

## DSACO Adult Conference 2026: Learn, Connect, and Celebrate Together

August 21 – 23

Cherry Valley Hotel

2299 Cherry Valley Rd. SE | Newark, OH 43055

Ages: 18+

Mark your calendars for one of the most anticipated events of the year! Thanks to the generous support from Philipps & Graham, LLC, the DSACO Adult Conference returns August 21 - 23 at the beautiful Cherry Valley Hotel. Designed for adults with Down syndrome (18+) and their caregivers (parents, siblings, extended family, or staff), this three-day conference brings our community together in meaningful and memorable ways.

The weekend kicks off Friday evening with a relaxed social gathering. Whether you're tossing a few rounds of corn hole, jumping into lawn games, taking a swim, or swapping your personalized trading cards with new friends, it's the perfect way to settle in and start building connections.

Saturday is packed with engaging breakout sessions tailored to everyone attending. All sessions are designed to be interactive, informative, and, most importantly, full of opportunities to connect with others who "get it." We're especially excited to welcome back one of our most requested presenters, Derek Graham, Esq. Derek will share updates on important future planning topics and offer plenty of time for questions, giving families valuable tools and peace of mind.

When the sun sets on Saturday, the energy turns up! Adults with Down syndrome can hit the dance floor with returning favorite DJ C-Money (also known as Caden Cox) spinning the tunes, and enjoy time together.



Meanwhile, parents and caregivers will find their own space to relax, recharge, and enjoy time together.

New this year is Connections Corner, a dedicated board/space designed to help families connect through shared interests, experiences, or questions. Whether you're seeking advice, resources, or simply someone who wants to go for a walk, this space will make it easier than ever to connect.

Registration opens June 1, with the full weekend offered at just \$50 per person. That cost covers materials, breakfast and lunch on Saturday, and breakfast on Sunday. A discounted rate for your lodging will be paid separately directly to Cherry Valley. Tell them you're with DSACO to get the discount! Whether you're new or returning, this is a weekend you won't want to miss!

For more information, please visit [dsaco.net/adultconference](https://dsaco.net/adultconference).

Questions? Contact Boo Krucky at [ekrucky@dsaco.net](mailto:ekrucky@dsaco.net).



Down Syndrome Association of Central Ohio

2

3/21  
Message

5

Community  
Focus

7

Upcoming  
Events

Summer 2026



# 3/21

Dear DSACO Community,

As we continue through our listening sessions and strategic planning, I've been reflecting on what makes our community so strong. Time and again, it comes back to one simple truth. When families come together, incredible things happen.

Over the past few years, we've had the opportunity to celebrate major milestones, including 40 years of DSACO's impact. Those moments reminded us of the power of this community, what we've built together, and what's possible when we stay connected, committed, and focused on a shared vision of inclusion.

That's why I'm especially excited about what's ahead this fall.

On October 4, we will celebrate the 25th Columbus Buddy Walk®.

For 25 years, the Columbus Buddy Walk has been one of the most visible and meaningful expressions of who we are as a community. Each October, during Down Syndrome Awareness Month, we gather not just for an event, but for a unified moment of connection, celebration, and advocacy. It is where families are centered, voices are elevated, and our broader community is invited to stand alongside people with Down syndrome.

This year feels different in the best way.

A 25th anniversary is more than a milestone. It is a chance to reflect on the generations of families who have shown up year after year. It is a chance to honor the stories, the advocacy, and the

everyday moments that have shaped DSACO into what it is today. It is also an opportunity to look ahead to the future we are building together.

As we continue listening, learning, and aligning throughout 2026, the Columbus Buddy Walk will serve as a reminder of why this work matters. It brings our mission to life in a way that is visible, joyful, and rooted in belonging.

## 3 WAYS WE'RE THINKING ABOUT THIS YEAR'S BUDDY WALK

Honoring 25 years of community.

This year, we will intentionally celebrate the history of the Columbus Buddy Walk by recognizing long-time families, partners, and supporters who have helped build and sustain this tradition.

Elevating voices and stories.

In alignment with our focus on listening, we want this year's event to highlight the voices of people with Down syndrome and their families. Their stories are the foundation of our work and will help shape what comes next.

Inviting the community in.

The Columbus Buddy Walk has always been a moment where the broader community shows up in support. As we look ahead to our next strategic plan, this is an opportunity to expand that circle and bring in new partners, advocates, and champions for inclusion.

## 2 WAYS YOU CAN BE PART OF IT

Show up and celebrate.

Whether you have been part of the Columbus Buddy Walk for years or are joining for the first time, your presence matters. This event is about community, and every person there helps strengthen it.

Share your story.

As we prepare for this milestone, we will be inviting families to share their experiences, memories, and hopes for the future. These stories will help us honor the past and shape the direction of DSACO moving forward.

## 1 BIG PICTURE VISION

We are building a future where inclusion is not the exception. It is the expectation.

The Columbus Buddy Walk has always been a reflection of that vision. For 25 years, it has created space for visibility, belonging, and celebration. As we gather this October, we are not just looking back. We are carrying that momentum forward into the next chapter of DSACO and the broader ElevateDD community.

Thank you for continuing to show up, share your voice, and walk alongside us. I am looking forward to celebrating this milestone together.

With gratitude,



**Troy Hunter**

President and CEO, ElevateDD

---

## ElevateDD Updates



### Welcome Kelly Houg!

Kelly Houg is dedicated to supporting mission-driven work through strong organization, collaboration, and thoughtful communication. As Administrative and Operations Coordinator at ElevateDD, she helps ensure the organization's day-to-day operations run smoothly while supporting internal systems that allow the team to focus on meaningful community impact.

Prior to joining ElevateDD, Kelly built a career in nonprofit administration, communications, and donor engagement. She has experience supporting leadership, coordinating meetings and events, managing communications, and maintaining systems that strengthen organizational effectiveness. Across her work, she is known for her attention to detail, reliability, and commitment to supporting teams behind the scenes.

Kelly holds a Bachelor of Science in Interpersonal Communication from Ohio University and has a longstanding passion for community involvement and service. After recently relocating to the Columbus area, she is excited to continue contributing to work that makes a difference.

## Learning Aid Ohio Is Changing Lives Through Tutoring

"Our tutor is amazing. She understands how my child learns and builds her confidence in every session.

My child would not be able to read if it wasn't for this program. It gave us the financial means to provide one on one tutoring.

Our family is less stressed. Meltdowns during homework are almost completely gone. This program has changed our lives. My child talks about going to college! She feels smart and participates in the general education classroom." - Learning Aid Ohio Account Manager

### Fall applications open on July 15.

Learn more and apply at [learningaidohio.org](https://learningaidohio.org).



---

## Introducing ElevateDD's Leadership Access Scholarship!

Check out this new opportunity from ElevateDD! This scholarship helps reduce financial barriers to event registration so people with developmental disabilities and their family members can participate in Ohio-based learning and leadership opportunities that support advocacy, systems learning, and community engagement.

Learn more and apply at [elevatedd.org/leadershipaccessscholarship](https://elevatedd.org/leadershipaccessscholarship).

## Join Adult Literacy Ohio's Summer Reading Challenge!

From June 10 through August 3, Adult Literacy Ohio invites you to join our Summer Reading Challenge. Set your own reading goal, read at your own pace, and choose to read books, audiobooks, magazines, or anything you enjoy! There's no pressure, just the joy of reading.

Plus, you can earn raffle entries when you:

- Sign up for the challenge
- Reach your reading goals
- Make a donation of any amount

Then, celebrate with us at our Ice Cream Social at Jeni's in Clintonville on August 3 from 4 – 7 PM.

We'll gather to celebrate everyone who participated, pick raffle winners, connect with friends, and enjoy ice cream together. This is a fun way to read, build community, and support people with developmental disabilities across Ohio.

For more information, visit [adulthoodliteracyohio.org/summerreadingchallenge](http://adulthoodliteracyohio.org/summerreadingchallenge).



## Learn and Connect with ElevateDD's Webinar Series

ElevateDD's webinar series is designed to bring families, caregivers, self-advocates, and professionals together to learn more about the issues, opportunities, and resources shaping the developmental disabilities community across Ohio.

Through timely conversations with trusted experts and advocates, our webinars explore meaningful topics like future planning, literacy, statewide supports, systems navigation, and more. Each session is created to empower families with practical information, helpful tools, and greater confidence as they navigate systems of support.

Whether you join us live or explore past recordings in our webinar archive, these sessions are a valuable way to stay informed, connected, and engaged in the work of creating authentic inclusion for people with developmental disabilities.

Explore upcoming webinars and watch past sessions at [elevatedd.org/webinars](http://elevatedd.org/webinars).

## Stay Connected Through ElevateDD's Blog

ElevateDD's blog shares stories, insights, and resources that matter to Ohio's developmental disabilities community.

Featuring posts written by ElevateDD staff members and guest bloggers, the blog explores topics like advocacy, inclusion, education, family support, and the issues shaping our community. These articles offer practical information and thoughtful perspectives to help families stay informed and connected.

With contributions from familiar DSACO team members, the blog highlights the statewide impact of our shared work and the ideas helping create authentic inclusion across Ohio.

Read the latest posts at [elevatedd.org/news](http://elevatedd.org/news).





## Independent Fundraising Toolkit

DSACO is continually inspired by the generosity and creativity of our community. Whether it's a restaurant give-back night, golf outing, or neighborhood fundraiser, independently hosted events help support programs and resources for people with Down syndrome and their families.

To make getting started easier, we've created an Independent Fundraising Toolkit with everything you need to plan and register your event, including guidelines, ideas, and next steps.

Ready to make an impact? Visit the Fundraisers page under the Community tab on our website for more details.

## Free Family Photography Sessions

We are thrilled to be able to offer FREE photography sessions to DSACO families once again this year! This is a great opportunity to capture beautiful photos of your loved ones and have them featured in our 2027 calendar.

[dsaco.net/calendar](https://dsaco.net/calendar).

## Announcing DSACO's New 321 Circle!

When you make a gift of \$321 or more, you join the 321 Circle, a special community of supporters helping advance DSACO's mission.

The numbers 3-2-1 represent the third copy of the 21st chromosome, but they also represent something bigger: a commitment to opportunity, advocacy, and belonging.

321 Circle donors help fuel:

- Programs for people with Down syndrome at every age
- Resources that strengthen families
- Advocacy that builds a more inclusive community

For more information, visit [dsaco.net/donate](https://dsaco.net/donate).

Questions? Contact Lisa Dodge at [ldodge@elevatedd.org](mailto:ldodge@elevatedd.org).



## 2027 Faces in the Community Calendar

DSACO is gathering photos for the 2027 Faces in the Community Calendar.

We'd love to see your smiles included! Send us your own snapshots, or take advantage of a free professional family photo session to capture the perfect picture! DSACO families are invited to submit two (2) high-resolution images (without filters or cropped) for possible inclusion in the calendar. The deadline to submit photos is August 1.

[dsaco.net/calendar](https://dsaco.net/calendar).

## Community Access Fund

DSACO's Community Access Fund provides financial reimbursement to people with Down syndrome for funds spent on activities in the community - up to \$250 every year! These activities may include, but are not limited to, sports, swimming lessons, gym memberships, summer camps, physical/speech therapies, art, and music, dance, or voice lessons. \*Music and Performing Arts activities are generously funded by the Barbour family in memory of Ann Barbour.

Reimbursement happens quarterly based on the deadline schedule below:

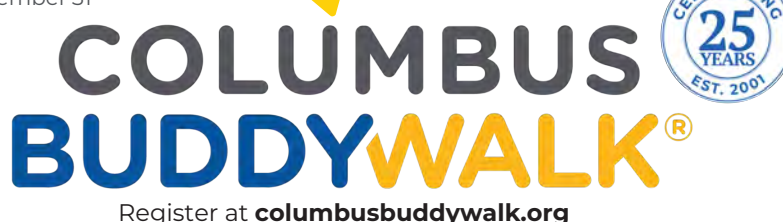
Q2 | Submit form with receipts by June 15 for payment by June 30

Q3 | Submit form with receipts by September 15 for payment by September 30

Q4 | Submit form with receipts by December 15 for payment by December 31

Questions? Contact Kirsti Osborne at [kosborne@dsaco.net](mailto:kosborne@dsaco.net).

Visit the Parents & Caregivers page under the Families tab on [dsaco.net](https://dsaco.net) for more information.



## Marge Barnheiser Advocacy Scholarship Winners

DSACO is proud to award scholarships to two adults with Down syndrome to assist with the costs for the National Down Syndrome Society (NDSS) Down Syndrome Advocacy Conference (DSAC). Each scholarship provides up to \$2,000 per pair (one person with Down syndrome and one companion).

Congratulations to our 2026 Marge Barnheiser Advocacy Scholarship winners!

Kim Wilson

Jordyn Hubert

Applications for the 2027 Marge Barnheiser Advocacy Scholarship open on February 1, 2027.



## Post-Secondary Scholarship Winners

DSACO's Post-Secondary Scholarships are awarded to self-advocates, siblings, parents, cousins, or other relatives of people with Down syndrome who are planning to pursue careers in which they will positively impact the lives of people with Down syndrome.

Congratulations to our 2026 Post-Secondary Scholarship winners!

Sabrina Wilson | Self-Advocate

Zoya Winkelfoos | Sibling to Zion

Luke Eash | Sibling to Olivia

Addie Kearns | Sibling to Alex

Simon Peterson | Sibling to Lucy

Emily Mifsud | Sibling to Grace

Thank you to the GLOW Foundation and Jeff Hughes for your generous support, which makes it possible for DSACO to offer these scholarships!

Applications for the 2027 Post-Secondary Scholarships will open on November 2, 2026, and close January 29, 2027.

Questions? Contact Sara Rainey at [srainey@dsaco.net](mailto:srainey@dsaco.net).

## NEW - BDSA Family Reunion Conference Scholarship

DSACO is proud to offer a new scholarship for DSACO families who wish to attend the Black Down Syndrome Association (BDSA) Family Reunion Conference! Scholarship funds can be used toward conference fees, travel, and lodging associated with the conference.

The BDSA Family Reunion Conference is more than a conference, it's a gathering rooted in culture, connection, and care. Designed with Black families at the center, this experience brings families together for education, wellness, and celebration.

The 2026 BDSA Family Reunion Conference will be held October 29 to November 1 in Indianapolis, Indiana. Scholarship applications will open on June 1 and will close on July 15.

Questions? Contact Kirsti Osborne at [kosborne@dsaco.net](mailto:kosborne@dsaco.net).

## Pike and Scioto Welcome Party

Sunday, June 14 | 2 – 4 PM

Candyland Children's Museum | Portsmouth

DSACO is excited to welcome families from Pike and Scioto counties to our community! Join us for a party at Candyland Children's Museum to celebrate. Families are invited to explore three floors of hands-on exhibits filled with opportunities to create, build, imagine, and learn through play.

Tickets are free, but families must register to reserve their tickets. Come celebrate this exciting new chapter with us. We look forward to meeting you!

To register, visit [dsaco.net/welcomeparty](https://dsaco.net/welcomeparty).

Questions? Contact Kirsti Osborne at [kosborne@dsaco.net](mailto:kosborne@dsaco.net).

## Summer Social

Sunday, August 2 | 1:05 PM

Huntington Park

330 Huntington Park Ln | Columbus

Join us for a day of baseball and fun at Huntington Park while we cheer on the Columbus Clippers! For \$20 per family, you'll receive admission tickets to the game, food vouchers, and access to the Pepsi Party Deck (parking is not included). Registration is required for parents/guardians, siblings and people with Down syndrome. Registration opens June 1 and closes July 17 (or until spots fill up)!

For more information, visit [dsaco.net/summersocial](https://dsaco.net/summersocial).

Questions? Contact Lucy Maddrill at [lmadrill@dsaco.net](mailto:lmadrill@dsaco.net).

## Reunion Virtual de Familias Latinas de DSACO

Jueves Agosto 13 | 6 – 8 PM

Sigamos conociendo y creando lazos de apoyo en nuestra comunidad, los invitamos a la próxima reunión virtual del Grupo de Familias Latinas de DSACO.

¡Los espero para platicar sobre próximas oportunidades y aprender más sobre nuestros programas de una manera muy divertida en donde tendremos varias sorpresas! No se lo pueden perder.

Su registro es necesario a más tardar el miércoles 12 de Agosto, para recibir el enlace para la reunión.

No olviden unirse al grupo FAMILIAS LATINAS DE DSACO en Facebook!

[dsaco.net/latinoresourcegroup](https://dsaco.net/latinoresourcegroup)

¿Preguntas? Por favor envíen un correo a [varmenta@dsaco.net](mailto:varmenta@dsaco.net).



## 2026 DSACO Golf Classic

Monday, July 20 | 12:30 PM

The Country Club at Muirfield Village

8715 Muirfield Dr | Dublin

Get ready to tee off for a great cause at the DSACO Annual Golf Classic! Join us on the picturesque greens of The Country Club at Muirfield Village for a day of golf and supporting the Down syndrome community. If you love golf, this event is for you! Participation fee is \$321/person, and it includes green fees, a cart, a swag bag, lunch, beer & hard seltzers on the course, and dinner and live music after the round.

For more information, visit [dsaco.net/golfclassic](https://dsaco.net/golfclassic).

Questions? Contact Mari Cox at [mcox@dsaco.net](mailto:mcox@dsaco.net).

## Latino Outreach Event

Día Familiar

Sábado 6 de Junio | 10 AM

Los invitamos a disfrutar un día familiar en un museo espectacular ofrece una amplia gama de exhibiciones interactivas que son perfectas para todas las edades. DSACO cubrirá el costo de entrada y snacks para su familia. Por favor tome en cuenta que el estacionamiento NO está incluido.

Este evento es gratuito para familias de DSACO (papas y hermanos), su registro es necesario a más tardar el viernes 29 de Mayo.

[dsaco.net/communityoutreach](https://dsaco.net/communityoutreach)

¿Preguntas? Por favor envíen un correo a Vanessa Armenta a [varmenta@dsaco.net](mailto:varmenta@dsaco.net).

## Somali M.O.M.S.

Saturday, June 13 | 7 – 9 PM

Fadlan nagu soo biir hooyooyinka Soomaaliyeed ee DSACO si aad uga qayb gashaan habeen u baahanahay madadaalo, cunto, sheekooyin, baahiyo iyo welwel nala wadaaga!

DSACO waxay dabooli doontaa kharashka cuntada.

Fadlan iska diiwaan geli kahor June 8.

[dsaco.net/somalimoms](https://dsaco.net/somalimoms)

Su'aalo? Fadlan la xiriiir Amina Said: [asaid@dsaco.net](mailto:asaid@dsaco.net).

## Stay Connected!

Stay up-to-date on all the events in your area by visiting [dsaco.net](http://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
- DSACO Families with Dual Diagnosis (DS + ASD)

**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 any therapy, treatment, institution, or professional system.

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

The programming and events listed in this newsletter are not exhaustive. For the most up-to-date and complete information, please visit our website at [dsaco.net](http://dsaco.net).

## SAVE *the* DATE



### Fall Fun Meetup

Saturday, October 17 | 3 – 5 PM

Van Buren Acres and Lehner's Pumpkin Farm

Celebrate the fall season with DSACO at a festive meetup for Little Buddies, School Age, and Teens! To make it easier for families across the area, this event will be hosted at two convenient locations: Van Buren Acres and Lehner's Pumpkin Farm.

### Adopt-A-Family

Applications open November 1 – 12

Everyone deserves to experience the joy of the holiday season, and DSACO is providing a way to make sure we are all included. Whether you need a little help this time of year or have the means to provide support, DSACO is committed to making the season a little brighter for everyone.

**ADOPT  
-i-  
FAMILY**

Down Syndrome Association of Central Ohio



### Little Buddies and School Age Indoor Pool Party

Sunday, November 15 | 5:30 – 7 PM

Join us for a splashing good time as our Little Buddies and School Age groups combine for an epic pool party! People with Down syndrome (ages 12 and under) and their parents and siblings are invited to join us at the Westerville Community Center for this fun and inclusive swim party.

### Winter Social

Saturday, December 5 | 9 AM – 12 PM

#### Star Lanes Polaris

DSACO families are invited to our much-anticipated annual Winter Social on Saturday, December 5! People with Down syndrome, siblings, and parents are invited to Star Lanes Polaris for a morning of bowling, breakfast, and meeting Santa and Mrs. Claus.

