



July | 2020

Nothing Will Stand in Our Way: DSG to Host 2020 Step Up for Down Syndrome Walks!

Since March, DSG has been re-thinking how to safely host our fundraising events due to the uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. One thing is for sure, we **WILL** come together—virtually, and hopefully in person—to celebrate your loved one with Down syndrome!

We Heard You! Recently, we surveyed our Walk Team Captains as to whether they would be comfortable gathering in person this fall. From your feedback, *DSG is planning a hybrid approach to ensure everyone can be involved at their own comfort level!* We will host a Virtual Walk and continue to plan for our ***in-person events!** Sign up now and at a later date you will be able to select whether you want to participate in the Virtual or in-person event, closer to event time! **Should we need to cancel these events due to COVID-19 restrictions, our Virtual Walk will keep our community together in a fun and different way!*

- Central MO Step Up Walk (in-person event): Sunday, October 11
- KC Step Up Walk (in-person event): Saturday, October 24
- Step Up For Down Syndrome VIRTUAL Walk: Saturday, October 24 (for ALL interested participants)



Navigating the Uncertainties—while we are optimistic that we will be able to gather together in-person for our Walks, we are unable to predict whether the state and local regulations will place restrictions on group events due to COVID-19.

Remaining Steadfast in Support of our Families—we want you to know how important it is for us to continue this celebration! No matter what the future holds, we are certain we will come together—although it may look and feel a bit different. Our goal is to provide the best experience possible for both types of events!

Let's Get Moving! Start Your Walk Team [HERE!](#)

- **Our Mission is Growing:** your past support has helped our dream to serve people with Down syndrome—of all ages—come true! As we expand with our new Lifelong Learning Campus, we will now have the space to offer services tailored to each stage of life, from birth through late adulthood.
- **You've Always Stepped Up:** our mission needs your support now, more than ever! With the challenges non-profits are facing during this global pandemic, your support will have a direct impact on the people we serve now—and into the future!
- **Make a Lifelong Impact:** the lasting impact of your support will help us expand our services. Soon we will have the space to host therapeutic play groups, dedicated teletherapy rooms, and more! We will have ample room for our Adult program and social enterprises, such as a coffee shop for our teens and adults to practice the skills they learn in our programs.

Nothing will stand in our way...as we Step Up for Down Syndrome! Stay tuned for more details to come!

Growing to Provide...

Lifespan Services

Expanding to Better Serve Your Family: Pathways Playgroups

Over the last year, our Pathways therapy team has been busy designing a new service for families of young children: Pathways Playgroups. This new service will take place within our specially designed and dedicated space at our new Lifelong Learning Campus, adjacent to our current office in Mission, KS.

All classes will promote child development through songs; fine and gross motor activities; sensory exploration; imagination; and social interactions. Here is a quick glimpse into the different classes that are coming soon—when we open our new Campus!

- **Toddler Playgroup** – geared for children ages 1 year 6 months to 2 years 11 months old. Caregivers participate in this class with their child.
- **Preschool Playgroup** – geared for children ages 3 to 4 years 11 months old. Caregivers participate in this class with their child.
- **Kindergarten Playgroup** – geared for children ages 5 to 6 years 11 months old. While children increase their independence, caregivers have the opportunity to mingle while watching the playgroup through an observation window.

What the Research Says

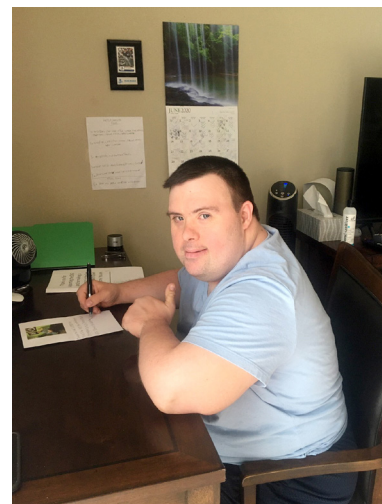
Research indicates a need for further social and community supports for young children with Down syndrome, in addition to more affordable and reliable therapeutic services (Marshall, Tanner, Kozyr, & Kirby, 2015). We also know that young children learn and grow through playful activities, with evidence supporting that engagement in therapeutic playgroups promotes developmental milestones (Fabrizi, Ito, Winston, 2016).

We Want Your Input! As we design these Playgroups and build out the schedules, we want to know what works best for your family! **Be sure to let us know through this survey!** >>

A Day in the Life of DSG's Staff: Zach Neff

If you've stopped by our office (before the "Stay at Home" orders), you've most likely met Zach Neff, one of our part-time administrative assistants. Zach has worked at DSG for nearly two years and has a host of responsibilities, including greeting visitors; answering the phone; performing appointment reminders; writing and mailing birthday greetings and thank you cards to donors; sorting and logging the mail; scanning items for our paperless system—and offering a smile and kind word to anyone who passes through our office.

Since the start of social distancing in mid-March, Zach has successfully worked from home on projects that are critical to our organization. Pictured is Zach at his desk in his apartment working on thank you letters for donors.



Zach says: "I love DSG because I feel like I'm helping out. When kids come in with their parents I get to say, 'Welcome to DSG, how can I help you?' and I feel glad that they are there. I feel excited that they come to DSG to learn about responsibilities and how to live a good life."

Thank you Zach for your hard work and contribution to our mission!

Attention All Teens: Virtual Summer Camp is July 6th – 23rd!

During this time of social distancing, DSG has planned a Virtual Summer Camp that offers your teen the opportunity to connect with peers, while learning fun new things! Registration is now open on the STARS page and will remain open until 11:59 pm the day before the scheduled session.

Facilitated by Tyler Goevert, School Age Program Manager, the groups meet for 90 minutes and explore a different themed activity from 12:00 to 1:30 pm. The goal is to provide a meaningful summer program as an alternative for camps and programs that would have normally taken place in person. Here is your quick tour of the daily themes:

- **Mondays: Book Club**—campers will spend time with the group discussing a book, movie, or television show that they have read or watched over the previous week.
- **Tuesdays: Virtual Field Trip**—campers will take a virtual tour of a museum, zoo, aquarium, or other notable location.
- **Wednesdays: Cooking Class**—campers will enjoy a guided cooking lesson from DSG staff, with a focus on simple recipes or snacks to allow for practice of independent skills.
- **Thursdays: Group Activity**—campers will participate in a structured activity that will allow them to showcase their personality and creativity.

For more details about each activity and to register, visit our STARS website page!

DSG Cares— Helpful Tips from our Service Team

Summer Sensory Play at Home!

Are you looking for fun, easy sensory play activities to engage your child? Not only does sensory play provide opportunities for children to explore their environment using their senses, but it also promotes the development of fine motor skills, gross motor skills, language skills, creativity and more!

Water bin: can't go to the pool this summer? Create your own water bin play! You can use anything from a plastic pool, a plastic bin, or even a mixing bowl. Add measuring cups and practice pouring and scooping; add waterproof toys to see if they sink or float; or create a "car wash" and fill one bin with water and the other with shaving cream—the options are endless!

Noodle bin: cook up some pasta and add it to a bin for exploration. Try using food dye to color the noodles or add small plastic insects to the bin and go "searching!"

Playdough: try making your own batch of playdough. Adding a scent such as cocoa powder or cinnamon will add to the experience. Incorporate cookie cutters, cutting boards, kid-safe knives or scissors to practice those fine-motor and bilateral coordination skills!

Obstacle course: make your own obstacle course anywhere you have extra room. Get creative and use everyday items around the house to create your obstacles!

Remember, the activities don't have to be perfect—just the experience itself will create lasting memories! For additional ideas or support, please feel free to reach out to our Lifespan Services Team through our Virtual Support tool!

On the Horizon

New Parents (Birth - 2)

- New Parent Gathering (Zoom): Saturday, Aug 8, 9–11 am >>

Young Children (ages, 4 - 6)

- Smart Start Pre-K Sessions: beginning this fall >>

Teens (ages, 12 - 17)

- Virtual Summer Camp: July 6 - 23, 12–1:30 pm >>

Adults (ages, 18 - 21+)

- Weekly Zoom Gatherings on Tuesdays >>

Central Missouri

- Family Social Gathering (Zoom): Friday, July 17, 7–8 pm >>
- Weekly Teen/Adults Zoom Gatherings on Tuesdays >>

All Caregivers

- 2020 - 2021 DSG Seminar Series: beginning this fall >>

SPECIAL NEEDS TRUSTS WEBINAR:
PRESENTED BY THE SPECIAL NEEDS PLANNING CENTER
Online: Tuesday, July 14, 4–5 PM >>

SAVE THE DATE...

SEPT.
14

KC STEP UP GOLF TOURNAMENT

Hosted at Shadow Glen Golf Club in Olathe, KS.

SEPT.
28

CENTRAL MO STEP UP GOLF TOURNAMENT

Hosted at Country Club of Missouri in Columbia.

OCT.
11

CENTRAL MO STEP UP WALK

Join us in Columbia to celebrate our families in this region.

OCT.
24

KC STEP UP WALK

Join us at Arrowhead Stadium for our largest fundraiser of the year.

Please note: all events subject to change and/or cancellation due to unforeseen COVID-19 restrictions.

For more information, visit our website at kcdsg.org

Mission Moment



Pictured far left: Julia and Nick, holding Emmi in her adorable watermelon outfit!

Families Connected for Life

"Our journey to join the Lucky Few with the birth of our daughter, Emmi, has been so joyful and filled with support. DSG connected us during our pregnancies and we will be lifelong friends going forward. Although we are so sad to be moving, we are so grateful to have met such an amazing tribe to walk through life, hand in hand. Nick and I will be forever thankful to the Down Syndrome Guild for their support."

~Julia Oramas, Mother of Emmi, 10 months old