

President's Letter

SPECIAL EDITION

Watch for
your next
newsletter!



Have a story
to share?
Make sure to
let us know so
we can
highlight it!

I hope you're ready. Great times are coming!

At this year's Down Syndrome Community Annual Meeting on May 17th, I spoke about all the great work the DSC is doing.

Over the past year, we've supported many organizations: National Down Syndrome Society, National Down Syndrome Congress, The Arc of King County, Special Olympics Washington, UW Experimental Education Unit, Down Syndrome Affiliates in Action, and the 321 eConference. We're proud to stand be-

hind organizations that give so much back to our organization and our membership, and we seek to forge strong bonds.

This year saw the start of our [D.A.D.S. of Puget Sound](#) group, headed by DSC Director Tim Larmore and Doug Horton. By getting fathers of our self-advocates together to share their experiences, learn from guest speakers and harness their energy for DSC events and services, this new group will

solidify and empower the untapped potential of these inspiring men.

Early this year, DSC Director Kara Freel-Sparks helped us conduct our first formal survey. Thanks to all of you who responded. The results have helped us shape a slate of new programs and services, and through these we hope to hit the most popular membership needs first, and work our way down from there.

New Programs

Under the guidance of DSC Director Alison Winfield, our self-advocate and caregiver support group called DSC Friends is well underway. Look for regular announcements of our monthly get-togethers for Birth to Toddler, Kids, Tweens, Teens and Adults.

DSC Director Laurel Sturges is moving forward with our DSC Gives Back program. The goal is to provide self-advocates avenues to give back to the community by doing their own volunteer work. It's charity, but it's also advocacy!

DSC Director Becky Ronan is working with Dr. Rebecca Partridge of the [Down Syndrome Program at Virginia Mason](#) (Issaquah and University Village) to co-host an intensive and interactive program addressing nutrition for self-advocates of all ages with Down syndrome and their caregivers. Details coming soon!

We'll be restructuring and strengthening our New Parent Packet Program by incorporating tools used by the [Parents First Call](#) program developed by the Massachusetts Down Syndrome Congress. It should serve to increase our support offerings critical to new parents, and expand our outreach to include prenatal diagnoses.

Finally, the DSC has applied for an education grant from the Global Down Syndrome Foundation to fund the initial phase of [The Learning Program](#) as developed by the Down Syndrome Foundation of Orange County. Cross your fingers!

Out of the Blue

The universe seems to coalesce around a good cause run by good people. The DSC is being served well by this bounty, with a bunch of great things seemingly falling from the clear blue sky.

While in town for the Special Olympics of Washington Breakfast for Champions, Jon Colman, NDSS President and Sara Wier, NDSS VP of Advocacy and DC Office Head, graciously agreed to speak to our membership about the [National Down Syndrome Society](#) and their advocacy work, including their work driving the ABLE Act through Congress. We're still feeling the impact of this unique event.

Delta Airlines has chosen the DSC as the latest organization to experience their annual [Santa Express](#) at SeaTac Airport. Santa Express is a holiday fantasy flight to the North Pole for our DSC children and their families. The fun starts immediately at the gate with decorations, caroling and photos with the entire crew. Flight 1225 will depart for the North Pole (a cruise on the jet around the airport), with dinner and entertainment onboard. Upon arrival at the North Pole (DAL Hangar), Santa and his elves will greet the children with special gifts, hot chocolate and more festivities. It's tentatively scheduled for December 9th, and we expect to offer an age range of 3 to 15 years old for self-advocates.

The National Down Syndrome Society has selected the DSC to host a national-level conference on Down syndrome and aging in 2015. Internationally renowned experts will be there to help us learn more about the impact an extra chromosome has on aging.

And finally, generous funding from DSC member Bob Benoit and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has allowed us to undertake a long overdue rebranding. We're underway crafting a new DSC logo and a vital new website design. The timing couldn't be more perfect. Expect the big unveiling later this year.

Still Doing What We've Done So Well

Thanks to our robust financial situation and the influx of energetic new Board members, the reinvigorated DSC still manages to produce our historical slate of services and events. Our services include: UPSIDE (our Kitsap and Jefferson County affiliate), New Parent Packet Program, speaker events, Heidi Heier Memorial Sharing Library, information network, newsletter, and referral services. Our notoriously awesome annual events calendar includes: Sweetheart Dance, Megarama Day, Talent Show, Holiday Party, and Camp Prime Time. This year expect another superlative Buddy Walk at the Seattle Center on October 5th. I am watching it come together, and you are going to be blown away by the results of our amazing team's work!

Speaking of the [Buddy Walk](#), you probably know it's our major fundraiser. Soon, we'll be asking you to help engage your social network to raise money for our cause. Once again we'll have online fundraising that gives your friends, associates and extended family a meaningful way to advocate for individuals with Down syndrome. Please show your appreciation for the DSC by joining our fundraising efforts. We're actively seeking corporate sponsors for the Buddy Walk as well, so please let us know if you have any leads.

Stay Connected

Make sure you're on our Yahoo email group and Facebook to get all our announcements and our helpful shares! To join the info only email group, send a blank email to downsyndromecommunity-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. Our Facebook page is [Down-SyndromeCommunity](#). Or check out our website at www.downsyndromecommunity.org.

There are lots of volunteer opportunities available these days. If you see anything that excites you, contact us at our new phone number, 206-257-7191 or by email at contact@downsyndromecommunity.org. We'd love any help you can give, from a single hour at an event, to offering your unique talents on the side, to a membership on one of our fun committees!

It seems like I've been chanting this mantra throughout my five years at the helm, but it's true: There's still much more to come from the DSC. Say, do you like soccer? Spearheaded by international soccer star Sydney Leroux, our hometown National Women's Soccer League team, [Seattle Reign FC](#), has plans to take the DSC under their wing and give us some professional sports love. This will be an empowering alliance for all of us. It goes to show that when you do the right thing and work hard, you never know what kinds of opportunities will fall into your lap.

I'd like to thank the tireless Board of Directors, our numerous financial sponsors, and you, the DSC membership, for all the support, energy and enthusiasm it takes to make these great times happen. The DSC is on a roll!

Sear King, DSC President

JUNE 2014

