“Celebrating Youth” at Danville’s 4th of July Parade

Kiwanis of San Ramon Valley awarded DSCBA the “Service Business Award” for our participation in the annual 4th of July Parade!

It all began Saturday June 27th when a group of fifty people came to the float building party at Rich and Jo Kelley’s house. Not only did we have DSCBA families, but we had friends, family, and volunteers from the Carondelet high school cheer team helping to create our “Backyard Pool Party” themed float. Our day consisted of swimming, socializing, float-building and pot-lucking. Everyone pitched in to paint, blow up beach balls and help assemble our joint vision of the float. It was a great chance for families with children of all ages to come together and support each other and support our cause!

On the morning of the 4th a very hardworking team came together in front of San Ramon Valley High School to put the finishing touches on the float. That team worked from 6-9:30am to ensure that the float was ready for the parade. A special thank you to Rich Kelley, Maura Perkins and Brian Garcia for their time that morning! The parade began at 9am and with parking being a concern we were very fortunate to have Martha Hogan and Nancy LaBelle providing a shuttle service to our families from the Hogan’s house to the float itself. Thank you ladies! With parking taken care of, our families were able to easily enjoy the parade without stress. Once everyone arrived at the float, most of the kids hopped on the float and plopped down in the baby pools, beach chairs and bleacher seating. Families and kids alike enjoyed splashing in the pools, squirting each other with squirt guns and waving their flags.
A Midyear Gratitude Note from Nancy

Many exciting things are happening at the Connection! Thank you to our Staff, Therapists, Teachers, Business Partners and Volunteers for their time and talents. Thank you to the members of our Board for their commitment to our mission and a special thank you to the Foundations that give so generously as our doors would not remain open without them. Thanks to all of our generous supporters whose help allows us to continue to offer Parent Support groups, Prenatal Consultation, one on one Advocacy and Baby Step classes free of charge. We also continue to offer therapeutic Step classes for young ones, teens and adults at a minimum cost to our members. 2009 is full of value added service such as private Speech Therapy with Heather Peterson and Reading Tutor Services with Natalie Hale on site at a discounted rate for our members. Together they are working with more than 25 of our members families with great reviews.

We started a new Step class in Benicia and our membership is up 10% from last year. A new Grant Manager, Linda Plount is on board, and we have long time member and educator Jennifer Cooper partnering with us to offer Special Education Placement services to our members in the Oakland/Berkeley/Hayward areas. Parents can always count on Martha Hogan our Advocacy Director to be at IEP meetings to insure that children of all ages get the education they need and deserve. Kathy Harkins, whom we could not do without, is embracing Quick Books and creating efficiency in the way we do business. Marianne Iversen, our Program Manager, is communicating more than ever about our Step classes and assessing areas of need for additional locations.

We started an In-A-Pinch program as a way for our community to give back to each other, thanks Angie Rettig!

Our website is redesigned and looking great (www.dsconnection.org) thanks to SunDesign Studios. We are excited about the Cajun Fest which will be held on September 12 in Walnut Creek, and equally excited about the Buddy Walk lead by Tammy Garcia at Heather Farms October 11. Both committees are fired up and can use YOUR HELP! This year we welcomed five new board members and we have additional openings on our Board. I remain committed to using technology for fundraising and member communication as it has made a great difference so watch out soon for more good stuff.

I look forward to an awesome rest of the year with all of you and I thank YOU for allowing me to continue what I am privileged to do every day.

— Nancy LaBelle

2009 DSCBA Board of Directors

Jim Bibles President Luz Maria Moreno
Dave Weingart Treasurer luzmaria9@gmail.com
Tammy Garcia Secretary amypo3@mac.com
Chris Bruno mperkins@mkni.com
John Chatowski tamandbri@comcast.net
Joanne Leach family.rettig@sbcglobal.net
Marianne Iversen kfhogan@sbcglobal.net
Heather Peterson happykidstherapy@hotmail.com
Heather Farms October 11. Both committees are fired up and can use YOUR HELP! This year we welcomed five new board members and we have additional openings on our Board. I remain committed to using technology for fundraising and member communication as it has made a great difference so watch out soon for more good stuff.

I look forward to an awesome rest of the year with all of you and I thank YOU for allowing me to continue what I am privileged to do every day.

— Nancy LaBelle

2009 DSCBA Board of Directors

Jim Bibles President
Dave Weingart Treasurer
Tammy Garcia Secretary
Chris Bruno
John Chatowski
Joanne Leach
Marianne Iversen
Heather Peterson

DSCBA Staff

Laura Briggs Teacher
Virginia Bonham Teacher
Bernadette Fatehi Buddy Play Coordinator
Kathy Harkins Operations
Martha Hogan Advocacy & Support
Marianne Iversen Teacher and Program Coordinator

Useful Links...

1. Down Syndrome Research and Treatment Foundation www.dsrft.org
2. Downesd International www.downsed.org
5. Special Olympics www.specialolympics.org
6. Wrightslaw: www.wrightslaw.com
7. Disability Solutions www.disabilitysolutions.org
8. Down Syndrome Quarterly www.denison.edu/dsq/
9. Woodbine House www.woodbinehouse.com
10. Regional Center of the East Bay www.rcgeb.org
11. CARE Parent Newwork (925) 313-0999 www.contracostaarc.com
12. Family Resource Network (510) 547-7322 e-mail: 0-FRNOAK@inreach.com
13. MATRIX Parent Network & Resource Center (415) 884-3535 www.matrixparents.org
16. The Arc of Alameda County www.tw-alameda.com
17. The Down Syndrome Pages www.downsyndromepages.com/
SIBLING SUPPORT GROUP (Age 8+)

Anyone interested in a 3 week (4 session) Summer Sibling Support Group in the month of August?

There would be 4 sessions total that focus on siblings learning particular feelings such as sadness, guilt, embarrassment and anger. There would be a check in and time for each child to share and focus on an art project related to that feeling.

The program would be conducted by Terese Ghilarducci, a licensed MFT and School Counselor who has been working with children with and without disabilities for more than 17 years. Terese is a long time friend of the Connection and a member of our Advisory Board.

Sessions would be held August 4th, 6th, 11th, and 18th. Times will be determined based on interest and availability.

Cost: $25 per child per class or $100 for the four week session. If this is something your family would be interested in please contact the Connection at 925-362-8660 or email Marianne at dscba.step@yahoo.com. Please provide number of siblings and times that work best for you when contacting us!

THERE’S A NEW STEP GROUP IN TOWN

The Connection is thrilled to say in May of this year a new Step group started in Benicia. A big welcome to Damien Carlson, Ryan Ray, Rachel Warren, Mike Rury, Martin Gonsalves, and Andrew Vasquez!

This group loves to dance and party! We kicked off the summer by having a do-it-yourself pizza party. Napoli, the best pizza parlor in Benicia, donated enough dough balls for each person to have their own personal size pizza. Together we shaped, sauced, and topped our own pizzas ..... and while they baked we danced! The pizza’s were beautiful. Each pizza chef shared a slice of his/her creation, and commented on the creative mixture of toppings others used. It was a great way to kick off the summer, and we’re already planning a kick-off to Fall!

Many thanks to PACE Solano for donating the facility where we meet weekly. — Tamara Reed

DANVILLE CHILDREN’S GUILD SUPPORTS THE CONNECTION

THANK YOU to the wonderful women of the Danville Children’s Guild for hosting a benefit “Poker Night” that raised just shy of $4000.

The check was awarded to us on June 25th while our Baby Step class was in full swing with Music Therapy. As you can see in the photo there were many families taking part that day. This money will allow us to continue Baby Steps and other important programs we offer without charge to our beautiful families.

The Danville Children’s Guild is an organization of women committed to improving the quality of life for children in Contra Costa County by raising funds for various children’s charities and youth organizations. The Guild can be reached at: www.danvillechildrensguild.org

2009 Advisory Board
Terese Ghilarducci, MFT teresemarieg@comcast.net
Tim Lane, Attorney at Law jtlanesq@aol.com
Amein Punjani, Business Consultant apunjani@ameritconsulting.com
Janet Richman(Past Board Member) janetrichman@comcast.net
Julie Sodestrom Past Board President djsodstrom@comcast.net
Terry Sylvester Past Board Treasurer terry.sylvester@comcast.net
Tracy Trotter, M.D. Pediatrician ttrotter@srvpc.com
GOOGLER’S FOR A DAY

On June 9th, excited teens and adults from the Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area headed to Google Inc. in Mountain View for what was called “An afternoon at Google.”

We arrived at 3:30pm and were greeted by many happy Googler’s, as they refer to themselves, to usher us into an auditorium setting with lecture hall type seating. Each participant was paired with their own Google Buddy and a laptop was waiting for them.

An Ice breaker drew out the personality is some very charismatic participants while making those a bit on the shy side more comfortable. Next on the agenda was a tour of the “Google Plex” where outside we saw, sculptures of a shark fin and tail, pink flamingos in the grass, and a T-REX hanging out in the courtyard.

As we entered the building we found it was as fun inside as out. There were folks playing pool, airplanes hanging from the ceiling and a large photo wall of famous people. Snack shelves were everywhere where anyone could grab a free snack and we did! Blair Hogan enjoyed a tub full of plastic balls on our tour led by Andrew, Blair’s Google Buddy. As you can see in the photo Blair was very relaxed!

We headed back to the lecture hall where we were greeted with smoothies and took our seats. The most memorable moments were made during the computer and internet basics activity. I couldn’t stop taking photo’s as the expressions on the faces of those who attended were priceless. The Google Buddies took their participants through Google Earth where they were excited to locate their homes, favorite restaurants, stadiums and other favorite things. They went on to learn how to use Google Search and how to set up and chat via a Gmail account.

When the participants were asked what they learned that day we heard excitement as the participants shouted, “I found a Vet for my dog Yo Yo”, “I heard my favorite song on YouTube”, “I saw the USC Campus”, “I found my favorite movie Titanic”, “I chatted on Gmail and saw my house.”

At the end of this educational and enjoyable day each participant was given a certificate of achievement and a symbolic t-shirt marking their participation in this “Afternoon at Google.”

There is little question in the mind of this writer that those who participated will remember this experience for quite some time, and that the Googler’s lives were enriched by spending the afternoon with the incredible teens and adults who attended that day.

A special thank you to Google’s Jason Toff, Cynthia Benin and all the volunteers who shared their time and talent that afternoon.

— Nancy LaBelle

Meet Linda Plount, Grants Manager

(aka the Money Detective)

I am thrilled to have joined the Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area as the new Grants Manager and look forward to the challenge of raising much needed funds for our great programs. When most people think of grants you think of writing a compelling story, but there is another important component of grant writing—I call it private detective work.

While there are as many different foundations and grant requirements as there are charities, as a grant writer I hunt and search for the grants that best match our mission and program goals.

At a charity event years ago I heard the story of a determined volunteer (much like our Martha) who would stop at nothing to support her charity. The story takes place in the 1950s and the only place to find and research grants was in a library at the capital. This dedicated volunteer regularly boarded a bus traveling to Sacramento to find the right match. She wrote letters, made calls and slowly but surely the grants began coming in.

Fast forward to 2009… There is still the excitement of the hunt for the perfect grant, but, luckily it can be done from a laptop. The sleuthing is what makes the job of grant writer exciting. The grants are the icing on the cake.

It will come as no surprise that giving is down in 2009—whether it be from corporations, individuals and/or foundations—and today there are more charities vying for less money. So doing the research and hunting for clues will increase our chance of receiving a gift.

A good detective always needs a Watson. If you come across any leads using the clues below as you read the paper or talk to friends please contact me at: down_syndrome@sbcglobal.net.

Clues:

1. Foundations and organizations who give or have given to:
   • Children’s Programs
   • Education Programs
   • Medical Programs

2. Neighbors/Co-workers who work for corporations with foundations

3. DSCBA volunteers who work at organizations with a giving program.

Clues:

1. Foundations and organizations who give or have given to:
   • Children’s Programs
   • Education Programs
   • Medical Programs

2. Neighbors/Co-workers who work for corporations with foundations

3. DSCBA volunteers who work at organizations with a giving program.
Dear Families,

I am excited to be joining forces with the Down Syndrome Connection and therefore with you! I have been a member of the Connection since it’s inception and have known Martha Hogan since my eldest son, Eli, was born with Down syndrome 12 years ago. I have an MA in Education along with an elementary teaching credential and have been working in the field of education for 15 years. I have focused on special education for the past five years – working as a Special Education Placement and Program Consultant.

The focus of my work has been to provide an “educational vision” for a child with special needs. This means that I observe children at home and/or school, learn about the public and/or private school options available and work together with the family to recommend the optimal educational placement and program services for that child. “Placement” refers to the actual school, as well as the type of classroom: fully included or special day class for example. “Program services” refers to the supports; perhaps a child needs a full time instructional assistant (aide), an adapted math curriculum, or an in-class buddy program. These are the types of educational decisions and recommendations that I help families explore. This can be done in a formal report format or through consultation where I help to guide a family along the process.

By presenting why a child’s educational vision is necessary, we try to persuade districts to comply. Many of you, however, know that this unfortunately is not always the case. I am not an advocate. I do not fight the district for this vision, I simply help to create and support it. I do think, however, that families can empower themselves when they understand the educational vision and why it is appropriate (and conversely, why an alternate placement might be inappropriate.) I also refer families to special education advocates if that becomes necessary.

In addition to developing a child’s educational vision, I love to meet with new families and families in early transitions (i.e. the transition to preschool or elementary school.) I offer support, guidance, and information. I visit families in their homes or communities and help them adjust, organize and strategize. As many of you know, when we become parents to a child with a disability we also become advocates, secretaries, teachers, and often medical professionals. It is impossible to do it on our own — we need connections and I hope I can be one for you!

Because my experience and community knowledge is largely from the west side of Alameda County (i.e. Berkeley/Oakland/Hayward), that is where I will be conducting most of my work. It is also an area that is more difficult for the DSC to access, due to distance.

I look forward to working with you and your children!

My best, Jennifer Cooper, MA Ed

1870 Thousand Oaks Blvd., Berkeley 94707

Jennifer Cooper, MA Ed is Joining Forces with the Down Syndrome Connection. She is a Special Education Placement and Program Consultant Specializing in Developing a Child’s Educational Vision

Jennifer and Eli Cooper

June 2009

In Conjunction with the Down Syndrome Connection

Services Offered:

• Home visits
• Educational consultation: placement and program vision
• Inclusion support
• Instructional Assistant training
• Meeting preparation and/or attendance: intakes, transitions and IEPs
• Information and resource referrals

Fees: Free first hour consult (DSC membership requested). $40-$65 sliding scale for subsequent hours.

Jennifer Cooper is a Special Education Placement and Program Consultant. She has worked with families with children with disabilities for more than five years and enjoys meeting with families and helping them to navigate decisions and transitions in the world of special education. She also loves going into classrooms and consulting with teachers and staff to establish effective strategies for children with disabilities to be included and succeed. She is a longtime board member of the Infant Development Association, serving professionals and parents of children, birth to three, with special needs.

A BIG THANK YOU TO: Judith Clark of Design Elements, 355 Hartz Ave, Danville, (925-837-5839), and The International Furnishings and Design Association for their Donation of Fancy New Blinds for the Connection!
Continued from page 1

in the parade. Many families decorated wagons and pulled their younger children, while our older teens and young adults enjoyed waving to their peers in the crowd. There wasn’t a face without a smile from ear to ear!

Not only did we have a colorful and kid-friendly float decorated with beach ball balloons, colorful beach towels, baby pools and big white pool umbrellas, we also had banners and signs that read “More Alike than Different” and “Keep your head up when your syndrome is Down.” Our claim to fame was our homemade blue and yellow balloon arch! (Blue and yellow are the national colors for Down syndrome.) Our volunteers from the Carondelet cheer team passed out mini-beach balls with stickers on them with the DSCBA website and location. They also passed out DSCBA brochures to help create awareness within our community. A special thanks to our ladies from Carondelet who carried themselves with class and pride, and who helped the DSCBA more than they will ever know. (The GREAT news is that we recruited them to cheer for our walkers at this year’s Buddy Walk!)

A special thanks to all of our sponsors:
California Sun Dry Foods, Morgan’s Masonry Supply, America’s Best Battery, MKNI Insurance - Maura Perkins, Precision People’s Car Repair, Heather A. Peterson –Speech Language Pathologist, the Kelley Family, and Empact, Inc. who donated more than $750 dollars to make this event happen! A HUGE thank you to the Kelley family for housing our float for the past few weeks and sharing their home with everyone. Rich Kelley is owed many thanks for being the master craftsman of the float. His craftsmanship was not only perfect, but safe for our children. Other “Thank Yous” go to the Deeter family for helping to shape the vision for our float; Maura Perkins for her unbelievable fundraising efforts and complete reliability, and all of the families who shared their time and energy with us the past few weeks!
The Day My Life Changed Forever

I found out I was pregnant in October 2005. I was going to be a mom for the first time and I couldn’t wait!

The pregnancy was relatively uneventful. For the most part I enjoyed every moment, from the tiny kicks and movements to the excuses for eating that extra serving of Rocky Road. A few months into my pregnancy my OB/GYN asked me if I wanted to do the AFP test, I declined. I had every intention of loving my baby no matter what, therefore this test, with a very high rate of false positives, was unnecessary. Now, I wonder if somehow deep down inside I knew that Tyler had Down syndrome.

Tyler was breech, so I was scheduled for a c-section on June 29, 2006. I remember the evening of June 28, 2006 Shaun and I went out to dinner and a movie for one last date night before we officially became parents. That night I was filled with anxiety, I assume it was the fear of any first time mother. Though, now I wonder if somehow I knew something wasn’t right. I really had no idea what was to lie ahead.

I remember lying in the OR that morning of June 29th, Shaun squeezing my hand and hearing the doctors scramble around pulling my baby from my womb. I couldn’t hear him cry which terrified me. Then Shaun said “he’s fine, he’s crying, you just can’t hear him.” His cry was so soft and faint. Shaun left my side to meet our son for the first time, and brought him to me. Tears rolled down my face as I was filled with joy. I remember saying “he’s cute...he’s really cute!” He was perfect, the most precious newborn I had ever seen. I had anticipated him not being very cute as some newborns are not. But not Tyler he was my little angel. I kissed his forehead and couldn’t wait to spend the rest of my life getting to know him.

Seventy-two hours passed, no one told me he had Down syndrome, but in my heart I felt something was wrong. Tyler did not pass his miconium, he was not feeding well and for a split second I thought I saw Down syndrome in my son’s face. I put the thought out of my mind the moment it entered it. I was terrified, as time passed I became more and more uneasy. Finally, the on call pediatrician made a decision to have Tyler transferred to the NICU at UC Davis Children’s Hospital. I was devastated. The evening and days ahead were even more excruciating.

Our first morning at UC Davis Shaun and I were at Tyler’s bedside when a team of interns and a resident explained to us that they believed our son had Hirschsprung’s Disease and Down syndrome. In that second my heart was torn from my chest. I felt like I couldn’t breathe. All my dreams for my “perfect” son were shattered. This was my worst nightmare unfolding right before me. Little did I know then what I know now: this wasn’t the “end” of my world, it was the beginning.

It’s been three years since that day. Along the way we have faced a number of challenges. However, attending Baby Steps classes made my terrifying journey a lot easier. I knew I wasn’t alone in my walk. As a group we celebrated the milestones and supported one another during the difficult times. Baby Steps helped me come to realize that my son is perfect. He may not be perfect in the sense that I had originally thought, but as I have grown I have come to realize perfection is in the eye of the beholder.

Tyler is the most loving and friendly boy I know. Everyone who meets him falls in love with him instantly. He smiles, waves, and blows kisses to everyone! People I don’t even know, know me because of Tyler. I wish I could have his sweet and unflailing heart. I wasn’t sure why God chose me to be Tyler’s mother, but now I think I may understand a little more clearly. Tyler has taught me so much about myself.

He’s taught me to be a fighter, to be strong, and to love unconditionally. He’s taught me life isn’t always “perfect” but to embrace what God’s given you and be grateful for what you have, to smile when you feel like crying, and to take life one second at a time. I now thank God for choosing me instead of questioning why he chose me. It’s not been an easy journey and I know I have many challenges that lie ahead, but with every new day and every new challenge I become a little bit stronger. That little boy has given me strength and courage that I didn’t know I had. He’s just absolutely amazing.

— Raquel O’Keefe

My Life with Tatiana

My name is Marco Casadont and I have a sister who was born with Down syndrome named Tatiana. She really likes baseball and likes to go to games almost as much as I do. This picture shows her and I with my friends and dad at the Giant’s stadium.

Sometimes I think life would be lame without Tatiana. Why? because she keeps me energetic and makes me laugh a lot. She surprises me by making my bed and getting it ready for me to sleep (like at a hotel).

I have learned not to stare at people who look or act different and I have a lot of patience. My friends learn just like me when they are with Tatiana. In the car on the way to the Giants game my friends and I watched “Elmo in Grouchland” and listened to “Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious” very loud and that was okay! And I love her very much. — Marco Casadont
Emily graduated from Collins Elementary Special Day Class in Pinole and she will be attending Kindergarten also at Collins Elementary in a K-3 Special-Ed class with minimal mainstreaming. Emily’s favorite thing about school is being challenged at just the right pace. Her strength is definitely being a social butterfly at school. Emily is looking forward to the next exciting stage of her life after high school!

After graduation Marissa has been accepted to Creative Growth art studio where she will pursue her passion for art as well as attending classes at Alameda Community College. She is looking forward to the next exciting stage of her life after high school!

Summer for Emily will also bring; taking a couple of short camping trips to Donner Lake, attending the National Down Syndrome Congress Convention, and special weekly outings with her older brother Christian and Mom on Fridays. Emily will especially love her once-a-week summer time trip to Krispy Kreme Doughnuts! Yummy! Summer time is here. It’s time for fun!!

Marissa Erickson – Alameda High School

Congratulations to Marissa Erickson. Marissa has completed four years of high school at Alameda High and has a long list of achievements to be proud of. Some of her highlights include being an officer in the Best Buddy Club, playing on the girls JV basketball team and receiving the honor of Jr. Homecoming Princess. She also works part time at a local pizza restaurant and preformed Irish dancing in her school talent show.

After graduation Marissa has been accepted to Creative Growth art studio where she will pursue her passion for art as well as attending classes at Alameda Community College. She is looking forward to the next exciting stage of her life after high school!

Olivia Byers-Straus and Marcus Griego-Paraiso heading for Marcus’ senior prom at Washington High School, San Francisco

Austin Burks

Austin just completed his Senior year at Castro Valley High School and graduated on Thursday evening, June 11, 2009.

Some of Austin’s favorite things during his High School years were his English, Drama, Art and Regular Education P.E. classes. He also enjoyed using the school library. Austin loved spending lunch socializing with his friends. He and his friends would then take a bus to their Eden Area ROP Job Training Program. Austin enjoyed having a job three days a week and earning a paycheck at the end of each month. He is very proud to have graduated and is ready to move on into his adult transition program in the Fall.

Austin will be attending the Creative Growth for Art summer program in Oakland this summer. He joined a local Dance Studio and is getting ready to perform at the Alameda County Fair this summer. He plans trips to Great America and Santa Cruz, taking swimming lessons and doing recreational swimming, bowling with his friends, gearing up for the Soccer season and is most looking forward to going to the Miley Cyrus Concert in September! He is her biggest fan!

Hats Off to Deven

From his first day of life to his first words to his first steps to his first day of Kindergarten, each milestone has been celebrated with tears of joy, shouts of excitement and tons of pictures to capture the memories! Now here we are celebrating his last day of Kindergarten! Time flies when you’re having fun! Our Deven is an energetic, happy and funny 6 year old. He likes to run, jump, climb, practice kung fu, sing, dance and laugh. He will miss his teachers and his friends during his summer break but is looking forward to getting on an airplane and going to Hawaii!!! He loves the water! Though we are celebrating the end of one thing we are embarking on the beginning of many others.

We love you D! Congrats Grad! You did it!

Emily Graduated Preschool

Emily graduated from Collins Elementary Special Day Class in Pinole and she will be attending Kindergarten also at Collins Elementary in a K-3 Special-Ed class with minimal mainstreaming. Emily’s favorite thing about school is being challenged at just the right pace. Her strength is definitely being a social butterfly at school. Emily is looking forward to attending summer school with some of her previous classmates. She will also be traveling south to watch her Daddy compete in wrestling in the Western Police/Fire Games. Summer for Emily will also bring; taking a couple of short camping trips to Donner Lake, attending the National Down Syndrome Congress Convention, and special weekly outings with her older brother Christian and Mom on Fridays. Emily will especially love her once-a-week summer time trip to Krispy Kreme Doughnuts! Yummy! Summer time is here. It’s time for fun!!
**Tumbling Sami – My little Tumble Bug**

Sami and I moved to Placer County in January of 2009. I knew once we moved I wanted to get her enrolled in a gymnastics class. We play at home quite often and I managed to teach her how to do a forward roll. She practices all the time! I checked into a gymnastics place called Flip 2 It Sports in Roseville. I spoke to the owner, who happens to work with children with disabilities. I explained that Sami had Down syndrome and I was wondering if they had a class for children with special needs? She said they did - it was a Mommy and Me class and that we were welcome to come and try it out. When we got there, Sami could barely sit still... I had to hold her back from running onto the floor. She was so excited. She was the only girl in the class and the smallest. The teacher set up an obstacle course consisting of a trampoline, balance beam, and things to jump over. Sami did great as she went through the course. The teacher was pleasantly surprised and told me that Sami does not need to be in the Mommy and Me class. She told me she should be in the “Tumble Bugs” with the typical developing children. I was so happy... so proud. Her teacher’s name is Flavio and he has so much patience. Sami now goes to gymnastics every Wednesday for 45 minutes. There are about 9 kids in the class. I have seen a HUGE improvement in Sami’s motor skills. When she first started, it was difficult for her to jump on the trampoline and keep her balance. Now she is not only jumping up and down, but she is starting to jump and move forward at the same time. Her favorite thing to do is the bars. Flavio helps her spin around and pull her self up and she always does it with a smile. She can walk across a balance beam with little or no help and Sami can do one forward roll after another consistently. She surprises me every time we go with not only her positive attitude and willingness to learn, but her ability to do what the other children are doing. She often runs to me during her class and gives me a hug - her teacher has come to learn that this is going to be a frequent occurrence. Sami makes me so proud and each week I look forward to watching her learn and try new things. I couldn’t be happier with my choice to put her in gymnastics. I think we’ll stay for a while.

— Diane Fambrini

**What a Year!**

WHAT A YEAR!! Patrick had an awesome 8th grade-from beautiful art work to gaining computer skills; dances, working in the library and a wonderful Leadership program. Middle school flew by-great friends and wonderful memories were made. I’m going to miss the tight, safe community we felt there. But on to high school with new challenges and experiences! Patrick was nominated for a special award from the Physical Education Dept. I received a phone call letting me know that he was chosen as “Student of the Year.” Patrick had no idea, and it was kept a surprise till an evening ceremony. It was tough getting back to school at night! Two other 8th graders received this same award, a little speech was given about each one by the teacher; when Patrick’s name was called, he was so surprised-talk about a red face! How proud I was to watch him walk up, in front of a large crowd, shake the P.E. teacher’s hand, and receive his award. Way to go Patrick! The graduation ceremony was a mixture of emotion-and we’re only talking about 8th grade here. He walked into the local high school football stadium with his class, sat with his buddies, listen to the speeches given, and then walked up the ramp to receive his promotion certificate. Tears flowing all around me. However, I failed to mention that the ramp moved on the way down. Woah-hold the horses!! We had NO MOVEMENT on the ramp for awhile-but he figured it out. How proud I was of him, again. So-check off another hurdle on my list and moving on to the next. Go WILDCATS!

— Kathy Harkins

**An Opportunity of a Life Time**

The envelope arrived the beginning of January. It contained an invitation for Peter to attend a People to People Ambassadorship meeting. We had no idea what P2P was. After reading about the organization online we felt this was something Peter possibly could get involved in. The end of January Peter, Garry and I were off to the introductory meeting. Many would attend but few would be able to go.

All the families at the meeting had typical kids-Peter was the only child who was challenged. It was clear that we were different. After the meeting I took just a moment to talk with Dr. Irizary. He saw no reason for Peter not to go, and they did have a non-discrimination clause. So we submitted our application. We didn’t have to wait long for a response.

I must say Dr. Irizary helped us along the way. He helped us by opening doors and minds for us. And he was encouraged by his friends and family to help Peter. Peter’s paperwork had to go before the Medical Department to be sure he could keep up with the level of activity. And he had to be able to self-medicate himself. Well that was not happening!!

So we went to Plan B—Mom was to be his Aide. And that wrinkle was taken care of.

Things are now all set. Peter and I are off to Vienna, Austria on the 4th of July. Peter will represent the USA in the Bowling Division. He will be trained by world class coaches and bowl in an International Tournament with typical 11 - 18 year olds. This will give him the opportunity to teach other children from our country and around the world that being disabled may mean you learn slower, but you are still ABLE.

— Nancy Scherbert
Get Your Date, Call the Girls or Gather Up Your Co-workers and Support the Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area.

**Jazzed Up Food & Drink**
Enjoy wine, cocktails and a delicious Cajun dinner buffet presented by Meribeth Farmer Catering of Walnut Creek.

**Slam’N Music**
Dance to the hot sounds of Bay Area favorite and Louisiana-born Jules Broussard and his “BAMME award-winning” band. ([www.broussard.com](http://www.broussard.com))

**Tickets & Info**
Tickets are $55 per person and can be purchased online at [www.dsconnection.org/events/cajunfest](http://www.dsconnection.org/events/cajunfest) or by phone at 925-362-8660. After September 1, 2009 tickets will be $65 per person and can be purchased at the door. (VISA and MasterCard accepted)

**WHEN:** Saturday, September 12, 2009 | 6:00 p.m.–11:00 p.m.
**WHERE:** Shadelands Art Center, 111 N. Wiget Lane, Walnut Creek
**COST:** $55 per person / $65 at the door after Sept. 1, 2009

**VIP Sponsor Tables**
Round up your friends and co-workers and purchase a VIP table for 10 for $1500 or more and receive wine on your table, a “thank you” gift, a reserved parking spot and acknowledgement in event advertisements. (Tax ID and Receipts available)

**Live & Silent Auction, Wine Raffle & More**
Join in on the bidding and end up with fine art, great wine, delicious cakes, fun items from Bay Area businesses, TV and Radio Stations and much more.

For tickets and more information please call 925-362-8660 or visit us online at [www.dsconnection.org/events/cajunfest](http://www.dsconnection.org/events/cajunfest)
Thanks to everyone who made DSCBA’s 6th Annual Bowl-A-Rama a great success. The day started out grey, with rain showers pelting bowlers as they arrived at Earl Anthony’s Dublin bowl on May 3rd. Once inside, one couldn’t help but feel the warmth of more than 150 bowlers, friends and volunteers.

Thanks to everyone who collected pledges both on and off-line in honor of bowlers and teams and who gave generously to support the event. Thanks also to the DSCBA Board of Directors and Staff who donated many of the fabulous raffle prizes, which ranged from sports tickets to Nintendo games and iPods.

Special thanks also goes out to Virginia Bonham and Marianne Iversen and the Express Yourself and Step In classes, who designed all of the beautiful lane signs for the event, and to Nancy’s good friends Krista Veri and Jill Enders, who added the final touches. Thank you to our friends at the National Charity League, who brought volunteers to man the T-shirt and raffle ticket tables.

WITH GREAT APPRECIATION TO THE FOLLOWING FAMILY AND BUSINESS LANE SPONSORS FOR THEIR CONTINUED GENEROSITY AND SUPPORT:

- Earl Anthony’s Dublin Bowl
- Engineering Enterprises
- Huether Insurance Agency
- G&B Trophies & Awards
- PDQ Printing
- MCC Reality Group, Inc
- Rago & Son, Inc
- The Casadont Family
- The Chatowski Family
- The Elliott Family
- Roxanne Loera
- Tom & Marise McIntosh
- Gary Smith
- The Sodestom Family

Everyone’s hard work paid off with one fantastic event.

See you next year!

— John Chatowski
STEP OUT OAKLAND CELEBRATES APRIL FOOLS DAY IN “STYLE!”

Janis with a Little Help from Her Friends
Tamika and Erica
The Step Out Team
Teodros and Bobby

Family Picture Day

In exchange for a donation to the Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area, you will receive a mini family photo session.

Your mini session will include a half an hour of picture time with your family. Those images will then be edited and touched up and placed on a CD for you to enjoy. CD’s will be ready for Pick up at the DSC 2 weeks after picture day.

- Saturday, August 15, 2009
- Heather Farms Park in Walnut Creek
- 9am to 4pm
- Please RSVP for a session by August 6th via email at redbride05@aol.com or call 925-575.1942

The time for your session will be given after you RSVP.

Heather Farms Park is dog friendly, so please feel free to bring all members of your family.

Please make checks and money orders payable to: Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area.
2009 CVS CAREMARK COMMUNITY GRANT SUPPORTS BUDDY PLAY

The CVS Caremark’s All Kids Can™ program strives to make life easier for children with disabilities. Its goal is to create more inclusive environments for children with and without disabilities to build self-esteem, lasting friendships and social skills, and to help children without disabilities learn diversity and tolerance.

CVS has awarded the Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area (DSCBA) a generous gift of $2000. This will allow the DSCBA to continue the important work we do at “Buddy Play” which is all about encouraging play between children with and without special needs and creating lasting friendships through interactive fun.

Our most recent Buddy Play groups have been a big success! We all had a great time going on an “Outdoor Scavenger Hunt!” On foot, by tricycle or wagon, we followed a map with numbers, words, and pictures to find the items we needed to do our art project at the end of the trail. The kids also enjoyed meeting “Nelson,” a wonderful therapy dog and his escort Nancy who came to volunteer!

“Water Works” was equally fun, and a nice kick off for summer. We had an “ocean” and a freshwater “pond” to play in. Our duck mascot “Queen Alina” got a chance to take a bird bath and then have a snack right out of the children’s hands! Talk about a sensory experience!

It’s so rewarding to see families of children with and without special needs, come together to play! Stay tuned for more Buddy Plays to come.

Thank you CVS Caremark!

2009 SF STEP CLASS

BUDDY WALK

Sunday October 11

Walnut Creek

• Come walk with us at Heather Farms during National Down Syndrome Month & promote acceptance & inclusion!
• A mile walk, live music, bbq lunch and raffle!

DON’T MISS OUT

Join the 2009 Bay Area Buddy Walk!

On Sunday October 11th the Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area’s (DSCBA) members, friends, family and concerned citizens will walk a mile for Down’s at Heather Farms Park in Walnut Creek.

The Buddy Walk is a national event that promotes acceptance and inclusion of people with Down syndrome. This is one of three fundraisers that the DSCBA puts on to keep their doors open.

How can you help?

• Join the Buddy Walk Committee and help us make this the best year ever!
• Volunteer for the day of the event to help with logistics, registration, raffle etc.
• Gather up a walk team, register, collect pledges and walk with us.

Details are at www.dsconnection.org/events/buddywalk

For information about volunteering and walking, contact Tammy Garcia at 510-579-1541 or you can call the Connection at 925-362-8660
For Your Time, Talent and Treasures We are Grateful...

In Memory of Emma Krumwiede
Kevin L. Krumwiede
Jason Hooker
Lisa Tamak
Vy Hyman
Shimizu Ryo
Jo Ann Krumwiede
Paul Burnett
Elisabeth Cook
Kevin and Sandra Krumwiede
Barbara and Agelito Arangcon
Lora Crosslin
Michelle and Anthony Walsh
Gap Inc.-Matching Gift Program

In Honor of
Katie Buckman- from Erika Walters
Dexter Foong- from Elizabeth Tedja
Mason Zolnier- from Victor VandenBerghe

Scholarship Fund – Remembering Ruth Chiavetta
Philip & Carol Chiavetta
Nancy & Rick LaBelle

Chevron Humankind Matching Gift Program
Robert Alfrey
Paul Casadont
Scott Truger
Mark Janke
Ms. Claire A. Levay-Young

AT&T Employee Giving Campaign
Raymond Rhodes
Joanne Leach
Ana Marsh
David Kimble
Krista Veri

Kaiser Community Giving Program
Mary Kimble

Recognizing Local Business
Albany Unified School District
Design Elements, Judith Clark
Kendall Financial, Monica Shaw
Jay-Marie Insurance
Temescal Arts Center
John O’Connell High School
SunDesign Studios, Sunshine & Kimo
Eric’s Computers, Eric Hansen
PACE Solano
G&B Supply, Roy Mapplebeck
Mechanics Bank, Danville
MKNI Insurance, Maura Perkins

Annual Meeting
Katherine Sefton, MDT
Regina Marie Lewis, Attorney
at Law
Robert Kosloff, Attorney at Law
Loren Spina
Gagnon’s Catering
Jo and Rich Kelley
Julie Sodestrom
Moraga Valley Presbyterian Church
National Charity League

4th of July Parade Sponsors & Organizers
Morgan’s Masonry Supply – San Ramon
California Sun Dry Foods – Danville
Empact, Inc – Walnut Creek
Precision People’s Car Repair, Inc.
America’s Best Battery, Steve Biro
Ken Shapiro and Jackie Turnshek
Maura Perkins
Heather Petersen
The Kelley Family

Pledges & Other Donations
Pamela Brady
FRG Waste Resources, Inc
Erica Santos
Franciscan Communications
Ian & Debbie Copeland
David Manion – Farmers
Insurance
Christopher Paterno
Jay Briggs – American Pacific
Mortgage

2009 Grants and Gifts
Wayne & Gladys Valley Foundation
The J. M. Long Foundation
Quest Foundation
Kiwanis Club of San Ramon Valley
Bob Cummings-St. Joan of Arc
Youth Ministry
CVS Pharmacy
The Peter Musto Charitable Trust Fund
Danville Children’s Guild

Thank you to all of the volunteers who give so freely and who we have not mentioned above.
Please join us on Saturday, September 26, 2009 for the 4th Annual St. Joan of Arc Knights of Columbus Golf Tournament to benefit our lead charity the Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area.

All the kids and staff at Down Syndrome Connection send their love and thanks for your support!

The event includes golf at San Ramon Golf Course, and dinner, wine tasting, raffle & auction immediately following at the St. Joan of Arc Gymnasium. Duffers are welcomed, but if golf isn't your thing, come join us for an evening of fun! $140 for golf and evening events $40 for evening events only

For further information please visit the St. Joan of Arc Knights of Columbus web site: www.kofc9206.org or call (925) 263-1776
Upcoming Events ........ Mark Your Calendars!

**Saturday, September 12**

**Cajun Fest**
Come party with us. 100% of the proceeds support the DSCBA’s programs
- Tickets are $55 each
- Live music, dancing, great food, cocktails, silent & live auction and more!
- For more information and to purchase tickets: www.dsconnection.org/events/cajunfest
- We need volunteers and auction items
  *If you can help please call Nancy at the Connection 925-362-8660*

**Saturday, September 26**

**Knights of Columbus Golf Tournament and Auction Dinner**
- 100% of the proceeds support the dscba’s programs
- San Ramon golf course — $140 includes a round of golf, auction and dinner
- Information: www.kofc9206.org or call 925-263-1776

**Sunday, October 11**

**Bay Area Buddy Walk**
Walnut Creek
- Come walk with us at Heather Farms during National Down Syndrome month & promote acceptance & inclusion!
- A mile walk, live music, bbq lunch and raffle
- www.dsconnection.org/events/buddywalk
  *We need volunteers. If you can help please call Tammy Garcia at 925-362-8660*

Clean out those garages and closets!
What if I told you that you can drop off your used cell phones, laptops, hand held devices, desktop computers, remote controls, etc. at the Connection? Starting today YOU CAN! Bring your used electronic devices to the Danville Connection they will get recycled appropriately which will contribute to saving the environment.
eWASTE also gives the Connection a cash back donation based on recycle value. Tell your friends, family and neighbors........ Thanks!