Making The Connection

WINTER 2011

DOWN SYNDROME CONNECTION OF THE BAY AREA

"Attending the Gala reminded me of the incredible support and love my daughter Ava and my entire family receive from the Connection. The evening was filled with love, acceptance and support for those with Down syndrome and their families."
– Sean Parham

CHARITY AUCTION GALA: SUPPORT AT ITS FINEST

– Amy Parham

It was a magical night at the Diablo Country Club where the Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area (DSCBA) held its first Charity Auction Gala on September 18th. Throughout the evening, the spirit of acceptance, support and advocacy for individuals with Down syndrome was palpable. The 200 attendees made very clear their dedication to Connection programs and services through their overwhelming generosity as we raised more than $55,000.

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2010 BAY AREA BUDDY WALK

– Tammy Garcia,
Board Secretary and Bay Area Buddy Walk Committee Co-chair

The 5th annual Bay Area Buddy Walk presented by the DSCBA was a smashing success! Nearly 500 people registered for the Sunday, October 3rd event and walked in support of their friends, family and loved ones to continue raising awareness for individuals with Down syndrome. Thanks to the dedication of so many, we raised more than $55,000 at this year's event, much of that through on-line donations.

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Thank you to the Dodge family for raising more than $12K by sending out a fundraising webpage in honor of Ainsley.

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A Note from Nancy

Hard to believe this is my third fall season at the Connection. I continue to witness the unlimited potential and amazing growth each day as babies, children, teens and adults come and go from our programs and services. We often cry in celebration around the Connection as babies say bye-bye for the first time, children read books they have created and teens and adults share, dance and laugh with the lasting friends they have made.

I'm thankful for our dedicated and compassionate staff who all work very hard each week to keep the bills paid, answer calls from all over the country and create an environment that is rich with creativity and safe for expression. Thanks also to our volunteers for being wonderful role models in our classes. This has been a year of growth and emotions as we continue to open our hearts and take the hands of many new parents and their beautiful babies assuring them they are not alone in their journey.

2010 has been a good financial year with increased support from members, local business and community and foundations who believe in our mission. Words cannot express the gratitude we have for supporters such as The J.M. Long Foundation, The Thomas J. Long Foundation, the Quest Foundation, The Wayne and Gladys Valley Foundation and the Noll Foundation who together have given grants in the amount of $140,000 in 2010.

The need for Educational Advocacy is stronger than ever as we continue to stand beside families faced with adversity while asking for the education their children deserve in our local school district. A shout out to Donlon Elementary School in Pleasanton who is doing a good job providing an environment set up for success including and accepting children with Down syndrome.

This year we served more families than ever before. Our Step classes are at their all-time fullest enrollment and we now have three additional support groups serving grandparents, fathers, and parents with educational based needs. This is in line with our vision of serving the entire family unit whenever possible.

Our fundraising efforts this year were successful. Our first Charity Auction Gala was a magical night filled with over 200 generous people from our membership, the community and local business such as Chevron who invited our Chevron families to dine with them at their VIP tables. This was the largest money making fundraising event the Connection has had and self advocates Marissa, Robert, Emma, Jackson and Blair were on hand to show us how to party and remind everyone that adults with Down syndrome are great people and contributors to society.

The Bay Area Buddy Walk brought approximately 500 people to Little Hills Ranch in San Ramon where we walked together in support of acceptance for all people with Down syndrome. It was a great feeling looking back at the sea of people in blue shirts walking in unity to promote awareness for today and years to come.

Last I want to share that this organization does not run by staff alone. Our volunteer board of directors has been dedicated this year to fundraising and networking which only puts more focus on the wonderful things we do at the Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area. If you are interested in becoming a board member applications are being accepted and my door is always open should you have any suggestions regarding new programs and or services.

Enjoy this newsletter and have a wonderful holiday season with friends and family. I wish you all peace in the New Year.

Nancy LaBelle
Executive Director

Down Syndrome Connection
OF THE BAY AREA

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2011 Board Meetings

101 J Town & Country Drive
Danville, 6:45pm – 8:15pm

The Board meets on 3rd Tuesdays of the month. NO Jan meeting, Feb 15, 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*

Jan 25, Feb 22, Mar 22, Apr 26, May 24, Jun 28.

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

DREAM TEAM

– Kristy Acuna

Transition. The Webster definition of transition is: a passing from one condition, form, stage, activity, place, etc. to another. Joaquin's definition wasn't quite so clear and simple. To him, transition meant headaches, stomachaches, asthma attacks, trouble sleeping, anxiety, and abandonment.

I received so much information about the "transition" into elementary school when Joaquin was only a year old. You would have thought I would dive right into all that information. I didn't. I knew that school was such a long way away, I would worry about it later. Well…later came and later went. At the time Joaquin was supposed to start kindergarten, we were living in Hayward. We went through all the IEP meetings, all the different testing and placement exercises which, to say the least, were incredibly difficult for Joaquin due to his anxiety with strangers. Joaquin was placed in a severely handicapped special day class.

The day I left my son at elementary school for the first time was the day I drove home in tears. My only comfort was trusting the staff would care for my child the way he deserved. As it turned out, Joaquin had a horrible experience and was in a full-blown asthma attack when I arrived at the school. After speaking with the teachers and aides, I immediately removed Joaquin from that school. I was in awe of the lack of care, compassion, and professionalism the staff showed towards my son. Joaquin simply was not "emotionally" ready for kindergarten is what we were told.

A year passed and we moved to Salida in Stanislaus County. The school year was quickly approaching, as was my fear of placing Joaquin in another school. I had lost all hope that anyone would be able to accommodate Joaquin's needs. I had lost faith in the school systems. I had lost all trust in the teachers and their aides to care for Joaquin. I felt like I had failed him. How could Joaquin ever trust any teachers again after being treated so horribly before? How would Joaquin view me as his mom, leaving him in the care of complete strangers…again??

Then came along what I call "The Dream Team." Joaquin was placed at Chrysler Elementary School in Modesto with an incredible teacher, Mr.Nick Puccinelli, and his aides Mr. Alex Serrato, Ms.Diane Nixon, and Ms.Kathy Medsger. These people have proven that Joaquin can and will thrive in a classroom setting; that Joaquin can overcome his anxiety and fear with the proper care and structure he needs and deserves. They show not only professionalism but compassion for these wonderful blessings we call our children.

There are 12 students in Joaquin's class, most classified as severely handicapped. After sitting in the class a little over a week, hours at a time, I can see how Mr. Puccinelli and his aides work as a team to make the classroom environment comfortable and safe. With such a wide range of emotional and physical disabilities among their students, they incorporate each child into whatever activity they may be doing; students are treated as individuals with individual needs.

The concept is so simple: respect and nurture these children and they will succeed. It was an absolute pleasure watching each of them work together for these amazing children. They all have restored my hope that Joaquin can enjoy his peers, that he can enjoy learning, and, most importantly, that he can learn to trust again.

My purpose in writing this article was to not only give Joaquin's "Dream Team" the recognition they deserve, but to tell other parents whose children may be struggling in the school system that nothing is set in stone! We, as their parents, have every right to question and observe. If you're not comfortable, follow your instincts. We will forever be their biggest advocates. Thank you again "Dream Team." Most importantly, Joaquin thanks you!!!

NEW RESOURCE FOR PARENTS EXPECTING A CHILD WITH DOWN SYNDROME

– Reviewed by Amy Parham

Viktor and Mommy

Diagnosis to Delivery: A Pregnant Mother's Guide to Down Syndrome is now available free-of-charge at www.downsyndromepregnancy.org. Written by Nancy McCrea Iannone and Stephanie Meredith, *Diagnosis to Delivery* outlines to parents what to expect upon the birth of their child with Down syndrome in supportive and plain language. Coping with the diagnosis, how to share the news with family and friends, dealing with comments, preparing your other children, and many other important topics are all covered in the book. I find particularly comforting the words the authors share in the Welcome at the beginning of the book:

"Our common experience has been that the initial moment of learning the diagnosis is stark and crystal clear, but the days and weeks afterwards are hazy, painful, confusing and overwhelming. But, after we emerge from that cloud and then live with our babies, we can't imagine our lives any other way. We have developed an appreciation for their unique gifts, talents, and beauty. And now we fiercely love our children, feel a deeper appreciation for humanity and empathy toward others, and realize that life with Down syndrome is hard work but is also remarkably ordinary."

If you are expecting a child with Down syndrome, or know someone who is, this is a compassionate and realistic resource that will be of great value to you or your loved one.

Oral Motor Techniques and Tools...Explained

– Heather Peterson, MS SLP-CCC

There are many pieces to an oral motor program. Below are "some" of the most frequently used techniques with babies, children, and adults with Down syndrome. (For the purposes of this article the term "children" will be used.) All of these are techniques of Sara Rosenfeld Johnson and her company "Talk Tools." Most of these techniques are used in combination, depending on your child's needs. Below are descriptions of each technique and how they affect feeding and speech development.

Therapeutic Facial/Oral Massage

Facial and oral cavity massage is very important to our children. Due to the decreased sensitivity found in individuals with low tone, more input is necessary to create normalized sensation in and around a child's mouth. There are simple pre-feeding massage techniques used on a child's cheeks, lips, face and tongue that parents can do to help their child achieve normalized oral sensation for feeding and speech. This is important during feeding so that a child can localize where a bolus/mass of food is inside his mouth at all times. Speech benefit: When a child has awareness and feeling in their articulators (parts of their mouth), then they are thought to have better "control" of how they move these parts (motor planning excluded).

Tongue Lateralization

The movement of the tongue side to side is important for good feeding and speech. Tools such as a toothbrush, Nuk brush, z-vibe and ark probe can be used to establish tongue lateralization. Speech benefits: when your tongue is able to freely lateralize, then it will be able to elevate for the purposes of making many of our speech sounds such as: /t, d, n, l, s, z, k, g, ch, sh, dj, r/.

http://www.talktools.net/s.nl/it.A/id.863/.f
– ARK'S Z-Vibe Travel Kit

Chewy Tubes

Red, yellow, green and purple chewy tubes/ark grabbers are used to increase jaw strength and grading for the purposes of chewing all types of food properly (complete tongue movement is necessary as well). Speech benefits: the chewy tubes provide adequate strength and some grading for the purposes of jaw stability necessary for supporting connected speech. Chewy tubes can also be used as a sensory tool when a child needs TMJ stimulation (teeth grinding etc). http://www.talktools.net/s.nl/it.A/id.1374/.f
– Bite Tube Set 4 Pack

Therapeutic Horn Blowing

The therapeutic horn hierarchy is used for tongue retraction and strengthening, lip approximation/protrusion and strengthening, and increasing abdominal grading. Speech benefits: the horn hierarchy is used for children with "whisper-like" voice quality as well as low tone. Also, each horn correlates to sounds, which can then be targeted at the same time of use.

http://www.talktools.net/s.nl/it.A/id.895/.f
– Original Horn Kit

Therapeutic Spoon Feeding

The rapid repetitive spoon (side) feed method is a technique used with babies and young children in order to create lip closure around the spoon, as well as to keep the tongue retracted during the feed (this helps the food to be swallowed). Speech benefit: this method is thought to aid the developing child in learning to approximate his lips together for the purposes of making an /m/ sound.

Therapeutic Straw Drinking

Straw drinking is an appropriate way of drinking (as well as cup drinking). Therapeutic straw drinking is used to help with tongue retraction and strengthening, and lip puckering and strengthening. This program is recommended to children with tongue protrusion, low tone/weakness and decreased lip pucker. Speech benefit: this program aids in speech clarity (for sounds created by the tongue), and lip movement for sounds such as: /o, u, w, sh, er/. An easy way to teach straw drinking is with a "Honey Bear." It enables parents to squeeze liquid into the child's mouth through a straw.

http://www.talktools.net/s.nl/it.A/id.771/.f?sc=23&category=1334 – Honey Bear

http://www.talktools.net/s.nl/it.A/id.911/.f
– Straw Kit

Cup Drinking

Many of our children need assistance when learning to drink from a cup. A Cut-Out-Cup is often used to teach a child to learn how to drink from a cup. "These flexible cups stimulate the corners of the mouth to facilitate lip closure and allow a child to drink without head or neck extension" (Talk Tools TM). Speech benefits: lip closure around the cup can be translated to lip closure for the /m/ sound. Tongue retraction while drinking can be translated to tongue retraction during speech. http://www.talktools.net/s.nl/it.A/id.174/.f
– Pink Cut-Out-Cup

Most people are amazed at how many techniques are necessary to enable a child with Down syndrome to feed and speak to the best of their ability. Although the above may seem like a lot, an oral motor program involving these techniques and tools can prove to be very effective, and can be done very quickly each day, when made a part of your daily routine. There can be other parts to an oral motor program, however the above listed techniques and tools are most frequently used and asked about by parents. Many of these tools can also be bought on www.amazon.com. As always, please consult with a speech pathologist for an evaluation of oral motor and feeding functioning before purchasing and/or using any of these tools.

Heather Peterson, MS SLP-CCC, Speech Language Pathologist: happykidstherapy@hotmail.com 202.425.6874.

Talk Tools Oral Motor Techniques: One Family's Testimonial

Our not quite 2-year-old son Andre worked with a feeding therapist from our HMO prior to working with Heather Peterson. He made very little progress. As a mother, I saw some of the techniques given to me were further exacerbating his already forming bad habits, and I knew I had to try a different therapy program. Eleven weeks ago we began working with Heather, using Talk Tools oral motor techniques. When we began therapy, Andre was eating only pureed foods and drinking only from a bottle. When given water (from a bottle or a cup), he choked. Working with Heather and at home, we have incorporated several of the Talk Tools oral motor techniques described in this article into his therapy, and he has made amazing progress! After 11 weeks, his tongue is retracted for long periods of time. He is chewing soft foods and is moving his tongue from side to side while eating them. He is drinking from a straw and is starting to blow bubbles. What a difference the right oral motor program makes!

– Pete and Julissa Keenan

COLE KELLEY – MY EVERYTHING

– Samantha Kelley

My name is Samantha Kelley and I have a younger brother with Down syndrome. Three years ago, when I was a junior in high school, I was asked to come and give a talk to a group of over 200 seventh and eighth grade kids at my church. I was asked to talk about a "desert time," or a hard time in my life. A time when I felt lost and didn't have all the answers. I also had to talk about how I got through it and how it changed me. I didn't realize that when I was asked to do this, it would be me who would learn and be truly rewarded. I had never talked about this experience with anyone and I had never let anyone in on how I felt. Though I was put in a vulnerable position, opening up about this experience to an audience of strangers allowed me to think back and reflect on what I went through and how much this little boy truly changed my life. Below is a written version of the talk I gave.

When I was in eighth grade, I found out my mom was going to have a baby. At first it was a little hard to get used to. It had always been just me and my brother, Shane, who is two years younger than me. I was comfortable with that and I wasn't sure I wanted our situation to change. Soon enough my family and friends found out and since they were excited about it, I began to accept the idea of something new and I became excited.

I really wanted the baby to be a boy. Shane and I both wanted a brother. My parents hadn't planned on finding out what the baby was going to be but when they did, they told us we were going to have a brother. At that moment it was like my wish had come true and I immediately started thinking about who I wanted him to be. Mainly, I wanted him to be an athlete. I pictured him being this all-star player. I wanted to be able to go to football games and basketball games. I had all these thoughts and ideas about the kind of person he was going to be. I wanted him to be this kid that everyone loved and admired.

On April 23, 2005, Cole was born. I had fallen asleep in the waiting room, so when we went in to see him I was a little out of it. I remember standing in a corner of the room when the doctor came in to examine my brother, to make sure everything was ok. He walked over to him and when he was done, he walked over to my parents and started to talk. I wasn't really paying attention but I remember hearing him say "signs of Downs."

My first reaction was "What does that mean? What does he mean by Downs?" Honestly, I knew what he meant but I wanted so badly for it to be wrong. When I realized he was talking about Down syndrome, I lost it. There was a bathroom in the room so I just went for it. I closed the door behind me, locked it, sank to the floor and cried. At that moment, everything I hoped he would do or become was gone. But it wasn't the realization that he may not be the person I imagined him being that upset me. It was the fact that he could have a disability; that he might have something that was going to hold him back from doing what he wanted. I didn't want that for him. I never wanted him to feel different or that he didn't belong. No one wants that for someone they love.

I remember letting my dad in the bathroom and I'll never forget what he said to me. He said, "You may not get what you wanted, an all star athlete, but he's going to be great and you're not going to love him any less." He was right.

When we found out the test results showed he had Down syndrome, I reacted better. I think it was because I was more mentally prepared. Knowing the facts, I expected it. In my heart I knew he did.

During the time that we waited for the results to come back, I prayed so hard that he didn't have it. I didn't want that for him. But then I remembered something that I had heard before. "Some of God's greatest gifts are unanswered prayers." And it is so true.

Through Cole, my parents met a lot of amazing people going through the same things they were, I became more educated on Down syndrome, and we became a part of something so much bigger.

I have never been the kind of person who asks for help or who leans on someone else to get me through a time when I don't have all the answers. I have always dealt with it myself. Someone telling me it was going to be ok didn't work for me. I had to experience it. Cole helps me experience it every day. He lets me know it's ok because he shows me every day that he is ok. He is strong and so smart, and funny. He makes me laugh.

He is not a burden to us and his disability is definitely not a burden to him. Do I wish he didn't have Downs? Yea, I guess, but do I love him any less because of it? Not a chance. I t's not possible. I love that little boy more than anything.

Nothing is what it seems at first glance and we tend to judge too quickly. But if you just give life a chance to prove you wrong, it will. We may not understand the things that God does, but he does them with a purpose. We need to trust that. No hard time stays that way forever. You have to look past it and push through, believing that everything happens for a reason. Whatever it is that is causing you doubt, you'll come to find you might need it and can't live without it. It could turn out to be more than you ever expected. It can turn out to be Your Everything.

NEW DSCBA EDUCATION SUPPORT GROUP STARTED

– Laurie McGrath

Thanks to all of you who joined us for our fist meeting in October! It was clear from this meeting that educating our children can be a consuming topic, full of questions and challenges, and coming together is a great opportunity for us to learn from each other and share our individual knowledge and experiences. A primary goal of the DSCBA Education Support Group is to create a shared bank of knowledge and information so that each family doesn't have to reinvent the wheel separately in navigating the formidable areas of school and education.

You are invited to join us at a regular, monthly meeting at the Connection's Danville location. Meetings are held the first Wednesday of each month. *Our next three meetings are:*

November 3rd, 7:15pm • December 1st, 7:15pm • January 5th, 7:15pm

If you can't make it to a meeting, join us in our newly formed online community, where you can post questions, reply with answers and share knowledge and experiences with other DSCBA members! This is a private Yahoo group, administered by DSCBA member Laurie Hawley, where only approved members have access to read and post. Visit the following link to join: http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/DSCBA. Click on the blue button in the top right, "Join this Group."

If you have any questions, or would like to be added to our meeting notice email list (different from the online Yahoo group), please contact our director of Parent Advocacy and Support, Martha Hogan, at: marhogan@sbcglobal.net.

Hope to see you at a meeting, or read your posts online!

NEW YAHOO! GROUP FOR CONNECTION MEMBERS

A Yahoo group has been set up so that members of the DSCBA can share information with each other or have a discussion about a specific topic in an email based forum.

This is set-up as a private group where only members have access to "read" and "post" questions, comments or to offer advice. Member Laurie Hawley has volunteered to be the group administrator; she will be approving new members to the group and moderating the posts for inappropriate material. Thank you, Laurie!

JOINING IS EASY . . .

Visit http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/DSCBA/

Once there you will see a blue button on top right that says "Join This Group!" Click on that and you are on your way!

Remember we also have a blog on our website, www.dsconnection.org, where you can post something to anyone that goes to our website. All content on the DSCBA blog is moderated by Lisa Upton; you can reach Lisa at redbride05@aol.com. A blog is a great way to share information that you do not necessarily want answered. Please consider posting information on our blog that will help others. Remember: everyone that comes to our website is coming to find information and you might know something that will help others. For more information about the blog, contact Lisa Upton.

If you have questions about either the DSCBA Yahoo group or the DSCBA blog, please contact the Connection.

WORKING TOGETHER TO MEET YOUR NEEDS

Iara Peng, Founder, T21: Together in the 21st Century

Soon after my second son, Joshua, was born with Trisomy 21, I started a nonprofit project called T21: Together in the 21st Century, dedicated to empowering parents to provide their children with a strong foundation to achieve their fullest potential. After receiving invaluable advice, information, encouragement and support from some of our nation's leading experts in various fields, I wanted to create a way to help reduce the barriers we sometimes face to supporting our children's development, whether it be inaccurate or outdated information, lack of financial resources to access therapies or interventions, isolation due to inadequate community programs, or insufficient emotional supports.

The Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area, the first resource my husband and I connected with after Joshua's birth, is such a key organization for all our families. Together, the DSCBA and T21 have partnered on several initiatives to better serve our parents. We wanted our community to know what we are up to and to invite you to contact us if you are interested in joining any aspect of the work.

If you are interested in learning more or have ideas about our work, please contact Martha Hogan at marhogan@sbcglobal.net or Iara Peng at iarapeng@gmail.com.

Accomplishments to Date:

Surveyed 30 new parents in the Bay Area to understand what supports they utilized and what was missing and how they think we can better support new parents

Interviewed 12 new parents in the Bay Area to follow up on survey results and delve deeper into ideas and suggestions that emerged from the survey

Interviewed 12 other Down syndrome organizations around the country to learn more about their supports and resources to new parents

Analyzed 12 parent packets from other Down syndrome organizations around the country to identify common and unique materials and resources as well as to compare formats.

Prepared a report on the survey and interview findings along with recommendations for the DSCBA to provide four new resources:

Revising parent packets content and format

Creating a formal parent mentoring program to support new families in our community

Creating a parent committee to stay current on new information, research and therapies

Expanding the T21 grants program to the DSCBA community.

Up Next:

Parent packets will undergo three phases of improvements beginning in November 2010. Look out for new content as well as a new format!

T21 is providing DSCBA with a grant to update its lending library materials with new DVDs, books and resources for parents. We will also be buying books to donate to our local libraries so they are better equipped to serve our families and community.

T21 grants will be available to DSCBA families starting in January 2011. Look out for grant applications in the next newsletter or ask about this opportunity.

We are designing a parent mentoring training program that will pilot in December 2010 with 4-5 parents of children ages 2-5.

We are designing a parent committee structure to pilot in December 2010 with 4-5 parents of children of all ages who will help to keep our entire community up to date on cutting edge research, approaches and innovations.

Join Us for Music Therapy!

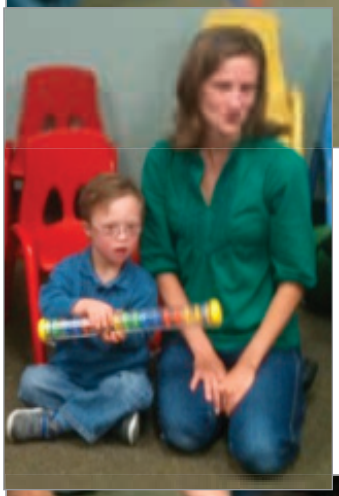
Music Therapy classes are now available at the Connection! We currently meet one Saturday a month from 10:00-11:30 am. Nicole Patton, a Board Certified Music Therapist, leads this group. Children ages birth to four are well suited for this class and siblings are welcome to attend. This is a great opportunity for both parents to participate in a class with their child. Instrument exploration and creative movement are integrated into the class, and fine and gross motor skills are addressed through music activities. Our next class will be on Saturday, December 4th. Hope to see you there! For more information, call Nicole at 925-984-3263.

2011 Dates for Music Therapy

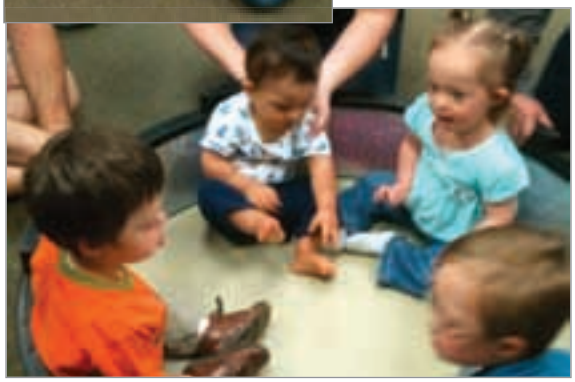
Danville Connection Office
101 J Town & Country Dr.
Danville

Every first Saturday, monthly
10 a.m.-11:30 a.m.

January 8
February 5
March 5
April 2
May 7
June 4



Music therapy is a great way for your child to interact with their peers! Kids get to ring bells, drum to the beat, wave flags and have a lot of fun



True Buddies

– Experienced by Grace, Written by Traci Cannon

I have a very special buddy. She is two times my age and my height. She is beautiful, smart, funny, caring, and far more mature than many kids her age. She is also my neighbor. My buddy has known me since I was born. I am the first person she has known with Down syndrome.

My buddy acknowledges that I have extra challenges, but she naturally expects that I can do as many things as other kids do, or that I at least will try. She holds me to the same standards as my brother and kids on the block; I, too, have to give her the correct password to get in the side gate to play on the structure. She teaches me hand clapping games, songs and dance moves. She taught me how to play follow the leader.

She doesn't always understand what I say but she continues to talk with me. She doesn't like it when I tug her hair too hard or get too rough in play, so she tells me to stop and be gentle. She loves my smile and my laugh, my hugs and I love you's. I think she also likes how excited I get to see her and how I call her name out the window. She reads me books, has helped me with my homework and gives me endless encouragement, support and praise.

My buddy is MaggieClaire McCoy, a 5th grader. My little brother has a crush on her. She is very cool. My mommy says that not only is she a positive influence in my life, but she is a positive influence for all her peers to show that friendship comes in all different shapes and forms. It's so neat to have a true buddy.

TOO SPECIAL FOR SPECIAL OLYMPICS?

– Alisa Rosillo

Not any more!! Max, who was diagnosed with AAI due to Down syndrome, has been tracheotomy and vent dependent since he was four months old. But his spinal cord injury has not stopped him from being a busy young man!! A challenger baseball player, swimmer, full-time student, Max now adds bowling as a Special Olympian to his list of activities. Thanks to Special Olympics for forming a Switch Bowling division for individuals who access their environment with switch technology!! GO MAX!!

LITTLE MOXIE NICHOLS

Five months old Moxie has been spotted sporting various Hats of the Day on mommyblog - http://www.doozeedad.blogspot.com. Here she is in a couple. (Hands can count as a hat, right?!)

– Meriah Nichols

DANCE CLASS FOR CHILDREN, TEENS AND ADULTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS: JOIN THE FUN!

– Mary Erickson

It starts with a huge smile and enthusiastic welcome from dance instructor Monica Dominguez. The dancers hurry into line and as the music begins to play, they start with a gentle body warm-up involving stretching, body isolations and floor work. New vocabulary words are learned: "pirouette" and "plie." Then they move into more choreographed dance moves that have been specially designed and modified for them by Ms. Monica. They include elements of Jazz and ballet technique with the added excitement of current hip hop moves. This is what my daughter Marissa and fellow dancers get to experience every Saturday for one hour. Everybody is a dancer, everybody will learn a choreographed routine, and they will perform as a group on stage, in full costume, in a spring show. But what the dancers do not know is that while they are enjoying themselves, they are also improving balance and body alignment, increasing flexibility, gaining muscle strength and core muscles, and developing musicality and a sense of rhythm. Marissa just knows that she is learning new dance moves, enjoying the music and having a blast with her friends.

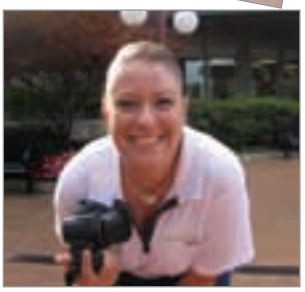
I have seen an increase in Marissa's confidence and self-esteem since she started taking the class. She has also improved her fitness level and overall coordination in the class. Marissa discovered that she loves to be on stage! Past choreographed dance routines have included "Dancing Queen," songs from High School Musical, and "Hoe Down Throw Down" from Miley Cyrus. The class is currently learning a ballet and jazz influenced routine to Miley Cyrus' "The Climb." It is a true joy to watch my daughter learn new dance moves and push herself further while gaining health and fitness.

If you know a dancer that would like to increase their performance skills and have a great time, I highly recommend this energetic and creative class taught by a skilled, warm, and loving instructor who brings 19 years of dance experience with her! New students are always welcome! Males and females, children through adult, are all welcome to join the fun. The class is located in a great performance space inside Holistic Fitness, 2881 Castro Valley Blvd. Suite #2, Castro Valley, CA, 94546. The class currently meets Saturdays from 12:30-1:25 and has a few openings. New classes are forming. There is a $10 yearly registration fee; monthly class tuition is $50. For more information or to enroll your child, please contact Ms. Monica at 510-861-3679 or monicasdance@aim.com.

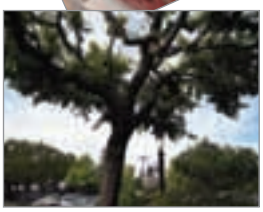
At left: Marissa with Ms. Monica after the Spring Dance Show.
Below: Hoe Down Dance Group.

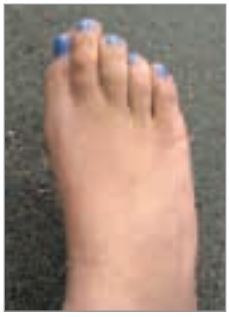
NEXT STEP STUDENTS TRY A HAND AT PHOTOGRAPHY

– Marianne Iversen



Thank you, Lisa Upton, for teaching Next Step students all about photography.





Next Step participants had a wonderful first session with lots of fun and an awesome visit from Lisa Upton. Lisa is a supportive member of the Connection and is a wonderful photographer. She showed the class how to take pictures and gave us all the rewarding experience of taking photos of each other and whatever else we thought would be interesting. What a great eye for some unique shots Next Step has. The following week, Lisa came back with a DVD of all the photos the participants took. It was so exciting to watch the DVD up on the big screen. Everyone took amazing photographs!

We will be using some of these photos in upcoming classes as we continue to cover the topic "It's all about ME." We learn more and more about ourselves and others in this class, and the friendships formed grow stronger each week. It's wonderful to see the care and concern that goes on in the class; when someone is missing they are always welcomed back with such warmth. Just ask them and they will tell you...friends rock!

If you'd like to reach Lisa Upton to schedule a photography sitting, please contact her at redbride05@aol.com or 925-575-1942, or www.lisauptonphotography.com.

NDSC National Convention

Self-advocates Emma Yungurt, Robert Humphrys and Marissa Erickson attended the 2010 National Down Syndrome Congress convention in Orlando, Florida, this summer. They participated in three days of conference activities and workshops that focused on self-advocate skills, dating and relationships, healthy eating, and exercise. They also enjoyed the annual NDSC dance and banquet. The young adults are looking forward to traveling to San Antonio, Texas, for the 2011 convention. If you have a teen 15 years and up, the self-advocate component of the NDSC convention is a great experience. Financial assistance to attend conferences may be available through your regional center. *– Mary Erickson*

Working at the Car Wash!

SF Step is working hard!

They planned and implemented a car wash to raise funds for a dinner out at a Mexican restaurant. Working together, they were able to wash, detail and dry seven cars in one hour! The group raised over $120 and are looking forward to a great night out in the Mission District celebrating with great food and friendship.

– Mary Erickson

At right: SF Step Group

The Step Out gang always knows how to have a great time!

San Francisco Step Students are Happy!

San Francisco Step students recently completed the sentence: "I am most happy when..."

Emma Yungert, 19 "...I think about my Grandma."

Chloe Pollock, 20 "...I am creating with fashion and art design."

Olivia Byers-Straus, 18
"...I have a boyfriend (and I need one right now)."

Marissa Erickson, 19 "...I'm onstage with the band."

Jackson Soderquist, 19 "...I see action movies and do sports."

Nina Kritzman, 21 "...I see see my sister when she's back from college for the holidays."

Corine Raper, 18 "...I am doing art, dancing or enjoying a cookie."

Nina Marquez, 24 "...I'm dancing with my friends in Step class."

Robert Humphries, 24
"...I am working with children, especially helping them learn to read and write."

Emma Darby, 24 "...When I'm with my family."

Step Out Students Also Shared Their Treasured Moments

"I am most happy when..."

Athena Sjoberg, 31
"...When my niece Marlena walks up to me and gives me a hug."

Bobby Jeffrey, 31
"...I'm celebrating Happy New Year with champagne with my family."

John Moses Brown, 37
"...When I'm with my family, my cousins and nephews, and when I'm with my Step Out friends."

Joseph Indrisano, 28
"...When I'm hanging out with my girlfriend, holding hands at the movies."

Annika Miller, 27
"...When I'm holding hands with my boyfriend and when I'm doing the carwash or dancing and singing with my Step Out friends."

Teodros Gad, 28
"...I'm happiest when I'm talking with my friends, watching my favorite movies (like Time Machine and Hocus Pocus), or looking up songs, movies and learning about other cultures online."

Erica Jacob, 29
"...When I'm Martha Stewart (my nickname from Step Out), baking Chewy Brownie Cookies or Butterscotch Bars with my Mom."

Buddy Play Fun to be Shown at the State Capital

Children with and without special needs help each other accomplish a goal while having fun and learning valuable lessons from each other

This time their handmade ornaments will be seen in Sacramento on the holiday tree

Would you like to be a Buddy? For more information about future Buddy Play please visit www.buddyplay.org or call the DSCBA at 925 362 8660

BUDDY PLAY PHOTOS: LISA UPTON PHOTOGRAPHY

Ava Parham (6) and her brother Reid (8) got to "fly" their Gram and Pop's Cessna airplane this summer on a trip back home to Illinois. The take-off and landing were both smooth.

– Amy Parham

2011 Spring Step Classes & Group Sessions

Baby Steps – Facilitator: Martha Hogan
Wednesdays, 10:30 a.m. – Noon: DSCBA, Danville
Jan. 12, Feb. 9, March 9, April 13, May 11, June 8

Small Steps – Teacher: Laura Briggs
Mondays, 3:30 – 5 p.m. : DSCBA, Danville
Session I – Jan 3, 10, (No class 17th) 24, 31, Feb. 7, 14
Session II – Feb. 28, March 7, 14, 21, 28
Session III – April 11,18, (No class 25th), May 2,9,16,23

Steppin' Up – Teacher: Laura Briggs
Wednesdays, 3:30 – 5 p.m.: DSCBA, Danville
Session I – Jan. 5, 12, 19, 26, Feb. 2, 9,16
Session II – March 2, 9, 16, 23, 30
Session III– April 13, 20,(No class 27th) May 4, 11, 18, 25

Next Step – Teacher: Marianne Iversen
Tuesdays, 4 –5:30 p.m.: DSCBA, Danville
Session I – Jan. 4, 11,18, 25, Feb 1, 8, 15
Session II –March 1, 8, 15, 22, 29
Session III – April 12, 19, 26, May 3, 10, 17, 24

Step In – Teacher: Virginia Bonham/Tamara Reed
Thursdays, 4 – 5:30 p.m.: DSCBA, Danville
Session I – Jan. 6, 13, 20, 27, Feb. 3, 10,17
Session II – March 3, 10, 17, 24, 31
Session III – April 14, 21, 28, May 5, 12, 19, 26

Step Out – Teacher: Jamie Lantz /Harold Burns
Wednesdays, 4 – 5:30 p.m.: Temescal Arts Center, Oakland
Session I – Jan. 5, 12, 19, 26, Feb. 2, 9, 16
Session II – March 2, 9, 16, 23, 30, April 6,13
Session III – April 27, May 4, 11, 18, 25

S.F. Step – Teacher: Jamie Lantz / Christina Lewis
Tuesdays, 4 – 5:30 p.m.: John O' Connell High School of Technology, S.F.
Session I – Jan. 4, 11, 18, 25, Feb. 1, 8, 15
Session II – March 1, 8, 15, 22, 29, April 5, 12
Session III – April 26, May 3, 10, 17, 24

Benicia Step – Teacher Tamara Reed
Wednesdays, 4 – 5:30 p.m.: Pace Benicia, Benicia
Session I – Jan. 5, 12, 19, 26, Feb. 2, 9, 16
Session II – March 2, 9, 16, 23, 30, April 6,13
Session III – April 27, May 4, 11, 18, 25

Parent Support Group – Facilitator: Martha Hogan
Last Tues. of the month, 7 – 9:00 p.m.: DSCBA, Danville
Jan. 25, Feb. 22, March 22, April 26, May 24, June 28

Grandparents Support Group – Facilitator: Martha Hogan
Last Wed. of the month, 10 – 11:30 a.m.: DSCBA, Danville
Jan. 26, Feb. 23, March 23, April 27, May 25, June 22

Father Support Group – Facilitator: Dr. Rick LaBelle
Monday, December 13, 6:30-8:30 p.m. (full schedule will be determined at this meeting): DSCBA, Danville

Educational Support Group – Facilitator: Laurie McGrath
First Wed. of the month 7:15 – 9 p.m.: DSCBA, Danville
Jan. 5, Feb. 2, March 2, April 6, May 4, June 1

CHARITY AUCTION GALA

Mason Zolnier

Charity Auction Gala continued from page 1

Emotions were particularly high when Mike Zolnier shared his personal story about his sweet son Mason. Mike spoke from the heart about his family's experience and how the DSCBA played a critical part in their lives when they found out Mason had Down syndrome. There were few dry eyes as Mike shared his story, making evident the profound impact the Connection has on the lives of so many families and individuals.

The DSCBA Charity Auction Gala could not have happened without the support of our Connection members and families, and from the generosity of so many businesses and individuals in our community.

We especially thank Chevron, who purchased tickets to the Gala for our Chevron families, and to Wells Fargo, Herzog/Farmers Insurance and MCC Realty Group.

Our family VIP sponsors for the evening included the VandenBerghe, Dereschuk and Humphrey families. Many more DSCBA member families also came out to celebrate and support the Connection.

A party would not be a party without Robert Humphreys, Marissa Erickson, Jackson Sodequist, Blair Hogan and Emma Yungert. These five young adults reminded everyone at the Gala that Down syndrome doesn't keep you down, as they enjoyed the party and danced the night away.

The silent auction portion of the evening included many goods and services from generous donors throughout our community. One of the highlights of the evening was the sale of an original Blair Hogan framed painting for $1800!

Our auctioneer Steve Hayworth kept the live auction dollars coming in, while KKIQ DJ and the Gala emcee, Faith Alpher, pumped up the party!

Chris Estes welcomed everyone with his music at cocktail hour and 2ENDEVOR rocked on until the party was over.

Event Planner Kshama Perera of eWeddings and Events, and our Gala Committee—Therese Ghilarducci, Martha Hogan, Karen Lochner, Jenn Bornstein, Jo Kelley and Nancy LaBelle—made the dream of a DSCBA Charity Auction Gala a reality. To you, we owe our gratitude.

Thanks also to Xfinity for a generous donation, and to all the volunteers that came out to help; to the Diablo Country Club staff for their attention to detail; and, a special thank you to the Gagnon Family of Gagnon's Catering and Rentals for their generosity.

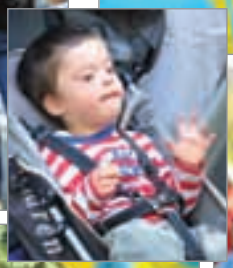
Finally, with great appreciation we thank all who donated auction items, cakes and services.

The DSCBA Charity Auction Gala was truly unforgettable. We look forward to seeing you all there again next year!!

2010 BAY AREA BUDDY WALK














2010 Bay Area Buddy Walk from page 1

The day was fantastic! Little Hills Ranch proved to be a spectacular location for this year's Bay Area Buddy Walk, and all in attendance enjoyed the great food, awesome music provided by Public Eye, our raffle, and all of the fun, extra activities provided by Little Hills Ranch.

Thank you to everyone who participated. Your commitment to raise funds for the DSCBA directly impacts the programs and services we are able to provide to our members. A special thank you to all of the volunteers who came out to help, particularly Valley Cheer and Dance: you helped make this event a big success.

A huge thanks goes to the Kiwanis of Walnut Creek for their generous monetary donation and for preparing the delicious lunch for all Bay Area Buddy Walk attendees. We are especially grateful to Larry Gagnon of Gagnon's Catering & Rental, Yes Press and Dan Nakahara, Little Hills Ranch and Amy Lateur, Public Eye, and Taylor Farms for your support of the 2010 Bay Area Buddy Walk. Peets Coffee (San Ramon), Apple Bagels (Pleasanton), Steven Spedowfski Photography, ZGallerie, Robinson & Robinson, and Brownstone also deserve a round of applause for their generosity. And to all the local businesses, services and individuals that donated to our successful raffle, we thank you.

The entire Bay Area Buddy Walk committee – Tammy Garcia, Joe Kelley, Tami Castelluccio, Suzy Suchon, Maureen Cummings, Angie Rettig, Jennifer Clark, Raquel O'Keefe and Laura Kahn – is excited about the excellent turnout and the great feedback received. We rely on the support of our membership and the people we were able to reach via our website and word of mouth. As a committee, we are committed to making sure the 2011 Bay Area Buddy Walk is equally successful.

Save the Date! Bay Area Buddy Walk

Sunday, October 2, 2011
at Little Hills Ranch in San Ramon

If you are interested in joining the Bay Area Buddy Walk committee or would like to help in any way, please contact Tammy Garcia at tammygarcia09@yahoo.com.

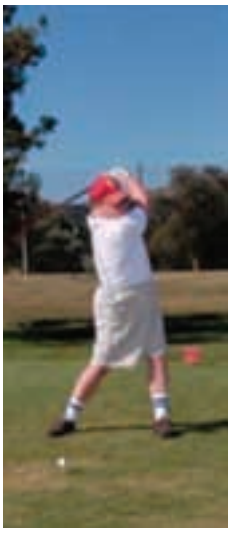
ST. JOAN OF ARC KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS GOLF TOURNAMENT

– Kathy Harkins

The 5th annual St. Joan of Arc Knights of Columbus Golf Tournament was held on Saturday, September 25. The Tournament included a morning of golf at San Ramon Golf Club, followed by a fabulous dinner, wine tasting, raffle and auction at the St. Joan of Arc Gymnasium. The Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area was honored to be the lead charity of the Tournament. It was a smashing success this year! Everyone had a great time and the spirit of giving by all those who played was wonderful. "It was a great day on the course--being part of such a wonderful fundraiser that benefits so many families is just an amazing feeling," says Martha Hogan.

The day ended with a gathering of friends enjoying wine tasting, hors'dourves and an awesome silent auction. There were many fun items to bid on, and people sure did. A slide show ran throughout the evening and our own Blair Hogan was captured with his huge golf swing! Dinner was fantastic and it gave everyone the opportunity to get to know each other at the tables. The main event was the live auction. Bid numbers went flying up and people gave generously.

How blessed is the Connection to have such wonderful friends thru the Knights. And big, big thank you goes out to Mario Diaz and his committee for putting on such a great event.



We are thankful to the Knights of Columbus who for five years has given back to the Connection by hosting a wonderful golf tournament, dinner and auction!

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 • Paul Casadont
Marty Barillas • Scott Truger
Claire A. Levay-Young

Kaiser Community Giving Program

Mary Kimble • Rick LaBelle

PG&E Corporation Campaign for the Community

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

Special Members to Thank

Laurie Hawley for Yahoo Group
Laurie McGrath for Educational Advocacy Group
Katherine Sefton for Potty Training Workshop
Iara Peng, T21

General Donations and Pledges

Katelyn & Victor VandenBerghe
Lisa & Heather Rigby
Karfin Cal Limited
James & Kathy Zolnier
Annika Miller
Ronald VandenBerghe & Family
The Foong Family
St. Joan of Arc Youth Ministry
Bob Cummings
Laura O'Brien, Alain Pinel Realtors, Danville
Phil & Mary Williamson
The Bornstein Family
The Swienton Family
Pamela Brady
The Shimasaki-Oda Family
Terese Ghilarducci
Karen Dahl
The Copeland Family
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Jeanne Riley
Amore Marketing & Promotions
Aleece Cancilla
The Oakland Athletics Community Fund – Car Wash
Chatowski Family

Grants We Are Grateful For

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Fremont Bank Foundation
GFWC Dublin/San Ramon Women's Club
Jam Handy Character Building Foundation
Kiwanis Club of Pleasanton
Kiwanis Club of San Ramon Valley
The Thomas J Long Foundation
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Marin Community Foundation
Maurice Amado Foundation
NAILBA Charitable Foundation
The Noll Foundation
The Peter Musto Charitable Trust
San Ramon Rotary
The Quest Foundation
The Wayne and Gladys Valley Foundation

Our Amazing Volunteers

Ozzy Abdi
Lauren Bruno
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Jasmine Collins
Ashley Hagin
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Paula Ridley
Kim Soltau-Gordon
K. Leigh Alfrey
Aleece Cancilla
Jensine Chen
Katie Kallick
Joyce Kim
Susan Nolan
Nick Somers
Andreas Dereschuk

Birthday Honors

Ralphine Dohrmann's 95th – Terese Ghilarducci
Will's Kohmann – Katie Kohmann
Mason Zolnier – James and Kathy Zolnier,
Mark Dennis and Richard Folger

In Memory Of

Lorraine Vallalao by Rosemary Cannon
Mr. Phillip Sokoloff by The Carathimas'

Donations in Honor of Mason Zolnier

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Larry & Patricia Goodman
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Recognizing Local Business

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Carathimas & Associates
Design Elements, Judith Clark
Feldman Law Group – Aaron Feldman
Franciscan Communications – Liana King
Jay-Marie Insurance
Jay Marie and Ron Garcia
John O'Connell High School
MKNI Insurance, Maura Perkins
PACE Solano
SunDesign Studios – Sunshine and Kimo
Temescal Arts Center
Lisa Upton Photography
Republic of Cake in honor of Samuel Austin McNiff

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.

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 Bowl-A-Rama, Charity Gala and the Bay Area Buddy Walk. Your participation and support makes a huge difference and our events are a lot of fun!

DONATE YOUR CAR Call us at the Connection at 925.362.8660 to find out how you can donate your car and in turn give back to the Connection. You may also call (877)700-GIVE or visit www.carsforcharities.com/DSC.htm

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.

TAX ID# 91-1904304

How Can You Help Us?

Gala Thank Yous

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Xfinity
The VandenBerghe Family
The Zolnier Family
The Humphreys Family
The Dereschuk Family
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Many Generous Volunteers
DSCBA Board of Directors
Gala Committee Members

GET A HEADSTART ON YOUR HOLIDAY CARD SHOPPING

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CARDS COME BEAUTIFULLY PACKAGED WITH RIBBON AND MAKE A GREAT GIFT!

HOLIDAY CARDS PACKAGES (7 ORIGINAL DESIGNS):

14 CARDS & ENVELOPES – PICK UP ONLY - $15 per pack
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(Backside has artist's photo and a personal message)

ORDER NOW….. WWW.DSCONNECTION.ORG
OR CALL 925-362-8660

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Santa Claus is Coming to Town!

The holidays are just around the corner and that means the annual DSCBA holiday party will be here before you know it!

Join us for a fun-filled afternoon of holiday music, crafts and refreshments. Your favorite guy in the red suit is scheduled to make an appearance so be sure to drop-in and say hello.

When: Sunday, December 5th

Time: 1 PM- 4 PM

Where: Los Cerros Middle School Multi-purpose Room
968 Blemer Road, Danville

And don't forget to bring your cameras!