

Heart Strings



**Our children and adults with Down syndrome
are the heart of our organization and our most precious gifts.**

Volume 13 January-February 2014



UPCOMING EVENTS

February 8th Valentine's Dance with Special Olympics Owensboro Middle School

For ages 13-Adult 6:30 p.m.—10:00 p.m. Pizza will be served

Please RSVP to Carla at 270-925-0195 or info@gradsa.org by February 7th!

February 20th Richard Bush—Special Needs Wills, Trusts, and Guardianship

Richard Bush is a lawyer from Louisville specializing in Special Needs Finances

6:00 p.m.-7:30p.m. Logsdon Community Center Q&A time after presentation

Please RSVP to Carla at 270-925-0195 or info@gradsa.org by February 16th

March 1st Family Game Night Logsdon Community Center 5:30p.m.—9:00p.m.

Come ready to have FUN!!! Snacks and drinks will be served

Please RSVP to Carla at 270-925-0195 or info@gradsa.org by February 27th

March 27th Michelle P Waiver Workshop Logsdon Community Center 6:00 p.m.-8:00p.m.

RVBH-Puzzle Pieces-Wendell Foster Center-CAKY and Active Day will be present

Don't miss this great opportunity to learn from the providers of Michelle P Waiver

Please RSVP to Carla at 270-925-0195 or info@gradsa.org by March 25th

April 26th Eggstravaganza Picnic Easter Egg Hunt, games and lunch

Watch for location and time. Don't miss the fun!

May 31st Holiday World All day event. Water Park will be open. Lunch will be provided

MUST RSVP no later than April 30th to Carla at 270-925-0195 or info@gradsa.org

June 7th Special Education Training Camp Logsdon Community Center 9:00a.m.=3::00p.m.

Sign in and donuts start at 8:30 a.m. Lunch will be provided. IEP and Inclusion covered

Presented by SPIN and The ARC! RSVP to Carla at 270-925-0195 or info@gradsa.org

no later than June 2nd. This will be very informational!

June—Mom's Night Out—Let us know what you would like to do! Send your suggestions to

Carla at 270-925-0195 or info@gradsa.org

Watch for more events coming up in 2014. We would love to hear your input for social and educational opportunities. Please send your ideas to Carla at 270-925-0195, info@grada.org or any board member. We look forward to hearing from you!

From the Board...

We are sad to see Lori Marksberry resign from the board. Thankfully, Lori will remain on the Buddy Walk Committee. Lori loves her GRADSA family and friends. She will be missed but we will make up for it at Buddy Walk time!!! Thanks for all the years you have given to GRADSA Lori, we love you bunches!

GRADSA Board members are busy creating a Strategic Plan that will secure GRADSA's future. During this process we will be forming strong committees. If you are interested in volunteering your time by being on one of these committees please let us know. You are very important in the future of GRADSA so please think and pray about your position in this process.

New Family...

GRADSA is excited to introduce Isabella Rose Rearden, born October 28th, 2013 to the GRADSA family. Isabella is the sweet daughter of Aleshia Gallagher and Jordan Rearden. They live in Hancock County and we hope they will be a big part of GRADSA.

Congratulations to Matthew Cook...



Owensboro High School has the best Basketball Manager ever in Matthew Cook. Matthew is so excited to be doing this. He loves riding the bus with the team to the away games. I think OHS is very lucky to have such an awesome Basketball Manager! Between school, Special Olympics, Buddy Ball and Puzzle Pieces, I am not sure how Matthew fits this in his schedule. What an amazing guy! We love you Matthew!!!

Check out Matthew in full uniform in picture to left. Can you say HANDSOME???

Comments from Carla...

Hello Everyone...

It's 2014 and things are off to a great start. We are so excited about the Strategic Planning coming up the last weekend of January. Please keep us in your prayers as we plan for the future of GRADSA and it's growth. The Christmas Party was so much fun. Thanks to everyone that came and I hope you had a great time. It's always so much fun to see everyone. I know it was mentioned under the board section of the newsletter but please be thinking hard about where you fit in with GRADSA. We have to build some committees and are counting on you to help. If you have any ideas or suggestions please send them to me. Also, I would love to make this newsletter more about our families. If you have any great stories and/or pictures, send them to me. Please? As always, I love you all and thanks so much for putting up with me. Let's have a great 2014!

GRADSA Presents "Fitness and Nutrition Program"...

Postcards with information about the Fitness and Nutrition Program will be going out about the same time as this newsletter. Fitness classes will start first of February and Nutrition classes will follow shortly after. Fitness classes will be twice a week. We are looking at Tuesday and Thursday early evening. They will be 45 minutes each class. Very low impact and equipment will be provided. This is an awesome opportunity the OHRH grant has given us and I hope we can count on your support. Please watch for this flyer and sign your child up. We will be doing heart rate, BMI and weight as a way to measure success. As announced at the Christmas Party Logan Roberts will be the Program Leader. However, Jeremy Payne has resigned. We feel Logan will do a great job!

Individual with Down syndrome opens Restaurant SpecialEDPost 01/06/14...

Meet the owner and operator of the "world's friendliest restaurant," Tim's Place. Tim Harris, who was born with Down Syndrome, knew from his teenage years that he wanted to be a restaurateur when he grew up, and he never backed down from his dream — even in spite of his disability. "We serve breakfast, lunch, and hugs," Tim says. Although the Tim's Place menu boasts some delicious-sounding meals, like the "Happy Day Breakfast," and "Tim's Olympian Breakfast," Tim insists that *hugs* are the best thing he serves. "The hugs are way more important than the food," he says. "The food is just food!"

Tim looks forward to going to work every morning in Albuquerque, and enjoys it so much that he does a dance in the parking lot on his way into the restaurant. "I am so excited to go to work, so I do a dance off in the parking lot. It's a dance of magic," he said. Tim said that his favorite part of owning his own business is "the people coming through the front door." He greets his customers with a hug, especially when they look sad. He says that Tim's Place is the "special place to be at," because he operates it.



"When I was a kid," Tim shares, "I wanted to own a restaurant. So I asked my dad to help me out. I'm so glad I did." Tim insists that people with Down Syndrome can't let anything get in the way of their dreams: "I did not let my disability crush the dreams," he says. "People with disabilities can do anything they set their minds to. They're special. We are a gift to the world."

Need a Vacation?...

Have you ever thought about taking a vacation with a group of individuals with special needs? Trips Inc. arranges all-inclusive vacation packages for travelers ages 16 and older with Intellectual and Developmental disabilities. All trips include lodging, meals, gratuities, entertainment, recreational equipment rentals, photo album filled with pictures from the trip and a cool t-shirt. There are all kinds of trips planned for 2014. Check out the options at www.tripsinc.com or call 1-800-686-1013. This is a great opportunity for making friends and seeing the world. Check it out!

6 Parents of Children with Down syndrome share their hopes for 2014...

By: Eliana Tardio

SpecialEDPost 01/03/14

As parents of children with Down syndrome or special needs, we all have hopes for positive change every new year. We've come so far in the last 10 years or so with respect to how people with special needs are perceived and treated, but there is still much to be done. We still face a lack of services, empathy, and resources for our families. I consider myself a faithful person. Even so, I can't deny that being the parent of two children with Down syndrome is a serious and challenging task. Challenges have nothing to do with the love we have for our kids; it's actually that love that makes those challenges manageable. In December of 2013 I decided to quit my job. Since then, I have made several adjustments to my budget in order to maintain the priority I've always had since my kids were born — of being their mother first. Nothing good comes easily, and I know that working from home is a challenge. But I'm ready to take it on for the sake of my family, and I'll do it with faith, love and strength. My personal experience is not atypical. There are hundreds of thousands of families with children with special needs who decide to live with less in response to the lack of options for keeping up with a regular job. So I asked some of these parents what they hoped for in the new year. To get things started, here is my personal hope:

These are the wishes of parents of children with Down syndrome all over the world. I hope you understand that every voice counts, and so does yours. By educating your own children and understanding that Down syndrome is just an extra chromosome, you help our children to be included and treated as what they are — people more alike than different. Just like all of us.



"In 2014, I hope people can be more empathetic and understanding of the task of raising children with special needs. I hope people understand that we don't expect pity from them, but empathy and honesty."
-Eliana, mother of Emir and Ayelen, USA



I hope people will not judge her before giving her the chance to demonstrate who she is, her own abilities and her individual personality. I hope society will let her and every person with special needs demonstrate what they can bring to the world as human beings first. "
-Leticia Villalba, mother of Abigail, a 6-year-old girl with Down syndrome, Paraguay



In 2014, I hope governments will understand the importance of providing public schools with more resources for our kids with special needs. Paloma has Down syndrome and is also blind; her future depends on the services and adaptations she gets at school. Sometimes people don't understand what these services really mean for us and how they can change our lives."
-Eva, mother of Paloma, a 12-year-old girl with Down syndrome and visual impairments, Mexico

6 Parents of Children with Down syndrome share their hopes for 2014...

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SpecialEDPost 01/03/14

Cont'd.



We hope in 2014 that society starts heading towards a constant appreciations and celebration of diversity. when people realize that inclusion (in every sector) benefits EVERYONE, not just those perceived as 'different', we will start evolving as a whole.

-Ceceliz & Juan Fernando, parents of Valentina Guerrero, 2-year-old model with Down syndrome, USA



After 24 years of raising Haizea, my hope is still the same: I expect society to accept her as what she really is, a young woman pursuing her dream of becoming a professional dance teacher. I would like people to see her talent without judgment."

-Amaya Verdini, mother of Haizea, a 24-year-old young woman with Down syndrome, Spain



In 2014, I hope people will believe in my children, and to learn to look at people with Down syndrome as people first, and to set aside prejudice because of their appearance."

- Alicia Llanas, mother of Elias, 8 and Eva, 6, both with Down syndrome, Mexico

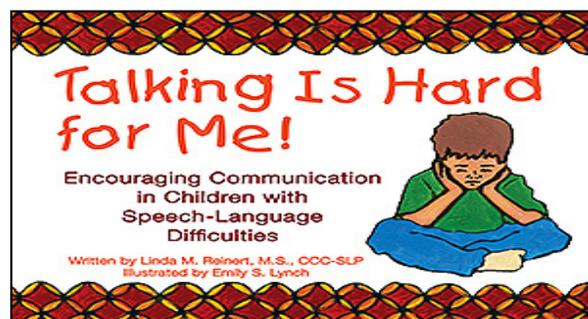
Hey GRADSA families, I thoroughly enjoyed reading these and I hope you did to. This is a perfect example of a committee opportunity. Going forward wouldn't it be great to hear these remarks from our own local families? If you would like to contact families for newsletter articles then please donate your time to GRADSA!

Book Review...

DSG Connections January/February 2014

"Talking is Hard for Me!" features a lively, full-color illustrated children's story that follows a child and his family as they challenge, prompt and support his communication efforts. Adults can read the story on their own or with their child to empathize with his struggles to talk while learning practical ideas that help. The accompanying informational sections are full of accessible speech-language therapy strategies and instructions to improve communication and ease frustration. Readers will be empowered when they see how easy it is to apply these practices throughout everyday life! A great resource for any parent, teacher, therapist, family member or friend.

Check it out!



Christmas Party 2013...



Wish we had more room for all of the pictures but you can see them on our website www.gradsa.org or Our FaceBook page www.facebook/GRADSA! Make sure you like our page while you are there!!!

In Our Community...



The following Daviess County High School students submitted artwork to VSA Kentucky: Nicholas Roberts, Nick Walker, Leland Isbill, Sheri Storm and Mackenzie Taylor. Chosen artwork will be included in the Traveling Student Art Exhibit and will be showcased at the Kentucky Exceptional Children's Conference in Louisville.

Awesome Pictures sent in. Thanks!...



Scotty Cissna, Michael Smith, Sam Rutland and Dana Hamilton
At Softball Regional's. Great games and great job!!!



Ashley Hagan as "Dorothy" from Wizard of Oz!
Love this pic!!! Love this girl!!!

Happy Birthday!!!

January

04 Landon Ashby
12 Shannon Mahoney
16 Raegan Brown
20 Erin Clark
21 Ashley Hagan
22 Ashley Dant
23 Isaiah Cruz
23 Elizabeth Stickler
24 Sherri Storm
24 Kathleen Kight
30 Zoey Doolin

February

03 Jonah Edge
04 Levi Goodall
06 Lexi Jones
06 Morgan King
14 Lindsey Spain
15 Michael Smith
17 Cody Trotter
18 Caleb Lancaster
18 Heather Sutton
24 Andrew Conway

March

06 Tatum Edge
17 Matthew Cook
19 Elliott Williams
21 Adrienne Free
24 Sam Winstead
25 Brooklyn Griffith

“This is the day which the
Lord has made:
Let us rejoice and be
glad in it.”

Psalm 118:24



Fazoli's Birthday Club:

Fazoli's, 5060 Frederica St., is treating individuals with Down Syndrome to a free meal to celebrate their special day. Children ages 12 and under can choose a kid's meal while teens and adults have their choice of a small spaghetti with marinara or meat sauce. To receive your free meal, show this column to the cashier during the month of your Birthday.

MISSION STATEMENT

GRADSA'S mission is to enable families enriched with the Down syndrome connection to share resources, build friendships and advocate together for the future of individuals with Down syndrome.

SERVICES

GRADSA is an affiliate of the National Down Syndrome Society and the National Down Syndrome Congress. GRADSA is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization that provides its members with a bi-monthly newsletter, educational workshops, social activities, a website, a parent outreach program and a hospital outreach program. There are no membership fees to join.

POLICY STATEMENT

GRADSA does not endorse any specific therapy, treatment or educational setting. We provide a variety of information and viewpoints. However, each family must make an individual choice.

PRINTING OF ARTICLES

GRADSA welcomes articles from parents, professionals and other interested parties. Material for consideration should be sent to Carla Renfrow at info@gradsa.org. Articles written for *HeartStrings* may be reproduced if credit is given to the original author and GRADSA. Permission to reprint articles not original to *HeartStrings* should be acquired from the original source.



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