



SPRING 2011

## Seventh Annual Red Carpet Ball: Candy Land, A Sweet Adventure

*"The best dinner and dance I've ever attended."* Jacob Braun

*"My friends and I look forward to this event all year!"* Alexandra Perez

*"I plan to volunteer at this exciting event each and every year!"* Volunteer Astrid Arellano

On Saturday, February 26, more than 180 people followed the rainbow path through the peppermint forest, the gingerbread plum tree and the gumdrop mountain to the DoubleTree Hotel for A Sweet Adventure in the DSAOC version of Candy Land.

The evening was, as always, **magical**. Large, colorful balloon arrangements, a life-size game board complete with game pieces, and an exciting backdrop for participant photos transformed the ballroom into an experience that guests will remember forever.

Once DJ WillPower started spinning his tunes, the dance floor was like the molasses swamp; you just couldn't →



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## Message from Board President Tres Heald

The Optimist newsletter's purpose is to inform our constituents of the events and people who are impacting our community. While

the horrible tragedy in Japan doesn't fit these criteria, it is worth saying that, at the DSAOC, our hearts and prayers go out to all of the families who have been affected by this catastrophic event. Their pain and suffering are unimaginable and it will take years to overcome the destruction caused by the earthquake and tsunami.

In times like these, people ask, "What can I do to help?" It's a call to action and a reason to get involved. It's what makes us human and differentiates us from all other life on earth. It's incredibly heartwarming to see the compassion that can pour from communities when there is a call to action. There is a feeling of reward and satisfaction when you are doing something good for others in need. As a reader of the Optimist, you are already showing a concern for people with Down syndrome. We would love for you to get involved with us. **We would like to extend to you a "call to action."** This can take multiple forms, but two of the most important areas are money and time.

Every year, we work very hard to raise funds for our operations so we can continue to provide valuable programs, resources and services at no cost or minimal cost to our families and community. The funding is getting tougher, as the state and federal governments have less and less discretionary funds available. Throw in an economic crisis or two and you really need to come up with

innovative ideas on how to raise money. The DSAOC raises almost all of its funds from private individuals, foundations and endowments. While this insulates us from variable federal and state budgets, it also makes us work harder for every dollar that comes in the door. We have "right sized" our operations and are back on stable footing after two very difficult years in 2009 and 2010. While our financial future looks stable, the services we offer our families can only improve with more funding. Please consider supporting DSAOC today with a monetary contribution. Gifts may be unrestricted or made in tribute, honor or memory of a loved one. Also, please remember DSAOC if your company offers matching gift opportunities or if you have in-kind gifts you can donate.

For more details on **ways to give**, please visit our website at: <http://www.dsaoc.org/types-of-donations.html>

Secondly, we need your time. Our volunteers are the life blood of our organization. With only 2-½ staff positions, DSAOC relies heavily on its unpaid volunteer committees. Our volunteers do a fantastic job and help coordinate fundraising events, social activities and education programs, and participate in the important work being done with our health care outreach project. Imagine what the DSAOC could accomplish for families and individuals with Down syndrome if we had even more volunteers. Please consider giving us a portion of your valuable time. In addition, due to some recent turnover, we are in need of several new members for our Board of Directors. Regardless of

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## Board of Directors Notes

DSAOC is currently seeking additional Board members from all walks of life, as well as those who have special skills in legal services, human resources and business management. If you are interested in being considered for a Board position, we would love to hear from you.

### **Are you interested in learning more about the role of a Board member and the time commitment required?**

Board of Director meetings are open to the public. Attending a meeting is a great way to introduce yourself to the Board, and ask questions about this exciting and meaningful opportunity. If you're interested or have questions, call the DSAOC Center at 714-540-5794 and leave a message for Board President Tres Heald. ■

***If you're interested...  
call the DSAOC Center at  
714.540.5794 and leave  
a message for Board  
President Tres Heald.***

# Mano a Mano 'hand in hand'

## A Spanish Language Early Literacy Program

### Responding to the diverse needs of our families

has always been the focus of the Down Syndrome Association of Orange County. We want to be sure that our families have the resources necessary to allow their children with Down syndrome to grow up confident and prepared to reach their full potential. Having access to educational opportunities is a huge part of this mission.

**"My daughter's teacher at school has noticed big gains."**



Recognizing that student study skill readiness and early literacy exposure can be challenges that students with Down syndrome encounter when entering the school system and such challenges are only magnified for students with Down syndrome that come from a non-English speaking family, DSAOC responded by developing the Mano a Mano program (hand in hand).

DSAOC's *Mano a Mano* program is a Spanish language, early literacy program that uses curriculum and teaching methods from "So Happy to Learn." The current program has been developed for children with Down syndrome between four and six years-of-age. Both the parent(s) and child attend 10 monthly, 90-minute classes that offer individual, as well as group learning experiences.

*"I feel very comfortable. This program is very efficient and helps us to really make an effort as a family. It helps put ourselves at Sammy's level,"* explains Sammy's mom.

*"My daughter's teacher at school has noticed big gains in Amy's progress, since beginning this program at DSAOC,"* adds Amy's mom.

Participants in the *Mano a Mano* program increase their early literacy skills, as well as their ability to be attentive, independent, engaged and participating students, all while developing a life-long love of learning. Parents also



benefit by strengthening their ability to be active participants in their child's education using the strategies and tools at home that are provided through this program. The acquisition of these skills can enhance a student's success in academic programs and opens a broader continuum of placements and opportunities.

To us, the most important aspect of the *Mano a Mano* program is that the child begins to develop a life-long love of learning. Families are enthusiastic about the program and are thrilled to see their child become more excited about learning. To witness this, for us, is the true measure of success.

*"I am truly grateful that DSAOC is offering this great literacy program for our kids. David's vocabulary has expanded in just the past few months. The reading books are designed so well, that it motivates my son to want to read. The presentation of the program is very simple and effective for all. I would love to see this literacy program offered to the older children with Down syndrome, as well,"* says David's mom. ■

**"David's vocabulary has expanded in just the past few months."**



# DSAOC's Resource Library

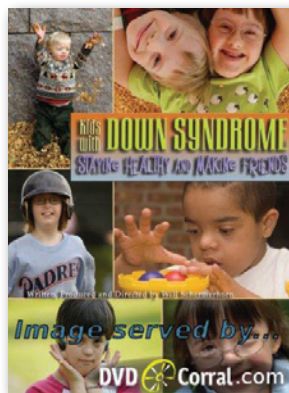
## CHECK IT OUT!

Did you know that the DSAOC Center has a multi-media resource library available to the community? The resource library contains books, DVDs, tapes, educational games and other material that you can check-out free of charge for up to one month at a time.

Here are just a couple of the great resources available in the DSAOC Resource Library:

### **Kids with Down Syndrome: Staying Healthy and Making Friends**

This popular DVD brings together parents and professionals from the United States, England, Ireland, Scotland, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand for an up-to-date and comprehensive guide to the health and social challenges in the years from walking to adolescence. Topics discussed include potty training, hearing and the ear, building conversation skills, behavior, and more.



*continued from page 2* → your interests, we can find something for you! Please contact Kellie Perez or me at the Down Syndrome Association of Orange County to get involved at the board level, committee level or volunteer level. We would love to hear from you.

Speaking of our Board of Directors, we wish to say thank you to two directors that have recently stepped down from our Board. First, we want to thank Brenda Deeley for her many contributions. Brenda was very involved as the head of our marketing efforts and put us on the map with new ways to reach our constituents, including enhancing DSAOC's presence in the world of social media by establishing our Twitter page, and improving our communications on Facebook. Brenda worked tirelessly for our organization and her contributions will continue to help us for years to come. Thank you Brenda! We will miss you. Secondly, we wanted to recognize and thank Nanda Gopal for donating his considerable time and efforts to our Board. Nanda served as our CFO for a term, bringing financial sophistication when it was needed, and he will be missed, as well.

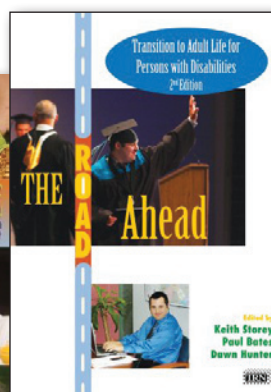
### **The Road Ahead: Transition to Adult Life for Persons with Disabilities**

*The Road Ahead* covers key areas in transition from school to adult life; it is edited by Keith Storey, Paul Bates and Dawn Hunter, nationally recognized transition experts.

This book explores transition planning, assessment, instructional strategies, career development, adult employment, community functioning skills, social life, quality of life, supported living, and post-secondary education.

To check-out these and other items from the DSAOC

Resource Library, please visit the DSAOC Center Monday – Thursday between the hours of 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. ■



*DSAOC is always seeking new resources or learning games to add to our Resource Library. If you have new or gently used items that you feel other families would find useful, please consider donating them to DSAOC.*

**One final note:** Throughout our history, we have made good use of your time and money. Current programs that we either fund or spend our valuable time on include: our New Parent Support program, which consists of hospital and home visits, delivery of the Welcome Baby Basket and assigning Parent Mentors, the Hospital Outreach Program, the Healthcare Series Seminars, the CHOC Children's Down Syndrome Clinic, our Spanish language early education program, the Partners in Education initiative, our community Down syndrome awareness projects and events, our on-line family networking groups, our Circle of Friends parent meetings, teen and adult social events, and more.

Join with us on our mission to create a world in which every person with Down syndrome is a valued member of society, and is healthy, confident and empowered to reach his or her full potential. Answer this **"call to action"** and get involved with DSAOC today!

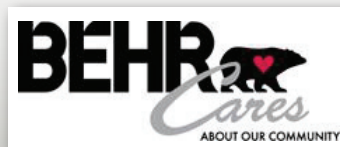
Otis P. Heald III, President  
Down Syndrome Association of Orange County

## “Three Cheers for Behr Cares”

“Behr Cares,” the community service group comprised of Behr employees from the Behr Paint Processing Corporation in Santa Ana, not only donated paint and painting supplies to DSAOC, but they gave their time and talents to create an exciting, Orange County themed mural in the activity center.

Spring is here, and it’s the perfect time to do some cleaning and add some color to white walls, which is exactly what DSAOC had planned to do when it reached out to a parent who is connected to the organization and also works for Behr.

On Friday, March 11, the transformation began. The “Behr Cares” team spent the day at DSAOC painting a fun, colorful mural for our families to enjoy. ■



Visit the following DSAOC Blog page for a link to a video from their community service day at the Center:

[www.dsaoc.org/blog/?p=1349](http://www.dsaoc.org/blog/?p=1349)



## Two NEW Ways to Connect & Share at DSAOC!

The Down Syndrome Association of Orange County is continually working to introduce new ways for our families to get connected and share experiences and resources. Two new and exciting ways we are achieving this is through the creation of an online networking group and bringing back our Circle of Friends groups.

### “Connect and Share – Online”

This past February, DSAOC launched the “Family Networking Group” using Google groups, a program designed to be a networking tool for families to communicate in a different way—online. This new online community has already created a buzz among families involved, while praised for its convenient way of obtaining information, providing feedback and getting advice. The current Google group is serving parents with children up to age five, though plans are in place to add other age groups beginning in mid-April. Contact DSAOC for more information and details on how you can receive your invitation to participate in this new online community.

### “Circle of Friends” is Back!

The Down Syndrome Association of Orange County is committed to providing a safe, comfortable environment in which parents can discuss issues, share concerns and learn from each other. In an effort to meet the networking needs of more families, DSAOC is reintroducing the “Circle of Friends” groups.

### Circle of Friends is currently comprised of 3 groups:

**Circle of Friends: 0 to 3** – (formerly our 0 to 3 Support Group). This group is focused on supporting our new and expectant parents, and takes place at the DSAOC Center the first Thursday of each month from 7-9 p.m.

**Circle of Friends: 3 to 6** – This new group primarily focuses on transition into school, as well as other topics surrounding the 3 to 6 age group; however all age groups are welcome to attend.

**Circle of Friends: Elementary** – This new group focuses on topics surrounding children in elementary school; however all age groups are welcome to attend.

The 3 to 6 and Elementary “Circle of Friends” groups are hosted by a DSAOC family in their home. Although these sessions typically have a specific opening topic, they have the flexibility to become an open forum for discussion on which parents can reflect and ask questions.

Don’t miss the opportunity to become more involved with DSAOC and other families we serve. Take advantage of these new networking opportunities and increase your knowledge, while sharing your own experiences and assisting others along their journey.

Watch for “Circle of Friends” dates and topics in Fridge Posts and e-mails. If you’re not receiving the DSAOC Fridge Posts and/or e-mails, please contact DSAOC today. ■



## A note from Prudential Special Needs Solutions on “Making plans for the future for a loved one with special needs”

When special needs are involved, choose financial and legal professionals with specialized skills.

When you have a loved one with special needs, making plans for the future takes on a whole new level of complexity. You obviously need to ensure that your loved one is financially provided for throughout his or her life. There are quality of life issues to consider, as well, and knowing where to find the best support systems and resources is vital. That’s why it’s so important to engage professionals, both financial and legal, with expertise in

***In August of 2010, NDSS joined forces with Prudential Insurance Companies to create an alliance that will aid families in planning for the financial future of loved ones with special needs. The Down Syndrome Association of Orange County is sharing the following article with you for informational purposes only and does not endorse the author or its affiliates.***

special needs issues. Many attorneys have expertise in estate planning, but when selecting a professional to help determine the parameters of care for a loved one with special needs, you will want to know if the individual has skill and expertise in:

- Special needs and disability planning, including drafting of special needs trusts
- Special education law
- Guardianship and fiduciary services
- Public benefits planning
- Supplemental security income, Social Security survivors benefits, Medicaid and Medicare applications and appeals
- Social Security disability appeals
- Nursing home law and litigation

It is emotionally difficult to plan for the care of a child or loved one with a disability following your death, but the truth is that planning is the best way to protect your loved one’s interests. Many people go no further than creating a will or family trust. However, if your child is unlikely to be self-sufficient in adulthood and will need Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income, and other government benefits, an attorney knowledgeable in these areas will prove invaluable. For example, you may not realize that if a person with a disability has resources above certain amounts in his or

her own name, or receives an outright inheritance above certain amounts, his or her government benefits may be reduced or revoked, because he or she exceeds the eligibility resource limits for such benefits. This is usually not what a parent intends. For example – an inheritance may be earmarked to address quality of life issues and not the basics of food, shelter and health care. Again, an attorney with expertise in special needs law can help ensure that your wishes are carried out. To begin your search for a qualified professional, the following sources may be helpful:

- State Bar Associations or the American Bar Association
- Local Disabilities Organizations
- The Academy of Special Needs Planners, [www.specialneedsanswers.com](http://www.specialneedsanswers.com)
- The Special Needs Alliance, [www.specialneedsalliance.org](http://www.specialneedsalliance.org)

When selecting a special needs attorney, make sure you find someone with whom you feel comfortable, since you will be discussing highly personal and emotional issues. Also, keep in mind that an attorney is only one member of a team of professionals whom you will want to employ when making your plans. A licensed financial professional, who can help identify financial products and services to meet your needs, is also a very important resource.

While it is easy to delay difficult decisions regarding the future care of a loved one with special needs, the peace of mind you will gain knowing that the proper safeguards are in place for the long-term will be well worth the effort.

For more information, contact Robert Friedman (CA insurance license 0A90408). Robert can be reached at 949-215-9887. ■

*The information contained in this article has been obtained from sources believed to be reliable. The opinion of the author is independent of Wedbush and is intended for general information only. Neither Robert Friedman nor Wedbush guarantees its accuracy. Securities offered through Wedbush, Member NYSE/FINRA/SIPC 1200 Prospect Street, Suite 350 – La Jolla, CA 92037*





**Rachel Osterbach,  
Self-Advocate**

## Self-Advocate Staying Busy and Enjoying Life

Rachel Osterbach is 28-years-old and leads a busy life of work, school, volunteering and athletics through Special Olympics. In her spare time, Rachel and her boyfriend enjoy going to dinner and seeing a movie. When Rachel isn't out and about, she is enjoying life at home with her parents and their two dogs, Chloe and Dolly.

Employment for Rachel started once she completed the Adult Transition Program in her hometown of Fountain Valley. Working through Regional Center, the Department of Rehab and Project Independence, Rachel landed an office job at Allstate Insurance. There, she gained valuable skills and learned how to make her own appointments with the Access transportation system, so she could travel to and from work independently.

After nearly five years of employment, the economic downturn forced the owner to close the business. Rachel didn't let that get her down. She soon got a new job at TJ Maxx, where she has worked for nearly a year. She takes pride in her Home Goods department, folding towels and ensuring that everything is neat and tidy on the shelves for customers.

In addition to being a dedicated employee, Rachel is a valued volunteer at a local library, where she has logged over one thousand hours of time since 2002. She also takes a few courses at Coastline College each semester. This year, she is taking cooking classes, where the students will learn how to prepare healthy meals.

Special Olympics has been a big part of Rachel's life, since she was nine-years-old. She is a member of the Lightning Bolts, a Special Olympics team with nine members, including her boyfriend, whom she met through her participation on this team.

Rachel loves her family and always looks forward to seeing her brother, Jonathan, when he comes to visit every few weeks. She loves movies, music, and the show "Glee," but most of all would love to meet Adam Lambert someday! ■

## Spotlights

### Volunteers Paying it Forward

Linda and Jillian Leeman began volunteering for DSAOC in the summer of 2008. This mother-daughter volunteer team brings amazing energy and creativity to DSAOC events, and they've become an indispensable part of our organization.

Someone special in their lives caused them to find DSAOC and begin volunteering their time. Linda's sister, Karin, who was born with Down syndrome, had such a positive impact on both their lives; they felt the need to pay that love forward.

Starting off as volunteers for our teen and adult social activities, Linda and Jillian have now become a vital part of our annual Red Carpet Ball and Buddy Walk.

With Linda's creativity and Jillian's connections and ability to get things done, they have helped transform the Red Carpet Ball into a truly magical experience for all participants. At the Buddy Walk, they are the go-to team for all of the fun happenings at the DSAOC Booth, not to mention their role in obtaining several of the exciting prizes given out on the popular "Wheel Spin."

When asked about her Aunt Karin, Jillian responds, *"I really believe my Aunt Karin shaped and molded me into the person I am today. I will always remember her amazing outlook on everything in life, along with her constant smile. I want to pass along the happiness, love and affection she gave to me, and I just love being able to volunteer at DSAOC in her honor."* ■



**Linda and Jillian Leeman,  
Volunteers**

**Save the Date –  
Get Involved,  
Be Inspired.**

**Orange County  
Buddy Walk**

**Sunday,  
November 6, 2011**

**Angel Stadium  
of Anaheim**

## Stay Connected to DSAOC

Visit [www.dsaoc.org](http://www.dsaoc.org) today to access these convenient ways to stay connected to DSAOC and the latest Orange County news related to Down syndrome.





## Seventh Annual Red Carpet Ball

*continued from page 1* → leave it easily, because the music kept you there!

The 2011 Red Carpet Ball Committee, once again, did a phenomenal job! A huge thanks to Linda and Jillian Leeman, Melinda Mergelsberg, Tatia and Marco Huipe, Laurie Flibbert and Danielle Borunda for their time, energy and creative talents. Participants were also able to capture the magic of the evening through photography services donated by Within a Dream Photography and Shutterbooth.



The Red Carpet Ball is an annual dinner and dance for individuals with Down syndrome age 15 and older. A portion of the annual Red Carpet Ball is funded annually by generous donors. We would like to sincerely thank Wayne and Terri Richards, the McDaniels family, the Volunteer Clowns of Orange County and the Rossman family for their generosity in providing donations to support this year's event. We appreciate you!

For more information, and to view the Red Carpet Ball photo gallery, please visit: <http://www.dsaoc.org/red-carpet-ball.html>. ■





# More FUN ways to support DSAOC are yet to come this year!



## Sunday, May 1 – Irvine Spectrum Center PCRFF Cinco de Mayo Half Marathon

Join DSAOC's team by registering for either the Half Marathon, 10K run or the 5K run/walk. If you're a cyclist, there is a 50K Bike Tour, and if you have kids who wish to participate, have them register for the 1K Kids Fun Run. Then, solicit sponsorships from your friends and family, and those donations will go directly to DSAOC!

You'll want to bring the whole family. There is a great Kids' Fun Zone, a huge food festival with lots of free goodies, and for the adults, a Beer Garden. You'll enjoy live musical entertainment and meet mascots and cheer teams from the Lakers, Ducks and Angels.

**Register or donate today by visiting [www.dsaoc.org](http://www.dsaoc.org).**

*Can't participate?* Make a donation in support of the DSAOC team. Your donation will support the Health Care Education & Outreach Program, or you can make a general donation and designate how you'd like DSAOC to utilize your contribution. ■



## Monday, June 13 – Los Coyotes Country Club

### Seventh Annual Golf Tournament, Banquet & Auction

Golf • Lunch • Player's Package • \$10,000 Putt-Off • Helicopter Ball Drop • Silent & Live Auction Dinner & Awards Banquet • Live Entertainment • Special Guests

A registration valued at more than \$400 is yours for only \$210 per golfer (Early Bird Registration by April 28 – Price increases to \$250 after 4/28/11)

*Not a golfer?* Join DSAOC and friends for some 'after golf' festivities, including live music, an exciting Helicopter Ball Drop and a \$10,000 Putt-Off. Bid on great items in our silent and live auctions and enjoy a Hawaiian themed banquet.

Banquet Only Tickets are \$50

Children's banquet tickets are also available for \$25 (10 years and younger)

**For more details and to register online, visit [www.dsaoc.org](http://www.dsaoc.org). Or, you can contact DSAOC at (714) 540-5794. Thank you!** ■



## Mark your calendar...

### Sunday, November 6 – Angel Stadium of Anaheim

#### 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Orange County Buddy Walk

Registration will open in June ■



DOWN SYNDROME ASSOCIATION  
OF ORANGE COUNTY

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714.540.5794

*To be good stewards of the environment and DSAOC's financial resources, we'd like to communicate with you more through e-mail. Please call 714.540.5794 or e-mail [kabbas@dsaoc.org](mailto:kabbas@dsaoc.org) today and make sure we have a current e-mail address for you. Thanks!*

*Thank you to Marissa Lopez for her contributions to the Spring Optimist*