

## Local chapter of Autism group gets new home

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SCHENECTADY, N.Y. -- Capital Region families dealing with autism have a new place to find answers.

The Albany Chapter of the Autism Society of America has relocated to downtown Schenectady, on lower State Street.

The society covers twelve counties, offering support and programs for people with autism.

The group also accepted a donation of \$4,700 from Schenectady County legislator Angelo Santabarbara - proceeds from his home-made cheese business.

Santabarbara's young son has autism.

Families affected by autism admit there's a lot of confusion after a landmark study that linked vaccinations with autism, was thrown out.

The British journal that published the 1998 study retracted the findings, saying now there's no proof the vaccine is connected to autism.

NEWS10 asked local parents of autistic children if all this changes their perspective on the disorder.

The now-retracted British study found combining the vaccines for measles, mumps and rubella damaged a child's immune system and led to autism. Now the influential medical journal The Lancet has withdrawn the findings, but many say the damage was done, with hundreds of thousands of parents worldwide delaying or passing up the MMR vaccination all together.

Santabarbara says he does not know what caused autism in his 8-year old son Michael, but says the litany of conflicting studies about vaccines is confusing.

"I can't say 100%, but it's certainly something on my list of things I want to look into," Santabarbara told NEWS10.

16-year old Stephen Einbinder was diagnosed when he was just a toddler. His mother, Meryl, says it's likely heredity plays a role in autism.

Meryl Einbinder adds, "Personally, I believe that a child can be predisposed to autism, and maybe the vaccine helps bring it on."

For Cindy Barkowski, there's no doubt vaccinations led to autism in her 15-year old son, John.

"We just don't know what is really truthful going into our children's bodies," The Rotterdam mother says. "I think there's too many at once, they're starting too young."