the event. "Everything just flowed perfectly." Jessica Hicksted, a barista at Starbucks who has a six-year-old autistic child, helped coordinate the walk.

"Autism, unfortunately, is one of those disorders that's not very well-known," said Hicksted, who also works as a substitute special education

teacher. "Do your best to read up on autism and help these families," she offered as advice to anyone wishing to learn more about autism. "It needs attention."

Saturday's Stride 4 Autism was the first of its kind in Northern Nevada, both Lori and Hicksted said.

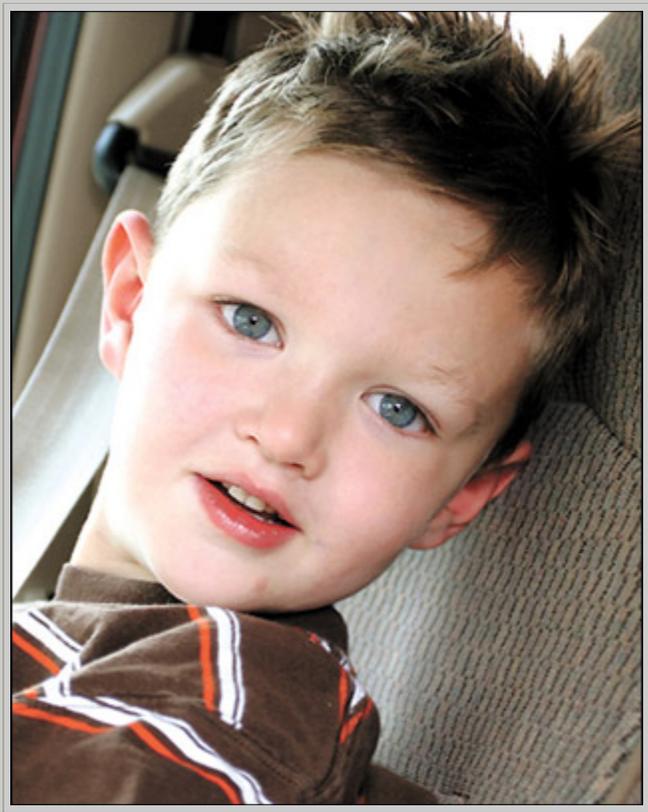
"Everyone seemed to have a lot of fun," Hicksted said of the participants-who all received free Starbucks drinks and pizza. It was "a little party, everyone was saying," Hicksted said. "The community kind of came together and we had a good time."

"It was refreshing," she later added.

Participants of the walk were asked to donate to [www.Stride4Autism.com](http://www.Stride4Autism.com). Lori estimated over \$2000 was raised.

The money will be used for scholarships for autistic children and for raising public awareness of autism in Northern Nevada. None of the funds

donated are used for Joshua's treatment.



"Anything that's going to help the child, therapeutically, that's what we want to do," Lori said.