Every year, as the holidays approach, Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) and 7x7 present an opportunity for Bay Area nonprofits to be acknowledged by the community. This is done through The Bay Area’s Favorite Charity Contest, now in its seventh year. In November, 7x7 put out a call to action for nominations of people and organizations making an impact on the community.

It was wonderful to find out we were nominated, and we were grateful to make the list of top 100 nominations. Finding out we made the top 49 was exciting, and things started to get serious for the $10,000 prize. Thousands of people from all over the world voted for the DSCBA — that took us straight to the top seven. PG&E and 7x7 held a lovely reception at the Hotel Zeppelin in San Francisco for the top seven winners. There, we were surprised to learn that DSCBA won first place and the $10,000 grand prize from PG&E. It was a humbling experience to win among so many hard-working organizations that impact people’s lives every day. Each of the other six organizations won $2,000 to further their good works.

Our win reaffirmed that our members, their families, the greater community, our supporters, volunteers, and many friends of our organization value what we do and recognize the great impact we make.

DSCBA Community Outreach Associate and Self-Advocate Marissa Erickson and 13 other staff and board members from the DSCBA were on hand to accept the award. It was an honor to be chosen and wonderful to meet all the folks from the other charities.

— Nancy LaBelle
LAST YEAR WAS ANOTHER YEAR of significant growth in membership, programs, and geographic reach, as well as financial and volunteer community support. DSCBA is going into our 19th year, and I cannot believe I am starting my 9th year as executive director.

In 2016, our grantors, several who are new to our mission and many who have been with us for years, contributed over $400,000, which gave us the ability to make our budget, expand, and accomplish our lofty goals. For example, the Wayne and Gladys Valley Foundation has been with us from the very start, and the Thomas J. Long Foundation, the Noll Foundation, and the Quest Foundation have been supporting us for many years. Together these foundations have contributed $185,000 in 2016 alone. We are grateful to also have strong corporate support from Chevron, Macy’s, and Wells Fargo. Every dollar of community funding we receive literally keeps our doors open, programs in motion, and support services strong, as we remain nongovernment funded for going on 19 years.

Congratulations and thank you to our members and the greater community who stepped up big time in 2016 and raised a record $320,000 from our Step Up Walk and spring gala. The excitement about and growth in fundraising dollars tells me our families and the community deeply understand our impact and continue to value what we provide.

This increased fundraising effort also shows that the community recognizes we must maintain vital partnerships such as our Medical Outreach and Education Alliances programs. These two programs are unique, making significant impacts: the way beautiful babies born with Down syndrome are welcomed into the world; fostering acceptance and friendship through ability awareness training for students without Down syndrome; and education for students of all ages who happen to have Down syndrome, based on their individual needs with a supported education team.

I couldn’t be prouder of our team at DSCBA. Our staff is dedicated, hardworking, and passionate about breaking down barriers and empowering our members. Our board of directors, newly led by Chairman Tom Deleplane, is committed to oversight and supporting the staff. Tom has implemented several board committees and is actively seeking new board members who are strategically connected in the community and who have the time and passion to serve as a member of the board. If this is you, please email us for more information at dscba@dsconnection.org.

Lastly, I’m happy to say we have secured our Danville location for another five years and will be doing an office renovation this summer that will accommodate our future growth. Our expansion strategy for the coming years involves keeping our home base in Danville where we have a strong presence, loyal community, staff members, and a large membership base. You will see us expand geographically with satellite locations as we identify need throughout the Bay Area for direct services. We have had adult programs for many years in four locations and plan to expand into Berkeley this year. We continue our vast Bay Area and beyond reach through our New Family Services. And we have successfully delivered Music Therapy as well as our Medical Outreach Alliance and Education Alliance into the South Bay and Peninsula communities.

We are currently looking for new funding opportunities to assist with expansion as well as to sustain our growth. If you can help us with this, please email me at nancy@dsconnection.org.

### MEDICAL OUTREACH ALLIANCE

Cathleen Small, Medical Outreach Alliance Coordinator, presents training classes to provide hospital staff and medical professionals with current information about Down syndrome, how to give a diagnosis, and how to best support families receiving a new diagnosis.

#### 2016 TRAININGS PRESENTED TO:

- Nurses at Mills-Peninsula Medical Center, Burlingame
- Social workers in the South Bay
- Genetic counseling students at Lucile Packard Children’s Hospital, Stanford
- Nurses at John Muir Hospital, Walnut Creek
- Geneticists and genetic counselors at Kaiser, Oakland
- Genetic counseling students at Kaiser, Oakland
- Geneticists and genetic counselors in the South Bay

### UPCOMING TRAININGS

- Pediatric Grand Rounds at UCSF Benioff Children’s Hospital of Oakland on March 21 — World Down Syndrome Day
- 2017 Developmental Disabilities conference at UCSF

TRAININGS ARE AVAILABLE VIA WEBINAR!
**DSEA News**

**We want to introduce our newest DS Education Alliance (DSEA) team member, Elizabeth Lewis.** Elizabeth comes to us with over 15 years of training and background in education and early intervention services. Most recently, she’s provided one-on-one support for students in inclusive settings and continues to work with families and educators to improve awareness, develop effective teaching strategies, and implement best practices. Elizabeth as Education Support Manager will be working on Individual Education Plan (IEP) support and consultation with Jennifer Cooper. We are excited to have this new energy and talent on board!

— Jennifer Cooper, Director of Education

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**Swimming for Mason and the DSCBA**

**At the DSCBA, we are always thrilled when our members support us in fun and unique ways. Often, it’s the young adults in our community that remind us that fundraising can be both inspiring and enjoying!**

Talia Giannini, a seventh grader, does not have Down syndrome (DS), but she does have a friend with DS, Mason Zolnier. Talia and Mason met at church, when Talia was assigned to be his buddy at church activities. “I have to admit,” she explains, “I was a bit nervous because I had never worked with anyone with DS and didn’t know what to expect. But I soon realized that I was actually learning from him and his great attitude.”

In short order, Talia had a great connection with Mason and his family, who are very active at the DSCBA, and wanted to do more to support the entire DS community in the Bay Area. She was able to combine her friendship with Mason, a school project, and her love for swimming into one event: a Swim-A-Thon!

On October 30, after collecting donations and pledges for her event, Talia swam 123 laps in one hour. Talia’s efforts raised more than $2,500 for the Down Syndrome Connection! “I was super humbled that so many of my friends and family supported me, and I’m really excited to help this amazing cause. I have learned that it takes a lot more effort and support for people with DS to learn, which is why it is so important to support them.”

May Talia’s efforts inspire us all! If you have fun and exciting ways to support the DSCBA, we are all ears! Bike, hike, dance, paint, run, walk, or sing! Email us at dscba@dsconnection.org with your ideas.

— Amy Parham

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**Down Syndrome Education Alliance**

**2016 Recap**

I’ve been in the field for a long time and felt this was one of the BEST COURSES I took.

Anyone who works with a student with Down syndrome should be required to attend.

**Road to Success**

- 9 training sessions for 543 educators

**27 families received IEP & Education Support**

Educators from 42 districts & private schools received training. A third of the sessions were assisted by a self-advocate, Eli Cooper.

**Ability Awareness**

- 39 presentations for 1853 students & 121 adults

Thank you for bringing this information in such an APPROACHABLE WAY to teachers.

Incredible workshop! It was SUCH A GIFT to experience someone Eli’s age who had lived through and was living the stories being told.

Jennifer Cooper, DSCBA Director of Education, provides training to Bay Area education teams and ability awareness presentations to students throughout the Bay Area. The goal of the Education Alliance is to provide up-to-date information, materials, and strategies regarding best practices for educating students with Down syndrome as well as to facilitate honest and positive dialogue with K-12 students about Down syndrome.
Future Connections

Get ready for Future Connections! The program will launch in the spring of 2017. There will be a limited number of openings for this trial eight week transition planning program. Depending on enrollment, the location is to be determined. Augmentative alternative communication (AAC) Specialists, Judith Lunger-Bergh, MA, CCC-SLP, Kati Skulski, MS, CCC-SLP, and Michaela Sullivan, MA, CCC-SLP, have created a curriculum that supports adolescents and young adults in identifying their preferences, interests, and needs as they plan their futures.

This is a crucial and often overlooked component of transitional and future planning. Our goal is for our participants to gain a confident voice in what is important to them and, with this focused awareness, begin to take steps to expand or make thoughtful changes in their lives. The curriculum is based on the Framing A Future (FAF) tool, published by the esteemed Bridge School (https://www.bridgeschool.org/transition/faq/index.php).

FAF is a self-discovery survey of 65 items organized around seven major life areas:
1. community membership
2. control of personal health and welfare
3. pursuit of lifelong learning
4. developing talents and interests
5. creating healthy relationships
6. self-reliance
7. developing a personal sense of spirituality

Multiple formats of FAF provide adaptations for users to accommodate visual, cognitive, and linguistic differences. FAF takes users through stages that address discovering the following:
- what is important to them
- how satisfied they are with benchmarks they consider important
- which areas are priorities for them, and
- what steps need to be taken to accomplish their priorities.

Life map – After each lesson, participants create a life map to highlight their priorities.

Future Connections' curriculum breaks down each life area into lessons using graphics, videos, personal collages, music, and role-play to teach the concepts of the tool. After participating in the program, participants will have individualized digital and hardcopy presentations reflecting their findings and opinions about targeted life areas.

These presentations will be invaluable in empowering our adolescents and young adults to advocate for themselves in their home, school, and professional lives. If you are interested in learning more about this program, please contact Kati at kaskulski@gmail.com.

— Kati Skulski

DSCBA Receives Grant from Million Dollar Round Table Foundation

The Million Dollar Round Table (MDRT) Foundation has awarded a $5,000 grant to the Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area for New Family Services that will provide support—resources, monthly classes, education opportunities, parent mentorship, and more—for expecting families and those with a new child. Through its global grants programs, the MDRT Foundation is committed to building stronger families and communities around the globe. This year, the MDRT Foundation will award nearly $1 million in MDRT member-endorsed grants to more than 100 charitable organizations worldwide. Representing the MDRT Foundation, Steve Wilcox, Partner and Financial Advisor at Summit Financial Group, presented the grant to DSCBA Leadership at the World Down Syndrome Day event in the park at Matteo’s Dream Playground on March 20, 2016.

We at the DSCBA thank both MDRT for this generous gift and Steve for his ongoing support of our mission.

Steve Wilcox, longtime DSCBA friend, here with his family, DSCBA members, and Concord Mayor Laura Hoffmeister
We had a beautiful day for the 2016 Bay Area Step Up for Down Syndrome walk and picnic. As many as 1,000 people attended, including 200 volunteers, to walk in unity, promote acceptance, celebrate abilities, and cheer for the many individual accomplishments at the finish line. A special thanks goes to Kshama Perera, Teresa Schaub, and the entire DSCBA staff for their work to create a wonderful experience for everyone.

We are grateful for Macy’s fourth year of sponsorship and to Scott Ferguson, Macy’s District Vice President, for bringing his crew out to celebrate and to give away prizes.

A big thank you to everyone that fundraised this year! We cannot do what we do without the funds from this event. A generous 2,013 people took the opportunity to donate via the fundraising webpages that 186 families created, ultimately raising a record $187,000.

The top five fundraising teams—Team Tiny Tang, Team Drucker, Team Leah, Team Brandon G, and Team Dubh Nation—raised $65,000! Top fundraising honors go to Team Tiny Tang. The Tang family, their friends and family, and other Peninsula-based DSCBA members joined together to raise $17,000 for Team Tiny Tang! The award for most team members went to Team Saige with over 80 walkers.

The carnival, sports games, corn hole, and miniature golf were a big hit. Tattoos, face painting, and free popcorn and cotton candy were also very popular. Many of you brought your tents and a picnic lunch; lunch could also be chosen from various food trucks.

This year we were fortunate to have the Las Lomas Pep Band to entertain us and to cheer on the walkers. Dance teams from Carondelet added even more fun by starting the walk with a dance routine. We all got down to DJ Joey’s dance tunes and did the “Cupid shuffle.” Everyone enjoyed our new team signs, which were proudly carried during the walk.

To our finish-line friends and volunteers, the Golden Gate Garrison 501st Legion Star Wars gang and the West Coast Avenger superheroes, we send a big shout-out for giving out the gold medals. Everyone enjoyed taking pictures of the characters and hanging with them throughout the day.

Last but not least, thanks to Lisa Upton of Lisa Upton Photography for taking team photos and to Julia Fuqua of Julia Fuqua Photography for taking the candid shots throughout the day.

Save the date for next year’s walk: October 8, 2017, same location. We hope to see you there.

— Kshama Perera

Marissa Erickson, left, and Luis Vivas and his family at the 2016 celebration
The Ramos Family’s
First DSCBA Holiday Party

**My family and I have been coming** to the Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area since earlier this year when our youngest was diagnosed with Down syndrome in January 2016. It has been great getting to know everyone. We have been so welcomed by each member in their own way. Slowly, we are beginning to make new relationships though the Down Syndrome Connection of

The Ramos family
On the Peninsula with Julie Tang

Peninsula’s Second Annual DSCBA Holiday Party

DSCBA Peninsula Program Manager Julie Tang says, “It was a leap of faith that started a Peninsula DS support group in July 2015 — and look at where we are now. The connections made and the support we have received from each other have been amazing. I feel so fortunate to have my role as Program Manager with the DSCBA so I can assist with the growth of Peninsula based support and services.”

A special thanks to so many as the Holiday Party would not have happened without the following people: Tina Ashamalla, Rob Glickman, Lisa Cassin, Hannah DeBono, Erin Donovan, Mike Regalia, Rod Ayers, Lisa Kuo, Jia Hu, Stephanie Ellis, Christi Woods, Karen Chiang, Grace Wong, Phyllis Larsen, and our local restaurant Village Hummus for their in-kind donation. Look forward to many more events like this!

— Julie Tang

Peninsula Brazilian Jiu Jitsu

Peninsula Brazilian Jiu Jitsu in Foster City offers free jiu jitsu classes to DSCBA families twice a month. We offer a big thank you to Marco Nascimento and John Rockwell for their time, love, and support.

If you are interested in this class, please email DSCBA Peninsula/South Bay Program Manager Julie Tang at julie@dsconnection.org.

Peninsula’s Second Annual DSCBA Holiday Party

Peninsula holiday celebrants, 2016

1st Ramos Family DSCBA Party, from pg.6

the Bay Area. The groups, support, people, and staff have helped add so much perspective to what life can be like and the opportunities to be had. The staff is so sincere and supportive to its members. It’s no wonder we voted them one of the best non-profits in the Bay Area.

We recently attended the family Christmas party and enjoyed the great turn out, attention to family, and support for siblings. We all enjoyed ourselves, and Santa was a hit. We hope to continue to attend this event annually and bring more of our family to contribute toward the love you could feel in the room. My kids were all smiles and my husband really felt grateful to have free services that support families like ours. Many thanks for a great party—we look forward to many more in the future.

— Raquel Ramos

Peninsula/South Bay Program Manager, Julie Tang
Peer Development Classes

Music Therapy Class

We are so pleased to now offer Music Therapy in three locations: Danville, Foster City, and San Jose. Please check the website for dates and times.

— Marianne Iversen

Above: This is what students say they like about coming to classes.

Below: Oakland’s Peer Development class shows off their pumpkin decorating skills.

Left: Robert, Emma, and Chris share some laughs while carving a pumpkin in San Francisco’s Adult Class.

Above: Danville’s Tween and Teen class enjoyed their Halloween celebration complete with costumes and a favorite movie.

Left, right and below: Benicia’s Peer Development enjoys cooking for the annual holiday party held for friends and family.

Special thanks to the San Ramon Valley Rotary for providing funds to support the class in their love of cooking and entertaining.
Two photos below: Danville’s Early Elementary class enjoyed some Halloween fun with self-decorated T-shirts and jack-o’-lantern drinks.

At right and below:
Danville’s adult class repurposes canvases to create one of a kind pieces of art for our upcoming art exhibit in May 2017.

Below:
Danville’s Young Adult class proudly displays their bottle cap mural. This beautiful piece was created with patience, love, and talent and is the inspiration for our upcoming art exhibit at the Village Theatre Art Gallery in Danville.
Foundations, family funds, and service organizations

Anonymous Foundation
Barr Family Foundation
Alice Beckman Fund at the East Bay Community Foundation
The Lowell Berry Foundation
Brush Family Foundation
CARH
Charis Fund
Chevron Corporation
Disability Communications Fund
Fidelity Charitable Grant – Calhoun Family Fund
The Carl Gellert and Celia Berta Gellert Foundation
The Global Down Syndrome Foundation
Bill Graham Supporting Foundation
Jam Handy Character Building Foundation
Lencioni Fund
Dean and Margaret Lesher Foundation
Thomas J. Long Foundation
Macy's
The Marino Family Charitable Foundation
Million Dollar Round Table Foundation
Noll Foundation
Pacific Gas and Electric Company
Quest Foundation
San Ramon Valley Kiwanis Foundation
San Ramon Valley Rotary
Share the Spirit Program
The Sidney Stem Memorial Trust
Sing for America Foundation, Tracy Trotter
The Special Hope Foundation
The Wayne and Gladys Valley Foundation
Wells Fargo Foundation

In honor of Angelis Rania

In honor of Darlene Bedell’s birthday
Jessica Frisz

In honor of Hailey Bornstein
Steve Arntz

In honor of Kingston Brinkley
Conrad Praetzel

In honor of T. J. Crawford
Damien and Beth Campbell

In honor of Emery De La Cruz
Robin Birakos

In honor of Dominic De Luca
Thom Kam

In honor of Sam Dobruck, my beautiful, happy grandson who has Down syndrome
Mary Ellen Dobruck

In honor of my grandson’s first birthday, 2017-01-30 (Om gupta)
Gail Pells

In honor of great-granddaughter Abbylu and her loving parents,
Jacob and Deela Hubbart
Lucile Brewer

In honor of Lulu Jensen and all the work you do with her
UBS Financial Services Inc. (Scott and Karen Sommer)

In honor of Oliver Nakahara’s birthday
Julie Paulson

In honor of Blair Underwood and Abigail King
David and Victoria Smith

In honor of Mason Zolnier
Bella Menges
Lisa Miller

In memory of Arthur Case, a wonderful, sweet man
Peggy Alreck-Anthony

AT&T
Anonymous

Car Donation Services
Phillip Chiavetta
James Cunniffe
John Finney
James Kwong
William and Susan Montague
Nicole Patton
Emmett Peck
William Pfann

Chevron
Anonymous
Paul Casadont
Marian Catedral King
Jeff Swindell

Chocolate Bunny fundraiser
Danville Chocolates

Chronicle Books
Anonymous

Clorox Employee Matching
Alan Burruel
Tobby Gavino

General donations
AmazonSmile Foundation
J. H. and Betty Barr
Bean Plant Co., Carissa Clark
Marvin and An Ra Buchanan
Julie Casadont
Laurel Clark
Patricia and Frank Elliot
Barbara and Frederick Ellul
Barbara Gabriel
Aaron Garcia
Jennifer Gong
Kelly Huff
Lynanne Jacob
Scott Keever
Chris and Joanne Leach
Kim Lindeberg

Geetanjali Magodia
Mike and Alicia McLeod
Steven and Lizette Miller
Laraine Moore
Edward and Lois Oda
Marilyn and Ray Perasco
Tom Price
Cathy and Jay Purchio
Peter Ross
Katie Skulski
Anne Sweeis
Toni Sweet
Nancy Tan
Yann Taylor
Kevin Walsh
Jack Yager
Richard and Cherie Zacchi
James and Kathy Zolnier

Give with Liberty
Kerrigan Malek, in memory of Christian James, and John Najar, on behalf of Sarah

Giving Tuesday
Darlene Bedell
Keisha Brown
Rosemary Cannon
Maureen Cummings
Donna Duffy
Marissa Erickson
Louise Godfrey
Elizabeth Llewellyn
Karen Lochner
Marsha Michie
Kathy Miles
Erica Milson
Amy Parham
Matt Portoni
Dan Sheehan
Svetlana Walters

Giving Tuesday, in honor of Blair Hogan
Terese Ghilarducci

Giving Tuesday, in honor of Martha and Blair Hogan
Janet Richman

Giving Tuesday, in honor of Cole Kelley
Jo Kelley

Giving Tuesday, in honor of Renato Simone
James and Erika Tippett

Kennedy/Jenks Consultants
Mike McLeod

International Money Fund
James Corr

Jeffries LLC Matching
Steve Kifer

Macy’s Inc.
Anonymous
Scott Ferguson

Continued on page 11
Continued from page 10

**NVIDIA**
Niravkumar Patel

**PG&E**
Jenny Rios in honor of Bianca Rios
Charles Seufert

**Pumpkin Patch fundraiser**
Castle Creek Company, Inc.

**Scholarship Fund**
Kristen Massa

**Speaker Donation**
GWFC Mount Diablo District

**Symantec**
Moumita Palit

**Talia’s Swim-A-Thon for Mason Zolnier**
Jennifer Davis
Kimberley Dow
Nicole Ferland
Gabriela Ghorbani

**VOLUNTEERS**

**Dedicated Classroom Volunteers**
Mia Anzilotti
Grace Benzler
Vanessa Boone
Haley Chambers
Amanda Di
Maureen Hunter
Bryneye Lee
Maddy MacDonald
Joey Powada
Stav Sendrovitz
Gracie Sula
Toni Sweet
Lauren Viarengo

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*Please know we work very hard to ensure your kindness is acknowledged. If your contribution to our success was received after the newsletter went to press, we will be honored to highlight your generosity in the next edition. Thank you!*

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**Empower ★ Inspire ★ Support**

**2017 Annual Spring Gala**

**Benefitting the**
Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area

You are cordially invited to attend:

**Empower ★ Inspire ★ Support**

An elegant evening of fine dining, auctions, and dancing

**Saturday, May 6, 2017**

5:30–11:00 p.m.
Diablo Country Club
1700 Club House Road
Diablo, California

To purchase your VIP table or tickets visit our website
dsconnection.org/gala

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We are actively looking for event sponsors and auction items. If you know of an individual or business that would enjoy giving, please email events@dsconnection.org

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**Holiday Card Project**

Thank you to Castro Valley High School’s student club Interact for creating holiday cards for DSCBA members and families.

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**DSCBA Donation Idea**

*Old Cars = New Support*

14 cars donated to DSCBA in 2016 provided $4,656 in support to essential DSCBA programs and services. Thank you!

To donate your car, truck, van, motorcycle, RV or boat, call 1-888-686-4483 or visit dsconnection.org

All donations are eligible for a tax deduction; please talk to your tax advisor.
Follow us on Facebook: Facebook.com/DSCBA

Our Mission
To empower, inspire, and support people with Down syndrome, their families and the community that serves them, while fostering awareness and acceptance in all areas of life.

DSCBA UPCOMING EVENTS

March 19  Sunday  Celebrating World Down Syndrome Day
Matteo’s Dream Playground at Hillcrest Park, Concord. See page 5.

March 22  Wednesday  Training Opportunity for all Bay Area Educators: “The Road to Success for Your Students with Down Syndrome.” Danville, location TBD, 4:00–7:00 p.m.

May 6  Saturday  Annual Spring Gala

May 18  Thursday  Recyclability Art Exhibit Opening ceremony
Village Theatre & Art Gallery, 233 Front St., Danville, 6:00–8:00 p.m. featuring Recyclability: A collection of unique creations made from recycled objects.

May 18–June 17  Thursday  Recyclability Art Exhibit. Village Theatre & Art Gallery
233 Front St., Danville. Come see the artwork created by our members from recycled materials.

June 12  Monday  Tips for Change Dinner
2065 San Ramon Valley Blvd., San Ramon, 5:30–8:30 p.m. Gianni’s Restaurant. The DSCBA staff and board will be the wait staff. All tips will benefit the Down Syndrome Connection.

September 14  Thursday  Danville Area Chamber of Commerce After Hours Business Mixer
At the DSC, 5:30–7:00 p.m.

October 8  Sunday  Step Up for DS Walk and Picnic
Pleasant Hill Middle School track and field.

December 3  Sunday  DSCBA Holiday Party

Check out our website: dsconnection.org