



Making The Connection

SPRING 2011

DOWN SYNDROME CONNECTION OF THE BAY AREA



Top left: Craft time! Above: My first DSCBA holiday party.
Top right: Enjoying cookies.



Above:
Face painting fun!



At left:
DSCBA Bell Choir performs.

Bell Choir led by DSCBA Music Therapist Nicole Patton.

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NEWS FLASH

DSCBA honored as 2010 Danville Area Chamber of Commerce Charitable Organization of the Year!



"This award is very special to all of us at the Connection," said Nancy LaBelle, DSCBA Executive Director. "Nominations came from the heart of several DSCBA members telling their personal stories. Being chosen among other deserving organizations

in our community is an incredible honor. We are proud of what we do each and every day, making a difference in the lives of so many individuals and families. We thank the Danville Area Chamber of Commerce and the *Danville Express* for recognizing the DSCBA in such a special way."

JINGLE ALL THE WAY

The rain did not keep away the many families and friends that came together for the DSCBA's amazing annual holiday party. Thanks to Jenn Bornstein and Melissa Jimenez who organized a wonderful day and to all of the volunteers that helped the event come to life.

There was a lot to do at this holiday fare for all to enjoy: face painting, arts and crafts, goodies to eat and an amazing bell choir led by Nicole Patton. We can't forget KLeigh Alfrey and her beautiful tunes on the clarinet which is always a treat!

The highlight of the day is when Santa surprises kids of all ages. Many hugs and wish lists were exchanged.

Thank you to everyone who came to celebrate with us. It is always a wonderful way to end the year.

— Nancy LaBelle



A CALL TO ACTION

2011 will be a year of growth at the Connection, both in membership and in new programs and services. Because of this I am asking for your help.

This year we will have one major fundraiser, the Bay Area Buddy Walk, on October 2, 2011 at Little Hills Ranch in San Ramon. For those of you among the 420+ that attended last year you know what a fabulous place it is; and for those that missed it, you will want to be a part of it in 2011.

We need **everyone** to get serious about fundraising for the Buddy Walk. You can do this simply by sending out an email with a link to your webpage to friends, family and coworkers and asking them to forward it on to their email lists. I'm sure you are familiar with many major charity walks around the world that raise their funds this way. Last year one family alone, the Dodge's, raised over \$12k in honor of Ainsley by sending out a mass email to everyone on their list. 30 other families raised another \$50k by doing the same. Just imagine if **everyone** sent out a webpage this year!

Our goal is to raise \$100,000 this year. 7% of the funds raised from the Buddy Walk are given to the NDSS as a donation to continue the amazing work they do for Down syndrome nationwide. We are proud to support their efforts.

We plan to hold webpage workshops you can drop-in on at the Connection to show you how to create a page to email, or we will create one for you if you need help. All you need is a brief personal story and a photo of your loved one or family. You can even throw on a YouTube video or post your page to your Facebook profile. More to come on this in the spring.

Our 2nd Annual Charity Auction Gala at the Diablo Country Club will be held on May 5, 2012 and will become a spring event going forward. This means we are asking you just two times a year to help us raise funds by either attending the Buddy Walk or purchasing a ticket to the Gala.

I look forward to seeing everyone at the Buddy Walk and don't forget to hold May 5th for the Annual Gala in 2012. It was a magical night last year!

Thank you for your support!

Nancy LaBelle
Executive Director

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2011 Board Meetings

101 J Town & Country Drive
Danville, 6:45 pm – 8:15 pm
The Board meets on 3rd Tuesdays of the month. Mar 15, Apr 19, May 17, Jun 21, Jul 19, Aug 16, Sept 20, Oct 18, Nov 15, NO Dec meeting. To attend or bring a guest please call Board President, Maura Perkins at 888-654-8884.

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2011 Parents' Support Group*

Mar 22, Apr 26, May 24, Jun 28, :
July 26, Aug 23, Sept 27, Oct 25
and Dec 5. Parents of children with
Down syndrome are welcome and
encouraged to join our monthly
support group to exchange
information, share common
experiences and be encouraged
by other parents with similar issues
and concerns. The group meets at
the Connection office in Danville,
101 J Town & Country Drive.
Please call Martha Hogan if you
have questions or to tell her you
are coming: 925 362-8660.

*Childcare is not available. Babies
under 10 months are welcome.
This group is for parents.

Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area

Phone 925.362.8660
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101 J Town & Country Dr.
Danville, CA 94526



TRAINING WITH SARA ROSENFELD JOHNSON - A PERSONAL JOURNEY

— Heather Peterson, MS SLP-CCC

As most of you already know, I am a huge believer in Sara Rosenfeld Johnson's (SRJ) "Oral Placement Therapy" technique (formerly known as Oral Motor Therapy). It has been a six-year love of mine, in which I have seen very drastic results in many babies, children and adults with and without Down syndrome. One of my earliest successes is a story of a 14 year old boy named Danny who has Dandy Walker syndrome. Originally, Danny presented with severe torticollis (head was tilted to one side), open mouth posture, excessive drooling (he continuously wore a bandana around his neck to catch the saliva), tongue protrusion, and the inability to make a single speech sound. This teenager, like many of our children at the DSC, was taught sign language and knew hundreds of signs. However, his initiation of language was very limited and therefore his signs were never used. I remember thinking to myself "How has Danny communicated for the past 14 years?" In that first session, what surprised me the most was how not a single therapist had thought of teaching Danny to speak.

It was very recently that I had been to my first class of SRJ's called "A Three-Part Treatment Plan for Oral Motor Therapy." This 12 hour course introduced Sara's tools and hierarchies to eager therapists. Sara's program targets oral muscle strengthening, symmetry, grading, and dissociation for the purposes of safe/nutritional feeding and speech clarity. It was because of this course that I was able to give Danny a voice.

Danny's mother and I worked hard together so that daily Danny worked with his oral placement tools. It is because of this that Danny began to look like a new teenager. His mouth posture was extremely different. Instead of his jaw hanging open, it was closed! He was able to get rid of that horrible bandana as well as the humiliation of drooling as a teenager. As the next couple of years passed, Danny was able to produce 75% of the sounds in the English language. One of his favorite ways to show off his new speaking skills was to read aloud to us during therapy. Because of Danny's new strength, grading, mobility and dissociation, he was able to finally use all of the language he had been taught by speech pathologists for the past 14 years! For Danny, Oral Placement Therapy was the key to unlocking his communication, motivation, and his self confidence.

Six years have passed since I took that first SRJ course. Since then I have taken many more of her courses and begun practicing her methods on 99% of the students that I see with Down syndrome today. The culmination of all of my learning came to a peak last week when I was invited to study personally with Sara Rosenfeld Johnson

at a traveling clinic she held in Sacramento. At this clinic she evaluated 16 children with DS. This Level Three Certification was the highlight of my career thus far, second to working at the DSCBA.

I can't begin to explain to you the nerves and excitement I felt the day before I began my four-day training with Sara. I had studied her methods for years and still was learning every day. A big hug to all of my clients who have let me live by the saying "I am doing everything I know how to do for your child, today." If you ask any of them, they will tell you that I am constantly tweaking



Heather Peterson, at left, with Sara Rosenfeld Johnson, pioneer of Oral Placement Therapy, at Peterson's recent course, "A Three-Part Treatment Plan for Oral Motor Therapy."

their children's programs as I learn more and more. Thank you for your loyalty and commitment to my learning.

If you take six years of students and add approximately 35 current students per/week that I treat, you can only imagine how many questions I had for Sara that first day I saw her! My days with Sara and one other training therapist (my wonderful new friend) were like an army boot camp. Each day was started by observation of 8 hours of evaluations that Sara performed. At 5pm, I got to ask as many questions as I could imagine! Most of them Sara rephrased and forced me to answer on my own. Sara told us the first day she taught through "stress." Typically this would have scared me into withdrawal, but I was determined, and I had waited six years for this experience. I was going to squeeze every last ounce of wisdom I could out of my time with Sara! The evenings were filled with report writing. Reports were generally 7 pages, single spaced, and took 5-7 hours to write. Around midnight, I let my laptop get some sleep while my mind continued to race with all the exciting new information I was learning. Day one and two were great, but it was finally on day three that Sara began explaining her methods to us, which made the learning easier and more fun. By day

four, the claustrophobia of being in the same small room had gotten to me. The grand finale on day four ended with a lot Q & A and a cup of coffee to keep us awake for the drive home. I not only left Sacramento with more knowledge, but with the ability to troubleshoot on my own.

Top 10 things I learned from SRJ last week:

- All babies with DS can learn to drink from a straw (transition from bottle) (12 mo+)
- The use of vibration paired with a chewy tube or bite block can help align a child's bite symmetry.
- All 16 children with DS, who were evaluated, had SEVERE jaw weakness.
- All 16 children with DS who were evaluated, used their Risoris muscles to chew instead of their Masseter muscles. These children chew in the front/side of their mouths while also suckling their food with their tongues. Chewing is supposed to be done on the back molars.
- Most children/people with jaw weakness show asymmetry in their faces. A baby will have a fuller cheek on the stronger side of their mouth. A toddler/child/adult will have a more refined/higher cheek or smile on the stronger side (generally).
- Most children with DS maintain a phasic bite reflex until 15-16 months. It is important to teach your baby to chew before this time.
- Use an antibacterial wash for your tools, not bleach. NEVER wash your tools in the dishwasher!
- Classes need to be held for teaching babies/toddlers how to chew (at the DSC).
- Classes need to be held for transitioning babies from bottle to straw (12mo +) (at the DSC).

This program was made to benefit our population. If you have DS and low tone, you need this program.

Working with Sara was a life-changing event. She changes the lives of every family she meets. She selflessly evaluated 16 children within 4 days as well as wrote each of their reports that same day, because she just couldn't say "no" to a family in need. If you ever have a chance to be evaluated by her, it will change your life.

I am also available for evaluations in the east bay, south bay and SF. You will be able to find my name on Sara's website at www.talktools.net in the next month or so, under "Find a therapist" with a Level 3 Certification. *Thank you Sara!*

Heather Peterson, MS SLP-CCC, Level 3 SRJ Certified.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

New Support Group!

Calling all parents of children entering Transition ages.

We will cover topics such as supportive living, inter/independent living and more. For more information, contact Marianne Iversen at Marianne@dsconnection.org.

Step Live 2011

This spring, Step In, a young adult enrichment class here at the Connection, will host Step Live 2011.

There will be poetry, dancing, skits and some surprises. There is always something special. We invite all friends of the Connection to come and see our show.

In preparation for Step Live 2011, the Step Dancers have been working on their slams with gusto. Blair is working on his beat box, and JR Dantes will show some moves that will stop your heart. Katrina Taylor and her best friend K. Leigh Alfry will be dancing and grooving with Stacey Elliot. And Taylor Baum, Terresa Blakeslee and Garrison and Nicole are all working on their moves

Step In will be performing for friends and family May 27th at the Connection. Everyone is welcome to attend!

100% FROM THE HERITAGE JV CHEER TEAM

– Emily Simino

Most girls dream of being a cheerleader, inspiring others by promoting the spirit of the school, wearing the illustrious uniform, which clearly identifies one as belonging to something bigger than they are. This is the ultimate desire that so many teenage girls strive for; “acceptance.” Many times this character building experience takes on a different role. Ironically, cheerleaders are thought of by some as self-absorbed caddy girls who measure their own value on looks and popularity, constantly judging others harshly. In reality, they are all searching for their own acceptance.

High school is difficult, students are judgmental, teachers are overwhelmed, classes are overcrowded, and campuses are dangerous. One does not need to climb Mt. Diablo or run a 10K to recognize the satisfaction of achieving a goal. My friend Emily has always wanted to be a cheerleader. She expected nothing less. Her parents were concerned and clearly understood the difficulty to be accepted in such a competitive arena. Acceptance is something that so many of us strive for and struggle with throughout high school and beyond. Recently, Emily has taught me a great deal about this subject.

Emily McDaniel is a freshman at Heritage High School and is a member of the JV Cheer team. Emily and I have been friends since fifth grade but never had a class together. We hang out with the same group of friends but were not best friends. We love to swim, go shopping, bowling and dance together. We love cupcakes, pajamas and talking on the phone until all hours of the night. Finding out that we were on the same cheer team was a dream come true for me. Life works in mysterious ways, and we should never forget that there is a plan for each of us. But little did I know at the time, Emily’s presence on this team would be life changing for everyone who took the time to get to know her.

You see, Emily has the ability to soften the hardest of hearts, to recognize the very best in everyone, measuring one’s value on the size of one’s smile and the sound of their laugh. Despite Emily’s own daily challenges with “Up syndrome,” she exemplifies what a true cheerleader should strive to be. Emily radiates an awareness of the world that is so inspiring, I find myself looking at life through her eyes. She has taught me and hopefully our fellow teammates to suspend judgment and love unconditionally.

Behind every successful person, there is a team of support. Emily has many “real life” cheerleaders that support her in her everyday life, including her mom, dad and older sister. Looking through Emily’s eyes, being a cheerleader is just part of going to high school, just like her sister Katie. To date, the district has never had a student with special needs be part of a cheer team. Michele is a seasoned mom who was all too familiar of what she was up against. She put her own fears aside and approached the cheer advisor about including Emily on the squad and for that reason, her daughter Emily and hopefully other students will have the opportunity to shine.

Our Coach, Shannon, does not make a distinction, expecting the same attempt as the rest of the team. When we are not listening and the coach makes us run, we all run, including Emily. When a girl talks back to our coach, Emily is quick to call them out and we all run. And when we practice our cheers, Emily shakes her booty with the rest of the team. Her spirit outshines any synchronized routine any day. Understanding the commitment, Emily never misses practice and looks forward to all the games. Emily takes great pride in her uniform, as she looks forward to “game days.” This is a chance to show everyone that she is a Heritage High School student



Emily McDaniel is in 9th grade and goes to Heritage High School in Brentwood and is a member of the JV Cheer squad.

and she is proud to show everyone around her who she is.

When Emily is dressed in her uniform, she is no longer considered special, slow, or whatever label people give her. She is a cheerleader! That really is the only label I can think of that really describes my friend. It is her time to shine and show our whole school that she is also a student at this school. Emily is a cheerleader and she is accepted and respected as a significant member of our team. The Heritage JV Cheer team.

The uniform has become a symbol of acceptance. Each time I put my uniform on, I can’t help but think of Emily. She reminds us all of the importance of teamwork, respect and pride for our school. To always give 100% and take nothing for granted. Emily’s presence on this team has influenced all who opened their hearts to her message. So it’s not hard to get fired up on game days, knowing that this is Emily’s time where she can show the whole school that she belongs, that she is accepted, that we are all in this together. It is a great life lesson and that is why I need to share Emily’s lesson with everyone.

Emily Simino is Emily McDaniel’s friend and fellow Heritage cheerleader.



COOPER'S TROOPERS HELP SPREAD THE WORD TO END THE R-WORD

– Jennifer Cooper

On playgrounds, in classrooms, homes and parks all over America, kids *and* their parents use the words “retarded” and “retard” with no regard or knowledge as to how it affects people with disabilities and those who love them. We in this community have all heard it and then felt our hearts and moods sink. We think, “Do I have the courage to say something?” “What should I say?” “Will I offend them (even though they just offended me)?” I’ve tried several versions of these responses and some direct retorts. For me, it often depends on my relationship with the offending party. I find it easier to tell people that I’m not as close to and easiest to tell children, perhaps because I feel that they’re more educable than adults.

My 11 year-old son, Oliver, has been struggling with this issue at school for several months now. He has come home in tears, hidden at school to cry and confided to me that he is so hurt by the words, but simply can’t get the nerve to respond. It’s hard to find courage when your heart is so deeply pained, and both Oliver and I have a big piece of our hearts devoted to Eli, my 14 year old son with Down syndrome.

Oliver, his teachers, and I came up with a plan – a plan that called on Cooper’s Troopers! Cooper’s Troopers (self-named) are an amazing bunch of kids that has evolved as a Circle of Friends group since Eli was in 5th grade. He’s now in 8th – still fully included. Currently, the group consists of all boys and for some reason they’re all much taller than I am – admittedly not hard

to do. They meet weekly after lunch with Eli and either play a game, watch a movie clip from Eli’s latest movie obsession, talk, or work on a project.

Last year during the month of October, Down syndrome awareness month, the boys created a PowerPoint presentation entitled *Understanding Eli Cooper – His Life with Down Syndrome*. They presented this to each of Eli’s classes after we invited Eli and some of the Troopers to visit Oliver’s school to deliver their presentation, lead a Q & A session (along with me to help answer some of the questions), and then lead a discussion based on the “Spread the Word to End the Word” campaign.

They presented to a group of more than 60 4–8th grade students, teachers and staff.

The Troopers discussed what Down syndrome is, how it happens and explained some of the supports and modifications that allow Eli to be successful at school. Eli joined in, told funny stories and demonstrated his flexibility and powerful wrestling skills by taking one of the Troopers to the mat. I then explained to the kids that when they, or anyone, says the word retard(ed), it pains me and others who love Eli. I told them that now that they know this information, to say it anymore is actually bullying – it’s picking on a group of people who are vulnerable, and likely unable to defend themselves.

The Troopers sported their “Spread the Word to End the Word” t-shirts and handed out

Cooper’s Troopers: Patrick, Cameron and Henry explain the chromosome.



Eli and Oliver beaming over all the pledges to spread the word to end the word.

“Spread the Word” wristbands and pledge cards to all of the students. Every person in attendance that day took the pledge. Already, Oliver’s heart – and mine – are lightened. Lightened by not hearing as much of a word that puts down Eli. Lightened by seeing the true love, support and dedication that those adolescent Troopers have! And lightened by knowing that we helped spread the word to end the word.

Update: There is no doubt we educated the group of kids at Oliver’s school. He reports that he’s only heard the word once in the almost two weeks since we held the assembly and in that case the kid caught himself and then apologized. Prior to the assembly, it was heard several times a day. For more information on *Spread the Word to End the Word* go to www.r-word.org.

BECOME A PARENT MENTOR!

The DSCBA’s Parent Mentoring Program is launching in May! The program has been created in order to offer support to new parents of children with Down syndrome, both those with newborns and those who are new members of the DSCBA community. Parent Mentor volunteers will be trained with the knowledge and skills to provide emotional support and practical information to new parents of children who have Down syndrome.

We invite you to become a Parent Mentor! All parents are eligible for the program and must first agree to the following:

1. Attend a two-day training workshop led by local and regional experts on topics such as *Medical Issues Associated with Down Syndrome* and *Making the Most of the Early Intervention Program*. The workshops will be held on Saturday, May 14 and Sunday, May 15 at the DSCBA offices.
2. Be available to make a hospital or house visit to new parents based on a DSCBA match and support that family as a mentor for one year.
3. Participate in quarterly meetings with other Parent Mentors to share experiences, receive updated trainings and revised materials.

This is a wonderful opportunity for you to stay informed on new and updated practices, information and therapies, as well as to connect with a family who needs your support as they learn about the challenges and rewards of parenting a child with Down syndrome.

Come be a part of this exciting new group! Contact Martha at marhogan@sbcglobal.net for more information or to confirm your interest in becoming a DSCBA Parent Mentor.



WELCOMING EMILY INTO MY WORLD

— Laura Kahapea



At 14 weeks gestation, I received that painful phone call that would change my life forever. My daughter Emily was going to be born with Down syndrome. I had questions and worries and fears. We met with our genetics counselor and a geneticist the following week. I took in every bit of information, every suggestion. I knew nothing about Down syndrome. I was worried about what Emily would “look like” rather than any of the potential medical issues she might be born with. I remember asking my genetics counselor, “Will my baby look like a Martian

baby?” Yet, I felt in my heart God saying to me, “Everything will be okay. I will take care of you.”

After an ultrasound at 18 weeks gestation, our perinatologist told us that Emily had “water on the brain” and might possibly develop hydrocephalus. He told us to come back in a month and, if her situation worsened, then Emily would be born severely mentally retarded. We saw a cardiologist the following week. He did an echocardiogram on Emily’s heart and also did an ultrasound of her brain. Our cardiologist shared what he saw on ultrasound and later that morning with my OB/GYN. My OB/GYN called me at work to tell me that the baby might not make it through the pregnancy or she might die shortly after birth or she might not be able to eat or move and have to be tube fed. That was the hardest moment of my pregnancy. Yet, I felt God saying, “I will give you the strength to deal with whatever I give you.”

God began to place important people in my life. I met a woman in a Saturday class who would spend time encouraging me, sharing scriptures, and praying for me. My friend’s minister father continued to pray with his congregation for us. The Down Syndrome Connection was there to listen to me and to send me valuable information. The CARE Parent Network was also there to listen as I reached out for hope. I received a mentor mom through CARE, as I was desperate to talk to someone who was actually living this life that I was so clueless about. As the days continued, I felt God say, “Emily is going to be a special blessing. I have many things to teach you and your family through her.”

I recall asking God, “Am I ever going to enjoy this pregnancy?” I asked God to help me begin to enjoy my pregnancy. I never asked God to take away the Down syndrome, but I did ask him to take away the possibility of hydrocephalus. I prayed for Emily’s heart condition. I prayed that God would allow her to be the best that she could possibly be. Halfway through my pregnancy, I told my husband, “It doesn’t matter what the doctors tell me, I can’t do anything to this baby.” Our decision was made and our journey continued.

Emily was born on August 14, 2004 with Down syndrome. I struggled with seeing her for the first time and bonding with her took longer than with my other children. I struggled with how my family and friends would react when they met her for the first time. I struggled with people staring at her. I struggled with feeding her. I struggled with pumping breast milk for over a year. I struggled with her weight gain for the first few years. I struggled with all those things that the occupational therapist, physical therapist, and speech therapists suggested that I work on with Emily and taking care of the needs of the rest of my family. I struggled and still struggle at times being around typically-developing children.

FAMILY THRIVES WITH JOAQUIN

IF THERE’S ONE THING that Joaquin has taught me, it would be to NEVER leave a permanent marker out on a white desk, EVER! “The bond that links your true family is not one of blood, but of respect and joy in each other’s life.” Joaquin is one of a kind and can always bring a smile to my face. Especially when he strips down, runs around the house and dances to silly songs! We love you always baby boy! Through thick and thin!

— Zoe Cristobal (15), Joaquin Acuna’s cousin

TENNIE-WEENIE, THAT’S WHAT I CALL JOAQUIN.

Joaquin has a disability that is called Down syndrome. Down syndrome slows down his way of learning, but Joaquin pulls it off to become a very smart cookie. In fact he was just the student of the week! Having that disability does NOT hold him back from being a happy boy.

I don’t see Joaquin very often, but when I do, I see a boy who just wants to stand out. I see him as boy like everyone else, but just a little different. He is one of the nicest, most cute little balls of joy that I’ve ever met. His family also plays a big part. They help him become the boy he is: perfect.

A couple weeks ago Joaquin came over.

Joaquin loves being active and hyper. He also loves jumping on our trampoline, but somehow him and all his brothers and sisters always pull off a way to get hurt. That day when we were all jumping on my trampoline, Joaquin got hurt, of course. Every time they get hurt, I pick them up and take them in the house. But when Joaquin was in my arms he stopped crying, looked me in the eyes, and kissed me. Then he pointed right back to the trampoline and that’s where we went. Instead of jumping I sat down, then Joaquin sat in my lap and he gave me a big hug.



That’s one of my favorite memories with Joaquin. The memories are countless but the one that really stands out to me is that one. For the first time I realized that Joaquin is so much more loving and caring than ever I thought.

— Ava Cristobal, (11)
Joaquin’s cousin

Emily is a healthy and happy six-year-old now. She is stubborn. She is bossy. She likes to do the opposite of whatever you tell her to do. She likes to run away. She can make small tasks difficult. Some days, I just do not feel like pulling her out from under a table one more time or chasing her one more time or peeling her off the sidewalk one more time when she refuses to walk. Just when I think I have had enough of her, I have to chuckle inside realizing that I am blessed that she has so much spirit!

My faith and daily reliance upon God has carried me in parenting Emily. Has God proven that he is faithful? Yes, he has and continues to take care of our needs. Has God provided me with the strength and patience to deal with Emily? Yes, most days. Has Emily been a special blessing? Yes. God has taught our family about acceptance. God has taught us more about the inner person. God has strengthened our faith. God has blessed us with meeting many beautiful special children and their families. God has blessed us with meeting so many committed people who work so faithfully on behalf of our special children. By welcoming Emily into this world, God has OPENED OUR EYES and OUR HEARTS and for that we will be forever grateful to HIM.



Great Moms Helping out!

Thanks to Julie Sodestrom and Kathy Sweinton for helping us with a recent mailing.

If you would like to help with future mailings please give us a call and we will put you on a volunteer list. Thanks!



A VERSATILE VOLUNTEER ACCOMPLISHES MUCH



Above, Marissa assists a student with a communication board and below, helps Ms. Williams with classroom decorations.



MDI SUCCESS FOR MEN PROVIDES STRENGTH IN NUMBERS



Thank you to the generous men of the international organization MDI Success for Men. They brought their hearts and muscles to the Connection and assembled our office furniture together in the New Year.

- Jeff Parrish
- Chris Morello
- Matt Lyons
- Anthony Godinez
- Greg Cochrane
- Barry McGrew
- Will Fishkin



– Julie Williams

My name is Julie Williams and I am a teacher at a special day class. I want to share with you about Marissa Erickson. Marissa works very hard in my classroom as a volunteer aide. Once a week, on Thursday afternoons, Marissa comes in ready to tackle anything! This is her second year of helping us out in my special day class. She has grown in her ability to assist my students with all kinds of problems and projects.

What is most impressive about Marissa is her great attitude. When given an assignment her response is always a happy “okay” or “I’ll do it!” She walks students to their buses. She helps students with their art projects. She designs and installs elaborate and creative bulletin boards. She is the best at cleaning up around the classroom (a skill I especially appreciate!). Marissa has even learned the fine art of cajoling students to do work they do not want to do.

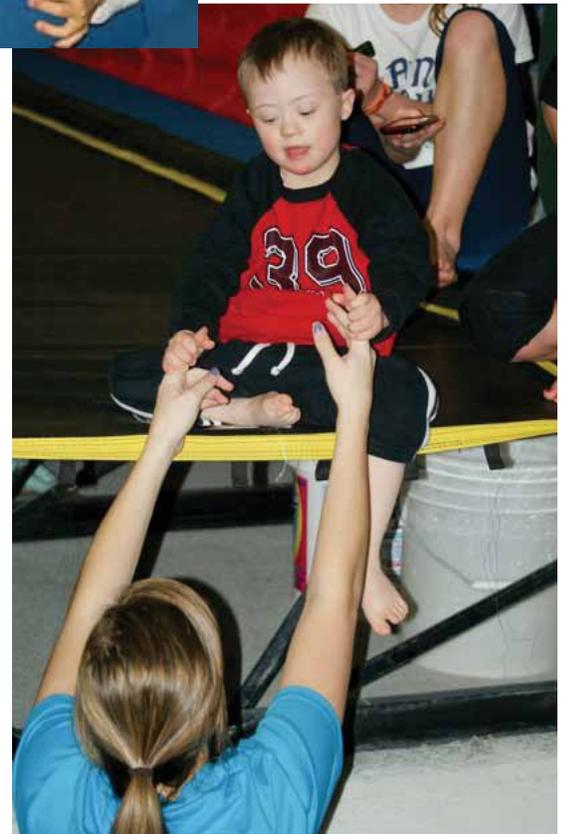
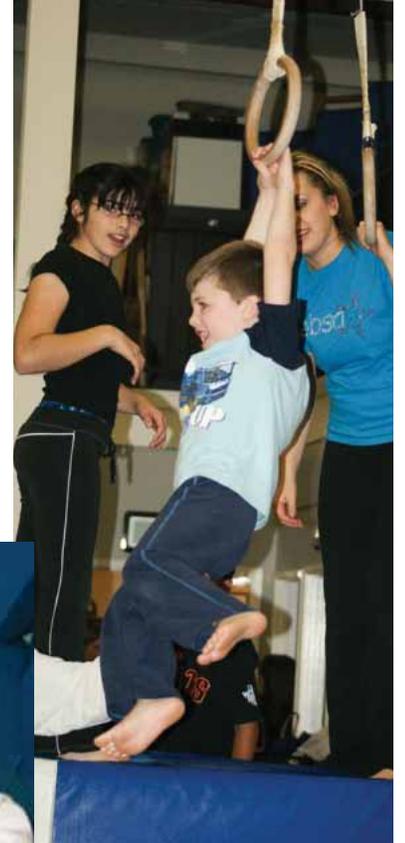
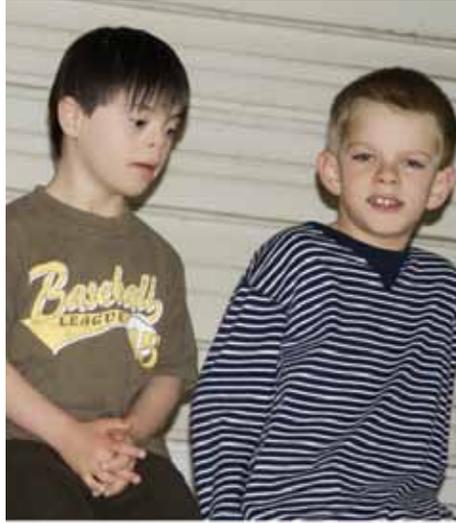
Marissa brings a wave of positive energy with her when she comes into our room. She has been genuinely helpful to me and to my students.

Julie Williams is the teacher for the classroom held at Alameda High school.

BUDDING SWINGERS AT BUDDY PLAY

On January 29th, 30 kids enjoyed “Gymnastics Party” at East Bay Sports Academy! This venue is great because the kids get to meet many new friends while burning off a lot of steam! Gross motor skills are practiced with the help of EBSA staff, and the kids have a wide variety of gymnastics equipment available to them. Every skill level can be accommodated, which leads to many proud and happy kids! During this Buddy Play, parents are also able to take some time on the sidelines and visit with each other and make new friends themselves! Thanks to our NAILBA grant, many more Gymnastics Parties will be offered to our Buddy Play families. Hopefully I will see you and your children at one soon!

– Bernadette Fatehi





**Bella
Giovanna Lucia**

Bella is 8 months old! She was born on May 13, 2010.



Bella and her sister, Tessa

Captured on Camera!!

Marianne Iversen holding the new DSCBA mascot "Ellie." Ellie is a new addition to Heather Peterson's family and we all love when she comes to visit and play.



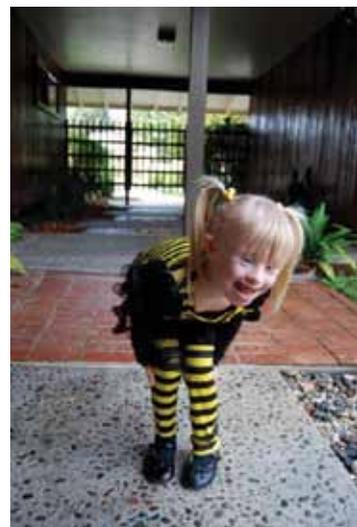
EXPERIENCING THE MAGIC

– Amy Parham & Nina Anderson Duncan

When Ava turned 5, we were thrilled that she could participate in Angels on Stage, a non-profit theatre troupe for children with differing abilities. Angels on Stage is based in San Jose and provides musical theatre experiences for children with special needs by presenting public performances in the community. All angels are served in a positive manner, and volunteers, 1:1 buddy coaches, and the family of each actor and actress sees first-hand the benefits of this confidence-building and tremendously accepting program.

Since it's beginning in 2008, and due to the success of two past performances (The Wizard of Oz and The Jungle Book) as well as the huge need in the community and simple word-of-mouth, Angels on Stage has doubled in size. Thanks to founder DeAnna Pursai's vision of illuminating abilities, Angels on Stage has grown to nearly 100 actors for the 2011 production of Aladdin. The actors are aged 5 to 22 and have varying abilities and a wide range of talent. Some of the angels are unable to speak or have mobility challenges, so accommodations are made to ensure that everyone can fully participate in the production.

It's not an overstatement to say that Angels on Stage brings Ava alive in an all-new way. She has made new friends, learned more appropriate social skills and frankly, loves to go "sing and dance" every Saturday



morning with her fellow angels. When the curtain went up for the first time during last year's performance of The Jungle Book, Ava gasped and then danced her heart out - all to applause for HER and her friends and peers alongside her on stage.

We can't wait to watch Ava and her friends perform in Aladdin, a magical adventure traveling through Agrabah with Aladdin, Jasmine, the Genie and the whole gang in the fun Disney musical theatre production which is sure to delight all.

For more information on Angels on Stage, visit www.angelsonstage.org.

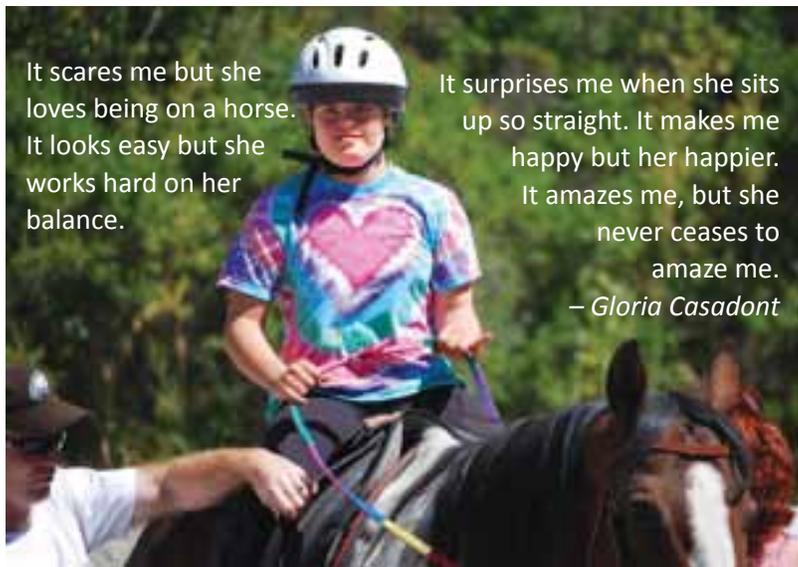
Photo: Ava, for the 2010 Angels on Stage performance of *The Jungle Book*.

TATIANA RIDING BANDIT

It scares me but she loves being on a horse. It looks easy but she works hard on her balance.

It surprises me when she sits up so straight. It makes me happy but her happier. It amazes me, but she never ceases to amaze me.

– Gloria Casadont



Step In Friends Bowling

From left ... J.R, Stacey, Kleigh, and Katrina
– Tamara Reed



Stepin' Up: Moonsand!!!!

– Laura Briggs

Steppin' Up had a great time playing with Moonsand. It is a fabulous tactile and fine-motor activity that also has the added benefit of being so much fun! It's like a day at the beach but without the water. Moonsand has the same quality as damp sand so it works equally well when used free-form or with molds. And it doesn't dry out so it can be used again and again.

We used molds to make terrific castles, used our hands to form our own creations, and even experimented mixing some of the colors. Some of us had the most fun building up our creations just so we could smash them down and build again! It was so much fun to share our projects with each other and even to pal-up and work together.

When checkout time came and we answered the question "What was your favorite part of class?" It was unanimous: MOONSAND!



Benicia Step Group: A Night On the Town

– Tamara Reed

Soma Plasztan, the General Manager of the Olive Garden in Vallejo, hosted a luncheon for the Benicia Step group in honor of National Disability Awareness Month. Damien Carlon, Rachel Warren, Michael Rury, Andrew Vasquez, and Martin Gonsalves were treated to a multi course lunch. The food was awesome, and the service excellent! Our server, Tiffany, was attentive and made sure we had everything we wanted. The group felt very special when Mr. Plasztan brought his entire staff over and introduced each one.

Thank you to Soma Plasztan, Tiffany Jones, and the Olive Garden for an awesome day we'll long remember!

Benicia Step Group with Olive Garden staff (left) and Olive Garden General Manager Soma Plasztan (far right).



Next Step: Stepping with the Music

– Marianne Iversen

Next Step has been having a great session with lots of fun bringing in the new year. We have a great time sharing all of the exciting happenings in our lives, and we are constantly learning more and more about one another. While we discuss our weekend happenings, so many subtle things are going on: heightened listening skills, improved eye contact, increased self-confidence, friendship building skills and so much more. The favorite activity of all without a doubt though is dancing. Sometimes it is dancing with "Just Dance," the Wii program where we following along with the dancers on screen. Other times it is group dancing where we dance in a circle and each participant leads the way in teaching us new dance moves. This creative movement allows such a wonderful means of self-expression and in turn leads to in increased self-esteem. It's also just plain FUN!



Benicia Step Group: Holiday Open House



On December 22nd the Benicia Step group hosted a Holiday Open House.

Andrew Vasquez, Rachel Warren, Damien Carlon, Mike Rury, and Martin Gonsalves spent several weeks planning the event. They planned the menu, and decided who would be in charge of each item. Everyone added to the guest list, which was a mix of family, friends and people who had been supportive of the group over the past year. On the day of the party they arrived early to put together appetizer trays, arrange the tables, and make any last minute changes. Their paintings were displayed so guests could see each one—these made for a great conversation starter. It was fun to meet so many new people and share the evening with good friends! The party was a huge success, and the group is already making plans to host a barbecue early in June!

– Tamara Reed





Bravo, Caleb!

– Esther Chow

Caleb Chow, a junior at Alameda High School, was recently selected to perform a dance in the Annual School-Wide Talent Show! Pictured here is Caleb doing his dance with typical peer dancers. Other than enjoying contemporary dance class at his high school, Caleb continues to be part of the concert band. During the winter concert in December 2010, Caleb played bass drum, triangle and suspended cymbal. Bravo, Caleb!!

Photo: Caleb Chow



Emma Tippett Sewing

– Erika Tippett

Emma is in the 7th grade and loving her elective class Living Skills where she mainstreams with the general education students. She has learned to cook, use a sewing machine and do the laundry. She has brought home delicious food and a pillowcase she sewed by herself.

Step Out Oakland: What I Love About Myself

Nicole - I have a good personality and I'm friendly. I'm great at remembering and celebrating birthdays.



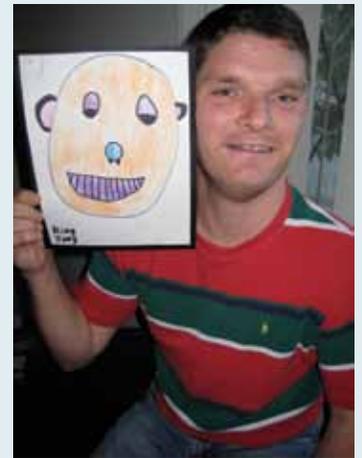
Erica - I'm great at cooking and baking for others, a good decider and party planner.



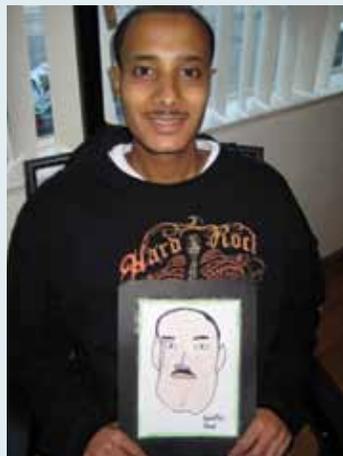
Tamika - I'm a great swimmer and bowler and I'm friendly.



Joey - I'm thoughtful. I'm a very caring person and finally, I'm a great cook and party planner.



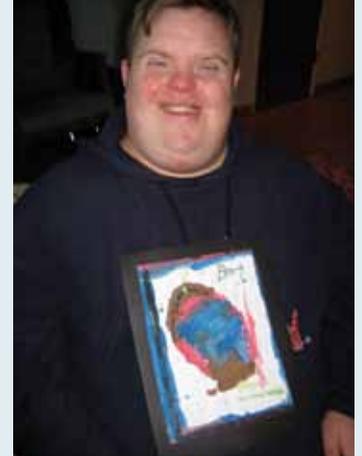
Athena - I like to extend myself to my whole family like helping my Dad cooking. I'm really generous, creative, and thoughtful. And, of course, I'm really good at cooking.



Teodros - I'm a loving and caring person. I'm smart and I'm peaceful.



Annika - I'm a generous friend, a great roommate and I think I'm awesome.



Bobby - I'm good at cleaning and doing chores at the house and helping Grandma cook and I'm a good friend. I'm funny.



You are cordially invited to the Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area's

**ANNUAL DINNER AND BOARD MEETING
SATURDAY, APRIL 2, 2011 • 5:30 P.M. - 9:00 P.M.**

St. Joan of Arc Parish
2601 San Ramon Valley Blvd, San Ramon, CA

**Meet the 2011 Board of Directors & Enjoy a Delicious Dinner
Prepared by Gagnon's Catering of Danville
Celebrate our Volunteers and Staff**

**Check Presentation - Million Dollar Round Table Foundation,
Steve Wilcox, Investment Advisor with Summit Financial Group LLC, San Ramon**

We are Honored to Welcome the following Guest Speakers:

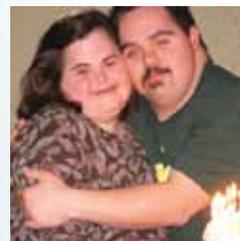


PRESTON JONES

As Director of the City of Walnut Creek's Specialized Recreation Department, Mr. Jones has created unique weekly programs for the special needs population such as: Adaptive Martial Arts & Adaptive Cardio Fitness. As a bestselling author of two books on children's safety, a 5th degree martial arts black belt and a motivational speaker Mr. Jones will present insight and thought provoking knowledge on the "Magical Power of Acceptance".

JAMIE & CHRISTOPHER HAUGE

Jamie & Chris are self-advocates who have recently married. Chris currently works at Nob Hill in San Ramon while Jamie is selling and exhibiting her art work at Creative Growth in Oakland. They will share with us their amazing life long journey together.



MELANIE A. MANNING, MD



Dr. Manning is the Clinical Assistant Professor of Pathology and Pediatrics, Assistant Director, Clinical Cytogenetics Laboratory and Director, Down Syndrome Clinic, Lucile Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford. She will discuss the services available at the Down Syndrome Clinic at Stanford specifically for families who have children with Down syndrome ages 0-18. She will give an overview of specialists available to your family and the benefits of bringing your children to be assessed by their program.

Bring the kids! Child Care will be provided by Circle K Volunteers

Evening COST: \$15.00 per family collected at event

YOU MUST RSVP • Phone: (925)362-8660 • Or email: down_syndrome@sbcglobal.net



For Your Time, Talent and Treasures We are Grateful...

AT&T Employee Giving Campaign

David Kimble, Raymond Rhodes
Joanne Leach, Krista Veri
Ana Marsh

Chevron Humankind Matching Gift Program

Robert Alfrey, Marty Barillas,
Paul Casadont, Mark Janke,
Claire A. Levay-Young, Scott Truger

Kaiser Community Giving Program

Mary Kimble, Rick LaBelle

PG&E Corporation Campaign for the Community

Mr. T Albrigo, Mr. Edwards,
Ms. Galvin, Mr. Kent, Mr. Rios,
Ms. Serrano, Ms. Wilson

Local Business Support

Bay Building Maintenance
California Art & Frame Works
Carathimas & Associates
Design Elements, Judith Clark
Feldman Law Group, Aaron Feldman
Franciscan Communications, Liana King
Hope Center – Pleasant Hill
James Allyn Printing
Jay-Marie Insurance
John O'Connell High School
Lisa Upton Photography
PACE Solano
SunDesign Studios-Sunshine & Kimo
Maura Perkins/MKNI
Temescal Arts Center

Pledges

Pamela Brady
James & Kathy Zolnier

General Donations

Audrey Wang
Peter Straus & Lili Byers
Geetanjali Magodia
Ronald & Julie Casadont
Trapped in a Rumor
Harold Burns Jr & Rose Jackson
Theodore Albrigo
Baking For Good
Stacy Tredennick
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Jim & Janet Richman
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St. Timothy's Episcopal Church
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Richard Neifert
Laura O'Brien – Alain Pinel
Steve Wilcox with Summit Financial

Foundations

Wayne & Gladys Valley Foundation
The J M Long Foundation
Kiwanis Club of San Ramon Valley
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Youth Ministry
CVS Caremark
Kiwanis Club of Pleasanton
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The Thomas J Long Foundation

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Marin Community Foundation, Barb Benton
NAILBA Charitable Foundation
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The Carl Gellert & Celia Berta Gellert Foundation
Maurice Amado Foundation
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GFWC Dublin/San Ramon Women's Club
East Bay Community Foundation
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MDRT Foundation

In Honor of

Mason Zolnier:
Margaret VandenBerghe
Mark & Catherine VandenBerghe
Ronald VandenBerghe
V.L. & K.J. VandenBerghe
James & Kathy Zolnier
Mary & John Brosnan
Eric & Mary Laub
Jo Kelley's Birthday: Paula Thompson
Kenny & Joanna Smith
Marc & Dianne Felker
Nancy and Rick LaBelle

Blair Hogan:
Bob Jones & Mary Ann Hughes
Hailey Bornstein:
Melissa & Ernie Bornstein
Joey Indresano: A Thomas & Rita Indresano
Martha Hogan: William Johnson Grant & Suanne Inman
Tatiana Casadont:
Ronald & Julie Casadont
Nancy LaBelle's Birthday:
Terese Ghilarducci
Kevin, Martha, Blair Hogan and Jim & Janet Richman & Spencer Brush
Katie Buckman: Erika Walters
Samuel Austin McNiff: Republic of Cake

In Memory Of

Dora Ghilarducci: Nicole Gilbert
Jeset Sidore, Stewart Samuels
Robbie Gagnon:
Katharine Schnaidt & Family

Special Members to Thank

The Dodge Family
Laurie McGrath for Educational Advocacy Group
Rick LaBelle for Father's Support Group
Iara Peng, T21
Laura Hawley for Yahoo Group
Lisa Upton for DSCBA Blog
Julie Sodestrom
– Membership Database Admin.

Our Amazing Volunteers

Ozzy Abdi	Lauren Bruno
Amanda Chan	Jasmine Collins
Ashley Hagin	Macee Lemoine
Paula Ridley	K. Leigh Alfrey
Aleece Cancilla	Jensine Chen
Katie Kallick	Joyce Kim
Susan Nolan	Andreas Dereschuk
Kiani Canales	Jeanne Riley
Kelsey Alm	

Holiday Party Thank You's

Mike Demasi
Krista Veri
Kathy Sorensen
Matthew Guerra
Suzette Esguerra
Janet Preston
Marianne Hung
Steven Spedowski
The Bornstein Family
The Singletary Family
Circle K Volunteers, Laura Redmond
The Moroney Family
Girl Scout troop 30451
The Cannon Family
The Mistry Family
Stan Heimowitz at Celebrity Gems Entertainment
Whole Foods – Lyndsey Silva
The Jimenez Family
Nicole Patton
Rick and Nancy Labelle

DSCBA Programs Can Only Continue with Your Help!

43% of our Funding comes from donations and fundraising events.

CASH DONATIONS Send a check to: Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area, 101-J Town and Country Drive, Danville, CA 94526. Phone: 925-362-8660

DONATE WITH PAYJUNCTION The DSCBA is a member of PayJunction a free service which allows you to purchase or donate using your credit card on a secure web site. PayJunction deposits your donation directly to our account. Visa and MasterCard are accepted at www.dsconnection.org/donate

DONATE AN AUCTION ITEM This is a great opportunity to showcase your business products and services or to give a great tax deductible item to be auctioned at one of our events. Some past items that are popular are wine packages, vacation homes, sports memorabilia, fine art, jewelry, spa packages etc.

SPONSOR AN EVENT Sponsor an event at a level that works for you. Publicize, advertise and show off your company logo while giving to a worthwhile cause. Have a booth and speak at our event.

HOLD A FUNDRAISER TO BENEFIT THE CONNECTION We are looking for community service organizations or businesses to hold a benefit in our name. One way to do this is to have a Charity Golf Tournament, Auction/Dinner or Crab Feed to name a few. Have ideas? Please call the Connection.

VOLUNTEER Do your community service with us! Volunteer your time and work at an event, spend time in one of our classes, come help out with newsletter mailings and other project. Call us for more information.

TAX ID# 91-1904304

How Can You Help Us?

CORPORATE GIVING AND MATCHING GIFT PROGRAMS Sign up for your corporate giving program at work which automatically can be taken out of your paycheck. Some companies even have matching programs which doubles your giving ability.

ATTEND A FUNDRAISING EVENT We would love to see you at our fundraisers such as the Charity Gala and the Bay Area Buddy Walk. Your participation and support makes a huge difference and our events are a lot of fun!

SIGN UP FOR THE ESCRIP PROGRAM eScrip is an easy way to give back to the Connection! Just register your grocery, debit or credit cards at merchants such as Safeway, Macys, Nordstrom or EBAY for example. A portion of your purchase will be donated to the Connection. Visit www.escrip.com to get started. ID#4843658.

