dsaco
Down Syndrome Association of Central Ohio

KEEPING UP
INCLUSION • ACCEPTANCE • AWARENESS

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.

Over 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 recognize the GPD Group with the Impact Award in recognition of their outstanding and growing partnership. We will also honor the Ryan Family with the Service Award for all they have done for DSACO.

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 Mari Cox at mcox@dsaco.net to learn more.

When:

Saturday, February 6

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.

For more details and to register, please visit dsaco.net/gala.

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

NEW!
Mirror Ball $21 Challenge!

Our Stars are ready to shine on the dance floor, and YOU can help make their impact even brighter!

To support a dancer, visit **charity.pledgeit.org/21challenge** and give credit to their fundraiser!

3/21

Dear DSACO Community,

You might sit in the car for a few extra minutes after learning your child has Down syndrome. There's a folder on the passenger seat and a question you meant to ask before you left. You might be thinking about the next appointment, or wondering what school will be like years from now. You might also be looking at the photo on your phone, excited to share it with someone you love. There's room for all of that in the same afternoon.

3 A WELCOME AT EVERY AGE

Whenever you're ready to reach out, we'll be glad to hear from you. Welcoming someone new to DSACO is one of my favorite parts of this work. You can call with a list of questions or just tell us a little about your family. We're happy to start wherever you are.

That welcome is yours at every age. If you're a teenager looking for something fun to do with friends, we want it to be easy to find out what's happening and how to join. If you're an adult thinking about what you'd like to do after finishing school, we'd love to hear what interests you and help you explore your options. In 2027, we want you to be able to count on a clear answer when you reach out and a call back when we need more time to help.

2 CELEBRATING THE MOMENTS THAT BRING US TOGETHER

We are still all basking in what we got to celebrate this past October: the 25th Columbus Buddy Walk®!

Thank you to the people with Down syndrome, families, volunteers, and community partners who have made the walk such a joyful tradition. I'm grateful for everyone who made our 25th a celebration worth remembering, and I'm excited for all the walks still ahead of us.

We'll have another reason to celebrate together soon at our Dancing with Our Stars Gala on Saturday, February 6.

1 MAKING OUR VOICES HEARD

Later in February, we'll come together at the Ohio Statehouse. On Thursday, February 18, 2027, we'll gather for Down Syndrome Ohio Advocacy Day. If you have Down syndrome and it's your first time talking with a lawmaker, you're welcome to come and tell them about your experience. You might tell them what you like about your job and how having a reliable ride helps you get there. We want lawmakers to hear directly from people with Down syndrome about what's working and what should change.

Thank you for being part of DSACO. I hope you'll join us at the Gala and the Statehouse in February. I'm looking forward to seeing familiar, and new, faces this year and getting to say, "I'm so glad you're here."

With gratitude,



Troy Hunter
President and CEO, ElevateDD

Down Syndrome Ohio Advocacy Day



Thursday, February 18

Registration begins at 9 AM

People with Down syndrome and their families deserve to be heard when decisions are made that affect their lives, their opportunities, and their communities.

For the first time, Down Syndrome Ohio and participating Down syndrome associations (DSAs) from across the state are coming together to host Down Syndrome Ohio Advocacy Day at the Ohio Statehouse on February 18, 2027. This inaugural statewide effort will bring self-advocates, families, advocates, and supporters together to connect with policymakers, share their experiences, and raise awareness of issues that matter to the Down syndrome community.

Join Down Syndrome Ohio, participating DSAs, self-advocates, families, and supporters in building a stronger statewide voice and making every voice heard.

Visit **downsyndromeohio.org** to learn more and register.



Thank You, 321 Circle!

Inspired by three copies of the 21st chromosome, the 321 Circle is a community of donors who give $321 or more each year to this initiative to help create lasting opportunities for people with Down syndrome. More than a symbolic gift, this support is a tangible investment in programs that empower people, resources that strengthen families, and advocacy that builds a more inclusive community. Together, these gifts provide steady, meaningful funding that helps DSACO continue building a more connected and inclusive community, today and into t he future.

We're grateful for our inaugural 321 Circle members, and look forward to widening this circle as we move into the new year. Stay tuned for details to learn how you can renew your commitment or join the 321 Circle for 2027.

A Gift That Moves Us Forward

The impact we make today helps move our community Forward Together.

Your generosity makes a lasting difference in the lives of people with Down syndrome and their families. By joining DSACO's SustainABLE Monthly Giving Program, you can help carry that impact into the new year and beyond.

Your monthly gift helps sustain the programs and services that support our community throughout the year. Make a commitment to a stronger future for people with Down syndrome by becoming a monthly donor today.

Give monthly to make a difference all year long. Your support matters!

Visit **dsaco.net/get-involved/give/** for details.

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.

Reimbursement happens quarterly based on the deadline schedule below:

2026
Q4 | Submit form with receipts by December 15 for payment by December 31

2027
Q1 | Submit form with receipts by March 15 for payment by March 31
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.

Visit the Parents & Caregivers page under the Families tab on dsaco.net for more information.

ElevateDD Updates

Welcome Angie Chapple!



We're pleased to introduce our new Coordinator of Education Services, Angie Chapple!

Angie has been supporting individuals with disabilities, their families, and related professionals for over 30 years. She has served in a variety of roles, including educator, supervisor, caregiver, and consultant, across all ages. Angie has her Intervention Specialist license and a Master's in Education, both obtained at Cleveland State University. She also has her Reading Specialist and Literacy Specialist endorsements. Angie is a Charting the LifeCourse Ambassador, an adjunct professor, and a board member of the Supported Decision Making Network of Ohio. She is also a sibling: her brother Dave was born with a disability when she was 5 years old.

In her spare time Angie enjoys reading, painting, traveling, biking and hiking, and playing with her great-nieces and new granddaughter as much as she can!

Save the Date!

Ohio Disability Family Statehouse Day

April 27, 2027



Stay tuned for more details!
elevatedd.org

ElevateDD's Webinar Series

Stay informed and explore topics that matter to Ohio's developmental disabilities community through ElevateDD's upcoming webinars. These virtual learning opportunities offer valuable insights to help you stay connected to issues impacting the community.

Visit **elevatedd.org/webinars** to explore upcoming sessions, check out our archive, and learn more.

Leadership Access Scholarship

Check out this exciting 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.**



Learning Aid Ohio Spring Enrollment

Learning Aid Ohio connects families with grant-funded, one-on-one tutoring for students with IEPs. Families can choose from our pool of approved tutors or invite someone they trust to apply.

Learn more about the spring semester and apply at **learningaidohio.org**.

2027 Faces in the Community Calendar

Help us celebrate the incredible people who make up our DSACO community with the 2027 Faces in the Community Calendar! Each month features people with Down syndrome and their families, highlighting the individuals who make our community so special. Calendars are a wonderful way to celebrate our community throughout the year and make great gifts for family and friends!



Calendars are available for office pickup only at the DSACO office Monday—Wednesday, from 9 AM - 5 PM. Please note that calendars cannot be shipped.

A special thank you to the talented photographers who generously donated their time and skills to capture our families at no cost. Your generosity helped make this calendar possible, and we are so grateful for your support.

For more details and to purchase a calendar, visit **dsaco.net/calendar**.

Post-Secondary Scholarship Applications Now Open!

DSACO is excited to again be offering college scholarships to assist 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.

The scholarship funds may be used to pay for incurred education expenses such as coursework, tuition, or materials purchased for academic needs (PC, books, etc.). The award can be used for any expense approved by the institution.

Once applications have been received by DSACO, they are made anonymous and sent to the Post-Secondary Scholarship committee for scoring. Applications are made anonymous so that any room for bias is eliminated.

Post-Secondary Scholarship Committee members are comprised of college professors, leaders in the disability community, and supporters from the GLOW Foundation.

These scholarships are made possible through funding provided by generous community partners, including the GLOW Foundation.

2027 Post-Secondary Scholarship Timeline:

- Applications open: Monday, November 2, 2026
- Applications close: Sunday, January 31, 2027 at 11:59 PM
- Applicants will be notified of their award decision in early March 2027
- Scholarship funds will be disbursed in July 2027

To learn more and to apply, visit **dsaco.net/postsecondaryscholarship.**

Save the Date! DSACO's World Down Syndrome Day Celebration



Saturday, March 20, 2027 | 10 AM - 1:30 PM

Columbus Funny Bone at Easton

145 Easton Town Ctr. | Columbus

Join us for a joyful celebration of World Down Syndrome Day (WDSD) on Saturday, March 20, at the Funny Bone at Easton! This Global Day of Awareness, observed by the United Nations since 2012, brings together communities worldwide to advocate for the rights, inclusion, and well-being of people with Down syndrome.

Event Highlights:

- **Proud to Be Me Fashion Show**: In collaboration with the Ohio State University Students Supporting People with Down Syndrome group, this is a chance for your loved one with Down syndrome to show off their style and shine on stage!
- **Improv Performance by DSACO's Improv Group:** Get ready for a fun and engaging show performed by DSACO's Adult Improv Groups!

For more details, visit **dsaco.net/wdsd**.

Dia De Reyes

Martes 5 de Enero, 2027 | 11 AM - 5 PM

La tradición de la Rosca de Reyes se celebra cada 6 de enero, el Día de Reyes, y es especialmente popular en países de habla hispana como México, España y otros de Latinoamérica. La festividad conmemora la llegada de los Reyes Magos —Melchor, Gaspar y Baltasar— al lugar de nacimiento de Jesús, llevando regalos.

La rosca, que es una especie de pan dulce en forma de anillo, tiene simbolismos específicos:

1. **Forma Circular:** La forma de la rosca simboliza el amor eterno, sin principio ni fin.
2. **Frutas Confitadas:** Las frutas de colores que decoran la rosca representan las joyas de una corona y los regalos que los Reyes Magos llevaron al niño Jesús.
3. **Muñeco Escondido:** En el interior de la rosca, se esconden pequeños muñequitos que representan a La Sagrada Familia lo escondió de Herodes.

Esta tradición es una mezcla de festividad religiosa y de convivencia familiar, y comer la Rosca de Reyes se convierte en un momento especial para compartir y disfrutar en comunidad. Para celebrar juntos la llegada de los Reyes Magos DSACO los invitamos a compartir este dulce momento de tradición y alegría.

Su registro para recibir una Rosca es necesario a más tardar el 18 de Diciembre, 2026. ¿Preguntas? Por favor envíe un correo a Vanessa Armenta a varmenta@dsaco.net.

Regístrese aqui: **dsaco.net/events/roscadereyes/**

Hablemos de la Terapia Ocupacional

Sábado 27 de Febrero, 2027 | 10 AM - 12 PM

La terapia ocupacional no busca solamente enseñar una habilidad, sino también identificar las barreras que impiden que una persona participe plenamente en su entorno.

Presentado por
Katherine P. Sarabia, MOTR/L.
Pediatric Bilingual Occupational Therapist
Owner / Little Chefs Pediatric Feeding Therapy

Acompañenos a esta platica en Español para aprender mas sobre como adaptar actividades, conocer estrategias y herramientas para facilitar su vida diaria.

Este evento es gratuito pero su registro es necesario antes del 19 de Febrero, 2027.

Se proveerá cuidado de niños para quien lo solicite y un desayuno ligero. ¿Preguntas? Envíe un correo a Vanessa Armenta a varmenta@dsaco.net.

Regístrese aquí: **dsaco.net/events/latinoresourcegroup/**

Fayoqabka Maskaxda ee Daryeelayaasha

Saturday, January 23 | 3:30 - 5:30 PM

Daryeelayaashu waxay door muhiim ah ka ciyaaraan taageeridda dadka kale, balse caafimaadkooda maskaxeed waa mid aad muhiim u ah sidoo kale.

Cadaadiska shucuureed iyo midka jireed ee la xiriira daryeelidda dadka kale wuxuu keeni karaa walaac, daal xad-dhaaf ah, iyo tabar-darri naxariiseed. Mudnaanta siinta daryeelka nafta, raadinta taageero, iyo dejinta xuduudo caafimaad qaba waa lagama maarmaan si fayoqabka loo ilaaliyo. Nasasho joogto ah, maskax furnaan, iyo la xiriirka bulsho taageerta waxay caawiyaan daryeelayaasha si ay u maareeyaan walaaca ugana sii wadaan daryeelidda si waxtar leh.

Nagu soo biir munaasabaddan khaaska ah oo loogu talagalay taageeridda caafimaadka maskaxeed ee daryeelayaasha adiga oo kale.

Waxaa soo bandhigaya:
Shukri Hussain
Counselor, MA, Trainee

Munaasabaddan waa bilaash, balse isdiiwaangelintu waa lagama maarmaan kahor January 19, 2027. Su'aalo? Fadlan kala xiriir Amina Said email ahaan: asaid@dsaco.net.

Halkan iska diiwaangeli: **dsaco.net/events/somalioutreach/**

American Heart Month



Did you know that approximately **50% of babies born with Down syndrome** are also born with a congenital heart defect? For many of these little ones, open-heart surgery becomes a necessary step to repair their hearts.

At DSACO, we understand how challenging this journey can be for families. That's why we're proud to offer our Heart Charm Program as a source of comfort and support during this time.

As part of the program, each family receives a beautiful heart charm necklace from Red Giraffe Designs. This special gift is more than just jewelry - it's a meaningful reminder of their strength, a symbol of hope, and a tangible connection to a caring community that stands beside them every step of the way.

Through the Heart Charm Program, DSACO is honored to be a part of your family's journey, providing encouragement and a reminder that you're never alone.

Contact Courtney Frost at **cfrost@dsaco.net** if your loved one with Down syndrome has an upcoming heart surgery.

Celebrating Black History Month



Every February, Black History Month serves as a time to honor the struggles, achievements, and resilience of Black individuals throughout history. This month-long celebration in the United States and Canada shines a spotlight on Black excellence across diverse fields, including science, arts, politics, sports, literature, and business.

More than just a commemoration of the past, Black History Month is an opportunity to reflect on the progress made toward racial equality and justice while recognizing the work that remains. Communities celebrate with educational events, performances, art exhibitions, and activities designed to honor Black heritage and foster greater understanding and respect.

As we celebrate Black History Month, let's honor the past, learn from it, and continue striving for a future rooted in equity and understanding.

Join our Facebook group at **facebook.com/groups/dsacoaaoutreachgroup.**

Hospital Care Packages

DSACO understands that hospital stays can be difficult. We're here to provide comfort and support to families navigating extended hospital stays with their loved ones with Down syndrome.

For stays longer than two nights at any hospital in our 25-county service area, DSACO offers Hospital Care Packages. These packages, delivered in a reusable tote bag, include items such as:

- Blanket handmade with love
- Tissues
- Toiletry kit with additional toothbrush
- Deck of playing cards
- Crosswords & puzzle books
- Gift card to a surrounding restaurant

To request a package or learn more, visit **dsaco.net/contact-us/hospitalcarepackage.**



Stay Connected!

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

dsaco.cbus

dsaco_cbus

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.

SAVE *the* DATE



Down Syndrome Ohio Advocacy Day

Thursday, February 18 | 9 AM
Ohio Statehouse

Join DSACO and Down syndrome associations from across the state for the inaugural Down Syndrome Ohio Advocacy Day bringing together self-advocates, families, and supporters to share their voices with policymakers.

Visit downsyndromeohio.org to learn more and register.



World Down Syndrome Day Celebration

Saturday, March 20 | 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!

Visit dsaco.net/wdsd to learn more.



Columbus Buddy Walk - Registration Opens!

Sunday, March 21

Register your team on March 21 (with at least one paid registration) 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.

Stay tuned for more details!



DSACO Derby Day

Saturday, May 1 | Time TBD
COhatch Polaris

The 2027 DSACO Derby Day brings Kentucky Derby excitement with signature cocktails, festive games, best-dressed contests, and more! Proceeds support DSACO's programs and services for people with Down syndrome and their families across Central and Southern Ohio.

Stay tuned for more details!