



HEART STRINGS

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

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

November/December 2005

Message from Executive Director

Although it is officially the fall season, it's hard to believe with the unusually warm weather. Unfortunately, it hasn't stopped the viruses from spreading. Matthew has already had bronchitis and strep throat. So keep taking your vitamins and washing those hands - hopefully your family will have a healthy fall and winter season.

Speaking of warm weather, it was the hottest Buddy Walk on record. Maybe next year we should plan for ice cream...but then we would probably need hot chocolate! You just never know about this crazy weather. Everyone seemed to have a great time though. Seeing the excitement on the faces of our children and adults with Down syndrome make it all worthwhile.

GRADSA hosted its first *Changing Lives: Down Syndrome and the Health Care Professional* workshop on October 18, with over 60 people in attendance. We will be taking this program on the road in 2006 to supply this important information to all health care professionals in our area. If you would like to be involved, please let me know, as I could certainly use the extra help.

Our next education workshop, *Reading Strategies*, will be held on November 17. The class will be presented by Valerie Neville, Special Education Teacher at Meadowlands Elementary School. Don't miss this chance to learn innovative ways to help our kids learn to read.

We hope that your family will be able to join us for our holiday activities. This is GRADSA's first appearance in the Christmas parade - what a festive way to promote Down syndrome awareness! Our annual Christmas party is always lots of fun and provides an opportunity to spend time with your GRADSA friends. A nice, hot meal is an added bonus!

Hope to see you soon!

Cindy Huston

Calendar of Events

Thursday, November 17, *Reading Strategies*, 6:30 - 8 p.m. at the Family YMCA. Presented by Valerie Neville, Special Education Teacher at Meadowlands Elementary School. Refreshments and child care will be available beginning at 6 p.m. Please RSVP to Cindy Huston by Nov. 15.

Saturday, November 19, *Christmas Parade*, The Sorgho and Masonville Fire Departments are providing GRADSA with two fire trucks to enter in the parade. Children and adults with Down syndrome are welcome to ride on the trucks with a parent. To sign up, contact Cindy Huston by Nov. 11.

Saturday, December 3, *Christmas Party*, 4 - 7:30 p.m. in Rogers Hall at KWC's Winchester Center. Crafts and activities begin at 4 p.m. A buffet dinner will be served at 5:30 p.m. and Santa will arrive at 6:30 p.m. GRADSA will be giving a Christmas gift to all individuals with Down syndrome. Children ages 12 and under will receive an animal from Noah's Ark Stuff 'n Fluff Animal Workshop. Teens and adults will receive a movie pass. We will also have a photographer on hand for family photos. **Since food and workshop animals need to be ordered in advance, you must RSVP by November 18.**

News



NEW ARRIVAL

E than Smith

was born August 11 to
April and Shawn Smith.

He has a big brother, Darian.

Welcome New Board Members

Tonya Murphy is a financial planner with Financial Freedom Partners. She and her husband, Mike, have three children - Coy, Kaylee, and Nick. They also care for Mike's sister, Linda, who has Down syndrome.

Brenda Walker is a guidance counselor at Country Heights Elementary School. She previously spent 15 years in special education. She and her husband, Harry, have a son, Nicholas. She also has a stepdaughter, Kim.

Matthew Williams is a calibration technician at Aleris International, and has been an Emergency Medical Technician for 10 years. Matthew and his wife, Lee (Puckett), have 3 children - Johnathan, Anna, and Elliott, who has Down syndrome.

Calling all Siblings: The next issue of *Heart Strings* will feature your stories. This is your chance to share with our readers what it's like to have a brother or sister with Down syndrome. It can be a few words or a few paragraphs, from younger and older sibs. Don't forget to send in a photo too. Deadline for submission is December 15.

The Wall Street Journal recently published two articles pertaining to DS:

"Next Chapter: A Young Woman With Disabilities Plans Her Wedding"
(Published: October 11, 2005)

<http://webreprints.djreprints.com/1325950882002.html>

"Agonizing Choice: A Brother's Survey Touches a Nerve In Abortion Fight" (Published: October 3, 2005)

<http://webreprints.djreprints.com/1321391430755.html>

NATIONAL INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS WEEK: DECEMBER 5-9, 2005



National Inclusive Schools Week highlights and celebrates the progress of our nation's schools in providing a supportive and quality education to all students, particularly those who have disabilities and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The *Week* also provides an important opportunity for educators, students, and parents to discuss what else needs to be done in order to ensure that their schools continue to improve their ability to successfully educate all children and youth.

National Inclusive Schools Week is being organized by the Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative and Education Development Center, Inc. as a way of acknowledging the hard work and commitment of teachers, administrators, students, and parents in making their schools more inclusive, and, thereby, significantly contributing to the development of a more inclusive society.

WHAT IS INCLUSION IS...

Inclusion is...

...the commitment to educate each child in the school and classroom he or she would naturally attend with same age peers.

... a right, not a privilege for a select few.

... supported by an educational philosophy that celebrates diversity.

... an involvement of children learning side by side, even though their educational needs and outcomes may differ.

... a provider of support to regular education teachers who have children with disabilities in their classrooms.

... full membership in regular class activities with services and support (as needed) in that classroom.

Inclusion is not...

... dumping children into regular education without appropriate supports.

... trading quality of education or intensity of supports for inclusion.

... ignoring the needs or sacrificing the education of any child.

... everyone learning the same thing at the same time, in the same way.

... eliminating or cutting back on special education services.

... expecting regular education teachers to teach students with challenging needs alone, without the support needed to teach effectively.

Reprinted from WIN Inclusion Solution, Autumn 2000

NDSS INCLUSION BROCHURE

The National Down Syndrome Society has published a wonderful brochure on the benefits of inclusion. When inclusion is effectively implemented, research has demonstrated academic and social benefits for all students, both those with developmental delays and typical students. Friendships develop, nondisabled students are more appreciative of differences and students with disabilities are more motivated to achieve. True acceptance of diversity ultimately develops within the school environment and is then carried into the home, workplace, and community. To receive a complimentary copy of the brochure, please contact Cindy Huston.

TOP TEN LISTS FOR PARENTS/TEACHERS

Ten Things Parents Wish Teachers Would Do

1. Build student's self-esteem.
2. Become familiar with each child's needs.
3. Communicate honestly and openly with parent.
4. Assign effective homework.
5. Set reasonably high academic standards.
6. Care about the kids.
7. Be fair.
8. Enforce positive discipline.
9. Use a variety of teaching methods.
10. Encourage parental participation.

Ten Things Teachers Wish Parents Would Do

1. Be involved in child's education.
2. Provide resources at home for reading and learning.
3. Set a good example.
4. Encourage children to do their best in school.
5. Emphasize academics.
6. Support school rules and goals.
7. Use parental pressure positively.
8. Be proactive.
9. Accept parental responsibilities.
10. Inform school of situations that may impact school performance.

Reprinted from Strategies for Success, Down Syndrome Association of Greater Cincinnati

THE LEARNING STYLE OF CHILDREN WITH DOWN SYNDROME

There is a wide range of abilities, behavior, and physical development among children with Down syndrome, but as a generalization, most children with Down syndrome tend to be visual learners, have difficulty with auditory memory & auditory processing, have fewer short-term memory "channels" which means they can't handle too many things at once (three and four part directions given orally are very difficult) and they need to practice the information regularly before it is committed to long term memory.

If the student you are working with happens to be a visual learner, he will probably benefit greatly from having visual information presented in conjunction with auditory information. Visual presentations (especially if it is new material) should be kept simple. If there is too much to look at, your student may be "distracted" rather than "supported" by the visual material. If the student is receiving services from an OT, the therapist may have suggestions for assisting the student to process visually (i.e. tracking, scanning from left to right, pointing with the index finger while reading words in sentence.)

Feedback needs to be provided in the following ways: *Let him know when he is successful.* Depending upon the child, provide a reward in recognition of his successful efforts. Stickers, a "thumbs up" or "high-five" with verbal praise - "You did it!", "Good work!" or "Great job!" *Convey the meaning of things.* Example: Of what value is reading to a child? Well, if he likes cookies, when he reads the word "cookie" it means something to him. It has "value." *Convey the purpose of the attempted skill.* Of what value is learning "more" or "less"? The child's newly acquired information needs to be able to transfer and generalize in any situation.

Keep in mind...if the child is refusing to do his work, it may be an indication that he is trying to avoid the continuance of "failure." If the child is not making progress...**DO SOMETHING!** Do not let the child continue to fail. Break the task down into smaller parts or steps. Try a different approach or method. Teachers need to plan for the stages of learning. There needs to be opportunity for the student to practice through repetition. Every bit of instruction needs to be evaluated. Proficiency at 80-100% for three days should be sufficient to move on to the next criteria. Overlearning causes frustration, is defeating, and becomes boring.

Children with Down syndrome often reveal stronger receptive language skills than expressive language skills. We assume because they are not answering verbally, it's because they don't know. And that's not it all. They know but may not be able to get the answer out quick enough or intelligibly enough. When provided with alternative means for responding, they can "show" you they know the correct answer. Depending on the skills of the child, picture or word cards could be used. Sometimes the use of sign language or picture boards can bridge the gap until oral motor skills increase.

"A plateau may be a place that some children with Down syndrome will visit, but don't expect and encourage them to live there. Learning is a lifetime experience for people with Down syndrome, just as it is for those who do not."

From "Teaching Reading to Children with Down Syndrome", by Patricia Logan Oelwein; Woodbine House, 1995.



Sam Fenwick rides the seahorse.



Laura Whitfell brought the whole family along.



Elizabeth Stickler enjoyed the water slides with dad, Mike.



Matthew Cook waits to ride the bumper boats.



Mitchell Hensley enjoyed dancing with the Holidog.

Twenty-eight GRADSA families enjoyed a wonderful day at the annual Holiday World outing in September.



Elliott Williams had a ball in the ball pit.



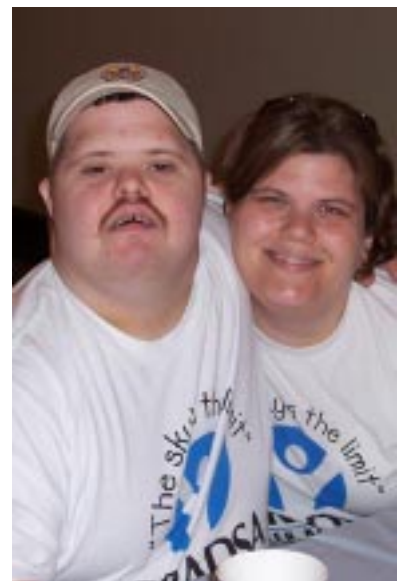
Alec Skipworth and dad enjoy the day together.



Beth Wilson climbs through the net at Holidog's FunTown.



Matthew Huston and Sam Winstead didn't mind the cool water at Splashin' Safari.



Will Graves Beyke gives his sister, Christie, a hug.

November/December Birthdays

Steven Ballard - 39 years old on Nov. 30
Michael Castlen Jr. - 52 years old on Nov. 19
Hannah Hardesty - 1 year old on Dec. 27
Paxton Hocker - 10 years old on Dec. 26
Matthew Huston - 5 years old on Nov. 10
David Leonard - 7 years old in Dec.
Lukas Mahoney - 6 years old on Dec. 15
Joey McActee - 10 years old on Nov. 25
Tammy Sears - 37 years old on Dec. 8
Ana Lilia Sedillo - 14 years old on Nov. 8
Ann Switzer - 5 years old on Dec. 28
Mark Vollman - 45 years old on Dec. 28
Jonathan Whittaker - 11 years old on Nov. 4
Alan Wood - 34 years old on Dec. 16



If this information is not correct or a birthday is not listed, please let us know!

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 our children.

Services

GRADSA, an affiliate of the National Down Syndrome Society, 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.

Policy Statement

GRADSA does not endorse, recommend or support any specific regime, therapy, or editorial submitted for publication.

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.

Board Members

Dwight Beyke, *President*
Phone: (270) 686-6433
E-mail: dbeyke@metlife.com

Tony Hamilton, *Vice President*
Phone: (270) 729-2576

Anji Edge, *Past President*
Phone: (270) 281-0093

Michele Cecil, Director
Carrie Colbert, Director
Steve Hagan, Director
Tonya Murphy, Director
Paul Puckett, Director
Brenda Walker, Director
Matthew Williams, Director

Cindy Huston, *Executive Director*
Phone: (270) 771-4945
E-mail: info@gradsa.org

All board meetings are open to the general membership. The next meeting will be held on Monday, December 12, 6 p.m., at the Owensboro Family Y.



P.O. Box 2031
Owensboro, KY 42302