

Heart Strings



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

Volume 7 January-February 2013



UPCOMING EVENTS

February 16th GRADSA/Special Olympics Valentines Dance
Owensboro Middle School Cafeteria Teens thru adults
7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Pizza will be served
Please RSVP to Carla at info@gradsa.org or 270-925-0195

Spring Fling coming in April. Watch for more information.

Will have more events in next newsletter including some educational events.

Comments from Carla...

Hello Everyone...

I can't believe it is 2013! I hope you all had a wonderful holiday season. I personally had a great Christmas and New Years. Our Christmas Party was so much fun and it was great to see all of you. Inside the newsletter will be some pictures from the Christmas Party, I hope you all enjoy them. I was extremely happy that the Barrow family was able to make it to the Christmas Party and was able to bring sweet Elysha. She is precious and doing well. Thanks for all the prayers. Board member Sherry Cook heard a Christmas Wish letter on WBKR for a family with a son that has Down syndrome. She immediately called Christmas Wish and picked up the letter. The GRADSA Board agreed to sponsor this letter as individuals. A huge thank you to the board. That is what Christmas is all about. I am so proud to be a part of this group. I feel I have met and made friends with some of the greatest people ever since becoming involved with GRADSA and I am so thankful. 2013 is going to be an awesome year for GRADSA and I hope you all are ready to be a big part of the adventure.

World Down Syndrome Day...

Don't forget that World Down Syndrome Day is March 21st. 3/21 represents the 3 copies of chromosome 21, which is unique to people with Down syndrome. 2013 will be the 8th year of celebrating this day. I would love to see GRADSA do something special on March 21st. Please send me your ideas at info@gradsa.org or 270-925-0195. You can visit www.worlddownsyndromeday.org to see what other organizations have done. Come on friends and family, let's do our part for those individuals with Down syndrome that we love so much.



From the Board...

First of all we would like to apologize for the confusion on the elections and election process. The board unanimously agreed to have interim officers until we can review/update the GRADSA bylaws. At this time we have updated to add officer positions of Vice President and Treasurer. The interim officers are President/Jonathon Estes, Vice President/Sara Vance and Treasurer/Gary Estes. We know there has been some concern that we have chosen to add a Treasurer as this is Carla's responsibility. Please be assured Carla will still be doing the majority of this but Gary will also have access and oversee the banking information. This is for the protection of GRADSA and Carla. We are contacting other organizations to see what the best practice is for elections and overall practices for organizations. We are also attending the DSAIA conference in February which will have a lot of networking opportunities available. We will use all this information in updating our current bylaws. At that point we will then have election for officers so please be thinking about those nominations. We are also planning to have all of our events planned for the year and will get that information to you. Thank you so much for your patience as we plan to build and improve GRADSA for the future. Remember your input is always appreciated and all board meetings are open to everyone. The board meetings are the 2nd Monday of each month at 5:30 p.m. at the YMCA.

Color Blast 5K...

Color Blast 5K, Color Us Proud Owensboro, Support Disability Awareness

GRADSA is very fortunate to be one of six local organizations participating in a unique and exciting celebratory fundraising event on March 23rd, 2013 to support Ability Awareness in our community. The six organizations are GRADSA, Puzzle Pieces, Wendell Foster Center, Team Karlie, Two Rivers Buddy Ball and Dream Riders. Color Blast 5K is a run/walk that will celebrate individuals with unique abilities and qualities. This is derived from the very popular Color Run and will be the first in Owensboro. We expect this to be a huge and annual event. A special thanks to Amanda Owen is the originator of this wonderful idea. I am so glad she asked GRADSA to be a part of it. The city of Owensboro is very excited about this and are also helping out tremendously. If you know of any companies, groups, families that would like to help sponsor this event, please let me know and I will contact them. We also need volunteers and participants. For more information please visit www.colorblast5k.org 25% of profits will go to WHAS Children's Crusade and rest divided between the 6 organizations.

GRADSA misc....

GRADSA's main form of communication is email. If you are not currently on our email list please send your email information to Carla at info@gradsa.org. This is great for last minute information/changes and it is the most cost efficient so please sign up so you do not miss out.

We are working on creating a Facebook page, so if you are on Facebook please watch for more information on this in the near future.

Please, please, please send any stories and/or pictures that you would like to share to Carla for the newsletter.

We also need ideas of what educational events you would like to see offered. Send your educational ideas to Carla ASAP so we can create the 2013 schedule. We do not know what you are needing unless you share.

Lose the Training Wheels 2013...

We will soon be starting the planning of Lose the Training Wheels 2013. Please let Carla or any board member know if you would like to be a part of this group. We need participants and volunteers for spotters. We will also be interviewing for a Camp Director. Please help us get this information out to the community. Our 2012 camp had a 94% success rate which is awesome. Let's share this good news with everyone so we can have a full camp in 2013.

Let's start the new year out right...

People First Language

"The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug".

Mark Twain

What is People First Language?

People First Language is **the respectful way to speak about people with disabilities by putting the person before the disability**. The disability is only one part of the whole person. People First Language allows for the focus to be on the person, their strengths, abilities and potential to realize their dreams. When we put the disability first, we unfairly, and probably unconsciously, label the individual, and labels contribute to negative stereotypes. Unless it is significant to the conversation, you do not even need to refer to the disability. Remember to concentrate on getting to know the person—not the disability.

Examples of People First Language

SAY	INSTEAD OF
Person with a disability; people with cognitive (or intellectual) disabilities	Physically challenged; intellectually challenged; retarded
Person with a disability; people with disabilities	Handicapped person; the handicapped; handicapped
Person with a physical disability; person who uses a wheelchair	Crippled; confined to a wheelchair; wheelchair bound; wheelchair user
Person with Down syndrome	Downs child; Mongoloid
Person with epilepsy; person with a seizure disorder	Epileptic
Person who is deaf; person who is nonverbal; person who uses an alternative communication	Deaf and dumb; deaf; mute
Person with cerebral palsy	Cerebral palsied; spastic

Accomplishments...

Special EDpost, 12/14/12

Lincoln Way East High School sophomore Adam Sekula, 16, recently received his Eagle Scout status—two years before most scouts achieve the honor. Adam's achievements are particularly impressive considering he earned his Eagle Scout rank under distinct circumstances: Adam has Down syndrome. "He is just focused and determined," said Adam's mother, Marlene. According to the Boy Scouts of America only 5 percent of the nearly 850,000 Boy Scouts across the nation earned the prestigious Eagle Scout rank last year. Adam began scouting in first grade as a Tiger Cub and he hasn't stopped since. In 2008, he earned the Cub Scout Arrow of Light Award and was declared Outstanding Cub Scout of the Year in his troop. Over the years, Adam's scoutmasters have made only one modification to accommodate his Down syndrome, allowing him to meet a swimming requirement with a kickboard while other scouts swam unaided. Adam then met the requirement without the kickboard just a few weeks after his swimming evaluation. Marlene said Adam has been fortunate to have patient and understanding scoutmasters. Rich McCully, Adam's current scoutmaster, said working with a scout who has Down syndrome does create some challenges regarding communication, but those never keep Adam from getting the job done. "He's very able to stay on task," McCully said. "When he gets locked on to something, that's what he thinks about." Marlene partially credits Adam's scoutmasters, for pushing Adam, and helping him grow as a scout. "They made him do the work," she said. "He didn't just get passed off on it because he had Down syndrome." To gain Eagle Scout status, Adam worked his way up through the seven ranks of scouting. Aspiring Eagle Scouts are required to hold a leadership position in their troop, perform community service work and consistently attend meetings. Potential Eagle Scouts must also earn 12 required merit badges, as well as a minimum of nine additional badges. Adam recently earned his 64th badge and holds the record for most badges earned in Frankfort Square Boy Scout Group 237. "I like the merit badges," Adam said.

From Deanna Isbill...

Hello Dear GRADSA Family!

After recently resigning from the board I felt the need to share some thoughts on the matter. I had decided to resign over a year ago due to mounting commitments mainly at home, work and school, but kept putting it off. I had served on GRADSA's board since before GRADSA was GRADSA. I took a break or two over the years and this may end up to be a break as well. I plan to remain active in other ways such as with the Parent Outreach Program (or POP as we always liked to call it!) I would, however, highly recommend to anyone with a little time to donate and a big heart for people with disabilities to consider joining our wonderful GRADSA board. It is very gratifying to help with the planning and behind-the-scenes operations of our support group.....or perhaps consider serving on a committee or volunteering at an event would be a better fit. If not now, then at some point in the future. Many of us have made lifelong friends by serving together. I have seen many changes in GRADSA over the years and it is absolutely growing and changing again. We have some good people on our board working hard to invigorate our group with new life and new ideas and new directions. Thank you to the current and past board members for all your work, dedication, and time. A big thanks also to our current and past Executive Directors, who are absolutely vital to our organizations success! You have all blessed GRADSA with your unique time and talent and heart!

Gratefully, Deanna Isbill (better known as Leland's mom)

Thank you Deanna, GRADSA appreciates all you have done and hope to see you back on the board when you are able. God Bless You.

Great Websites...

WWW.ABLEPLAY.COM

Thanks to April Smith for sharing this.

This is a toy rating system and website that provides comprehensive information on toys for children with special needs. AblePlay was created so parents, special educators, therapists and others can make the best decisions when purchasing products for children in their lives with disabilities. AblePlay has designed an easy to understand rating system that focuses on the developmental areas of cognitive, sensory, communications and physical abilities of a child.

http://nichcy.org

National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities

NICHCY is the center that provides information to the nation on:

- * Disabilities in children and youth
- * Programs and services for infants, children and youth with disabilities
- * IDEA, the nation's special education law
- * Researched-based information on effective practices for children with disabilities

Special focus is children and youth, birth to age 22. Anyone can use their services-families, educators, administrators, journalists, students, etc.

They are very pleased to offer:

A toll-free number (1.800.695.0285), bilingual services, and a team of research and information specialists who are available to talk with you and address your individual questions and concerns in English or in Spanish;

A website in English and in Spanish

A monthly eNewsletter called *News You Can Use* (and you can!); and last but not least...

The Research Center where you can find out what research has to say about effective educational practices for children with disabilities.

From Newsletter of Local Lodge 818...

Allied Federation Local Lodge 818 Makes Holiday Donation

Every year Allied Federation Local Lodge 818, headquartered in Evansville, Indiana, chooses a worthy charitable group to offer a donation. This year Local Lodge 818 chose the Green River Area Down Syndrome Association (GRADSA) for a donation of \$250.00. GRADSA is a non-profit organization that provides its members with a newsletter, educational workshops, social activities, and a parent and hospital outreach program.

Local Lodge President E. B. Free offered, "The group's mission is to enable families enriched with Down Syndrome connection to share resources, build friendships and advocate together for the future of individuals with Down Syndrome."

Adrienne Free, daughter of Local Lodge 818 President E. B. Free, presents check to GRADSA Executive Director Carla Renfrow.



Christmas Party 2012...



Happy Birthday!!!

JANUARY

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

MARCH

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

FEBRUARY

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



**“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



A special thanks to Sherry and Terry Cook, Sara Vance, Jonathon Estes and Tony Hamilton for all your help at the Christmas Party. A Big Shout Out to Meggan Clark and her family for all their help.



GRADSA
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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 *Heart-Strings* 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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