Everything but Snow

By Nancy Labelle

If you came to the holiday party in December you witnessed a crowd of over 300 people getting into the holiday spirit. Thanks to the Bornstein family and the DSCBA staff, especially Marianne Iversen, the day was organized and very fun. Kids of all ages enjoyed arts and crafts with volunteer Girl Scout Troop 31700. There were many yummy sweets to be eaten, baked by generous volunteers. Nicole Patton, Music Therapist, had the Bell Choir proudly ringing in holiday tunes. Talented K. Leigh Alfrey and her clarinet have become a wonderful tradition as she spreads the holiday spirit with “Silent Night,” “Jingle Bells,” and many more tunes. This year, a talented face painter from Celebrity Gems Entertainment literally transformed smiling faces into superheroes and amazing butterflies. Who needs snow?

When Santa made his entrance, everyone stopped to hear his hearty “Ho, ho, ho.” Thank you to Mike Demazi who connects us to Santa every year. Many photos were snapped on Santa’s knee—some with smiling faces and some with not so smiling faces.

It was fun to welcome new families who attended for the first time, as well as our friends from the Central Valley. Thank you to Derek and Jennifer Jernstedt from the Quest Foundation for bringing the kids out for some fun and for being a great support for our organization.

A warm thank you goes out to all who volunteered, including Circle K for decorating and the Diablo Valley Chapter of the National Charity League for helping on the day of the event.

The photos you see were taken by volunteer photographer Steven Spedowsfki. Steven is a local photographer specializing in event and outdoor portrait photography. He has volunteered his time at several of our events. Current and past DSC event photos can be viewed at www.spedphoto.com/DownsSyndromeConnection. All photos can be downloaded for free. You can reach Steven at spedophoto@gmail.com.

Here’s hoping your holidays were joyful!
The DSCBA has a new vehicle donation program where you can donate your car, truck, van, motorcycle, RV and boat. A portion of the proceeds from the sale of the vehicle is given to the DSCBA for our programs and services. Donations are eligible for a tax deduction; please talk to your tax advisor. For more information or to donate your vehicle, please call 1-888-686-4483.
Nancy’s Notes

Community with Compassion

Nancy LaBelle, Executive Director

Happy New Year!

In March I will celebrate my fourth year at the Connection. It has been an honor to serve a community rich with members who have amazing energy and are filled with unselfish compassion for others.

I witness what I call community with compassion inside and outside our doors every day. Many parents are helping other parents who are sometimes struggling themselves. Moms and dads are sharing emotions and lessons learned via Baby Steps, newsletters, Yahoo! Groups, and support meetings.

With open hearts and homes, Parent Mentors are often taking the not-so-easy calls from newly diagnosed parents who may feel alone.

Our dedicated teachers, who truly adore their students, work to ensure young ones become strong, middle ones learn to follow directions, and older students create and nurture amazing friendships. Martha Hogan, our Parent Support and Advocacy Director, continues to give her heart and soul to many families who are in the dark about what to expect when having a child with special needs.

Every day I see lives change, including mine, because of our community with compassion.

I am happy to say, 2011 was a financially successful year at the Connection thanks to our long time generous funders such as the Wayne and Gladys Valley Foundation which has been giving to the DSCBA since 1999. The foundation gave a start-up grant of $50,000 in 1999 and has been giving ever since. Additionally, 2011 brought several new, generous funders that were touched by our mission, such as the Wells Fargo Foundation. We are truly thankful for all the foundations, community service groups, and private family funds that give so generously—providing 43% of our income. Needless to say, our giving tree is sprouting many leaves in our Danville office, reminding us each day how it is we can open our doors and why we are able to provide vital services to the Down syndrome community. We welcome our funders anytime to visit us and to witness firsthand the programs and services that are supported with your gifts.

We started new programs in 2011 such as our Parents of Adult Children and Education Support groups. We offered workshops on behavior, Augmentative and Alternate Communication devices (AAC), potty training, and much more.

Education is a hot button for us at the DSCBA. We remain passionate about helping parents get the education they want for their children and that their children deserve. In 2011, we sat side by side with parents at over 30 Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings as an advocate, helping parents prepare in many phone calls and meetings. We have a project coming in 2012 that we hope will bring about change by empowering educators with information about how children with Down syndrome learn and thrive in an educational setting.

The year 2012 has much more in store, including our annual meeting in March with a keynote speaker on behavior and much more. Mark your calendar for the magical celebration at our Gala for Giving auction and dinner dance in May at the beautiful Diablo Country Club.

In the past four years, the DSCBA community with compassion has changed my life. I can only imagine what lies ahead.

Happy New Year.

Join the DSCBA Yahoo! Groups

Laurie Hawley

Did you know the Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area has a Yahoo! Group? We do! All are invited to join. We hope this venue will be a place for everyone to share successes, ask questions of or advice from other parents, share your experiences of raising a child with Down syndrome, etc.

Have a question about potty training? Trying to decide on a preschool placement? Considering having your child’s adenoids or tonsils removed? If you have a question, it’s likely that someone else in our group has been through the same thing and can share their experience and insight. Please take advantage of this opportunity to network and connect with other families.

This is a private Yahoo! Group so you don’t have to worry about security issues. Join by going to http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/DSCBA/ and clicking on the “Join” button. Briefly explain how you are connected to the DSCBA, and then Laurie Hawley, who moderates the group, will approve you. You can also email Laurie directly at thehawleyhome@yahoo.com. She will send you an invitation to join the group.
Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area

Board of Directors – 2012
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Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area

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Terry Sylvester, Past Board Treasurer
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Tracy Trotter, MD, Pediatrician
trtrotter@svrpc.com

Board Meetings – 2012
101 J Town & Country Drive
Danville, 6:45 – 8:15 p.m.

Advisory Board
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Reading & Handwriting Consultant
info@specialreads.com
Tim Lane, Attorney at Law
jltlaneesq@aol.com
Nicole Patton, Music Therapist
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Tracy Trotter, MD, Pediatrician
trtrotter@svrpc.com

Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area
www.dscconnection.org
Phone 925.362.8660
Fax 925.362.8663
101 J Town & Country Dr.
Danville, CA 94526

2012 Parents Support Group*
Parents of children with Down syndrome are welcome and encouraged to join our monthly support group to exchange information, share common experiences, and be encouraged by other parents with similar issues and concerns. The group meets at the Danville Connection office, 101 J Town & Country Drive.
Please call Martha Hogan if you have questions or to tell her you are coming: (925) 362-8660.
*Childcare is not available. Babies under 10 months are welcome. This group is for parents.

You may be thinking the same thing I am: “I can’t believe it’s the New Year 2012 already.” Where did the time go? Time sure does go by fast when you are having fun, and come April of this year my first year as the DSCBA President will be over. It has been an exciting year thus far. For all that participated in the Buddy Walk, you know what a fun event this was. So much money was raised, all with your enthusiasm and (fun) raising. It was a beautiful day; the park was wonderful; the energy was electrifying; the food was great, and the volunteers were awesome. I felt so loved that my brother, sister-in-law, and three nieces could share the day with me, along with some very dear friends. I couldn’t have been prouder to be part of such an amazing organization and event. We also had great workshops, parent support groups, speech consultations, Step classes, grant approvals, reading classes, and so much more this month.

This spring we have two very inspiring events that I want to personally invite you to. The first will be our Annual Meeting on Saturday, March 17, 2012. This will be a day of workshops, speakers, networking, lunch, and community. There will be something for everyone in your family, including siblings. This is the first time the Connection has sponsored such an event so be sure to look for more information about this day.

Our next big fundraiser for the year, the annual Gala for Giving, will be held May 5, 2012, at the Diablo Country Club. We had our first gala last September 2010; it was an elegant evening with both a silent and a live auction, dinner, and dancing. Many tears of joy flowed that night from the outpouring of giving and generosity from so many friends of the Connection. Definitely put this date on your calendar.

I want to tell you how much I enjoy being your President. However, I could not do my job without the commitment of each Board member and our fearless leaders in the office: Nancy, Marianne, Martha, and Peggy. Thank you to all of you. For any of you who feel moved to be a part of the work we do at the Connection, there is always room for you as a volunteer, committee member, or Board member. Feel free to contact me any time at teresemarieg@comcast.net.

Can’t wait to see you at the Connection Annual Meeting and Gala!
through the monthly Education Support Group meetings and the DSCBA Yahoo! Group I’ve shared the improvement we’ve seen in our daughter Maia’s expressive language and academic confidence since enrolling her in our local Sylvan Learning center in Walnut Creek. Nancy LaBelle encouraged me to write a newsletter submission to describe our experience of how a private learning center can immediately benefit our special needs kids. Initially, I didn’t think it could.

Being relatively new to the Bay Area and thrifty by disposition, I relied heavily on Groupon and similar websites to sample Bay Area businesses and services at a substantial discount. Last August, Sylvan Learning offered a Groupon coupon for the registration fee, initial skills assessment, and four one-hour tutoring sessions. I was drawn to the offer because I felt Maia could benefit from some outside structure and academic supplementation to her school program. Plus, there was a location in our very neighborhood.

Admittedly, I was skeptical that a small learning center could cater to Maia’s academic needs—after all, her education plan at school was drawn up by a roundtable of educators, specialists, and caregivers, and still occasionally begged for revision as unforeseen issues arose. I also thought a learning center essentially served as an academic boot camp for kids whose parents always wanted them ahead of grade level and for those who desperately needed to fix a slipping grade. All the same, I figured the worst that could happen was that Maia would burn out shortly after starting and that I’d have blown $100 to confirm my suspicion that she didn’t belong there.

Nonetheless, before purchasing the Groupon coupon and signing Maia to a trial period with Sylvan Learning, I contacted our local center in Walnut Creek to inquire if they had what it takes to accommodate a child with developmental delays and behavioral issues. I spoke at length with the center Director, Karen, about Maia’s learning challenges and escapist behaviors. I also opened up and shared some of the challenges we had had with our school district in making a case for Maia’s academic potential in an inclusive educational setting. Karen, unfazed by my questions yet sympathetic to the learning needs I described, expressed confidence that the Sylvan Learning program could be tailored to address behavioral and sensory issues that we had seen impede access to learning. She went further to say that Sylvan attends Individual Education (IEP) meetings and meets with school staff if the family requests this.

I acknowledged that my wife, Fatima, and I were uncertain about what teaching formats could engage Maia and whether Maia had the stamina for one-hour sessions. But if we could boost Maia’s confidence in the classroom we might mitigate escape behaviors and eventually make academic tasks preferred activities. Shortly after signing on to the Groupon trial, Karen reached out to Maia’s teacher and resource support staff at school to get a further understanding of what academic challenges needed to be addressed. My wife and I were eager to facilitate Sylvan’s access to Maia’s school program by sharing her IEP and behavioral support plan. Drawing on these resources, Sylvan Learning devised a multisensory, multimedia math and reading program and selected an ideal tutor for Maia. Within three weeks, Maia was tolerating full hour sessions and wanting more.

After a nine-hour stint at school and afterschool care, Maia still looks forward to 5:30 p.m. sessions with her tutor. My wife and I periodically peek through the glass from the waiting room, paranoid that teaching materials are being flung in protest, but delighted to see Maia with her face lit up and engaged in her lesson plan. We see her embrace the learning experience at Sylvan and increasingly so at school and home. Classroom centers and writers’ workshops are being done more independently with very few and very minor disruptive behaviors. Her Speech and Language Pathologist (SLP) is delighted by the marked improvement in her expressive language and attentiveness.

While we’re thrilled with the current educational program at Maia’s elementary school in Walnut Creek, we feel Sylvan Learning has bolstered Maia’s performance and learning acquisition. In several ways, they have supplemented and reinforced strategies for Maia to meet her IEP goals. They’ve offered a level of attention and solutions which most families would hope their school districts would offer. They are eager and willing to share their assessments and progress reports with Maia’s school and participate in IEP meetings. After seeing a functional behavioral assessment and intervention plan implemented for Maia, we know first-hand how invaluable a third-party perspective on a child’s learning progress and needs can be when the school district and parents have disparate views or have run short of ideas. Fortunately, we are blessed with a teacher, support staff, and private learning center that take genuine interest in preparing Maia for further learning in years to come.

For any questions regarding this article, Vivek can be reached at dosawalla@gmail.com.

SOcially connected!
Check us out on Facebook at
WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/DSCBA

260 fans so far – why don’t you become one too?
Get updates from the connection and learn about events
Fans can post text, photos and video to DSCBA’s page

February 2012 Making the Connection
Bringing Vika Home: Our Adoption Story

Janeé Pedersen

I will never forget the moment I met my third child, my daughter Viktoria. Unlike our first two children, who came to us the old-fashioned way, my husband and I met Vika (pronounced VEE-kah) on a beautiful sunny morning in a century-old orphanage on the other side of the world. Also unlike my first two children, Vika was born with Down syndrome. It’s why she was there in the first place. Her birth parents, young, most likely poor, and living in a society where people with disabilities are viewed as social outcasts, felt unable to care for her. By the time she was a week old, the test results were in, the papers had all been signed, and she was officially an orphan.

I think that my husband and I had always known we would adopt, but we never imagined it would be a child with Down syndrome. When we first considered adoption, we were certain that we wanted to adopt a waiting child: a child who was already cleared for adoption and was just waiting for a family to come for them. Waiting children are almost always those with disabilities or health issues or children over age five or six. After a lot of research, we felt quite certain that we wanted to adopt an HIV+ child.

By April of 2010 we were ready to begin. We decided to pursue an independent adoption from Ukraine—meaning that we would be adopting without the help of an agency. We completed our home study and prepared to bring home an HIV+ child under age two.

Then in July, just before we were ready to submit our paperwork to the Ukrainian government, our hearts began to change. We learned more about the plight of those with physical and developmental disabilities in Eastern Europe—that the vast majority of these children are legally abandoned by their parents at birth, and are sent to orphanages where they spend their early childhood. By the time they turn four or five, they are transferred to mental institutions where they live out the rest of their lives. The conditions in these “invalid homes” are horrific. There is inadequate health care, few caregivers, and no education or therapy. Many do not survive. The most high-functioning children spend their days lined up on benches in cold concrete rooms or crowded into outdoor sheds. The less fortunate ones are sedated and kept in cribs 24/7, wasting away.

As we considered these things, our hearts were broken. We found ourselves unable to sleep, unable to think of anything else. We spent hours in prayer, considering if we might be called to adopt one of these children. We researched Down syndrome and explored resources in our community (including the DSCBA!). We grappled with the thought of having a “forever child” who may never leave our home. We talked to other adoptive families and considered the affects that years of neglect would have. Within about two weeks we had made up our minds. We made some last-minute changes to our paperwork, specifically requesting to adopt a child with Down syndrome.

In October 2010 we flew to Ukraine, excited to meet the little girl we had heard about from another adoptive family. After spending a few days meeting with officials in Kiev, we traveled 12 hours to the south, to a city called Nikolaev.

The papers had been signed, the Ukrainian social workers had approved us, and now there we were. We were led into the room where she was living with 11 other children, all ages two through five—some of them healthy, some of them with obvious delays and disabilities. Then we saw Vika. She captured our hearts immediately, and as her nanny helped her take a few wobbly steps toward us, tears filled our eyes and we knew instantly she was meant to be ours. After just a few minutes our translator asked us if we were sure we wanted to proceed with her adoption. There was not a doubt in our minds!

A little less than a month later, after a couple more flights across the ocean, everything was finalized and I landed in SFO a few days before Thanksgiving with our new daughter. We were met at the airport by Vika’s new grandparents and our two other children, who were then 3-1/2 and 1-1/2 years old. My 3 year old daughter, after hugging and kissing her new sister, asked us if we could please go back and get her a little brother, too!

Over the last year we have learned a lot as we’ve parented Vika. She is an amazing girl, so bright and so determined. She has made incredible progress and adds much joy to our lives. Of course it is not always easy. Even after a year, we deal with the effects of her institutionalization on a daily basis. We are all still learning to better understand each other, and she’s learning what it’s like to live in a family and be loved. Every day we thank God for the beautiful gift He has given us in Vika.

At the same time, not a day goes by when we don’t remember the ones we had to leave behind. There are currently 165 million orphans in the world, and thousands are wasting away in institutions like the one Vika was headed for. We plan to adopt again in the next few years, and in the meantime we love talking to other families who are interested in adopting waiting children, both domestically and internationally. If you think you might be interested in adopting a child with special needs, please feel free to contact me by phone (925-784-7530) or e-mail (janeenoel@yahoo.com). I would love to talk to you! You can also read more about our journey to meet Vika at www.iwillcometoyou.wordpress.com.
Engaged!  
– Karen Peterson

It was bound to happen. On Friday, December 16, when Heather Peterson and Mark Vukelich were en route to Half Moon Bay to celebrate Heather’s birthday, they made a slight detour to the DSCBA for a surprise marriage proposal. Since their second date had been at the Bowl-A-Rama, it seemed only appropriate to come back full circle to the DSCBA which holds a very special place in their hearts. Mark, with the assistance of others, arranged to have many onlookers on-site to witness this special moment. Encircled in red roses, Mark got down on bended knee and popped the question to the delight of Heather, her family, invited friends, the DSCBA staff, and many of Heather’s clients. Afterwards, everyone shared champagne and a healthy round of picture-taking.

Congratulations to the newly engaged couple.

Save the date to “Step Up for Down Syndrome”  
(Formerly known as the Buddy Walk)

Benefitting the Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area  
SUNDAY OCTOBER 7, 2012  
LITTLE HILLS RANCH, SAN RAMON

New Book!  
Down Syndrome Parenting 101: Must-Have Advice for Making Your Life Easier  
– Natalie Hale, author

Exciting news comes from DSCBA’s reading teacher, Natalie Hale (mom of Jonathan, 27): Woodbine House has just published her latest book, Down Syndrome Parenting 101. This book spans parenting our kids from the cradle to independent living and is the first book of its kind. Woodbine House explains it best with the following description.

Down Syndrome Parenting 101 will be cheered by parents, grandparents, siblings, teachers—anyone who shares life with a person with Down syndrome—for delivering inspirational advice, nuggets of wisdom, and plenty of laughs. Throughout, author Natalie Hale draws upon her personal and professional experiences raising a son, now an adult, and teaching educators and parents how to teach children with Down syndrome to read.

Beginning with a Foreword by Martha Beck, parent of a child with Down syndrome and author of the New York Times bestseller, Expecting Adam, Down Syndrome Parenting 101 offers inspired takes on a host of important issues, from learning to recognize and celebrate your child’s personality and gifts to finding a great teacher for him, and from insisting your child pull his own weight to giving your child his space as an adult. The author—equal parts mentor, humorist, enthusiast, and realist—masterfully takes readers by the hand and walks them through the various life stages, experiences, and people they will encounter with their child including: getting to know and fall in love with your child, interacting with medical professionals, literacy, discipline, school, transitioning, and independence.

Chapters are short, a plus for busy parents, and can be read individually or sequentially. Turn to this upbeat book for credible, realistic advice and for a dose of bibliotherapy when you need validation and perspective.

And here’s an unsolicited Amazon customer review:

“I’ve read them all but this one is GREAT!

My lovely daughter Lilya (who has Down Syndrome) is now 5 years old. From day one I read many many books that were available concerning Down Syndrome. Many were good, but this book is a GEM. It is grounding, uplifting, funny, serious and SMART! It reminds us about the essentials of life - to recognize and to remember to appreciate the gifts life give us.

I heartily recommend this book to new and seasoned parents of children with Down syndrome. It is uplifting and encouraging to new parents and puts the seasoned parents (with busy life schedules) “back on track” to what life is about. And - just for the record - I found this book on Amazon and was reluctant to buy it as I’ve read so many already... but so glad I got it! Thank you Ms. Hale! Warm regards to you and your family!”
SPECS4US, Superior Precision Eyewear for Children Who Are Special, introduces a new concept in eyewear for children with Down syndrome that eliminates the problems commonly associated with traditional eyeglasses.

The mission of SPECS4US is to improve the vision and quality of life for individuals with Down syndrome by providing affordable custom frames designed especially for them.

The Erin’s World line of frames is engineered to fit the unique facial features of children with Down syndrome while offering stylish options handcrafted for an active lifestyle. Each pair of frames offers special design features not found anywhere else. Adult sizes and sunglass clips are also available.

Created by the mother of a child with Down syndrome and 25 years experience as an optician, the Erin’s World eyewear from SPECS4US will help children and adults explore their world with enhanced vision combined with an exciting level of style.

You can find the Erin’s World line of frames at:
Unique Eyecare, 1875 S Bascom, Suite 162 Campbell, CA 95008
408-377-2076

For more information and additional locations, visit www.SPECS4US.com or call 1.800.586.1885.
Sara Rosenfeld Johnson visited the DSCBA in November 2011 to perform 20 oral placement therapy evaluations in just four days! Part of her work was also to continue my training as a Level 4 therapist. This level of certification was very different than Level 3. This time around, I was doing a lot of the work and Sara was doing a lot of the “constructive criticism.” If any of you have had the pleasure to work with Sara, you know that she is a no-nonsense, tough New York woman. Needless to say, she didn’t hold anything back. She told me how it was and how it was going to be no matter how many people and video cameras were in the room with us!

We evaluated babies for the first time and updated program plans for some of the older children and adults. Despite the intensity of the days, it was very easy to get completely and totally caught up in a euphoric moment when a child said a perfect word or voiced a new sound for the first time. Many of Sara’s long time clients were speaking in clear sentences. I still think those children and families are incredible! To experience the humor and sarcastic personalities of some of our children was very moving and very motivating for me.

As the weeks have progressed since her visit, I have realized that Sara’s training, including all of her “constructive criticism,” has immensely helped my current practice.

I have noticed my evaluations are more thorough, and my skills are more refined. Sara made a few recommendations to me before she left. One of them was to become PROMPT certified. PROMPT therapy is a tactile (facial prompting) technique used for children with motor planning difficulties in order to help them create sounds and sequence them together to form words. This technique coupled with strong oral musculature enhances motor planning for speech development at the sound, word, and sentence levels.

As always, training with Sara was truly beneficial, utterly exhausting, but ultimately inspiring. Thank you, Sara, for everything!

**PROMPT Therapy Training**

The DSCBA will be holding a PROMPT certification class in the spring (TBD) for all speech therapists in the area. If your speech therapist is interested in PROMPT training, please pass along their information my way. (See the above paragraph for a description of PROMPT.)

**Augmentative and Alternative Communication Recommendation**

The California Communications Access Foundation and the DSCBA have teamed up with an Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) specialist, Kati Skulski, in order to provide assistive technology for our children who need a voice. Our AAC library was unveiled this February 2012, giving families the opportunity to try a variety of low, medium, and high tech devices with their children. Kati and Nancy have been hard at work to create the library, seminars, and alliances with funders and outside professionals/schools so that our children can have the best possible communication experience. Please come in and check out one of the devices for your child. Heather is available for AAC evaluations and specific training. Please contact Kati Skulski at kaskulski@gmail.com. Please contact Heather Peterson at heather@happykidstherapy.com. Please contact Nancy LaBelle with ideas at: nancy@dsconnection.org.

At the DSCBA web site you will find information about: AAC Basics, The World of Education and Communication Applications and AAC in the School Setting. Additional information is available at http://www.dsconnection.org/information/augmentative-alternative-communication.php

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**Explore Gary Shupin Independent Living Community Today**

Shupin Community offers young adults with developmental disabilities a unique living experience in San Francisco's vibrant Laurel Village neighborhood. Residents live independently in a supportive environment with these benefits:

- Apartment living
- Regularly scheduled programs to meet individual needs and interests
- Independent-living skills training
- Vocational resources
- Financial/money management
- Social skills coaching

Learn more at www.shupincommunity.jfcs.org or call 415-449-3822.

The Shupin Social Club offers cooking and music classes, holiday get-togethers, recreational opportunities, and social and cultural outings—for residents and nonresidents.

STRENGTHENING INDIVIDUALS. STRENGTHENING FAMILIES. STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY.
Benicia Step
Tamara Reed

At right: The group saw the movie Mr. Popper’s Penguins and then made a movie review. Find the review on YouTube, search for the title “Benicia step group reviews the movie Mr Poppers Penguins.”

Above: Andrew, Mike and Lisa having a great day; they sold over 40 hot dogs and sodas as a fundraising activity in conjunction with the Grocery Outlet for their Independence from Hunger July event!

At right and below: In October we visited Dream Dinners in Benicia. The group made French crispy chicken and tasty appetizers. Many thanks to owners Esther Hassard and John Lucchesi for helping make this a great afternoon!

Below: In November, the group toured the Benicia Fire Museum. Assistant curator Christine Cooley & fellow volunteer fighter Robert Bruce explained how various equipment was used throughout history. The group tried on hats from different eras and had fun looking at the older trucks on display.

Benicia Step group Christmas party
by Martin Gonsalves & Lisa Silva

We had a really cool Christmas party. We set up, planned, and shopped on our own. We learned to cook and make appetizers. We felt proud of ourselves. It was fun to have our friends and family together. Thank you for coming to our party!
### Pasta dinner

**by Andrew Vasquez**

I love to get together and cook with my friends! Lisa and Rachel made salad. Martin, Mike, and Damien made ravioli casseroles, and of course I make the best garlic bread. We all set the table, and cleaned up. It’s fun to hang out with my friends!

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### Down Syndrome Awareness Horse Show

**Melissa Lucia**

I am blessed to be the mother of three wonderful children, one of whom, Bella (19 months), happens to have Down syndrome. I am also blessed to be the daughter of two wonderful parents, Lamont and Helen Brown, and by all other members of my family. My parents, who live in Forest, Virginia, wanted to do something special in October in honor of National Down Syndrome Awareness Month. They own a horse farm in Virginia, where my mom boards many horses and teaches students; she also rides competitively. She decided to host the First (hopefully annual) Down Syndrome Awareness Horse Show and Competitive Trail Ride.

This event was held on October 15, 2011, at their amazing equestrian facility. All money raised through the entry fees, raffles, craft sale, food, and drink was donated to the DSCBA. There were 48 horse riders competing at this show and approximately 350 spectators. This was a very large turnout! To put it into perspective, a typical event will have about 30 riders and maybe 100 spectators. In addition to the Horse Show itself, there was a raffle, a bake sale, a craft and yard sale, a magic show, and food and drink provided by a local barbeque company. There were also 25-30 local sponsors. Everyone was so excited to be a part of something like this—many have already committed to doing it again next year! Bella was even entered into one horse class and she happily waved to all of the spectators as she was led around the ring (see photo)! She was definitely the star of the show! Altogether we raised $3,800 for the DSCBA! For a small town horse show, this is an amazing amount.

Additionally, and more importantly than the monies received was the community awareness raised by this event. Even though the area I am from has a population of about 150,000 people, they do not have their own Down syndrome organization. This event brought out five families with children having Down syndrome. My hope is that they will begin and continue to foster a support network for themselves. Additionally, many people who were unfamiliar with the specifics of Down syndrome received a great education during this event! I am so thankful for my parents and entire family and their willingness to undertake such a huge event in a showing of support for Bella and for raising awareness for Down syndrome! Bella sure is one lucky cowgirl! If you want to see all of the pictures from the horse show, you can view them online at my parents’ website at [http://www.willowcreekfarmssva.com/horse-show-2011.html](http://www.willowcreekfarmssva.com/horse-show-2011.html).
Buddy Walk 2011

Nancy LaBelle

The 2011 Bay Area Buddy Walk is a day we will never forget with 400 more guests than expected, but very welcomed, and an outpouring of volunteers and community sponsorship. Over 1,000 people attended on October 2 (during National Down Syndrome Awareness month)—almost three times as many as Buddy Walk 2010—to celebrate the acceptance and inclusion of all people who have Down syndrome.

Little Hills Ranch accommodated us beautifully and offered an environment full of fun. Bouncy house, tattooing, fishing, rock wall climbing, and more were enjoyed by all. At the park, the band 2ENDEAVOR rocked the house and got everyone up and dancing. Thanks to Larry Gagnon of Gagnon’s Catering and Rentals, the Danville/Sycamore Valley Rotary, and the St. Joan of Arc Light Youth Group, we enjoyed a wonderful lunch.

Our goal was to raise $100,000 since the Buddy Walk is one of two fundraisers that literally keep the doors at DSCBA open. In July of 2011 I challenged our members and our community to help us raise that $100,000. A simple webpage created by 97 families was sent out to friends and family, resulting in over $125,000 of online donations.

Our biggest fundraisers were the Zolnier and VandenBerghe families. Together, they raised a record-breaking $15,000 from their web pages in honor of amazing Mason, who turned three years old the day before the walk. The Zolniers were proud winners of an iPad2. The Quintella family came in second place with over $8,000 raised for sweet Leah. And the Garcias were a very close third place with over $8,000 raised in honor of Brandon; he had over 25 fans walking with him that day.

The largest team was Team Drucker with over 75 people proudly walking for awesome Will. The second largest team was the Krikschiunas family, supporting sweet Ella. She had an entourage of over 40 people walking and celebrating her first birthday with party hats and colorful signs.

There are so many people to thank for making this event a success (see page 18). A warm thank you to the Cal Parks Company for their generous discount of the park facility. Thank you to everyone who attended and made this event a success!

Save the date and watch for more information about the 2012 DSCBA Step Up for Down Syndrome (formerly the Buddy Walk) coming on October 7, 2012, at Little Hills Ranch in San Ramon.
More photos of fun at the highly successful 2011 Buddy Walk.

Messages from her Family

A genuine smile worth waiting for...
I love to see you smile
When I do, nothing else matters!
-Tia Rosa

Tatiana, we love you and miss you a lot when you are in California. It’s fun and rewarding when you are around. You always make us feel happy and loved.   Kisses - Tia Mercedes and family

Tatiana, you bring the best out of each one of us
- Tia Dulce

I love when you come to Puerto Rico because you make me happy. I miss you (and Marco)
- Yaya

Tatiana, at 16 years old
You are an amazing girl
You make me smile
You are so beautiful
You make the sun shine
When you saw Santa
your face lit up
You know what Christmas means and you felt God

Tatiana’s heart filled with joy as Santa entered the gymnasium at the 2011 Holiday Party.
tOTs at Play
Marianne Iversen

tOTs at Play, the new class for children between the ages of three to six just started this January. Zarah Goseingfiao and Michelle Rojas, two of the incredible Occupational Therapists (OTs) from Therapy at Play, facilitate our class. This class focuses on developing fine motor skills and readiness for writing.

Activities include sensorimotor exercises which engage core muscles and prepare children for seated and focused tasks. At each class the students work on table activities that involve prewriting and writing skills and encourage appropriate pencil grip. The students develop their handwriting strength, bimanual skills, manipulation skills, and hand-eye coordination.

Above, Nico Barillas engages his muscles while jumping on the trampoline and Mason Zolnier works on improving his balance.

If you are interested in your child attending this new class, please contact Marianne Iversen at (925) 362-8660.

New Class: Music Therapy
Marianne Iversen

A new Music Therapy class has started for ages 6–10. This class is facilitated by our wonderful Music Therapist, Nicole Patton. We are also happy to have 14-year-old Emma Tippett as a volunteer helper. This class is held on the first Saturday of every month 12:15-1:45 p.m. Both kids and parents had a wonderful time at our first class this January.

Above: Jayden Azzopardi and Mara Shofner drum to the beat of the music. Clockwise from below: Emma helps with parachute fun, Hailey Bornstein joins in parachute fun with Nicole and the rest of the class, Emily Lonis makes her own music with the “Boom Wackers” Maia Tenorio enjoys rocking out with the maracas.
2012 Spring Schedule

**MUSIC THERAPY**
1st Saturday of every month
Ages 0-4 years • 10:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m.
Ages 6-10 • 12:15-1:45 p.m.

**TOTS AT PLAY**
Ages 3-5 years • Fridays: 12:15-1:15 p.m.

**BABY STEPS**
Ages 0-3 years • 3rd Wednesday every month
10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

**SMALL STEPS**
Ages 5-8 • Mondays: 3:30-5:00 p.m.

**STEPPIN’ UP**
Ages 8-13 • Wednesdays: 3:30-5:00 p.m.

**NEXT STEP**
Ages 13-19 • Tuesdays: 4:00-5:30 p.m.

**ADULT CLASSES THROUGHOUT THE BAY**
**Step In** – Danville • Thursdays: 4:00-5:30 p.m.
**Step Out** – Oakland • Wednesdays: 3:45-5:15 p.m.
**SF Step** – San Francisco • Tuesdays: 4:00-5:30 p.m.
**Benicia Step** – Benicia • Wednesdays: 4:00-5:30 p.m.
**Pinole Step** – Pinole • Fridays: 3:30-5:00 p.m.

**SUPPORT GROUPS**

**Parent Support Group**
4th Tuesday of each month • 7:00-9:00 p.m.

**Grandparent Support Group**
4th Wednesday of each month • 10:00-11:30 a.m.

**Support for Parents with Adult Children**
3rd Thursday, every other month • 7:00-9:00 p.m.

**Educational Support Group**
3rd Wednesday of each month • 7:15-9:00 p.m.

**Father Support Group**
If you are interested in learning more about this group, please call the Connection

**Sibling Support**
If you are interested in learning more about this, please call the Connection.

*For more information* please check our website at [www.dsconnection.org](http://www.dsconnection.org)
SF Step’s Día de los Muertos Celebration

– Harold Burns

The SF Step group celebrated Día de los Muertos this year for the first time. The idea came from multiple conversations with the group about the sorrow that they felt losing loved ones over the past few years. We asked the students to bring photos and stories for their memory boxes. We spent two sessions decorating the boxes with photos, drawings, and poems while also sharing stories with the group. We then created an altar for the boxes with flowers, candles, and traditional paper decorations. It was very meaningful and cathartic and brought us closer together as a group. We look forward to making this a yearly tradition.

Steppin’ Up’s Holiday Celebration

Laura Briggs

The Steppin’ Up class walked over to the Luna Loca restaurant to celebrate the holidays. Great fun and food were had by all.
Next Step

Marianne Iversen

Thanks to the wonderful generosity of the California Communications Access Foundation, our Next Step class was able to purchase and incorporate Talking Photo Albums into their curriculum. Each student was given their own personal photo album to record a message for each picture. The students described what was in each picture and, with the help of classroom volunteers, recorded a short description of each photo. They were then able to share their photo albums with their peers. The photo albums can be used in a variety of different ways to assist students in sharing life experiences and photos of their interests. School projects where the student needs to speak in front of their class are another fabulous way to use these albums.

Top: Macee LeMoine and Juliana Portoni
Above: Marianne Iversen and Emma Tippett
Left: Laura Redmond and Patrick Harkins

Kayaking in the Bay

Tamara Reed

On October 23 several of our adult DSCBA members were able to take another wonderful kayaking trip on the SF Bay in Sausalito in connection with Environmental Traveling Companions. Thanks to the Kiwanis Club of San Ramon Valley for their grant that made this incredible experience happen!

Movie Party

Olivia Byers-Straus

In November Olivia Byers-Straus hosted a movie party at her house. After loading up their plates with chicken tenders, bagel bites, fruits, and veggies, she and a dozen friends crowded into the TV room to watch Secretariat.

The group shows their fun side

There was much conversation before, during, and after the movie, as well as outbursts of enthusiasm, especially during the horse races! It was so much fun that Olivia is planning future gatherings throughout the year.
For Your Time, Talent and Treasures We are Grateful...

- AT&T Employee Giving Campaign
- David Kimble
- Joanne Leach
- Raymond Rhodes
- Krista Veri
- Kim Wolken
- Chevron Human Kind Matching Gifts Program
- Paul Casadont
- Mark T Janke
- Scott Truger
- Community Health Charities of CA
- Janet Holmes
- Edwin Ostrowski
- Kaiser Community Giving Program
- Rick LaBelle
- Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund
- Mr. and Mrs. William Calhoun
- PG&E Corporation Campaign for the Community
- Mary Galvin
- Car Donation Services
- Steve Benson
- Cesar Dantes
- Joyce Mesinsksky

PC World Communications Matching Funds
Katelyn Vandenbergs
Columbus Foundation - Diamond Hill Investments Matching Funds
Richard Snowden
Applied Materials Matching Funds
Michael Kamp
Kennedy/Jenks Consultants Matching
Mike McLeod
General Donations
Alta Bates Medical Group
Baking for Good
James and Veronica Barillas
JH & Betty Barr
Hellen and T Lamont Brown
Peter Straus and Lili Byers
Garrett & Cathy Girvan
Nancy Henderson
Heritage Bank of Danville
Arthur and Jane Hillman
Sunita Sayana Lokuge
Melissa & Christian Lucia
Velma & Mario Magnani
Geetanjali Magodia
William McClure
Mike McLeod
Kevin & Lori McNally
Bob and Marlyand Randick
Kenneth & Marilyn Rasler
Steven & Angelica Rettig
Lilbie Shimer
Victoria Smith
Barbara Strehlitz
Vallejo Grocery Outlet
Neil Wallace
Whole Foods, San Ramon

- Foundations, Family Funds and Service Organizations
- Anonymous Family Fund
- Barr Family Foundation
- The Ray Benton Family Fund
- California Communications Access Foundation
- Chatowski Family Fund
- CVS Caremark Community Grant
- Diablo Country Club Foundation
- The Carl Gellert and Celia Berta Gellert Foundation
- Jam Handy Character Building Foundation
- Heffernan Group Foundation
- Kiwanis Club of Pleasant Valley
- Kiwanis Club of San Ramon Valley
- Knights of Columbus Council 9206
- Lencioni Fund
- The Joseph and Vera Long Foundation
- The Thomas J Long Foundation
- Lowell Berry Foundation
- M Squared Consulting, Inc
- Maurice Amado Foundation
- The Peter Musto Charitable Trust
- NAIBA Charitable Foundation
- The Noll Foundation
- The Oakland Athletics Community Fund
- The Quest Foundation
- San Ramon Rotary
- Wayne & Gladys Valley Foundation
- Wells Fargo Foundation

In Honor of Kathy Zolnier’s Birthday
The Vandenberge Family

In Honor of Mason Zolnier
James and Kathy Zolnier

In Honor of Damian Lawton
Susan Stanton

In Honor of Patrick Harkins
Mary M Greene

In Honor of Garrett Rebello
Diane Greenspan

In Memory of Eugenia Carter
Nancy & David Cleary
Ian & Debra Copeland
John & Linda Harkins
Carol & Tom Huvane
John & Donna McMorrow
Matthew & Megan Portoni
Bert & Evelyn Schroeder
Jean Wright

In Memory of Annette Albrow
Cathy Buffetton
Mel and Wanda Jones

In Memory of Emma Krumwiede
Lisa M Priggs

In Memory of Tom Northrup
Mary Rettig

In Memory of Aofie McComb
Patrick & Ann Aherne
Anne Burke
Dean and Anne Fogel
Brian Kyne
Frank Kyne
Gertrude Kyne
Kevin Kyne
Martin Kyne
Rita Kyne
Teresa McDonagh
Ann O’Connell
John, Josephine, Aidan, Aisling, Nial & Maura O’Flynn
Adrian Parr
Lisa Whitman

In Memory of Rochelle Ann Battie
Victor Vandenberge

2011 Holiday Party Volunteers
- Mary Ballin
- The Bornstein
- Tawny Burns
- The Cannon Family
- Circle K Volunteers
- Laura Redmond
- May Cook
- Mike Demasi
- Girl Scout Troop #31700

2011 Buddy Walk Volunteers
- Laura Azzopardi
- Cal High Leadership
- Tami Castelluccio
- Circle K-East Bay
- State University Circle K-University of California Berkeley
- Maureen Cummings
- Danville/Sycamore Valley Rotary
- Robert Fuenzalida
- Ray Hoyt
- Mike Sherrill
- Karl Weber
- Tammy & Brian Garcia

Our Amazing Volunteers
- K. Leigh Alfrey
- Wendy Blalock
- Lauren Bruno
- Tawny Burns
- Allee Ceccone
- Andrea Chiang
- Andrea
- Dereschuk
- Matthew Duckett
- Sean Duckett
- Dawn Handley
- Maria Huetter
- Camille Hunt
- Mira Khawam
- Jennifer Kilian
- Macee LeMoine
- Alexis Liebowitz
- Toni Liebowitz
- Elyse Perry
- Marlyns Randick
- Laura Redmond
- Paula Ridley
- Heather Rigby
- UCB Circle K International

DSCBA Programs Can Only Continue with Your Help!

43% of our funding comes from our fundraising events

CASH DONATIONS
Send a check to: Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area, 101-J Town and Country Drive, Danville, CA 94526.
Phone: 925-362-8660

DONATE WITH PAYJUNCTION
The DSCBA is a member of PayJunction a free service which allows you to purchase or donate using your credit card on a secure web site. PayJunction deposits your donation directly to our account. Visa and MasterCard are accepted at www.dsconnection.org/donate

DONATE AN AUCTION ITEM
This is a great opportunity to showcase your business products and services or to give a great tax deductible item to be auctioned at one of our events. Some past items that are popular are wine packages, vacation homes, sports memorabilia, fine art, jewelry, spa packages etc.

SPONSOR AN EVENT
Sponsor an event at a level that works for you. Publicize, advertise and show off your company logo while giving to a worthwhile cause. Have a booth and speak at our event.

HOLD A FUNDRAiser TO BENEFIT THE CONNECTION We are looking for community service organizations or businesses to hold a fundraiser in our name. One way to do this is to have a Charity Golf Tournament, Auction/Dinner or Crab Feed to name a few. Have ideas? Please call the Connection.

How Can You Help Us?

VISITOR
Volunteer your time and work at an event, spend time in one of our classes, come help out with newsletter mailings and other project. Call us for more information.

CORPORATE GIVING AND MATCHING PROGRAMS
Some companies will match a level that works for you. Publicize, advertise your support and show off your company logo while giving back to our cause.

SIGN UP FOR THE ESCRIP PROGRAM
A portion of your purchase will be donated to the Connection. Visit www.escrip.com to get started. ID#48845638.

Our Amazing Volunteers
- K. Leigh Alfrey
- Wendy Blalock
- Lauren Bruno
- Tawny Burns
- Allee Ceccone
- Andrea Chiang
- Andrea
- Dereschuk
- Matthew Duckett
- Sean Duckett
- Dawn Handley
- Maria Huetter
- Camille Hunt
- Mira Khawam
- Jennifer Kilian
- Macee LeMoine
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- Laura Redmond
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The 1st Annual DSCBA Empowerment Conference and Annual Meeting

Saturday, March 17, 2012
9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Rolling Hills Community Church, Danville
1565 Green Valley Road Danville, CA 94526

The Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area is pleased to announce our first Empowerment Conference and Annual Meeting which will take place on Saturday, March 17, at the Rolling Hills Community Church in Danville. The Empowerment Conference will provide information and practical advice to help parents and extended family members regarding someone they love who has Down syndrome.

Registration is $25 for one attendee or $40 for two attendees. The registration fee includes breakfast, lunch, and the Conference. All-day child care, an all-day Sibling Support workshop, and Music Therapy for those in either child care or the Sibling Support workshop are also provided.

March 2, 2012, is the Registration Deadline – Space is limited

REGISTRATION FORMS ARE BEING MAILED TO YOUR HOME, OR YOU CAN REGISTER WITH A CREDIT CARD BY CALLING THE DSCBA AT 925-362-8660

Morning session: 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. (For child care you must arrive at 9:00 a.m.)
DSCBA News, Board of Directors’ Business, and Excellence in Education Awards

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Frank Marone – We are delighted to have Dr. Frank Marone as our speaker for the morning session. Dr. Marone is an Applied Behavior Analyst who has been successfully assisting individuals with intellectual disabilities and their families for 38 years, in all settings. Applied Behavior Analysis is the scientific study of the causes of behavior. From this study we know what to do to understand and remedy behavioral difficulties. Dr. Marone will discuss the current understanding of behavior and its remedies, reflecting research of the past 100 years and his extensive clinical experience. Questions from you will be used to help make the discussion most relevant to your current challenges.

Lunch: 12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. Enjoy a delicious lunch prepared by Gagnon’s Catering. A Q&A with Dr. Marone will also be available at this time.

Afternoon Breakout sessions: 1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. (Choice of one)

Younger Children Needs – Panel of Experts
• Oral Motor and Health – Heather Peterson, MS CCC-SLP and Dr. Hockel, DDS
• Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) – Kati Skulski, MS CCC-SLP
• Sign Language and Hearing Loss – Carol Lettko, M.A. CCC-SLP & Jennifer Wayman, MS CCC-SLP - Center for Early Intervention on Deafness (CEID)

Adult Needs – Panel of Experts
• Conservatorships 101 – Deborah M. Wilhelmus, Esq.
• Transition and Adult Programs – Carol Gonsalves, Coordinator of Training - Matrix Parent Network and Resource Center
• Available Services for Adults – Therese Bush, Case Manager - East Bay Regional Center

All-day child care provided by Circle K of UC Berkeley
All-day Sibling Support provided by Terese Ghilarducci, MFT
Music Therapy Sessions provided by Nicole Patton, CMT
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<th><strong>UPCOMING EVENTS</strong></th>
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<td><strong>The 1st Annual DSCBA Empowerment Conference and Annual Meeting</strong></td>
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<td>Saturday, March 17, 2012 • 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. • Rolling Hills Community Church • 1565 Green Valley Rd. • Danville</td>
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<td><strong>2012 Annual Gala for Giving and Celebrating Acceptance</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday May 5, 2012 • 5:30 p.m. – 11:00 p.m. • Diablo Country Club • 1700 Club House Rd. • Diablo</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Step Up for Down Syndrome</strong></td>
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<td>Sunday October 7, 2012 • Little Hills Ranch • San Ramon</td>
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**Making The Connection**
Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area
Phone 925.362.8660 • Fax 925.362.8663
101 J Town & Country Dr. • Danville, CA 94526
ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

**WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/DSCBA**

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**SAVE THE DATE**

**2012 Gala for Giving – Celebrating Acceptance**
Benefitting the Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area

**MAY 5, 2012**
**DIABLO COUNTRY CLUB**
5:30 p.m. – 11:00 p.m.

Join us with master of ceremonies Tom Vacar, KTVU/Fox 2’s Consumer Editor, & dance to the sounds of popular cover band Public Eye

Live Auction, Silent Auction, Raffle, Delicious Dinner, Dancing and more...

**TICKETS GO ON SALE IN FEBRUARY or you can pre-order by calling the Connection at 925-362-8660 (8120 per person)**

**Sponsorship Opportunities are Available – We need Auction Items**