

Dancing with Our Stars Gala



DSACO invites you to our highly anticipated signature event, the **Dancing with Our Stars Gala**, an enchanting evening filled with dancing, celebration, and lasting memories! This unique event highlights the heart of our mission.

Fifty adults with Down syndrome will showcase their ballroom dancing skills and talents by performing professionally choreographed routines. They will be eager to share their dances with you!

During the gala, we will proudly honor Nationwide Children's Hospital with the Impact Award in recognition of their outstanding and growing partnership. We will also honor a

Service Award recipient.

As you enjoy the festivities, take the opportunity to learn more about DSACO's programs and initiatives that empower people with Down syndrome to shine. Get your dancing shoes ready and join us for an unforgettable evening of impact.

We're grateful for the continued support of the GLOW Foundation for this year's event as a presenting sponsor. Tickets will be available for purchase beginning December 1 at dsaco.net/gala. Sponsorship opportunities are still available; please contact Lisa at ldodge@elevatedd.org to learn more.

When:

Saturday, February 7

6 PM | Cocktails

7 PM | Dinner & Dancing

Where:

Hilton Columbus at Easton
3900 Chagrin Dr. | Columbus

Ticket Pricing:

General Registration | \$150
General Registration includes dinner.

Table of Ten | \$1500
Table of ten includes dinner for ten guests.

Complimentary valet parking
available for all guests,
courtesy of Creative Options.

Click or scan for details or
registration



Can't attend? Please consider
making a tax-deductible
donation at dsaco.net/gala.

4

COMMUNITY
OUTREACH

5

MEDICALLY
SPEAKING

6

PROGRAMMING &
GROUPS

Winter
2025-2026

3/21

As this year comes to a close, I have been reflecting on what an incredible time it has been to join the DSACO family. From the moment I stepped into this role, I have been welcomed with such warmth, sincerity, and purpose. That spirit was especially evident this fall at the Buddy Walk, where families, friends, and community partners came together to celebrate one another and to show what true inclusion looks like. This year, we set new records: 263 teams and more than 10,000 participants! Because of you, DSACO now reaches over 5,000 individuals, families, and professionals across 25 counties, and every dollar raised through

this event fuels programs, advocacy, and services that change lives every single day. The 2025 Columbus Buddy Walk was a powerful reminder that DSACO is built on connection, commitment, and love.

3 A LEGACY OF INCLUSION. DSACO's story began with families who believed that their children deserved every opportunity to learn, to grow, and to belong. That same belief continues to guide our mission today. Over the years, DSACO has inspired the creation of Learning Aid Ohio and Adult Literacy Ohio, programs that extend the reach of this work while staying

true to its heart. Together, these communities ensure that people with developmental disabilities have access to learning, support, and opportunities that lead to greater independence and inclusion.

2 STRENGTH IN SHARED PURPOSE. As I look ahead, my focus remains on listening, learning, and working alongside this incredible community. I am eager to continue meeting the families, volunteers, and partners who have made DSACO such a trusted and transformative organization for more than forty years. Each conversation I have reminds me that our greatest strength lies in our shared commitment to one another and to the belief that every person deserves to live fully and meaningfully.

1 WITH GRATITUDE AND HOPE FOR THE WORK AHEAD.

Thank you for the many ways you support this mission. Whether through your time, generosity, or advocacy, you make this work possible. I am deeply honored to be part of this community and excited for all that the new year will bring.



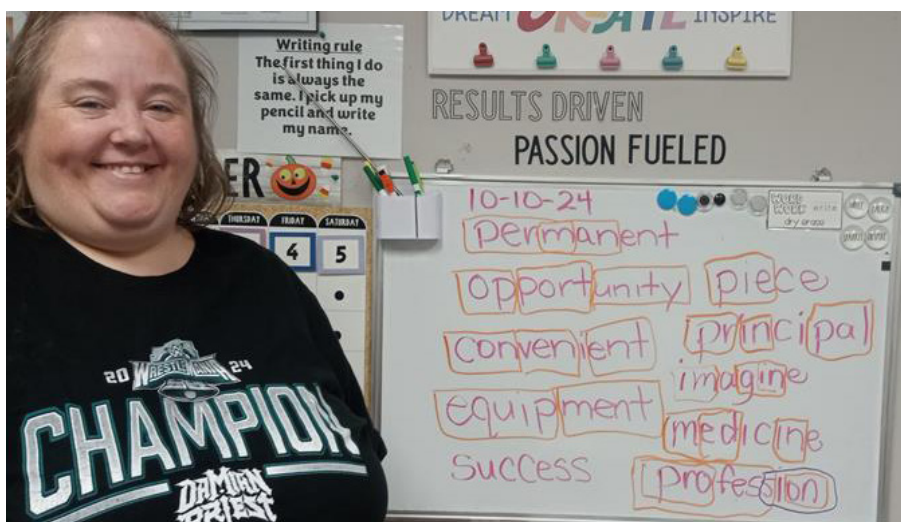
Troy Hunter
President & CEO, ElevatedDD





Adult Literacy Ohio empowers adults with developmental disabilities to strengthen reading, writing, and communication skills that build confidence and independence. Through individualized tutoring and person-centered learning, participants gain the tools they need to achieve their goals at home, at work, and in the community.

Meet Amy!



Amy came to us with goals focused on vocabulary, segmenting, decoding, and even learning basic Spanish, something she had always dreamed of. Despite her desire to learn, someone had told her it wasn't possible because of her disability. After working with our program, Amy shared, "I could disregard the limitations someone had told me about learning Spanish due to my disability. I can spell words that I previously misspelled." Her tutor, Kimberly, reflected on the journey, saying, "The most significant aspect was for Amy to let go of the myths and limitations that had been placed upon her." Amy's partner, Michael, described her experience as being in a cocoon at the beginning and watching her become a butterfly at the end. We are so proud of Amy and Kimberly! They truly embraced the person-centered aspects of this program. Amy learned new vocabulary words in both English and Spanish and segmentation strategies for figuring out unknown words. Amy is proud of her progress and her SSA mentioned that she has noticed the vocabulary development and better pronunciation and sounding out skills too. She mentioned how important this is because Amy teaches art classes and does a lot of public speaking engagements as a self-advocate.



Spring 2026 Enrollment Is Now Open!

Learning Aid Ohio continues to make a difference for families across the state by providing 1:1, in-person tutoring for students with IEPs. Families consistently report that their learners show increased confidence, improved academic skills, and reduced stress at home thanks to the individualized support they receive through the program.

Enrollment for the Spring 2026 semester opens November 11, 2025, with tutoring sessions running from January 10 - May 8, 2026. Whether you've participated before or are ready to return for a new semester, Learning Aid Ohio is here to help your learner stay on track and reach their goals.



Black History Month

Black History Month, celebrated each February in the U.S. and Canada, honors the struggles and achievements of Black individuals from slavery to modern times. It showcases Black excellence in science, arts, politics, sports, and more, while encouraging reflection on progress toward racial equality and the work still to be done.

The 2026 theme, “**A Century of Black History Commemorations**,” marks 100 years since Dr. Carter G. Woodson launched the first History Week in 1926, encouraging reflection on a century of honoring and institutionalizing Black history.

DSACO Black and African American Outreach Facebook Group



Día de Reyes

La tradición de la Rosca de Reyes se celebra cada 6 de enero, en el Día de Reyes, y es especialmente popular en los países de habla hispana. Esta tradición combina la celebración religiosa con la unión familiar, y disfrutar de la Rosca de Reyes se convierte en un momento especial para compartir y celebrar en comunidad.

DSACO te invita a celebrar esta hermosa tradición. Regístrate para recibir una Rosca antes del 19 de diciembre de 2025.

¿Preguntas? Comunícate con Vanessa Armenta en varmenta@dsaco.net.

The tradition of Rosca de Reyes is celebrated every January 6th, on Three Kings' Day, and is especially popular in Spanish-speaking countries. This tradition blends religious celebration with family togetherness and enjoying the Rosca de Reyes becomes a special moment to share and celebrate as a community.

DSACO invites you to celebrate this beautiful tradition. Register to receive a Rosca by December 19, 2025.

Questions? Contact Vanessa Armenta at varmenta@dsaco.net.

Click or Scan to Register



Familias Latinas de DSACO Facebook Group

Únete a nuestro grupo de Facebook para familias latinas, una comunidad acogedora y solidaria para familias de habla hispana que tienen un ser querido con síndrome de Down.

Join our Facebook Group for Latino families—a welcoming and supportive community for Spanish-speaking families who have a loved one with Down syndrome.

Familias Latinas de DSACO Facebook Group



Ramadaan

Ramadaan, oo ka mid ah bilaha ugu barakaysan Islaamka, waxaa u dabaaldega in ka badan 1.9 bilyan oo Muslimiin ah adduunka oo dhan. Waa xasuusidda waqtigii la soo dajiyay Qur’aanka Kariimka ah ee lagu waxyooday Nabi Muxamed (nabad iyo naxariis korkiisa ha ahaato). Bisha Ramadaan, Muslimiintu waxay soomaan laga bilaabo waaberiga ilaa qorrax dhaca—iyagoo iska ilaalinaya cunto, cabitaan, iyo dabeecado xun—si ay ruux ahaan u koraan oo ay u xoojiyaan xidhiidhkooda Alle. Maalin kasta waxa lagu soo gabagabeeyaa Iftar, oo ah cunto farxad leh oo lala wadaago qoyska iyo asxaabta.

Ramadaan Mubaarak annaga iyo qoysaskeenna idinka!

Ramadan, one of Islam’s holiest months, is observed by over 1.9 billion Muslims worldwide. It commemorates the revelation of the Holy Qur’an to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). During this month, Muslims fast from dawn to sunset—refraining from food, drink, and negative behavior—to grow spiritually and strengthen their connection with Allah. Each day ends with Iftar, a joyful meal shared with loved ones.

Ramadan Mubarak from our family to yours!

Hooyooyinka Soomaaliyeed

Waxaad lagu casuamayaa Habeenka Hooyooyinka Soomaaliyeed ee Jimce, Janaayo 30! Ku soo biir hooyooyinka Soomaaliyeed ee DSACO habeen madadaalo, cunto, iyo wada sheekeysii ah. DSACO ayaa bixineysa kharashka cuntada.

Su’aalo ma qabtaa? La xidhiidh Amina Said: asaid@dsaco.net.

You are invited to Somali Moms' Night Out on Friday, January 30! Join other Somali mothers from DSACO for an evening of fun, food, and conversation. DSACO will cover the meal.

Questions? Contact Amina Said at asaid@dsaco.net.



Welcome Kelly Kuhns

Kelly joined the DSACO team as Program Coordinator of Medical Outreach where she will focus on improving the health and well-being of people with Down syndrome through healthcare resources, community support, and partnerships with providers. She earned her nursing degrees from Columbus State and is a registered nurse with experience in emergency care, labor and delivery, and case management.

Kelly and her husband, Luke, have three children. Their youngest, Oliver, was born with Down syndrome in 2015, inspiring Kelly's ongoing advocacy for inclusion - even testifying at the Ohio Statehouse. DSACO has been a valuable resource for her family and a community they deeply cherish. She initially started out as a volunteer in 2017 as a parent mentor and M.O.M.S. facilitator, and supported our medical outreach efforts.



New Down Syndrome Program at Nationwide Children's Hospital

By Andrew Page, MBA

Operations Manager – Developmental Behavioral Pediatrics,
Nationwide Children's Hospital

Nationwide Children's Hospital – Developmental Behavioral Pediatrics

We are excited to announce the Nationwide Children's Hospital Down Syndrome Program will be offering a new and expanded care model beginning in November. Moving forward, all patient visits will specifically tailor to the patient's age; and will include appointments with a variety of specialists:

- **0-4 years of age:** Developmental Behavioral Pediatrics, Speech, Occupational Therapy/Physical Therapy
- **4-10 years of age:** Developmental Behavioral Pediatrics, Speech, Occupational Therapy/Physical Therapy, Psychology
- **10-17 years of age:** Developmental Behavioral Pediatrics, Occupational Therapy, Psychology, Adolescent Medicine
- **17-21 years of age:** Internal Medicine/Pediatrics, Psychology, Adolescent Medicine, Occupational Therapy

We will also have a dedicated patient navigator and nurse to help patients and families with scheduling appointments across the hospital system, refill requests, referral follow ups, form requests, and connection to resources.

The program, led by co-medical directors Patricia Nash, MD, and Murugu Manickam, MD, with Mark Wells, MD, will now offer appointments on Monday and Thursday and will offer audiology appointments as needed.

The clinic will be located at the Outpatient Care Center at 555 South 18th Street on the third floor.

We are excited to be able to offer these enhanced services and improved access for our patients! For more information, please call us at 614-722-6160.

Programming & Groups Color Key



First Connect Parent Mentor Program

DSACO offers new and expectant parents of babies with Down syndrome the opportunity to connect with trained parent mentors who share the same or similar life circumstances. New parents receiving a prenatal or postnatal diagnosis will have the opportunity to connect with a trained parent mentor and receive support and guidance during the first year following birth.

New Parent Counseling

DSACO offers counseling to parents whose child with Down syndrome is less than one year old, to help you adjust to your child's diagnosis and work through those early emotions. Having an unexpected diagnosis can bring along many different emotions, and we are here to help you get connected with a licensed professional who can guide you through this journey.

Little Buddies North and Southeast

Little Buddies Parent Resource Group is a monthly group for expecting and new parents or families of children with Down syndrome (preschool age or younger) in the Central Ohio area. We offer support and information for families prenatally through preschool. This group meets in two convenient locations: Pickerington and Worthington.

School Age Group

Join DSACO's School Age Group, created for families who have a child with Down syndrome in school. This group meets quarterly at different locations to connect with other families, explore resources, and enjoy fun activities together. It's a great opportunity to build community and make lasting friendships!

Education Support and Resources

The school years bring a flurry of activity, complexity, and opportunity for a child with Down syndrome. DSACO strives to provide support, information, and resources to help them take full advantage of this exciting stage of life. Educators should be equipped with extra tools and knowledge to help them along the way to success. DSACO offers teachers guidance and resources to set their pupils on the right path.

World Down Syndrome Day Book Bundles

Celebrate your student with Down syndrome on World Down Syndrome Day (3/21) by gifting a Book Bundle to their school! This initiative aims to celebrate students with Down syndrome in our 25-county service area and raise awareness about inclusion. DSACO will send age-appropriate books, materials, and an awareness poster to your child's school.

High School Social Group

The High School Social Group is a monthly gathering for teens with Down syndrome. The goal is to build friendships and foster independence in a safe and fun environment. These monthly events are best suited for older teens who are mostly independent and have a desire to connect with peers (or whose parents would like them to do so).

Teen and Adult Pool Party

Teens and adults with Down syndrome (ages 13 and up), along with their families, are invited to an indoor pool party on February 8! We'll be partnering with the Westerville Community Center again to offer this much-loved opportunity to our families. You'll be able to enjoy their wonderful and spacious indoor leisure pool and slides during this swim party!

Cooking with You... and Who?

DSACO is inviting adults with Down syndrome to join us twice a month for our virtual cooking class! This class is hosted by a guest chef and provides step-by-step instructions on how to prepare a simple recipe from the convenience of your own kitchen. Basic cooking terms, preparation ideas, and gadget safety are all emphasized with the goal of fostering independence and empowering individuals with the skills they need to be successful in the kitchen!

Improv Central and Southeast

Classes feature engaging, creativity-boosting activities designed to improve skills like eye contact, listening, quick thinking, voice projection, and teamwork. Whether you are a returning participant or brand-new to improv, we would love to see you at either location for our Spring session! Classes are held on Mondays in Pickerington, and Tuesdays in North Columbus.

M.O.M.S.

Join DSACO moms for a relaxing night out where they will share stories, needs, concerns, and ideas. Locations vary. Check our events tab or email a group contact for details. You can also join the M.O.M.S. Facebook Group - an online community where moms share information, experiences, and encouragement with one another.

D.A.D.S.

The mission of D.A.D.S. is to assist and support, through fellowship and action, the fathers, and families of people with Down syndrome. This group allows dads a chance to get to know each other and learn a bit from one another in a social setting. You can also join the D.A.D.S. Facebook Group - an online community where dads share experiences, exchange information, and support one another.

Connecting Parents of Adults Group

Connect with other parents of adults (age 18+) with Down syndrome to share experiences, discuss needs, address concerns, generate ideas, and enjoy each other's company. You can also join the DSACO Parents of Adults with Down syndrome Facebook Group - an online community for sharing information and experiences while being inspired and uplifted.

Aging and Down Syndrome Caregiver Support Group

Connect over Zoom with other caregivers of adults (age 40+) with Down syndrome on the fourth Tuesday of the month. Each virtual session will provide emotional support as well as experience and resource sharing with a focus on Alzheimer's and dementia.

Additional Resources

click or scan

New & Expectant Parents



Early Childhood



School Age



Teens



Adulthood



Parents & Caregivers



Educators



Medical Professionals



Mark Your Calendar

We're off to the races planning something new!

Stay tuned for details about our Derby Day event on May 2, 2026.

Count Me In!

Ready to say "Count me in!" and make a lasting impact on the DSACO community all year long? Join the SustainABLE Monthly Giving Program today!

Click or scan to Join



Your monthly support helps power the programs, services, and daily operations that make a difference in the lives of people with Down syndrome and their families.

Stay Connected!

Stay up-to-date on all the events in your area by visiting **dsaco.net**.



dsaco.cbush



dsaco.cbush

Facebook Groups:

- DSACO Black and African American Outreach Group
- DSACO D.A.D.S.
- DSACO "Lending" Library
- DSACO Little Buddies Parent Resource Group
- DSACO M.O.M.S.
- DSACO Parents of Adults with Down syndrome
- Familias Latinas de DSACO
- DSACO Families with Medically Complex Needs
- DS-ASD Parent Resource Group, courtesy of DSACO

Our Mission: To support families, promote community involvement, and encourage a lifetime of opportunities for people with Down syndrome.

Keeping Up is a publication of the Down Syndrome Association of Central Ohio (DSACO), reporting items of interest relating to Down syndrome. DSACO does not promote or recommend therapy, treatment, institution, or professional system. Any editorials are the opinion of one person and not meant to represent the exclusive opinion of DSACO.

DSACO is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and a community of ElevateDD. Contributions are fully tax-deductible.

SAVE *the* DATE

World Down Syndrome Day Celebration

March 21, 2026 | 10 AM – 1:30 PM

Columbus Funny Bone | Easton

Join DSACO and the Ohio State University Students Supporting People with Down Syndrome group for the annual World Down Syndrome Day Celebration, featuring the Proud to Be Me Fashion Show!



Columbus Buddy Walk – Registration Opens!

March 21, 2026

Register your team on March 21 (with at least one paid registrant) and receive a FREE poster with your team's name on it! There is no fundraising commitment to register your team and, as always, registration is FREE for your loved one with Down syndrome.

D.A.D.S. Outreach Event – Columbus Clippers Game

April 18, 2026 | 4:05 PM

Huntington Park | Columbus

Join your fellow DSACO Dads at Huntington Park for an evening of fun at the ballpark! Cheer on the Columbus Clippers from the Sluggers Suite as they take on the Iowa Cubs.

M.O.M.S. Outreach Event – Mom Prom

April 25, 2026 | 6 – 10 PM

Combustion Brewery | Pickerington

Mom Prom is more than just a party – it's a chance to celebrate the unique bond shared by moms of people with Down syndrome and take time to celebrate YOU! Join us for a night filled with dancing, laughter, and celebration!