

# Educator of the Year Award & Recognition Program

2016 marked the 17th year of the Down Syndrome Association of Orange County's Educator of the Year Award & Recognition program.

This year, seven nominations were submitted by our families living throughout greater Orange County that wanted to have us celebrate the amazing work of their child's teachers, therapists, aides and administrators, who have made a positive difference for individuals with Down syndrome.

DSAOC was thrilled to announce the 2015-16 Educator of the Year during an assembly at the school. Ms. Jaime Bennett, first grade, general education teacher at Montevideo Elementary School in Mission Viejo, received the honors. Nominated by the Parsons family, Ms. Bennett is described as the epitome of what a teacher should be. She is caring, kind, and enjoys what she does, and it shows in the way she interacts with her students. She expects the same things from her students, and she builds them up and encourages them to challenge themselves. Congratulations Jaime Bennett, and THANK YOU for all you do for the Parsons family, their daughter Mandy and for all students. We look forward to further recognizing you on stage during this year's Orange County Buddy Walk.

Read the OC Register article on Educator of the Year and Ms. Bennett: <http://www.ocregister.com/articles/bennett-720909-parsons-mandy.html>

We are also excited to announce that Courtnei English, founder and CEO of No Limits Learning Center in Brea, will be receiving the Board of Directors "Special Achievement Award" in an upcoming ceremony, and will also be recognized at the Orange County Buddy Walk.

All of the nominations were noteworthy and, as always, it was a tough decision for the judging committee to select just one winner. We appreciate all of our families that took the time to nominate the individual or team, whose efforts are making a positive difference for children with Down syndrome. All nominees received a letter and certificate acknowledging their amazing work, and their leadership team was also notified.

Congratulations to all of our nominees, and "thank you" DSAOC families for letting us know about all the great things happening in our community for our loved ones with Down syndrome.



We look forward to receiving nominations next year, enabling DSAOC to continue to highlight, affirm, and celebrate those in education and professional therapy programs, whose outstanding efforts and innovations have helped a student with Down syndrome grow and learn.

You can help us continue to Change Perceptions and Change Lives by submitting a nomination during next year's cycle, which will open in March of 2017.

## Mark your Calendar for these DSAOC events!

**Saturday, October 1**  
Teen/Adult Halloween "Boo Bash" Costume Party and Dance at Mater Dei High School (costumes optional)

**Saturday, October 22**  
Halloween Picnic and "Trick-or-Trunk" at the Garden Grove Elks Lodge

**Sunday, October 30**  
Orange County Buddy Walk at the Angel Stadium of Anaheim from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

**Saturday, December 3**  
Breakfast with Santa at the Garden Grove Elks Lodge

Save the Dates

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
PERMIT NO 321 SANTA ANA, CA

## Did You Know...?

### New Age Extension At CHOC

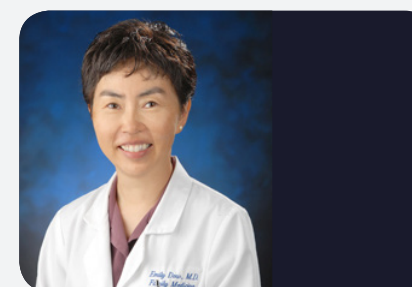
The CHOC Children's Down Syndrome Clinic, created in alliance with the Down Syndrome Association of Orange County, has extended its age for Pediatric care from ages 18 years to 21. This means your loved one can receive care at CHOC until he or she turns 22-years-old. Before that time, they have the opportunity to be transitioned into adult care at the NEW Adult Down Syndrome Clinic at the UCI Family Health Center in Santa Ana.

### NEW Adult Down Syndrome Clinic created in alliance with UC Irvine Health.

Dr. Emily Dow (pictured to the right) is the Chief Medical Officer of UC Irvine Family Health Centers (UCI FHC) in Santa Ana and Anaheim, which are federally qualified health centers in medically underserved areas of Orange County. She is also Professor and Acting Chair of the Department of Family Medicine at the UC Irvine School of Medicine. Dr. Dow has dedicated her career to caring for the socioeconomically disadvantaged populations in inner city and underserved urban areas.

Dr. Dow started a clinic for adults with Down syndrome at the UCI FHC Santa Ana in March, 2016, with the purpose of providing high quality primary care with a focus on those transitioning from pediatric to adult care. She will conduct health screening and disease prevention using the most current health care guidelines, and coordinate team-based care, in conjunction with case managers, social workers and other health professionals. There will be specialist referrals, as needed, and involvement of families in educating and anticipating the needs of the adult with Down syndrome.

DSAOC thanks Dr. Dow for her commitment to our families and adults with Down syndrome.



**CHOC Children's Neuroscience Center**  
CHOC Commerce Tower  
Clinic Hours: Wednesdays 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.  
Appointments for the NEW Adult Primary Care Down Syndrome Clinic at the UCI Family Health Center can be made by calling: 714-456-7002.

DOWN SYNDROME ASSOCIATION OF ORANGE COUNTY  
151 KALMUS DRIVE, SUITE M-5  
COSTA MESA, CA 92626  
714.540.5794

DSAOC

Stay Connected  
Visit us on Facebook - facebook.com/DSAOC  
Follow us on Twitter - twitter.com/DSAOC  
Visit our website - dsao.org/blog  
Share with us - #DSAOC

DSAOC  
DOWN SYNDROME ASSOCIATION OF ORANGE COUNTY

SUMMER 2016

DSAOC strives to create a place for connection, hope and awareness, for people with Down syndrome and their families in Southern California.

**Our Mission** is to provide the means necessary to empower individuals with Down syndrome to reach their full potential.



## Red Carpet Ball 2016 - "Sunset Safari"

Who doesn't love a good animal print and some RAWR-ing dance music by DJ Willpower? The 2016 DSAOC Red Carpet Ball's "Sunset Safari" delivered in a WILD way. On Saturday February 27, 250 teens and adults with Down syndrome and their guests arrived at the Knott's Berry Farm Hotel, and were transported to the savannah for a Sunset Safari-themed night complete with animals, a safari tent and even a safari jeep photo-op! They had a delicious, catered dinner and danced the night away.

We couldn't do it without our guides, our fantastic 2016 Red Carpet Ball Committee! Thank you to Linda and Jillian Leeman, Tatia and Marco Hupe, Kristin Abbas, Laurie Flibbert, Pat Wiggins and Cindy Lysek for dedicating themselves to another amazing Teen/Adult Ball. Special thanks to the Knott's Berry Farm Hotel team, the Orange Elks (Mike and Rosie Cash), JB Interiors Drywall, Sean Rosenthal from Within A Dream Photography, the Leeman family and AVMS Lighting for their generous contributions to this event.

The Red Carpet Ball itself is more than just a dinner and dance. It is a comfortable, friendly and fun event

for our teens and adults to connect and celebrate with their friends, and we are grateful for the community and family support that we have received to make it another unforgettable evening.

The support of our parents is a critical part of making this event a success, which is why we simultaneously host the Parent Mixer. The Parent Mixer is an opportunity for families to network with each other and exchange information, while their adults with Down syndrome enjoy themselves in the ballroom. This year, DSAOC was pleased to host Sara Weir, president of the National Down Syndrome Society, as the Mixer's guest speaker to speak about her experiences and what's on the horizon for the Down syndrome community in research and legislature.

For more information about the Red Carpet Ball, the Parent Mixer, and to view photos, please visit: [www.dsao.org/red-carpet-ball.html](http://www.dsao.org/red-carpet-ball.html)

### Interested in getting involved?

If you would like information about becoming an RCB Committee Member, or if you wish to make a monetary contribution toward the 2017 Red Carpet Ball, please contact the DSAOC Center at (714) 540-5794.

THE OPTIMIST



# Message from the President

Dear DSAOC Families and Supporters:

What an amazing year DSAOC has had thus far... and it's once again going by quickly. DSAOC has created new partnerships, and we've made some wonderful memories with our families and their loved ones with Down syndrome at the many exciting events we've coordinated for our community. As you'll read in this issue of The Optimist, through our relationship with UCI Healthcare, we now have a dedicated primary care clinic for adults with Down syndrome that opened in March. We continue to be grateful for the support of our community.

Have you taken time to view DSAOC's "COMMUNITY CORNER" Down syndrome awareness video series? Community Corner shares the stories of individuals with Down syndrome and the people and organizations making a difference in their lives.

You can learn about Rachel's job, and how she inspires those around her; watch Willie manage two jobs and enjoy his independence; hear how Adam makes a positive impact on those he works and lives with; see what Chad had to do to earn his Eagle Scout honor; hear from siblings about why they love the DSAOC Sibshops program; check out Jake at work and hear his story... and, hear from some of our community partners, and learn about DSAOC programs. I encourage you to visit our website today at [www.dsaoc.org](http://www.dsaoc.org), and view our "Community Corner" video series. And if you have an idea for a future story, please contact Kellie Perez – [kperez@dsaoc.org](mailto:kperez@dsaoc.org).

As a reminder, fun and exciting things are always coming up, so the best way to current with DSAOC happenings is to 'LIKE' the DSAOC page on Facebook, and follow our posts. You can also be on our EMAIL list and MAILING list. Remain "in the know" about Down syndrome community news, as well as offerings from our friends at other local organizations. Simply go to: <https://www.facebook.com/dsaoc>, and click the "Like" button. To join our email and mailing lists, send a message to Ali at [admin@dsaoc.org](mailto:admin@dsaoc.org), and provide your mailing address and preferred email.

Thank you for your time in reading this issue of The Optimist and for your support of DSAOC's Mission. We look forward to seeing everyone at the 2016 Orange County Buddy Walk!

Sincerely,

Janette Mattson  
President - Board of Directors, DSAOC

DSAOC website: [www.dsaoc.org](http://www.dsaoc.org)  
 DSAOC Calendar of events: [www.dsaoc.org/events-calendar.html](http://www.dsaoc.org/events-calendar.html)  
 CHOC Children's Ds program: [www.dsaoc.org/chocs-children-down-syndrome-program.html](http://www.dsaoc.org/chocs-children-down-syndrome-program.html)  
 Community Corner: [www.dsaoc.org/community-corner.html](http://www.dsaoc.org/community-corner.html)  
 National Down Syndrome Society: [www.ndss.org](http://www.ndss.org)  
 National Down Syndrome Congress: [www.ndscenter.org](http://www.ndscenter.org)  
 Regional Center of Orange County Vendor List: [www.rcocdd.com/wp-content/uploads/pdf/vendorsearch/vendorextractpdf.pdf](http://www.rcocdd.com/wp-content/uploads/pdf/vendorsearch/vendorextractpdf.pdf)  
 International Mosaic Down Syndrome Association: [www.imdsa.org](http://www.imdsa.org)  
 HealthCare Guidelines Prenatal to Age 21 yrs (updated 2013): [www.ndss.org/Global/Health\\_Care\\_Information\\_for\\_Families\\_of\\_Children\\_with\\_Down\\_Syndrome%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.ndss.org/Global/Health_Care_Information_for_Families_of_Children_with_Down_Syndrome%20(1).pdf)  
 Healthcare Guidelines 22 yrs and Older (updated 1999): [www.ndss.org/Resources/Health-Care/Health-Care-Guidelines/Adult-Health-Care-Guidelines/](http://www.ndss.org/Resources/Health-Care/Health-Care-Guidelines/Adult-Health-Care-Guidelines/)  
 Down Syndrome Growth Charts (updated Oct 2015): [www.pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2015/10/21/peds.2015-1652](http://www.pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2015/10/21/peds.2015-1652)



Important Links

# Orange County Buddy Walk

Orange County Buddy Walk

**SAVE THE DATE**

Sunday, October 30, 2016

9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the

Angel Stadium of Anaheim

Join us for Halloween themed festivities, including a TEAM COSTUME CONTEST, Pumpkin Carving Contest and Trick or Treating with our exhibitors! More details heading your way soon, so stay tuned!

## Reflections from the 2015 Orange County Buddy Walk

During last year's Orange County Buddy Walk, our DSAOC interns mingled and interviewed some of our fabulous Team Captains, who shared what the Buddy Walk means to them, and why this day is so incredibly special. Here's what they had to say...

Princess Ashlan's Team proclaimed that the Orange County Buddy Walk is "tutu fun and tutu cute" – in reference to the bright pink tutu that wrapped around little Ashlan's waist.

Team Trevor's Troopers attend the event every year to celebrate Trevor, now 11-years-old. You couldn't miss their team camp set-up, as it is surrounded with Star Wars memorabilia and Trevor waving a lightsaber in the air. Jennie Henricks, Trevor's mom states, "The Orange County Buddy Walk has become our annual family picnic to celebrate Trevor. Not just my team and family, but everyone here is extended family to us. We really are one community on the same walk with our kids!"

Heather Avis, Team Captain of The Lucky Few, spoke for many as she stated, "Oh wow, the Orange County Buddy Walk is amazing. It is awesome to be in a place with so many like-minded people. Before, I would attend and say that it is important that we raise awareness, but I don't think that awareness is doing enough for the Down syndrome community. I think that the key is creating relationships. So, this event for me is a celebration. It's so fun! Just gathering to do the actual walk makes me very emotional. Our team is 'The Lucky Few,' and I think everyone here agrees that we are, in fact, so lucky!"

Another team that quite literally gave the interviewers goose bumps, while speaking, was Cole's Crew. As Cole's mom began to talk about Cole, she got emotional and said, "I love the Orange County Buddy Walk,



because it is a celebration of his life and all of the people and families who are on the same journey as we are. It's a connection that you don't get to make all the time or with a lot of people. But, today we step back, and see how many people are really on this life journey with us."

Finally, 'Nicasia's Garden of Victory' elaborates on the importance of feeling included. Nicasia's mom shares, "The Orange County Buddy Walk is so special to get people together, and have the opportunity to see so many of the families return year after year. This is our once-a-year family reunion, and I can't imagine a better reason to bring all of us together. Everyone here understands one another. Sometimes I feel so alone in the real world, but here I don't have to explain myself to anybody... if Nicasia gets overwhelmed and has a meltdown, I don't feel the need to run and hide or explain anything. We love the unity and acceptance that this event represents."

It is very clear that the Orange County Buddy Walk has many personal meanings for everyone, but one thing rings the same for all, and that is this event is a celebration of the lives of individuals of all ages with Down syndrome.

See you on Sunday, October 30! Register at: <http://dsaoc.donordrive.com/event/BW2016> For more information you can visit the DSAOC website: [www.dsaoc.org](http://www.dsaoc.org)

## Alzheimer's Disease & Down Syndrome

By now, many of you reading this have already learned of the connection between Down syndrome and Alzheimer's disease. We wanted to share some information with you, so that you know research is progressing here locally, and that DSAOC is on the frontline by remaining close to this research, as well as joining forces with Alzheimer's Orange County (formerly Alzheimer's Association Orange County Chapter) and the support services available for families that are affected by this disease.

We are fortunate to have Dr. Ira Lott on our Board of Directors. Dr. Lott is Director of the UCI Down Syndrome Program and Professor Emeritus, UCI School of Medicine. He wrote an article that we are sharing a portion of with the link to the full article also provided below.

### Learning about healthy aging and Alzheimer's disease from people with Down syndrome

The association between Down syndrome and Alzheimer's disease was established in 1948. Since then, we've learned that by age 40, all individuals with trisomy 21 have the characteristic amyloid plaques and neurofibrillary tangles of Alzheimer's disease.

One cause of the association between Down syndrome and Alzheimer's disease is overexpression of the amyloid-precursor-protein gene on chromosome 21, which results in brain amyloid accumulation from an early age. Indeed, primitive brain deposits of amyloid have been seen as early as four months of age in infants with Down syndrome. As a result, the processes of development and aging in Down syndrome provide a unique window on the mechanisms that lead to Alzheimer's disease in a young adult population. UCI MIND is one of the few research centers nationwide that has had a longstanding and robust program in Down syndrome research.

Notably, despite the fact that plaques and tangles are essentially universal by age 40 years, not every individual with Down syndrome develops dementia. While the prevalence of dementia increases with age, we follow many individuals in their 60s and beyond, who have not experienced cognitive decline. The biomarkers that may signal cognitive decline are the subject of a current major research project funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) that involves many UCI MIND researchers.



A telemedicine session with Dr. Ira Lott, Director of the UCI Down Syndrome Program and Professor Emeritus, UCI School of Medicine

Continue reading this at: <https://www.mind.uci.edu/research/down-syndrome-program/learning-healthy-aging-alzheimer-disease-people-syndrome/>

You can also read more information about the connection between Down syndrome and Alzheimer's on the NDSS website: <http://www.ndss.org/Resources/Health-Care/Associated-Conditions/Alzheimers-Disease--Down-Syndrome/>

Below are links to other articles of interest relating to the benefit of staying active to help keep the brain healthy. Although these articles are not directly speaking about individuals with Down syndrome, research has been conducted with individuals with Down syndrome, who were placed on a regular fitness routine, and it showed significant changes in attitudes towards exercise, including increased exercise self-efficacy, more positive expected outcomes, fewer cognitive-emotional barriers, improved life satisfaction and marginally lower depression.

### Walk, Jog or Dance: It's All Good for the Aging Brain

By GRETCHEN REYNOLDS

<http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/04/07/sweat-smart/?smid=nytcore-ipad-share&smprod=nytcore-ipad&r=0>

### Yoga May Be Good for the Brain

By GRETCHEN REYNOLDS

<http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/06/01/yoga-may-be-good-for-the-brain/?smid=nytcore-ipad-share&smprod=nytcore-ipad>

### How Exercise May Help the Brain Grow Stronger

By GRETCHEN REYNOLDS

<http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/06/15/how-exercise-may-help-the-brain-grow-stronger/?smid=nytcore-ipad-share&smprod=nytcore-ipad>