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Cooking up plans for an Autistic student's future

By Jennifer Stacy

Naples - Autism is the fastest-growing developmental disability in this country. Now a unique approach to education here in Ft. Myers is making an impact, cooking up success and hope.

Michael and Harriet Stuart have been searching for unique educational opportunities for their 16-year-old son Aaron, who has Autism. Concerned about his future and whether or not he would be able to find employment, they began exploring options that would utilize his unique skill set.

The Stuarts began brain storming with educators at Eden School for the Autistic in Ft. Myers, where Aaron has attended class since he was nine-years-old.

Together, they cooked up a plan.

Aaron began showing interest in cooking meals, asking to help in the kitchen. Suddenly, a different kind of lesson plan was cooked up. Aaron would spend part of his day learning academics, and part vocation--expanding his skills in the kitchen.

Aaron learned to cook at home and at school, eventually preparing meals for his family, and the Eden staff. He thrived on the structure of following a recipe and his methodical attention to detail created delicious results.

Aaron went from salads and sandwiches, to eventually baking cakes. They are skills that are ingredients for future employment.

Now there's talk of selling goods in local stores, made by Aaron and other kids at Eden.

5 kids will begin the cooking vocation program at Eden this year. It's hoped they all have the same success as Aaron.

For more information, visit [Eden School](#).

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