



HEART STRINGS

A bi-monthly publication for families and friends enriched with the Down syndrome connection.

Our children and adults with Down syndrome are the heart of our organization - and our most precious gifts.

July/August 2008

Message from Executive Director

I hope you are enjoying the summer and finding time for a some rest and relaxation. We managed to get away for a few days and it was a wonderful break. Our summer seems to flow better when we take the time to truly get away from the daily routine.

I am excited about the SibShop we are hosting in August. Melissa Jackson, sister of Aaron Shoemaker, and I recently attended a SibShop training in Louisville. I learned a lot about sibling relationships and how it affects the entire family - not just when they are young, but as adults too. Sibs have the longest relationship with the person who has a disability and needs support just like parents do. Imagine raising your child without the support of other parents who understand what you are going through. Sibs needs that same validation from their peers.

Raising children is the hardest job in the world and when you factor in a child who has a disability, there are so many more issues to deal with. My daughter Haley, 10 years old, loves her brother and is so proud of his accomplishments. Yet, at the same time, she is also terribly jealous of him. This year has been tough on her since there have been so many opportunities for Matthew (bowling, soccer, horseback riding, baseball, swim lessons). She doesn't understand how it is "fair" that he gets a tutor in the summer and a fun babysitter (i.e. respite provider).

While these times may be difficult for her, I know that having Matthew for a brother will complement her life as an adult. It has already made a difference in her life now. For example, at a recent birthday party we attended that had several boys with disabilities, she didn't skip a beat. She played with each of them and didn't think twice about their "differences." She looks forward to GRADSA events and seeing the other children and adults with Down syndrome. She is an advocate, speaking out to classmates at school for misusing the "R" word. She chose to do a wax museum project on Helen Keller because she overcame her disability to achieve greatness. She is already a better person for having Matthew in her life and I am so proud of her.

Please keep the following individuals in your prayers:

Tyler Lamar broke his jaw after falling 17 feet from the top of the bleachers. The doctors were not able to do surgery because of the dangers of wiring his jaw shut, so it must heal on its own, which requires him to be on a liquid diet.

Ruby Hidalgo fractured her knee from a fall and is recovering well.

Ben Pace was not able to have his trach removed due to his sleep study results. However, the results of his heart cath came out well.

Jonah Edge is still struggling with airway issues and returns to Cincinnati on July 8 for more tests.

Be sure and check the Calendar of Events for upcoming activities. Hope to see you soon!

Cindy Huston

Calendar of Events

Pool Party - Friday, August 1, 5:00 - 8:00 p.m. at Cravens Pool. Join us for a BBQ and pool party. This was a favorite event last year so be sure and mark your calendar to attend. Grilled burgers and hotdogs will be available, compliments of Mike Isbill. **Please RSVP to Cindy Huston.**

SibShop - Saturday, August 23, 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. at Owensboro



Christian Church (Community Room), SibShops are an opportunity for brothers and sisters (ages 8-13) of children with disabilities to obtain peer support and education within a recreational context. SibShops offer games interspersed with discussion activities. The workshop will be facilitated by Melissa Jackson, sister of Aaron Shoemaker, and Kristin Blandford, aunt of Mitchell Hensley. Both are also special education teachers. **Please RSVP to Cindy Huston**

and include your child's T-shirt size. Pizza and refreshments will be provided.

Holiday World Outing - Saturday, September 13, GRADSA will pay admission and lunch for individuals with Down syndrome and their immediate families. Extra tickets may be purchased for extended family but must be prepaid. **Please RSVP to Cindy Huston.**

Buddy Walk, Saturday, October 4, 11:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. at Moreland Park.

Watch your mailboxes for the Buddy Walk brochure which will be mailed in late August.

Swim Lessons for Children with Disabilities

Beth Wimsatt and Michelle Long, special education teachers with more than 10 years of pool experience, are offering private swim lessons for children with disabilities. For more information, call Beth at 315-8517.

Buddy Walk Update

Tonya Murphy has been appointed as our 2008 Buddy Walk Coordinator.

Tonya has served on the GRADSA board for several years. She has a sister-in-law, Linda, who has Down syndrome. We are excited to have her involved



in the walk. She is still looking for volunteers, so if you can help, please contact her at 314-2621 or buddywalk@gradsa.org. **The next Buddy Walk meeting is scheduled for July 8, 5:30 p.m. at the public library (2nd floor).**



Tonya and Linda at the GRADSA Holiday World Outing

New Officer Elected to Board

April Smith has been elected to the board as President-Elect for the 2008-2009 calendar year. Smith's experience with GRADSA began in August of 2005 when her second son, Ethan, was born. She was as prepared as possible for the usual challenges of raising two boys and maintaining a career as manager of the Real Estate Owned Department of US Bank Home Mortgage, where she has worked for 9 years. However, April and her husband, Shawn, had no warning that Ethan would not be born as healthy as their first son, Darian, now 9. When they realized they were parents of a child with Down syndrome, they felt numb and overwhelmed with feelings of loss, guilt and fear. Within a week of bringing Ethan home, Cindy Huston with GRADSA arrived and brought with her information, personal knowledge and compassion. Now that April was armed with the information and support she needed for this special kind of parenting, the numbness began to fade. She could now focus on the joys of raising such a child.



While raising a child with Down syndrome is not easy, neither is raising any child. Smith knew from the moment she saw Ethan that he was a special child who would bring great blessings to their lives. Anyone who meets Ethan can attest to that. His smile is contagious & he brings happiness to all that meet him. He is a constant discovery of love.

Since becoming involved with GRADSA, April has served on the Buddy Walk committee for two years and has played an active part in the events. She is dedicated to helping new parents understand Down syndrome and appreciate the capabilities of their wonderful child. Her vision for GRADSA is to continue that support, stating "I want us to continue making positive changes by educating our communities about Down syndrome and by making resources easily obtainable for those individuals and their families."

Friends Share a Common Bond

By: Lela Hale

Have you ever met someone and they became such a big part of your life that it seems like they were always there? That's the way it felt with my friends "The Big Guns." I call them that



because I think a few years ago, God felt He had to call in the "Big Guns" to reel me in and help make me a better person. There is one woman in the "BG's" whom I have connected with in such a way that I know she is truly an angel sent down from heaven, not only for me and my family, but for a host of other people as well. Her name is Angie Pace.

I met Angie in the summer of 2000 when we were both volunteering with Vacation Bible School at our church. We became involved with the mom's group at church and our kids attended the parochial school. Before long we were part of a group of families that shared holidays, births, cookouts, and other special occasions.

Angie and I have shared many things over the past 8 years. She has listened to me, laughed with me, cried with me, advised me, fussed at me, and shared by daughter's birth with me. She was a friend I could call on anytime for help. Angie is the kind of person who is always thinking of what she can do for others and never expects anything in return. She is very matter of fact and has her "act together." The only time I recall seeing her upset was when she was pregnant with her youngest child, Ben. The doctors told her there were serious medical problems and Ben may not survive. My heart broke for her and her family when she cried and told me she didn't care what was wrong with him, she just wanted him to live. She had always been the strong one in the group and to see her break down reminded me how serious the situation was.

Through a strong faith and many prayers, Ben did survive and was born by emergency C-section on November 18, 2005, with Down syndrome. The diagnosis of Down syndrome was not the defining moment of Ben's birth. He was alive and absolutely beautiful! I remember being in awe of Angie during the first year of Ben's life. He had numerous health issues and was hospitalized frequently. Angie educated herself about Down syndrome so that she could take care of Ben and meet his needs. She also continued to care for her other children, her husband, and her friends. God knew what He was doing when He gave Ben to the Pace family.

The "oddest" thing about our friendship is that 2 years later, I became pregnant and also had complications. Although mine were not as serious as Angie's, I was told that my son likely had Achondroplasia, a form of dwarfism. Angie was there for ultrasounds, consults, tears, etc. She was also there when I was admitted to the hospital 5 weeks before my due date because of low amniotic fluid. On November 10, 2007, Elijah was born, also by emergency C-section, and was immediately taken to the NICU. While in recovery, the doctor came in and told us that he did not have Achondroplasia, but appeared to have Down syndrome. My husband and I cried for our son, but again, God knew what He was doing. After all, He had sent Ben 2 years earlier.

Elijah was very tiny but so very beautiful! The days since his birth have been filled with many hours of joy and gratitude for his life and for Ben's life. God knows what He is doing when He creates all children, but in our case, He knew who to send first. I could not have made it without Angie's knowledge, wisdom, and support.

Angie and I have the same feelings of love, pain, sometimes despair, much hope, and tremendous joy in the time after our boys were born. We don't know what the future holds for Elijah and Ben, but we do know how even more special our friendship is because of the gifts God gave us in the form of these two little guys.

Sibling Relationships

By: Melissa Jackson



"Come meet your new little brother," I heard my mom say as she went to my grandmother's house to pick me up. I was only 2 years old, but I can still remember the day that I met my new brother. Looking back, I don't think anyone in our family knew the impact he would have on us, and everyone he met. My parents were honest about my brother from the start. We didn't keep the fact that he was different a secret. In fact, we have always celebrated all the things he CAN do...not focused on the things he CANNOT do. As kids, my brother and I were "two peas in a pod." I remember him following me around and mocking everything that I did. (Sometimes that wasn't such a good thing!) We did the things every "normal" siblings do—climbed trees, rode bikes, and drove our parents crazy by fighting! Even though I have moved away from home, my brother and I still remain close. We talk on the phone everyday and go on "brother/sister outings," as he would call it.



Having a sibling with Down syndrome has not always been easy. Going to school with my brother was definitely a challenge. I remember being called out of class in the fifth grade to help my brother "calm down." I also recall the time I was called out of class because he wouldn't come down from the jungle gym. As we would walk in the halls of school, some kids would whisper, but I never cared. I was very proud to have a brother with Down syndrome! Eventually, I moved onto middle school and we no longer went to the same school. He began to make friends throughout the rest of his years in school. In fact, he was so well-known and well-liked that people started referring to me as "Aaron's sister."

As I child, I felt like my brother looked up to me. Now, as adults, I look up to him. Aaron is truly a miracle from God and I feel blessed to have him as my brother. He has inspired me to be an advocate for individuals with disabilities, especially those with Down syndrome. The bond that Aaron and I share is so special to me. I feel like I am the person I am today because he has played such an important role in my life. Aaron is such an inspiration to our family and I am proud to call him my HERO!



Aaron with his sisters,
Misty and Melissa.

Sibling Concerns & Unique Opportunities

There are many issues that sibs of individuals with Down syndrome will face throughout their lives. Below are a few of the concerns and unique opportunities for growth that sibs have. In most cases, the opportunities far outweigh the concerns. Despite the lifelong challenges, most sibs grow up to be better people having shared their childhood with a brother or sister who has Down syndrome.

Unique Opportunities for Growth

Compassion
Pride
Accepting
Maturity
Advocacy
Values
Insight
Humor
Loyalty
Tolerance
Volunteerism
Meet new people
Inspiration
Patience
Perks (trips, no waiting in lines at parks)
Exposure to career options
Appreciation of own blessings

Concerns/Problems

Embarrassment
Resentment/Jalousy
Responsibility/Caregiving
Isolation
Safety
Worry/Future
Guilt
Different expectations from parents
Balancing family time

Available in the GRADSA Resource Library:

The Best Worst Brother - Siblings will relate to Emma's experiences with her 3-year old brother who has Down syndrome.

Life Goes On - First season of the popular 80's television show featuring Chris Burke.

Views from Our Shoes - Siblings share their experiences about what it's like growing up with a brother or sister who has Down syndrome.

The Sibling Slam Book - Teenagers share their thoughts on what it's really like to have a brother or sister with special needs.

The Sibling Support Project is pleased to announce SibNet (for older siblings) and SibKids (for younger siblings), the Internet's only listservs for and about brothers and sisters of people with special health, development, and emotional needs. Both provide an opportunity to share information and discuss issues of common interest with their peers from around the world. For a no-cost subscription, please visit www.siblingsupport.org

Our Experience with Obstructive Sleep Apnea

By: Anji Edge

Jonah was born on February 3, 1997, with a multitude of medical diagnoses, in addition to Trisomy 21. He has struggled since birth with obstructive breathing issues. They are exacerbated by his complex congenital heart disease. Sometimes, the line between the two becomes very dim and hard to see. But we continue on, searching for answers, educating the doctors whose paths we cross, in our quest to find health for Jonah. We have traveled to five states and worked with doctors from three other states. We've met some wonderful people along the way, and our lives have been molded and shaped by this little boy with sparkling brown eyes, an infectious belly laugh, and the sweetest smile you will ever see. I have an obligation to Jonah to be vigilant, informed, and willing to push the doctors who are caring for him to the limit. To search for answers, and to one day be able to say that our children with Down syndrome are no longer falling victim to the silent killer called sleep apnea. I would like to share with you some of what I have learned from Jonah's battle with obstructive sleep apnea.



Dr. Sally Shott, a pediatric otolaryngologist at Cincinnati Children's Hospital, is Jonah's primary doctor, leading the team of his other doctors in treating his sleep apnea. I have found Dr. Shott to be a very knowledgeable, very concerned woman, who is dedicating a large amount of time to ENT issues in the Down syndrome population. In April 2006, Dr. Shott's research findings from a 5 year longitudinal study were published in the Journal of the American Medical Association. An excerpt from that study says:

Obstructive sleep apnea syndrome is defined by sleep abnormalities that consist of complete and partial upper airway obstruction during sleep, a reduction in the amount of air entering the lungs with an abnormally high level of carbon dioxide in the blood, and oxygen loss.

Although obstructive sleep apnea is seen in only 0.7 to 2 percent of all children, a previous study based on 53 children and adults with Down syndrome between the ages of four weeks and 51 years old (an average of seven years old), found an incidence of sleep abnormalities as high as 100 percent in some cases. With this very high incidence in children, Sally R. Shott, MD, a pediatric otolaryngologist at Cincinnati Children's and principal investigator of the JAMA study, questioned whether all children with Down syndrome should be objectively evaluated for sleep abnormalities, obstructive sleep apnea, and at what age this evaluation should be done.

"Our results point to the need for objective testing for the presence of obstructive sleep apnea in children as young as three to four years old. Because there is a high incidence of sleep disorders in children with Down syndrome, clinical sleep studies are recommended even if the parents report no sleep problems in their child," Dr. Shott said.

Dr. Shott and her colleagues investigated the incidence of obstructive sleep apnea in 65 children with Down syndrome who were followed in a longitudinal, five-year study from the ages of two to five years old. The children in the study underwent a polysomnogram, or sleep study, between three and four years old. Researchers also examined the ability of parents to identify sleep abnormalities in their child.

They found that in general, parents of children with Down syndrome significantly underestimated the severity of their child's sleep disturbances. Overall, 69 percent of parents reported no sleep problems. Yet, 57 percent of children expressed abnormal sleep patterns. In the children with abnormal sleep study results, only 23 percent of parents correctly predicted a problem. In a previous study, only 32 percent of parents suspected their child had obstructive sleep apnea, despite a 100 percent incidence of abnormal studies.

Because children with Down syndrome have an increased risk of sleep abnormalities, in 2001 the American Academy of Pediatrics recommended that primary care physicians question parents about possible sleep disorders when the children are five years old and older. However, no recommendations are made for specific testing. This study recommends objective testing by polysomnography, or sleep study, in all children with Down syndrome."

Dr. Shott recommends that ALL children with Down syndrome receive a sleep study, regardless of whether the parents think their child has a sleep problem. That is the only way to diagnose and treat obstructive sleep apnea in this population. Our children with Down syndrome deserve no less than a timely diagnosis and treatment of such a severe problem as obstructive sleep apnea. But it is up to the parents to insist on this.

Recently, in an effort to alleviate some of the financial burden of our extensive travel back and forth to Cincinnati, I met with Dr. William O'Bryan of Pulmonary Associates of Owensboro, to see if our local sleep lab would be willing/able to conduct a sleep study on Jonah. Jonah has sleep studies at regular intervals to determine the success of surgical procedures he is undergoing to address his sleep apnea. While in Dr. O'Bryan's office, I questioned him about sleep studies in our children with Down syndrome. His response was very encouraging and positive. Dr. O'Bryan indicated that our sleep lab would be able to conduct overnight sleep studies on children with Down syndrome who are at least six years of age. No longer will parents have to make an appointment with a doctor in Louisville, travel there for the initial consultation, travel there again for the study, and return home to await the results. Any pediatrician can write the order for the sleep study and it can be performed here in

Owensboro. This study should be viewed more as a “screening” tool than anything else. If serious abnormalities are found on the sleep study, the child with Down syndrome will still need to be treated by a pediatric specialist. However, this does alleviate some travel and the costs associated with it.

Sleep studies for our children are painless. Nevertheless, some preparation is necessary. There are many electrodes that are attached in various places on the body (Jonah’s sleep lab in Cincy uses 38). They don’t hurt. The “glue” they use to attach them has a very strong smell, is very cold when applied to the body, and tends to stick around for several days afterwards. I have yet to find a substance to remove this glue entirely and we generally have to wait it out. The natural oils on Jonah’s skin help break the glue down and he is usually glue-free within one week. He has some pretty interesting hair days during that week, as 26 of the electrodes are attached to his head! Once the electrodes are attached, there are two pieces of equipment that Jonah absolutely HATES that have to be attached. One is a nasal cannula, which is a plastic piece that is inserted in his nostrils. It’s the same thing that oxygen is given through in the hospital. The other piece we call “cat whiskers.” They are attached with glue to his upper lip, and consist of two very thin, very short wires. They measure the airflow through his nostrils and mouth. There are also two thin pieces of material or “belts” that are strapped around Jonah’s chest and stomach. These measure Jonah’s efforts to breathe. They go under his paja-

mas, and once in place, are forgotten entirely. Once Jonah is wired up, we immediately turn the lights off, lay him down, and he goes to sleep. He somehow believes that he CAN’T move with all this equipment attached. That’s not true, and he does roll around during sleep, but it helps us to keep him still for him to believe this. One parent stays with the child during the whole test. I usually take a book and a small book light, because Jonah goes to sleep immediately. I read for a few hours, and keep an eye on the monitors, to get a feel for what the results might be. Then I crawl up on the deluxe, hospital issued couch, and sleep. Unless Jonah pops an electrode off, they don’t bother us. There is a dim light in the room, and a camera focused on the bed. They videotape the child during the entire night (so don’t pick your nose, or do anything that you don’t want lots of people to see!) All in all, this is one of the easiest tests that Jonah has done on a routine basis.

School is out now and schedules are slower. Make that phone call to your child’s pediatrician and talk to him/her about scheduling a sleep study for your child with Down syndrome. Remember, in Dr. Shott’s study, of children with significant sleep issues, only 23% of parents correctly reported a problem with their child’s sleep. That means that 77% of parents were wrong when asked if their child with Down syndrome had issues with sleep. We owe it to our children to not be in that group of parents.

ANJI’S TIPS FOR PREPARING FOR A SLEEP STUDY:

Do not let your child nap during the day.

Avoid caffeine or any other stimulants.

Bring a favorite blanket, favorite PJ’s, etc.

Make certain your child is fed, has gone to the bathroom, has a pull up on and in their PJ’s BEFORE you begin to attach the wires. Trust me on this one.

Once you begin the “wiring” process, DO NOT STOP. Just get it over with, all at once. It takes about an hour and 2 adults to get Jonah wired.

Sit upright in the bed with your child on your lap during wiring. The head of the bed is raised, which supports you, and allows you to help control your child’s arms, which will be reaching and grabbing for electrodes. Trust me on this one, too.

Once the child is wired, the lights go off IMMEDIATELY and they lay down in the bed. No interim periods, just get on with the prayers, kisses, hugs, etc., and get those lights out!

If your child happens to wake during the night and begins pulling wires off, DO NOT TURN THE LIGHTS ON. The sleep techs carry small flashlights. Make certain they use them, rather than overhead lights.

I have, when Jonah was much younger, actually laid in the bed with him, gently restraining his arms until he has fallen asleep. It is much easier to insist that he NOT touch the equipment than it is to re-apply it after he pulls it off. I wouldn’t suggest sleeping the entire night in the bed, as your presence could disrupt your child’s natural sleep patterns.

Remember, each child is different. Even if you don’t get through the entire night, any amount of information is helpful. We only got about 3 hours of sleep time on Jonah’s first attempt. Now they have to wake us up in the morning to boot us out of there! Don’t give up and know that you can try again on another night.

A Reason to Celebrate

GRADSA invites its readers to share their reasons for celebrating! Please send your submission to P.O. Box 2031, Owensboro, KY 42302, or email: info@gradsa.org



More than 100 family members and friends gathered to celebrate **Chris Hagan's 45th birthday** at a surprise party in June.

Leland Isbill participated in his 1st Holy Communion in May. He was in a class of 50 from St. Mary of the Woods in Whitesville.



News

GRADSA extends its deepest sympathy to **Zeb Wells** in the loss of his grandfather, **Jim Storm**. Mr. Storm would be honored to know that \$505 was donated to GRADSA in his memory.

Would you like to receive the newsletter electronically instead of by mail? If so, email us at info@gradsa.org. The newsletter is also posted on our website - www.gradsa.org

The Center for Courageous Kids is a world class medical camping facility in the rolling hills of Scottsville, Kentucky providing a cost-free, safe, and fun camping experience for children who are seriously ill or have a disability, and their families.

The campus sits on 168 acres and consists of 18 buildings and activity areas, including a Medical Center, Dining Hall, Theater, Bowling Alley, Stables, Archery, Indoor Pool, Gymnasium, Woodshop, Beauty Salon, Camper Lodges, Boating & Fishing. The camp is a non-profit organization funded by donations from individuals, foundations, and corporations with a heart for children and is free to all children and their families. The Center offers summer camp and family retreat weekends to children with a variety of disabilities. **They will be offering a family retreat weekend for individuals with Down syndrome and their families on October 31 - November 2.** For more information, please contact Donita Monroe at (270) 618-2900 or email: dmonroe@courageouskids.org or check out their website at: www.courageouskids.org

Read about Kelsey Dueker's exciting adventure at Camp Courageous in the next issue of *Heart Strings!*

Call for Pictures: The National Down Syndrome Society is seeking photos of individuals with Down syndrome to include in its annual Times Square Video Contest. The video, which showcases individuals with Down syndrome from all over the world, will air on the Panasonic News Corporation Astrovision screen in Times Square on September 28 at 10:30 a.m., preceding the New York City Buddy Walk™. The winning photographs will feature children, teens and adults with Down syndrome working, playing and learning with friends and family. Please limit photos to no more than three per individual with Down syndrome. If more than three pictures are received, only the first three will be considered. For more information or to submit a photo, visit www.buddywalk.org. **The deadline for submitting photos is July 18, 2008.** You will be notified ONLY if your photo is accepted for the video. Photos will be not be returned. For further questions about the contest, contact Rebecca Switalski at timessquarevideo@ndss.org or 877-526-0270.

Summer Sports

There have been several opportunities for recreation this summer including Buddy Baseball, TOP Soccer, and Dream Riders. A special thanks to the organizers of these groups who give of their time to provide children with disabilities the chance to participate in meaningful activities.



Merrick Justice steps up to bat.



Trevor Brown, Peyton VanMeter, Merrick Justice, Taylor Palmer, and Leland Isbill receive their TOP Soccer trophies.



Sam Fenwick gets ready to swing at the ball.



Kaleb Warman runs to first base.



Elizabeth Stickler shows off her kicking skills.



Tyler Lamar swings at the ball.



Elliott Williams displays his riding skills.



Sam Winstead is all decked out and ready to play.



Jonah Edge is a pro at riding Jimbo.

July/August Birthdays

Alan Bennett, 40 years old on July 30
Shelby Faye Crook, 12 years old on July 9
Sam Fenwick, 6 years old on July 18
Abbey Garvin, 5 years old on July 3
Keith Grant, 55 years old on August 28
Will Graves, 28 years old on July 26
Justin Hagan, 28 years old on August 10
Dana Hamilton, 27 years old on July 20
Tyler Lamar, 13 years old on July 19
Charity Louden, 28 years old on July 31
Luca Marsh, 1 year old on August 23
Linda Murphy, 44 years old on August 3
Brent O’Nan, 7 years old on August 23
Taylor Palmer, 9 years old on July 5
Kyrstyn Randolph, 14 years old on Aug. 22
Shawn Riney, 36 years old on July 15
Samuel Rutland, 16 years old on August 21
Aaron Shoemaker, 24 years old on Aug. 20
Ethan Smith, 3 years old on August 11
Luke Stone, 5 years old on August 22

Fazoli’s Birthday Club - Fazoli’s, 5060 Frederica Street, is treating individuals with Down syndrome to a free meal to celebrate their birthday. Children ages 12 & under can choose a kids meal while teens & adults have their choice of a small spaghetti with marinara or meat sauce. To receive your free meal, show this column to the cashier during the month of your birthday.

Mission Statement

GRADSA’s mission is to enable families enriched with the Down syndrome connection to share resources, build friendships and advocate together for the future of individuals with Down syndrome.

Services

GRADSA, an affiliate of the National Down Syndrome Society and the National Down Syndrome Congress, is a non-profit, 501(c)3 organization that provides its members with a bi-monthly newsletter, educational workshops, social activities, a website (www.gradsa.org), a new parent outreach program, and a hospital outreach program. There are no membership fees to join.

Policy Statement

GRADSA does not endorse any specific therapy, treatment, or educational setting. We provide a variety of information and viewpoints, however, each family must make an individual choice.

Printing of Articles

GRADSA welcomes articles from parents, professionals, and other interested parties. Material for consideration should be sent to Cindy Huston. Articles written for *Heart Strings* may be reproduced if credit is given to the author and GRADSA. Permission to reprint articles not original to *Heart Strings* should be acquired from the original source.

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The next board meeting will be held on Thursday, July 24, 5:30 p.m., at the Family YMCA. All board meetings are open to the general membership.

If you have an address change or would like to discontinue your subscription to *Heart Strings*, please contact us!

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