



MAKING THE Connection

DECEMBER 2013 • DOWN SYNDROME CONNECTION OF THE BAY AREA

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Santa Claus Came to Town

Kathy Harkins

The Connection celebrated its 14th Annual Holiday Party Sunday, December 8—wow, 14 years. Each year the party grows with new families, and each year it is a time of visiting and reconnecting with our old friends.

DSCBA is grateful to Hannah Bornstein for helping organize this great event. We spent time picking out crafts, and Hannah helped organize volunteers from Los Cerros Middle School Leadership and her great bunch of friends. They, along with National Charity League Diablo Valley (NCL) volunteers, manned the craft tables. Our NCL volunteers worked the treat table; they also baked 24 dozen holiday treats to share with everyone and 18 dozen plain cookies for our cookie decorating craft. They are an amazing group of moms and young ladies! Thank you to Nicole Patton for leading our Bell Choir. It is so much fun watching all the faces concentrating and waiting patiently for their color to pop-up so they can ring their bells. It is much harder than it looks! Our friend, K. Leigh Alfrey, delighted us with a clarinet performance—my favorite time of the party. Her performances are a must-see.

We raffled off beautiful gingerbread houses made by our grandparents group; there were six lucky winners. And we also had two beautiful Country Bears, made by one of our grandparents, to raffle off. The afternoon was busy with fun craft activities, like kaleidoscopes, snowflakes, candy cane thumbprints, and more. Of course, a Holiday Party isn't a party without Santa coming to visit! He took time from his busy schedule to visit with us, listening carefully to our wish lists. Thank you, Lisa Upton, for photographing this magical day. The Connection is lucky to have you as a friend. And thank you to Tami Castelluccio for allowing us to setup Friday night and to be able to walk in Sunday morning to get the party started!

We wish you the most magical holiday season (and mark your calendars for next year's party, December 7, 2014)!

More holiday photos, page 5



PHOTOS TAKEN AND DONATED BY LISA UPTON PHOTOGRAPHY

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2014 Board Meetings

Board meetings are held at 101 J Town & Country Dr., Danville, 6-8 p.m., on the 3rd Tuesday of the month: Feb. 18, Mar. 18, Apr. 15, May 20, Jun. 17, Jul. 15, Aug. 19, Sep. 16, Oct. 21, Nov. 18. Please call Board President Terese Ghilarducci at 925-872-5858 to attend or bring a guest.

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A Note from Nancy

Nancy LaBelle, Executive Director



Happy New Year! We have so much to look forward to in 2014 and much to be grateful for after a very full, rewarding year in 2013. The goals and mission of the DSCBA were accomplished in many ways last year due to the wonderful efforts and generosity from our community: our members, funders, volunteers, staff, and board members. Thank you for believing in our mission and for allowing us to expand our services, which are making a significant difference. Together, we have been busy teaching educators and the community that people of all ages who happen to have Down syndrome should never be underestimated in what they can achieve.

DSCBA submitted 51 grant applications for funding and received over \$250,000 from community and family foundations. Because of everyone's hard work, support, and commitment, we have been able to achieve great things in 2013:

- 1) Trained 471 educators, thanks to our successful DS Educational Alliance program, with these classes: DS101, Behavior is Communication, Inclusion, Ability Awareness, Numicon, See and Learn, Total Communication in the Classroom, and Augmentative and Alternate Communications (AAC) & Literacy.
- 2) Conducted more than 16 Ability Awareness presentations throughout the greater Bay Area, educating classrooms with a total of 522 students about Down syndrome and why their classmates are more alike than different.
- 3) Completed a pilot summer Communication Readiness Program to understand the impact of a summer immersion program in Communication, AAC, Oral Motor and Literacy for preschool- and kindergarten-aged children.
- 4) Welcomed 25 new babies with their families into our community, with open arms.
- 5) Facilitated 35 support groups for parents and extended family members.
- 6) Provided developmental Step classes in four locations throughout the Bay Area, four days a week for ages 0–61.
- 7) Organized a successful all-day Empowerment Conference, the Gala for Giving, the Step Up for DS walk, and many workshops for parents.
- 8) Provided 10 Music Therapy sessions and offered Oral Motor Therapy and on-site reading services for all ages.
- 9) Maintained a lending library, including an extensive technology library, full of AAC devices and materials.
- 10) Gave the gift of expression to children, teens, and adults with our AAC program.
- 11) Started a medical outreach program.

And much, much, more!

Please know that without you, we could not make the significant impact we are making. We are truly thankful.

In 2014, with the generosity of the community, we will continue to expand our reach and maintain our core services. We will educate all who come through our doors and, with your help, continue to build strong relationships with school districts and medical professionals. The DSCBA remains strong in our belief that everyone deserves a voice, good education, and access to inclusive programs—our energy in those areas will remain strong. As a community we must advocate for people of all ages with Down syndrome, with a focus on independence and ability.

Thank you for all you do for the DSCBA throughout the year!



SAVE THE DATE

May 3, 2014

*Annual Gala
for Giving*

Benefitting the Down
Syndrome Connection
of the Bay Area

DIABLO COUNTRY CLUB

**Appetizers, cocktails, dinner, live
and silent auctions, raffles, dancing,
and more. Get dressed up.**

Join in on the fun!

**WATCH FOR TICKETS
ON SALE IN MARCH**

NOTE:

We need your help!

**Please let us know ASAP if you have contacts
for auction items such as the following:
vacation rentals or holidays anywhere
(we have airfare), limousine and luxury car
rentals, fine jewelry, electronics, sports
tickets and memorabilia, hotel stays and
restaurant gift certificates, winery excursions,
cases of fine wine, cruise tickets, shopping
excursions, family entertainment and more.**

**We are also in need of event sponsors as well
as a celebrity to host and/or meet-and-greet.**

PLEASE tell us who you know!

**Thanks to everyone for making this
a great event each year!**



DOUBLE YOUR DONATION FOR DOWN SYNDROME

For a limited time, the Quest Foundation will match your gift to the DSCBA dollar for dollar up to \$50,000!

Avery, DSCBA Member

DSCBA needs your help to continue our support of families like these:

"When our son was born, the Connection quickly became a key part of our lives. It was, and still is, a sweet and sorely needed combination of a living library of information, genuine compassion, complete support and a warm Grandma's hug - all rolled into one."

"Someone I love very much has benefited greatly from the services provided by the Connection."

"I've been involved for the past year with the Down Syndrome Connection — and they've been awesome! I've met lots of great friends and have learned a ton from them. They work so hard, every day, to help make sure that I, and other kids and adults with Down syndrome, have all of the same opportunities as everyone else to become the best that we can be."

"Our son will be able to thrive and grow in ways he probably would not have had the chance to without the DSCBA."

"We are so fortunate to have such a valuable resource in the Bay Area. We love this organization and appreciate what they give to us, to other families we have met, and what they give back to the community."

"Their education advocacy has been especially helpful as we have navigated the school system in preparation for our son's kindergarten year — which is off to a great start!"

"I've been attending my Step class for the past 7-1/2 years at the Down Syndrome Connection. It has been so much fun and really helpful in helping me with social skills and meeting some great people."

"We've seen firsthand the impact that the Down Syndrome Connection has made in the life of our cousin and his family. It is an amazing organization run by dedicated people who help those born with Down syndrome live lives of grace and dignity."

Use the envelope included in this newsletter to make a special gift to the DSCBA, which will be matched dollar for dollar by the Quest Foundation.

Or go to our website: www.dsconnection.org and click on the **Donate Now** button on the home page.



Down Syndrome Connection
of the Bay Area

Thank you for your support!





PHOTOS TAKEN AND DONATED BY LISA UPTON PHOTOGRAPHY





PHOTOS TAKEN AND DONATED BY LISA UPTON PHOTOGRAPHY

Thank You All for Stepping Up for Down Syndrome

Nancy LaBelle



Thank you for attending the 2013 Step Up for Down Syndrome Walk and Family Picnic on October 6. We hope you had a fun day! Over 800 people attended—most in creative T-shirts—for activities, a mile walk, barbecue, and more, at Little Hills Ranch in San Ramon.

A big thank you goes to our sponsor, Macy's, and to the more than 100 volunteers in attendance that day, as well as Finn the Fish from Pepperidge Farm. For all their work that goes into an event this size, special thanks to our DSCBA staff, both for the advance preparations and the event day work. Sending a shout-out to California Parks Company for their generosity. And we thank Connie, of Connioko Karaoke & DJ Productions, for donating her time and equipment all day.

We are truly grateful for the 90 families who sent out a webpage and collected approximately \$132,000 online. Without these funds we do not make our budget for the year to cover our programs. Please consider sending out a webpage next year. If you don't know how, we will teach you!



Team Mason



Team Brandon G.



Team Drucker

Congratulations to the Zolnier and VandenBerghe families who for the third year in a row raised the most money, in honor of Mason, at \$20,300. In second place, the Garcia's, walking for Brandon, rocked it with \$11,790. The Drucker's, walking for Will, came in third with \$8,420 and had the largest team! We send special appreciation to our highest single donor, Katherine VandenBerghe, who donated \$10,000 to Mason's page.

Thanks to everyone for their support in so many ways. It was a fabulous day!

More Step Up for DS Day photos on pages 9



PHOTOS TAKEN AND DONATED BY STEPHEN SPEDOWSKI PHOTOGRAPHY

Step Up for DS Day photos from page 8, more photos on page 10



Step Up for DS Day photos from page 9, more photos on page 11

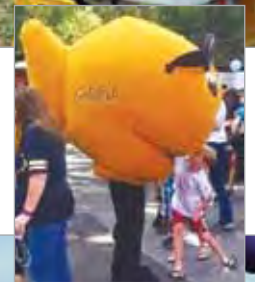
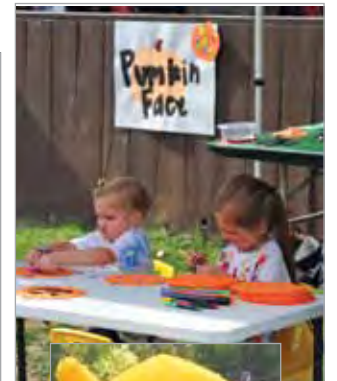


PHOTOS TAKEN AND DONATED BY STEPHEN SPEDOWSKI PHOTOGRAPHY

Step Up for DS Day photos continued from page 10, more photos on page 12



Step Up for DS Day photos continued from page 11, more photos on page 13



Step Up for DS Day photos continued from page 12



PHOTOS TAKEN AND DONATED BY STEPHEN SPEDOWSKI PHOTOGRAPHY

2013 DSCBA Safety Day

Kathy Harkins



Will Clark enjoying lunch

On a warm Saturday morning, the Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area held a Safety Day. What a great day it was! A generous donation to the Connection provided us with a private visit from a fire engine from the San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District (SRVFPD). We were lucky enough to also have an ambulance visit from the SRVFPD. We thank Joyce Castro from this organization for helping to organize the truck and ambulance and donating helmets and badges for the kids.

The Danville Police Department brought their Youth Police Vehicle, a Ford Mustang. It is equipped with emergency lights like normal police cars, but it also has a computer and monitor in the trunk that are used in presentations to young people. We thank Carol Burroughs, from the Town of Danville, for providing this, as well as badges and fingerprint kits, for the kids. This day gave the children (and adults) a chance to see the vehicles up close. We were able to climb in and out of the cab of the fire engine; we were able to see the inside of the ambulance; and we were able to sit in the Youth Police Vehicle. Hopefully, this took some of the fear out of these cars and trucks—so if we happen to need one, we won't be as scared.

We enjoyed a great lunch of ribs, the famous ball tip sandwiches, beans, and salad from Kinder's BBQ Danville and had a wonderful time visiting with old friends and making new ones. We ended the day with a raffle—congratulations to all the winners! I would like to thank the following people who helped with making this day so fun: Alec DeLillo, Peter Downey, Madison Ferguson, Taylor Fink, Ryan Harkins, Martha Hogan, Marianne Iversen, Marie and Morgan Jiminez, Heather Peterson, and Mark Vukelich. Thank you also to Sammie Fox, who gave her time to take pictures of this fun-filled day!



Alex Walters enjoyed the day

SAVE THE DATE FOR THE DSCBA ANNUAL

Empowerment Conference and Annual Meeting

**SATURDAY,
MARCH 8**

DON'T MISS a great day full of workshops for parents and educators.

WE WILL OFFER childcare for the day and lunch.

THINK ABOUT whom you would like to submit for an "Excellence in Education Award" from your child's education team.

WATCH FOR invitations and how to register in the new year.



Heather Peterson

Oral Placement Therapy 2013 Superstars

Heather Peterson, MS SLP-CCC

Hi, everyone! It has been another incredible year for all of the children using the Talk Tools Oral Placement Therapy (OPT) program. I have continued to train with my mentor, Sara Rosenfeld Johnson, as well as her counterparts. The children we see are achieving beautifully articulated speech with tongue tip elevation, retraction, and, of course, jaw stability. This year's progress in the school system is that two schools, one school in both the SRV and the Mountain View school districts, have agreed to pay for Oral Placement Therapy services. Other good news is that, through the DS Educational Alliance (a DSCBA program), we are educating our educators about the importance of sensory-motor therapy for our children. I am also finding 1:1 aides very helpful in implementing OPT daily at school. Below, I have shared a few stories to help inspire you to continue or to begin an OPT program in 2014.



Bella Lucia

Bella Lucia is a three-and-a-half-year-old girl who has been receiving OPT since eight months of age. She is currently using phrases like "my turn," "ew, gross," "more, please," and "read book." She has perfect lip puckering and retraction for /oo, oh, ee/ sounds in speech. She also is using /m, b, p, k, g, t, d, w/ sounds in her words. She talks to everyone around her, and one of her earliest words was *bump* for fist-bumping her siblings. Bella's mother states:

I have seen an incredible amount of progress with Bella in just the last few months. She is not only using one to two word utterances, but she is using them spontaneously and in proper context. She can also now spontaneously count to ten, which is amazing! I have visibly seen her jaw strengthen and stop shifting while doing oral motor therapy. It is really amazing to see! I am so proud of her and so thankful for Heather and Talk Tools.



Sarah Williamson

Sarah Williamson is a six-year-old girl in the first grade. She has been following an OPT program for three years and is now using incredibly long phrases and sentences with clarity. She tells me stories about her sisters and the holidays. She is currently targeting /L/ blends like "fly, flea" and has mastered /s/ blends. My favorite saying of hers is, "Pack it up and move it out." Sarah's mother states:

Sarah really does surprise us every day, not only with her vocabulary and phrases, but also with her patience when others have trouble understanding her—which is happening less and less! She loves seeing Heather and practicing her Talk Tools with her dolls. Lately, Sarah enjoys talking to everyone—from her family to the grocery store cashier—about losing her first tooth. She's a charmer!



Ainsley Dodge

Ainsley Dodge is a seven-year-old girl in first grade. She went through our Communication Readiness Program this summer at the DSC and has been receiving OPT since age two. Ainsley has Apraxia of Speech and has worked very intensely with her mother to reach her goals. This summer she jumped from one word to multiple word utterances; her clarity has improved since the summer. This past week, while looking at photos, she said, "Oh my god!" "wow," and imitated "so cute." Ainsley is targeting the /L/ sound right now in therapy. Ainsley's mother states:

All of our hard work at OPT is starting to pay dividends. We are hearing new sounds and clarity is improving month over month. It is giving Ainsley confidence to initiate social interactions with peers!



Lucas Paterno

Lucas Paterno is a six-year-old boy in kindergarten. He also went through our Communication Readiness Program this summer and has been receiving OPT since age three. Lucas made huge social and length of utterance gains this year. He is speaking in phrases and sentences with nice clarity, helping other children answer questions, and beginning to read. Lucas' mother states:

Lucas has shown much improvement with feeding and speech since we first started Oral Placement Therapy with Heather. We are very happy with his progress. Many others have commented on his improvement. His gastroenterologist is also very impressed with his progress and, as a result, wants to refer her patients to Heather.

DSEA Schedule

Down Syndrome Educational Alliance Upcoming Classes and Locations for Educators

Date	Training	School District
January 7, 2014	DS 101	Brentwood
January 9, 2014	DS 101	New Haven
January 14, 2014	DS 101	Brentwood
January 21, 2014	DS 101	Benicia
February 5, 2014	DS 101	Moreland
February 6, 2014	Inclusion/Ability Awareness	San Ramon Valley

For more information please go to www.dsconnection.org

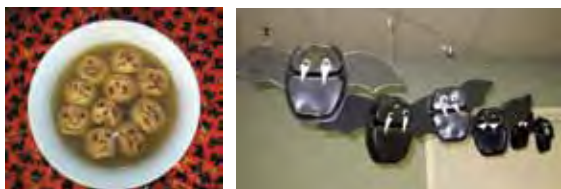
Shrinking Heads at Steppin' Up

Laura Briggs

Steppin' Up started on a sad note this fall. We had to say goodbye to our very good friend, Anthony. While we made him a goodbye card, we laughed about purple underwear—his favorite joke. We miss you, Anthony, and wish you a happy birthday.

We had lots of fun dancing, playing Uno, and making our cool hanging bat. Then because it was Halloween, we had our annual costume, popcorn, and movie day. This year the winning movie was *Halloweentown*. Along with our popcorn and Pirate's Booty, we had a tasty punch with a few shrunken heads tossed in. It was a good fall season, and now we are looking forward to upcoming holidays!

Top left: Tasty punch (apples with carved faces) Top right: Flying bats on Halloween Bottom: The Steppin' Up gang



2013 Educational Alliance Update

Jennifer Cooper



The Down Syndrome Educational Alliance (DSEA) has continued a variety of training and consults with educators. The team from the summer Communication Readiness Program (CRP) has been working diligently to follow their eight students into the beginning of their school year. They have been able to meet with most of the children's IEP teams in order to provide information, tips, and communication resources. Most of the teams have been receptive and appreciative of the support. We continue to navigate and attempt to make progress in those situations that don't feel as open to our supports and information.

We have held two Down Syndrome 101 trainings thus far this school year. One was for educators in a specific district, and the other was open to educators from all districts. Due to high demand, we moved the venue to a larger site—a good problem to have. Already several DS 101 trainings are scheduled in specific districts for early 2014. Remember, we will travel to districts and do an in-house class if they can guarantee us at least 25 participants. We will continue to hold DS 101 and other trainings periodically and will always alert our list of educators. If your child's teacher would like to be put on our email list, let us know! Also, let us know if you are interested in another DS 101 geared towards parents.

We held two successful and well-attended first-time trainings this fall: one on Literacy and Alternative Communication and the other on Inclusion and Ability Awareness in General Education Classes. In addition to continuing instruction, we are also busy with classroom observations, continuing to refine and organize materials, and facilitating ability awareness trainings in classrooms. We hope that the students and educators who open themselves up to our training all echo the sentiment made by a second grader towards the end of a recent ability awareness training. She quietly raised her hand and said, "I have so much respect for Maria right now. More than I did before I understood about Down syndrome." Let us know if you'd like help with an ability awareness training for your child's classroom.

We hope your child is having a successful school year!

Small Steps Grows Soup

Laura Briggs

This fall, Small Steps "grew vegetable soup." The inspiration came from the book *Growing Vegetable Soup* by Lois Ehlert. We planted peas, cauliflower, spinach, and other fall vegetables in our back garden. We gave the new plants a drink with water from our water table, after we finished playing there.

Our obstacle course had a garden theme by "planting" seeds on the balance beam, "watering" seedlings while standing on a balancing disk, growing, growing, growing as we climbed over our new climbing structure, and then picking our plastic veggies while we scooted by them on a roller board. We ended by matching the vegetables to their corresponding written words.

Finally the day arrived when it was time to make our vegetable soup. We went out to our obstacle course garden and picked our "planted" vegetables. Then we washed, cut, and put them in the pot. While our soup cooked, we completed one last obstacle course. Then we had a delicious treat; we had grown vegetable soup!



Top left: Laura Briggs and Addie Bender
Top right: from left, Hannah Fletcher, Ainsley Dodge, and Lulu Jensen enjoy their soup

Bottom right: Aniruth Kumaran, cutting the vegetables

Bottom left: Ainsley Dodge (at left) and Addie Bender reading along during the obstacle course

Step In Falls into Fun

Marianne Iversen



Step In has been having some great times this fall. They made tie-dyed shirts together, created fun Halloween silhouettes, and made a Thankful Tree with gratitude leaves. Each participant wrote what they were thankful for on the leaves and then shared their feelings with their classmates. This group has been together for quite some time now, and their friendships with one another are truly a blessing in themselves.



At top: Starting the work on the Fall Thankful Tree

Above: Creating the Thankful Tree's trunk

At right: The finished tree with gratitude leaves from each participant



Step Out Delves into Discussion and Dance

Harold Burns



This autumn, the Step Out team has continued to nurture a sense of peer-community, physical resilience, and emotional intelligence through dance and discussion. Joey and Annika teamed up in October, as did Nicole and Athena, to create dance combinations and to teach them to the group. It was a great lesson in teamwork and the challenge of sharing skills with friends. We also welcomed a fun new friend, Amanda, into the group and look forward to learning more about her.

When exhausted by dancing, we took time to discover our capacity for balance poses that can challenge our sense of safety while also helping us build confidence and trust in each other. Emotionally, we continue to grow in our communication skills as we discuss the struggle of anger at ourselves and others, as well as the frustration of not being good at a particular skill and having to work hard at learning. We are grateful that we have one another and our families to support us.

SF Step-Baskets for Fun and Fundraising

Christina Lewis and Harold Burns

This year SF Step has stepped out on a limb and organized a holiday fundraising sale to raise money for group adventures! Following the lead of our extraordinary volunteer Wendy Earl, the group came up with several fragrant herbal treats for gifting. We will be selling our gift baskets to our families this December. Additionally, the group has been improving our theater skills, as we explore role-play and performance. We are excited to put together a small showcase in the spring of 2014. Watch for more information about the showcase at www.dsconnection.org.



At left: Wendy Earl, volunteer, and Emma Yungert



At left: Matt Hillman



At right: Robert Humphreys



At left: our gift baskets

Next Step - A Few of Our Favorite Things

Marianne Iversen

Next Step participants worked on a fun silhouette project this fall. Each student brought in pictures of some of their favorite things: musicians, foods, TV shows, movies, actors, friends, family members, and pets. The students first painted their canvas with their favorite color, then glued on their silhouettes, and finally glued their pictures on the silhouettes. The students loved going in front of the room to show off their personal



T. J. Crawford

artwork and talking about their favorite things. It was a wonderful way to learn more about each other and practice so many skills, including fine motor skills, following directions, public speaking, and the all-important skill of listening.



At left: Back row left to right: Tatiana Casadont, Bill Dickson, Christian James
Front row: Emma Tippett, Patrick Harkins, Juliana Portoni, Adam Ferguson

Benicia Step Goes Tie-Dye

Tamara Reed

The Benicia Step group had a great time tie-dyeing T-shirts. They worked in teams and were proud to show their handiwork at this year's Step Up for Down Syndrome walk!



Above from left: Damien Carlon, Michael Rury, Lauren Reed, Lisa Silva, Martin Gonsalves

2014 Winter-Spring Schedule of DSCBA Networking Groups and Classes

DANVILLE LOCATION CLASSES

Music Therapy

Saturday: 10:00–11:30 a.m.
Jan. 4, Feb. 1, Mar. 1, Apr. 5, May 10, June 7

Baby & Me (Formally Baby Steps)

Wednesday: 10:30 a.m.–12:00 p.m. Jan. 15, Feb. 19, Mar. 19, Apr. 16, May 21, June 18

Small Steps

Monday: 3:30–5:00 p.m.
Session 1: Jan. 6–Feb. 10
Session 2: Feb. 24–Mar. 24
Session 3: Apr. 7–May 12

Steppin' Up

Wednesday: 4:00–5:30 p.m.
Session 1: Jan. 8–Feb. 12
Session 2: Feb. 26–Mar. 26
Session 3: Apr. 9–May 14

Next Step

Tuesday: 4:00–5:30 p.m.
Session 1: Jan 7–Feb. 11
Session 2: Feb. 25–Mar. 25
Session 3: Apr. 8–May 7, 13

Step In

Thursday: 4:00–5:30 p.m.
Session 1: Jan 9–Feb. 13
Session 2: Feb. 27–Mar. 27
Session 3: Apr. 10–May 15

ADULT CLASSES THROUGHOUT THE BAY AREA

SF STEP

Tuesday: 4:00–5:30 p.m.
Session 1: Jan. 7–Feb. 11
Session 2: Feb. 25–Mar. 25
Session 3: Apr. 8–May 13

Step Out (Oakland)

Wednesday 3:45–5:15 p.m.
Session 1: Jan. 8–Feb. 12
Session 2: Feb. 26–Mar. 26
Session 3: Apr. 9–May 14

Benicia Step

Wednesday: 4:00–5:30 p.m.
Session 1: Jan. 8–Feb. 12
Session 2: Feb. 26–Mar. 26
Session 3: Apr. 9–May 14

PARENT TO PARENT GROUPS

Parents with Children Ages 0–3

Facilitator: Martha Hogan
Location: DSCBA, Danville
Tuesdays: 7:00–9:00 p.m. Jan. 28, Mar. 25, June 24, Oct. 28

Parents with School-Aged Children

Facilitator: Martha Hogan
Location: DSCBA, Danville
Wednesdays: 7:00–9:00 p.m.
Feb. 19, Apr. 16, Sep. 17, Nov. 19

Parents with Teen and Adult Children

Facilitators: Marianne Iversen and Tamara Reed
Location: DSCBA, Danville
Thursdays: 7:00–9:00 p.m.
Mar. 20, May 15, Aug. 21, Oct. 16

Grandparent to Grandparent

Facilitator: Martha Hogan
Location: DSCBA, Danville

4th Wednesday of every month: 10:00–11:30 a.m. Jan 22, Feb. 26, March 26, April 23, May 28, June 25

Parent Mentor

The Parent Mentor program consists of parents who have been trained to mentor a new family or a family that has moved into the Greater Bay Area. Mentors will be matched up with a family according to location, needs, and common interest. For more information, please contact Martha Hogan at Martha@dsconnection.org or 925-362-8660.

Sibling to Sibling

Facilitator: Terese Ghilarducci
If you are interested in learning about the possibility of a sibling group, please call the Connection at 925-362-8660.

For questions or to RSVP before meetings

Contact Marianne at 925-362-8660 or check the website for more information:

www.dsconnection.org

DSCBA Halloween Fun Photo Contest

Thanks to everyone who turned in photos!



1st Place: Nico and Cruz, policeman and prisoner



2nd Place: Josias, fisherman



3rd Place: Hailey, lollipop princess



Grateful for the Gates

Marianne Iversen

Special thanks to Mark Sypien of Bay Area Exteriors for the wonderful gates that he built for our garden area. The children in our Step classes can now safely work in our garden and play in our sand water table. Thank you so much, Mark, for your continued support!

STAY SOCIALLY CONNECTED



CHECK US OUT ON FACEBOOK AT
WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/DSCBA

GET UPDATES FROM THE CONNECTION AND LEARN ABOUT EVENTS

FANS CAN POST TEXT, PHOTOS AND VIDEO TO THIS PAGE

More than 1,100 followers now
WHY DON'T YOU BECOME ONE TOO?

Beautiful Friendship

Gloria Casadont

Now that Thanksgiving is approaching I want to say thanks to Olivia, a true friend of our daughter, Tatiana.

Olivia saw straight into Tatiana's heart and spirit back in first grade and continues to do so today.

I believe that because we fought to have Tatiana included in regular classes this beautiful friendship happened.

Eleven years after having met, Olivia drove Tatiana to the movies—just like I used to drive them both before. And I say thank you, Olivia.



Top right: Olivia and Tatiana, eight and nine years old, respectively.

Above right: Tatiana and Olivia, 11 years later, after the movie.

Above left: Tatiana, center, and Olivia, left, with other team members at Step Up for DS.

Step Up Walk Creative T's

Kathy Harkins



On a rainy Saturday morning, folks braved the stormy weather and came out to make their Step Up for Down Syndrome T-shirts. What a creative group we had. There were T-shirts with bling, jeweled crowns, and slogans such as "Keep calm, it's only an extra chromosome" and "Peace, love, and Down syndrome." We had paint, glitter, jewels, markers, and stencils—you name it, and it went on a shirt.



We shared a lunch of pizza, enjoyed each other's company, made new friends, and laughed a lot.

Thanks go to the Connection for the T-shirts, lunch, and art supplies. Thank you Marianne Iversen for all the setup and cleanup help. And thank you to those who made the trip in the nasty, weird weather.

Award for Zachary

K. Williams



At left: Zachary with principal Alan Ainsworth and teacher Amber Isherwood, both of whom nominated Zachary for the award. Right: Zachary with his sister, Amanda Taylor, and her husband, Jarrod.

Zachary Williams received an Exceptional Accomplishment Award from his middle school on October 24. Congratulations, Zachary! The award recognizes improvement in behavior, listening skills, and helping classmates. Zachary is now doing well as a freshman at Concord High School.

Ryland, the Ring Bearer

Brian Alldredge

Ryland Alldredge turned six years old the day before he participated as a ring bearer in his cousin Kristy's wedding in La Jolla on October 11, 2013. He was accompanied by his sister, Hayden, who served as a flower girl. Ryland is a kindergartner at Grattan Elementary school in San Francisco.



Ringling the Bells

Kathy Harkins

This September, on Friday the 13th, at 13:00, the bell rang 13 times from the Bell Tower at the Winchester Mystery House in San Jose. This fun tradition of ringing the bell honors the late Sarah Winchester, who was fascinated by the number 13. Adam Ferguson and Patrick Harkins were the honorary bell ringers, representing the DSCBA. The DSCBA will receive a donation from the Winchester Fountain Fund, which is money collected from the coins that visitors throw into the mansion's various fountains. I wonder if there are 13 of them.

Patrick Harkins and Adam Ferguson



Olivia's Love Hugs Raises Funds for the DSCBA

Isaiah and Virginia Aguilar



Our daughter, Olivia, is three and a half years old, and she is growing so much, so fast. In the past month, she has started to sing along to songs and say yes when asked about something. She was able to recognize a shape, a letter, and a number correctly that I had written down. Before, we had only worked on numbers, the alphabet, and shapes individually. Olivia said, "Ariel," as clear as day and perfectly. She must have learned it from the movie; a lot of words she says only her mother and I understand.

We went to Disneyland, and Olivia couldn't have behaved better. Olivia regularly goes potty on the chair, but only recently started having a dry diaper occasionally, when we take her to the restroom.

We think Olivia has made a friend at after-school care: when I pick her up, one little girl seems to always want to say bye and give her a hug. It is very heartwarming because everyone else she associates with are friends we bring to play with her. And Olivia went trick-or-treating for the first time this year!

We are grateful to friends, family, and co-workers who helped us raise \$3,390 this year for Step Up for Down Syndrome.



Directly above: Olivia with Isaiah's work team from Robert Half Corporate Headquarters; they held a bake sale for Step Up for Down Syndrome

Far left: Olivia as Princess Merida, with her proud mom, Virginia

Otto at Two Years Old

Brandy Gavenda



Words escape me
 My mind, it tumbles
 My heart is beating
 My thoughts are jumbled
 Down syndrome. . .
 Just words, they don't define
 He is happy and joyous
 Life-loving, mine
 My boy is walking
 And signs more than speaks
 He is perfectly boyish
 My heart no longer seeks
 An answer to a prayer
 One I didn't know I asked
 He completes our family
 If we're up to the task
 He challenges us
 Each and every day
 To be better and better
 In every way

A Big Thank You to Virginia Bonham

Marianne Iversen

Participants from Step In, Benicia Step, and Step Out came together for a movie night at the Connection to spend time together and to wish Virginia Bonham great success as she goes off to school to get her master's in special education. Virginia has been teaching Step classes since 2004. Thank you, Virginia, for all the time and dedication you have given to our many Step participants throughout the years. We wish you all the best in your new venture!



Top: Trisha is sad to see Virginia leave
 At right: The group at movie night



Grandparents Group Volunteers Their Holiday Cheer

Martha Hogan



Among the most important ingredients in the family unit are grandparents! Since the inception of our grandparent support group at the Connection, we have seen wonderful friendships formed, a sharing and caring for each other, a reaching out to new members of the group, and tremendous growth in understanding their grandchild born with Down syndrome—as well as being more supportive to their own children. It is a pleasure and a privilege to be able to reach out to these wonderful folks and to have them more involved in the Connection's family. This holiday season, some of our grandparents, as well as an aunt, graciously gave up a morning to make gingerbread houses for the centerpieces and raffle prizes for our Holiday Party.



DS Research and Treatment Updates

Nancy LaBelle

Thank you to the Down Syndrome Research and Treatment Foundation for catching the DSCBA up on current research news on Saturday, November 2. Special thanks to Sarah Wernikoff, DSRTF Board Chair, Dr. Craig Garner, Dr. Craig Heller, and Almad Salehi, MD, PhD.

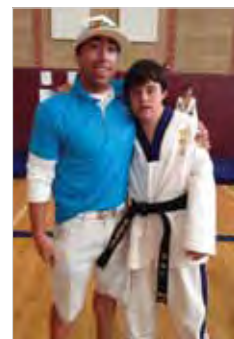
To view the presentations given that day, please visit our website at <http://www.dsconnection.org/research.php>.



A Black Belt for TJ

Donna Crawford

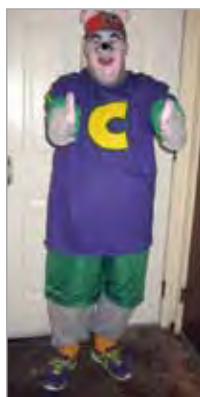
T. J. Crawford received his black belt in martial arts on October 12. TJ studied with Martial Arts America in Walnut Creek, for the past six years. Congratulations, TJ! You worked hard to achieve your black belt promotion. We are so proud of you!



TJ with his brother, Paul, at the black belt ceremony

Austin Burks Makes His Dream Come True

Barbara Burks



Austin dresses as Chuck E. for Halloween

Austin Burks has had many accomplishments over his 22-1/2 years of life, the most current one being his self-advocacy, perseverance, and sheer determination to get hired at Chuck E. Cheese in Dublin, California. It has been his dream and goal, since he was 13 years old. Taking the initiative, he pursued the company tirelessly for three years. He never gave up or lost hope—in fact, he was convinced it would become a reality! Austin's dream came true October 5, 2013, when he became an official Cast Member (employee)!

Austin approached management in mid-October wanting more responsibilities than just washing dishes, but was told no. Then there was a change in management in late October, so Austin boldly and confidently approached the new General Manager. She was very impressed with his ability to advocate for himself. He wants to grow on the job, not just be a token on staff. He wants to be seen as abled, not disabled.

He wants to prove he can do more than they think he can. He has demonstrated incredible maturity in going after what he wants, which is to be treated with the same dignity and respect as anyone else. He wants to be accepted for being Austin Burks and who he is, not for being labeled the young man with Down syndrome. I applaud my grandson for stepping up and making a difference, not just for himself, but for paving the way for other young adults. He is an inspiration to all who know him. I am so proud of him!

Austin told the new General Manager what other duties he would like to do and supported it with the list below he composed and typed himself, then gave to her. She immediately began implementing some of them and has increased his hours! As you can see, Austin is definitely a take-charge kind of guy!



Austin at work

CHUCK E CHEESE JOB SOMETHING ELES

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 MAKING PIZZAS | 5 PASS PRIZES OUT FOR THE KIDS PARENTS |
| 2 SET UP BIRTHDAY PARTYS | 6 FIX EVERY GAMES TICKET MEDICINE |
| 3 BIRTHDAY STAR DANCE WITH CHUCK E | 7 TAKE GARABGE OUT |
| 4 WASH CLEAN TABLES BENCHES HIGH CHAIR | 8 WASH CLEAN AT THE SALAD BAR |

Olivia on Her Path

Lili Byers



Congratulations to Olivia Byers-Straus—from her final solo performance, in June, with the Steppin' Out dancers in San Francisco, to the start of her two-year college career in the Pathway program at UCLA. If she looks happy, it's because she

loves living in her own apartment with three Pathway roommates, taking classes, cooking her own meals, learning to get around Los Angeles on transit, and participating in all kinds of social activities, from sports events to parties and picnics. Her parents' only complaint is that they don't hear from her often enough! But when they do, she sounds joyful. Nothing could make them happier!



Above: Olivia dancing her solo

At left: Olivia, front and center, surrounded by her Pathway classmates

Thank You, Keller Williams

Marianne Iversen

A big thank you once again to our friends at Keller Williams Realty for helping to assemble office furniture for the DSCBA. Thanks to realtors Randy Burchfield, David P. Johnson, and Kerry Trembath for giving their valuable time to help us.



Extra Special Dancers and Girl Scout

Marianne Iversen

Volunteer Nicole Nathlich is combining her love for dance and her passion for the kids at the Down Syndrome Connection with her Girl Scout Gold Award service project. Nicole has been teaching basic dance skills classes for children 4–6 years old and another class for those who are 7–10 years old. Session 2 will run from January 11 to February 15, and Session 3 from March 1 to April 5. If you are interested or would like more information, please contact Nicole at nicanat@yahoo.com.

The following comments are from parents whose children were enrolled in Session 1 this fall:

“Jadon had a great time in dance class and looked forward to going. Nicole and her friend, Jesse, are wonderful girls—super-encouraging and patient. The dance class has sparked an interest in him and has been great exposure for him.” (Charlotte Habecker)

“This class was perfect for Hailey since she needs special one-on-one attention. Nicole and her partner, Jesse, did a phenomenal job following Hailey’s lead so that she could be successful. We are so very grateful and touched that Nicole donated her time and efforts to teaching Hailey in her very first dance class. She gave Hailey the opportunity to enjoy music that she so loves and to dance, dance, dance!” (Jennifer Bornstein)



Top photo from left: Toby McLeod, Jadon Habecker and Nicole Nathlich

At right: from back left: Nicole Nathlich, Jesse Goodman, and Hailey Bornstein (front)



Nina Advocates for the ABLÉ Act

Connie Johnson



In November, 2012, Nina Krietzman and her mother, Connie Johnson, were invited to visit Washington DC as part of the National Down Syndrome Society (NDSS) fly-in campaign for the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act. NDSS flew in self-advocates from around the country to encourage key senators and congressional representatives to support the ABLE Act. (This bill will allow people with Down syndrome and other disabilities to create a tax-free savings account to cover qualified expenses, such as education, housing, and transportation. It is a supplement to other plans. The bill aims to ease financial strains faced by individuals with disabilities.)



Nina met with aides to Senator Dianne Feinstein, Leader Nancy Pelosi, and Majority Whip Kevin McCarthy. It was exciting to be in Congress and to learn how bills move through to become laws.

The ABLE Act has been reintroduced in Congress this year, and happily, Senator Feinstein has decided to sign on this time.



This summer, Nina went to Sweden, Denmark, and France on vacation. In Sweden, she met a lot of relatives from all over the world who came together for a family reunion. From Sweden, she went to Denmark to meet a family friend, then on to France, where she spent a lot of time in Paris.

Top left: Nina in the Cannon House
Center: Nina dancing on the Mall
At left: Nina with an aide to Dianne Feinstein

Aktion Club Raises Funds and Gives Back to the Community

Marianne Iversen

The Aktion Club of San Ramon Valley (SRV) held a car wash to raise funds to provide services to their community. The club voted to purchase toys for those in need and will be delivering them to the Bay Area Crisis Nursery on December 14. The Aktion Club is growing in members and continues to have fun while building their leadership and decision-making skills.

This group is sponsored by Kiwanis Club of SRV and provides a wonderful opportunity for the members to give back to their communities. If you know someone who might be interested in joining, please contact Marianne at Marianne@dconnection.org or 925-362-8660.

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At right: Aktion Club at the car wash fundraiser

For Your Time, Talent, and Treasures We Are Grateful...

Foundations, family funds, and service organizations

Anonymous Family Foundation
Barr Family Foundation
Ray Benton Family Fund
Lowell Berry Foundation
The Calhoun Family Fund
California Communications Access Foundation
Chevron
Children's Support League of the East Bay
Diablo Country Club Foundation
Jam Handy Character Building Foundation
KIDS-N-NEED
Kiwanis Club of Pleasanton
Kiwanis Club of San Ramon Valley
Lencioni Family Fund
The Joseph & Vera Long Foundation
Thomas J. Long Foundation
Million Dollar Round Table Foundation
M Squared Consulting, Inc.
Noll Foundation
Quest Foundation
San Ramon Rotary Foundation
TWANDA Foundation
Wayne and Gladys Valley Foundation
Wells Fargo Foundation

AT&T Employee Giving Campaign

Frankie Juarbe
David Kimble
Joanne Leach
Raymond Rhodes
Krista Veri

Bank of America Matching Gifts

Christina Ireland

Car Donation Services

Rosma Suansing

Chevron Humankind

Paul Casadont
Mark T. Janke

Del Amigo Pool Association

Lap-a-thon

Kaiser Community Giving Program

Burt Hasiguchi for Kaden Mui
Richard LaBelle for the Ruth Chivetta Scholarship Fund
Gail Hibson-Lawton
Larry Lawton

Microsoft Matching Gifts

Program
Anonymous

PG&E Corporation Give with Liberty Campaign for the Community

Derek Kent

IN HONOR OF

Sarah Najar
John Najar
Llenny Rios

IN HONOR OF

Lulu Jensen
Sommer Family Foundation

IN HONOR OF

Ability Awareness Training
Leonard A. Caetano, Jr

IN HONOR OF

Caleb Adams' birthday
William and Linda Watson

IN HONOR OF

Nico Barillas
Kevin and Anita Moore

IN HONOR OF

Matthew Bauman
Jacquie Christianson

IN HONOR OF

Harold Burns
Robert Guter
Michelle Vanni

IN HONOR OF

David Collins
Pixieland Amusement Park

IN HONOR OF

Emery De La Cruz
Robin Luke

IN HONOR OF

Ainsley Dodge and our CRP and DS Educational Alliance Programs
Wendy Cooper

IN HONOR OF

Linda Fountain
National Charity League
Diablo Valley

IN HONOR OF

Baby Kota's 1st anniversary
Ravi Kota

IN HONOR OF

Larry Kuta's 50th anniversary
Jeanne and Steve Karabin

IN HONOR OF

Sheri Milsner's 21st birthday
Vicki Ellefson

IN HONOR OF

Jay Purchio
Jeanne Leland

IN HONOR OF

Matthew Stamey's birthday
David and Judith Havlick
Margaret Jensen
Rick LaForet
Kim Lindeberg

And a generous match from
Matthew Stamey
Peter Tschernenko

IN HONOR OF

Cora Slocum
Karen Slocum

IN HONOR OF

Taylor's 21st birthday
Kim & Linda Henrie

IN HONOR OF

Mark and Cathy VandenBerghe's birthdays
Victor and Kathy VandenBerge

IN HONOR OF

Ronald and Patty VandenBerghe's wedding anniversary
Victor and Kathy VandenBerge

IN HONOR OF

Victor and Kathy VandenBerghe's birthdays
Karen, Mike, Mason, Major, Kate, Jason and Maggie

IN HONOR OF

Mason Zolnier's 5th birthday
PaPa and Gamma

IN HONOR OF

all the parents who give everything for their wonderful children every day of their lives. Our hearts are always with you!
Frank and Michele OConnor

IN MEMORY OF

Fay Burford
Kevin and Martha Hogan

IN MEMORY OF

Tatiana Casadont's grandfather, Ron Casadont
Julie Casadont
Roger and Sara Pinkert
Matthew and Megan Portoni

IN MEMORY OF

Gina Covello
The Covello Group

IN MEMORY OF

Marie Harrington
Anna and Lynn Azzopardi
Lorraine Delia
The Fleisher Law Firm
Teresa and Anitra Fraguglia
Mary Greene
Norma Kennedy
Joan LaPorte
Maureen Lewis
Bev & Harv Passanisi
Larry & Bobbie Ross
Sue Schwartz and Howard Muchnick

IN MEMORY OF

Doris Lindeberg
George and Martha Levison
Kim Lindeberg
Pamela Sherman

IN MEMORY OF

Kyle Martinez
Jim and Melinda Borelli
Connie Burnett
Timothy Covello
Tony, Armida, Tony Jr., Sonia

and Danielle Martinez
Lori & Kevin McIntire
Beverly Schuetz

IN HONOR OF

Ruby Nadelhoffer
Barbara Melton

IN MEMORY OF

Larry Nobriga
Eve Cummings

IN MEMORY OF

Peter Saeveke
Tim and Carolyn Lane

IN RECOGNITION OF

Karen VandenBerghe-Zolnier's Birthday
Mom and Dad

IN LOVING RECOGNITION OF

Kathy VandenBerghe's birthday
Victor VandenBerghe

IN RECOGNITION OF

Kate VandenBerghe-Roysdon and Jason Roysdon's birthdays
Mom and Dad

In recognition of

Victor VandenBerghe's birthday
Kathy VandenBergh

Our daughter Sophie supports DSCBA

David and Sophie Fielder

SPECIAL THANKS TO

Jennifer Cooper for ability awareness presentation at Oliver Nakahara's first grade class
Dan Nakahara

GENERAL DONATIONS

James Corr
Daetz Family Charitable Fund
Michael and Kinney Edlinger
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Garret and Cathy Girvan
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Kim Lindeberg
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James McKenna
Steven and Lizette Miller
Valerie Perkins
Kenneth and Marilyn Rasler
Jeanne Rile
Mary Shust
Peter and Cynthia Trueblood
Michael and Coni Whisler

VOLUNTEERS

2013 Step Up Walk

Tami Castelluccio
Maureen Cummings
Christos Dereschuk
John Fischer
Connie Gaxiola
Michael Ghazal
Camille Hunt
Kyle Iversen

Marie Jimenez
Melissa Jimenez
Morgan Jimenez
Jo Kelley
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National Charity League
Rolling Hills Chapter
Ashley Parish
Taylor Rogers
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St. Joan of Arc Light
Youth Group
California High School
Leadership

Dedicated Classroom Volunteers

K. Leigh Alfrey
Kathy Bargar-Viarengo
Wendy Earl
Jane Fountain
Brian Fruchey
Brock Garcia
Dawn Handley
Camille Hunt
Danielle Moyers
Molly Napolitano
Brienne O'Sullivan
Elyse Perry
Lauren Reed
Meghan Serrano
Logan Silliman
Lauren Viarengo
Adam Villafior
Yalda Yekta

2013 Holiday Party

K. Leigh Alfrey
Brian Bornstein
Hannah Bornstein
Jennifer Bornstein
Darren Briemie
Mike Cannon
Gloria Casadont
Tami Castelluccio
Mike DeMasi
Madison Ferguson
Michael Ghazal
DSCBA Grandparents Group
Marie Jimenez
Carrie Koel
Robert Koel
Los Cerritos Middle School
Leadership and friends
National Charity League Diablo
Valley Chapter
Jessica O'Reilly
Ashley Parish
Lisa Upton

Around the DSCBA help

Virginia Aquilar
Randy Burchfield
DSCBA Grandparents Group
David Johnson
Mark Sypien
Kerry Trembath
Lauren Viarengo

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!



Join the DSCBA Medical Outreach Committee!

Give back by being involved in a program that will positively impact how a diagnosis of Down syndrome and the news of delivery to new families are given and received at delivery medical facilities throughout the Bay Area.

We will ensure information about Down syndrome and how the DSCBA can help is current. Also help schedule and deliver training where needed regarding “delivering the news.” We can definitely use help in the San Francisco area.

The next committee meeting is Thursday, January 23, 6:30 p.m. at the Danville DSC office.
Call 925-362-8660 for more information.

Upcoming 2014 Events • Save These Dates

Saturday, March 8

Empowerment Conference and Annual Meeting, Danville

Saturday, May 3

Gala for Giving at the Diablo Country Club, Diablo

Sunday, October 5

Step Up for Down Syndrome Walk and Family Picnic

**For details and updates go to
<http://www.dsconnection.org>**