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While the month of April will wrap up our spring semester classes here at Radford, this month also holds another special meaning that might be lesser known.

April is Autism Awareness month—a month to become more educated about autism, to give back to those who have either been affected by autism or who have autism, themselves, to raise awareness, and to celebrate those with autism both for their similarities and their differences.

According to [AutismSociety.org](http://AutismSociety.org), Autism Awareness Month is celebrated by things like presidential and congressional declarations, online events and activities, local events and activities through affiliates, and various partner opportunities with several different associations that work towards raising awareness for autism. I think this month is definitely an important one, because neither I nor many of my friends knew that April was Autism Awareness Month.

The fact that so many are unaware of the existence of this month celebrating and promoting awareness for autism shows us that there is a long way to go in raising awareness for this disease that, according to the Autism Society, currently affects more than 3.5 million Americans. This same source states that autism is the fastest-growing developmental disability, so in order to keep up with the constantly evolving disease, we need to stay consistently and completely educated and informed.

One way to show support for Autism Awareness Month, of course, is to self-educate on topics such as the differences in the brains of those who are autistic and those who are not, which will aid greatly in tearing down the many stereotypes that accompany this disorder. Working towards understanding what autism consists of—internally, chemically, behaviorally, and societally—will consequently give us much of the knowledge we need in order to ensure that those with autism are living the most fulfilled lives possible.

A second way to show support is to wear the Autism Awareness Ribbon.

PresenceLearning.com states that many advocates of autism awareness wear the ribbons

pinned to their clothes, place magnetic ribbons on their cars, and much more. The ribbon provides a sense of public support and community for all of those affected by autism, and the popularity of the ribbon increases greatly during the month of April.

While awareness for autism has certainly increased over the years, I still think we have a long way to go before we reach a point where autism is widely understood and accepted. We still need to work towards spreading knowledge and facts concerning the disability, because I believe that one of the greatest hindrances to widespread autism awareness is the huge number of stereotypes that continue to accompany autism.

In order to spread awareness in the right way, many people need to forget what they *think* they know about autism and relearn everything they previously believed in a way that will both increase their own awareness and promote their own understanding. Ensuring the correct and stereotype-free distribution of facts about autism will promote the type of awareness we need in order to most successfully provide those with autism and their families the best lives possible.

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