



March | 2020

Planning for a Bright Future: DSG Hosts Successful Job Fair and Mock Interviews for Teens and Adults

Attended by 25 teens and adults (self-advocates) with Down syndrome and 18 different local businesses, the event brought together the community with a vision for the future.



CALEB AND MARIE

Marie Leathers, OTR/L, RBT, DSG's Occupational Therapist, organized the event to ensure it was meaningful and productive for not only attendees, but also employers. "As an occupational therapist, my main goal was for every self-advocate to participate and have a meaningful experience," said Marie. "I graded the activities, which means increasing or decreasing the difficulty, to meet each person where they are—for just the 'right' challenge."

Parents found that DSG had the success of each individual in mind. "I didn't think Caleb would benefit from a job fair because his speech is very delayed, even among kids with Down syndrome," explained Petrice, Caleb's mom. "However, his SLP at school convinced me to let him try. That is when I reached out to the DSG Pathways team and they were all so excited to help Caleb be as successful as possible. He was provided so many supports; video modeling, visual schedule, visual prompts, and the Touch Chat app."

With nearly 20 staff and volunteers on site, each attendee was provided support tailored to his/her abilities to ensure optimal participation and growth from the experience. "Using visual supports, augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), environmental modifications (splitting the businesses into three rooms to help prevent over-stimulation), our self-advocates received that perfect amount of a challenge," said Marie. "Our staff and volunteers provided support tailored to the individual, ranging from either 1:1 support, 2:1 support, or no support at all."



Once Petrice and Caleb decided to attend, they were surrounded by support that ensured his success. "With the help of the Pathways Team, we collaborated with staff from Caleb's high school," said Petrice. "Marie (DSG occupational therapist) provided us a visual schedule and visual prompts. School staff practiced with Caleb for three days prior. He also watched the videos, about job interviews, that the Pathways Team provided."

Petrice attended the parent-education session, while Caleb visited with employers. "As always, I learned a lot from Sarah Mai's (DSG's Director of Family Services) presentation," said Petrice. "Especially, that it is always important to be thinking about socially appropriate behavior and how it will impact their ability to get and keep a job—our kids will not get a 'pass' on the job."



Caleb's experience was a positive one, according to Petrice: "I think Caleb understood that this was preparing him for a job—and to be an adult. It was a huge confident booster—he was very proud of himself."

As Petrice and Caleb prepare for his future, they believe this event was helpful. "Caleb felt like he was given the opportunity to be as independent as possible—just having the experience is always a plus," explains Petrice. "This will help him be better prepared for an actual interview in the future."

Growing to Provide...

Lifespan Services

Meet Our Team: Jessica Fahey, Program Coordinator



What is your role at DSG?

I develop and implement programming for adults through Club 3-21, as well as the programming for our families in the Central Missouri area. In addition to designing events that are both engaging and educational, I supervise our three self-advocates that work at DSG – Zach, Sara and Elli.

What brought you to DSG?

I was excited to join a team of professionals with both long-term experience working with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and diverse educational backgrounds, such as Occupational Therapy and Applied Behavior Analysis. I have worked with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities for over 6 years in various capacities. My personal growth over the past 6 months working at DSG has been a wonderful experience. I am surrounded by coworkers who educate and challenge me, while being supported by an organization that believes in me and constantly pushes for progress.

What's your favorite part about your job?

I appreciate simple moments such as two parents sharing information with other families at one of our events in Central Missouri. I love seeing our adults with Down syndrome trying new green vegetables after learning about the importance of a healthy diet. I love seeing the light bulbs that turn on above our educator's and parent's heads during a seminar led by our therapy team.

What do you want our DSG families to know?

We are committed to the ongoing development of our programs to encourage growth, education and self-improvement.

Anything else you would like to add?

I'd like to give a special shout out to my friend Sean Kopp who attends our Club 3-21 program. Hi Sean! Our Dads have known each other for 57 years and have been participating in a poker group once a month for 45 years. It's relationships like these that make me realize how much I enjoy working in my hometown for an organization that helps foster independence, no matter how big or small the steps.

Making an Impact

DSG's Lifelong Learning Campus Project Gains Momentum with \$200,000 Pledge

The donor, who wishes to remain anonymous, has a personal connection to DSG's mission.

"We are thrilled by the incredibly generous support for our Lifelong Learning Campus," said Mike Frazier, President, DSG Board of Directors. "Donors believe in our vision to build a campus that will enable us to better serve people with Down syndrome of all ages, now and into the future."



Designed by Tevis Architects, the project includes renovations of the building next door (5916 Dearborn St.) and within the current office space (5960 Dearborn St.).

"We need a campus that mirrors the top-tier services we're creating and delivering," said Jason Drummond, Ed.D., Chief Executive Officer of DSG. "This project coming to fruition has allowed us to imagine a place for people with Down syndrome to receive efficient, effective services and support throughout the entire lifespan. We are extremely grateful to our donors who are investing in the lives of the people we serve, for generations to come."

“Isaac loves the process of being ‘dropped off’ at PALS, which gives him a sense of independence that he enjoys. He benefits from interacting with his peers, which is one of our goals for him. We hope that he will make friendships here that will last a lifetime as they grow up into STARS (DSG’s teen program) together and beyond. As parents, we enjoy PALS because we get to talk to other families about issues they are dealing with and share ideas, since they are all close in age.”

~Parents of Isaac (age 8), participant of PALS: after-hours program for ages 7-11

Be a Champion for Down Syndrome on 3/21!

To increase awareness of World Down Syndrome Day (WDS) on March 21st, DSG is asking our champions to mobilize and perform a “random act of kindness.”

Whether you buy coffee for the person behind you, leave donuts in the break room, or fill someone's parking meter, be sure to let them know it's in honor of Down syndrome! Even better, wear your WDS shirt while spreading the word! *Order by tomorrow (3/2) at noon to receive your shirt in time!*

DSG will also share facts about Down syndrome throughout the month of March, so be sure to share and build awareness!

Young Children (ages, 3-6)

- Seminar Series: Facilitating and Reinforcing Social Skills (ages, 3-21) / Thurs, April 30 at 8:30 AM

Register>>

Children (ages, 7 - 11)

- PALS Stay and Play at DSG / Mon, April 13 at 5:30 PM
- PALS Night Out at Superkidz / Mon, April 27 at 5:30 PM
- Seminar Series: Facilitating and Reinforcing Social Skills (ages, 3-21) / Thurs, April 30 at 8:30 AM

Register>>

Teens (ages, 12 - 17)

- STARS Cooking Class / Wed, April 1 at 6 PM
Register>>
- STARS Personal Safety Class Wed, April 8 at 6 PM
Register>>
- STARS Self Defense Class / Wed, April 15 at 6 PM
Register>>
- STARS: Fitness and Nutrition Basics / Wed, April 22 at 6 PM
Register>>
- Good Life Series: Living the Good Life / Tues, April 28 at 6 PM
Register>>
- STARS Basic First Aid Class / Wed, April 29 at 6 PM
Register>>

- Seminar Series: Facilitating and Reinforcing Social Skills (ages, 3-21) / Thurs, April 30 at 8:30 AM

Register>>

Central Missouri

- Central Missouri Music Therapy (for ages 11 and younger) / Tues, March 31 at 6 PM
Register>>
- Central Missouri Social Hour (for all ages) / Fri, April 10 at 6 PM
Register>>

Adults (ages, 18 - 21+)

- Adult Continuing Education (ACE) Program Information Meeting / Tues, March 10 at 6:15 PM
Register>>
- Club 3-21 Sexuality and Dating / Tues, April 7 at 6 PM
Register>>
- Club 3-21 Self Defense and Safety / Tues, April 21 at 6 PM
Register>>
- Seminar Series: Facilitating and Reinforcing Social Skills (ages, 3-21) / Thurs, April 30 at 8:30 AM
Register>>

INFORMATION MEETING: ADULT CONTINUING EDUCATION (ACE) DAY PROGRAM

March 10 at 6:15 PM

DSG will launch our new ACE Program on August 3rd! ACE is a fee-for-service, learning program for adults with Down syndrome that will take place, Monday-Friday, 9 AM to 3:30 PM. Our goal is to equip adults with Down syndrome with the skills that will help them to live a meaningful life by maximizing their independence and productive participation within their community.

Register>>

On the Horizon

DSG Welcomes New Manager of School Age Program



Tyler Govert

B.S. - Psychology, Kansas State University
M.A. - Special Education, University of Kansas
Graduate Certificate: Applied Behavior Analysis

DSG is excited to welcome Tyler Govert as our new School Age Program Manager. His first day is Monday, March 2nd. Tyler will be responsible for DSG's PALS program that serves ages 7 – 11, as well as the STARS program that serves ages 12 – 18.

Tyler began his career supporting individuals with special needs when he worked with children at a community mental health center during his undergraduate years. Following graduation, he relocated to Kansas City where he has worked as both direct support staff and in a supervisory role in the community, school, and residential settings.

Outside of work, Tyler and his fiancée, Katherine, spend the majority of their time attempting to “wrangle two cats and a puppy.”

A note from Tyler: “I can’t wait to start in this new role and get to know all of the families we serve!”

Mark Your Calendar!

MAR.
18

WORLD DOWN SYNDROME DAY CELEBRATION AT COCO KEYS WATER PARK
Register here >>

APR.
11

DSG PROM (ages, 15+)
Overland Park Convention Center
Register here >>

APR.
16

DSG WINE AUCTION
17th Annual Private Cellar Wine Tasting & Auction
Email giving@kcdsg.org

APR.
30

SEMINAR SERIES: FACILITATING AND REINFORCING SOCIAL SKILLS *Register here >>*

Check out all of our events on our website >>

Mission Moment

“Pathways has given us tons of tools to help with behavior and making every-day life easier. We have a staff of people on our side who work together to address occupational therapy, behavior and speech/language. Annabelle is now more aware of her “rules” and what she needs to do. She can communicate that to us and her teachers. We all use her visual supports that help her to understand what’s expected from her—and she communicates it to us, especially when she is following them!”

~Parents of Annabelle (age 7), Pathways participant

