



Making The Connection

WINTER 2012

DOWN SYNDROME CONNECTION OF THE BAY AREA

Everything but Snow

By Nancy Labelle

If you came to the holiday party in December you witnessed a crowd of over 300 people getting into the holiday spirit. Thanks to the Bornstein family and the DSCBA staff, especially Marianne Iversen, the day was organized and very fun. Kids of all ages enjoyed arts and crafts with volunteer Girl Scout Troop 31700. There were many yummy sweets to be eaten, baked by generous volunteers. Nicole Patton, Music Therapist, had the Bell Choir proudly ringing in holiday tunes. Talented K. Leigh Alfrey and her clarinet have become a wonderful tradition as she spreads the holiday spirit with “Silent Night,” “Jingle Bells,” and many more tunes. This year, a talented face painter from Celebrity Gems Entertainment literally transformed smiling faces into superheroes and amazing butterflies. Who needs snow?

When Santa made his entrance, everyone stopped to hear his hearty “Ho, ho, ho.” Thank you to Mike Demazi who connects us to Santa every year. Many photos were snapped on Santa’s knee—some with smiling faces and some with not so smiling faces.

It was fun to welcome new families who attended for the first time, as well as our friends from the Central Valley. Thank you to Derek and Jennifer Jernstedt from the Quest Foundation for bringing the kids out for some fun and for being a great support for our organization.

A warm thank you goes out to all who volunteered, including Circle K for decorating and the Diablo Valley Chapter of the National Charity League for helping on the day of the event.

The photos you see were taken by volunteer photographer Steven Spedowski. Steven is a local photographer specializing in event and outdoor portrait photography. He has volunteered his time at several of our events. Current and past DSC event photos can be viewed at www.spedphoto.com/DownsSyndromeConnection. All photos can be downloaded for free. You can reach Steven at spedphoto@gmail.com.

Here’s hoping your holidays were joyful!



See more Holiday photos on page 2

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From page one – more holiday photos.

VEHICLE DONATION PROGRAM

The DSCBA has a new vehicle donation program where you can donate your car, truck, van, motorcycle, RV and boat.



A portion of the proceeds from the sale of the vehicle is given to the DSCBA for our programs and services.

Donations are eligible for a tax deduction; please talk to your tax advisor.

For more information or to donate your vehicle, please call 1-888-686-4483.



Nancy's Notes

Community with Compassion

Nancy LaBelle, Executive Director

Happy New Year!

In March I will celebrate my fourth year at the Connection. It has been an honor to serve a community rich with members who have amazing energy and are filled with unselfish compassion for others.

I witness what I call community with compassion inside and outside our doors every day. Many parents are helping other parents who are sometimes struggling themselves. Moms and dads are sharing emotions and lessons learned via Baby Steps, newsletters, Yahoo! Groups, and support meetings.

With open hearts and homes, Parent Mentors are often taking the not-so-easy calls from newly diagnosed parents who may feel alone.

Our dedicated teachers, who truly adore their students, work to ensure young ones become strong, middle ones learn to follow directions, and older students create and nurture amazing friendships. Martha Hogan, our Parent Support and Advocacy Director, continues to give her heart and soul to many families who are in the dark about what to expect when having a child with special needs. Every day I see lives change, including mine, because of our community with compassion.

I am happy to say, 2011 was a financially successful year at the Connection thanks to our long time generous funders such as the Wayne and Gladys Valley Foundation which has been giving to the DSCBA since 1999. The foundation gave a start-up grant of \$50,000 in 1999 and has been giving ever since. Additionally, 2011 brought several new, generous funders that were touched by our mission, such as the Wells Fargo Foundation. We are truly thankful for all the foundations, community service groups, and private family funds that give so generously—providing 43% of our

income. Needless to say, our giving tree is sprouting many leaves in our Danville office, reminding us each day how it is we can open our doors and why we are able to provide vital services to the Down syndrome community. We welcome our funders anytime to visit us and to witness firsthand the programs and services that are supported with your gifts.

We started new programs in 2011 such as our Parents of Adult Children and Education Support groups. We offered

We remain passionate about helping parents get the education they want for their children and that their children deserve.

workshops on behavior, Augmentative and Alternate Communication devices (AAC), potty training, and much more.

Education is a hot button for us at the DSCBA. We remain passionate about helping parents get the education they want for their children and that their

children deserve. In 2011, we sat side by side with parents at over 30 Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings as an advocate, helping parents prepare in many phone calls and meetings. We have a project coming in 2012 that we hope will bring about change by empowering educators with information about how children with Down syndrome learn and thrive in an educational setting.

The year 2012 has much more in store, including our annual meeting in March

with a keynote speaker on behavior and much more. Mark your calendar for the magical celebration at our Gala for Giving

and dinner dance in May at the beautiful Diablo Country Club.

In the past four years, the DSCBA community with compassion has changed my life. I can only imagine what lies ahead.

Happy New Year.

Join the DSCBA **YAHOO!** GROUPS

Laurie Hawley

Did you know the Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area has a Yahoo! Group? We do! All are invited to join. We hope this venue will be a place for everyone to share successes, ask questions of or advice from other parents, share your experiences of raising a child with Down syndrome, etc.

Have a question about potty training? Trying to decide on a preschool placement? Considering having your child's adenoids or tonsils removed? If you have a question, it's likely that someone else in our group has been through the same thing and can share their experience and insight. Please take advantage of this opportunity to network and connect with other families.

This is a private Yahoo! Group so you don't have to worry about security issues. Join by going to <http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/DSCBA/> and clicking on the "Join" button. Briefly explain how you are connected to the DSCBA, and then Laurie Hawley, who moderates the group, will approve you. You can also email Laurie directly at thehawleyhome@yahoo.com. She will send you an invitation to join the group.



Terese's Tales

Terese Ghilarducci, President of the Board

My brother Todd,
Blair Hogan,
and me



You may be thinking the same thing I am: "I can't believe it's the New Year 2012 already." Where did the time go? Time sure does go by fast when you are having fun, and come April of this year my first year as the DSCBA President will be over.

It has been an exciting year thus far. For all that participated in the Buddy Walk, you know what a fun event this was. So much money was raised, all with your enthusiasm and (fun) raising. It was a beautiful day; the park was wonderful; the energy was electrifying; the food was great, and the volunteers were awesome. I felt so loved that my brother, sister-in-law, and three nieces could share the day with me, along with some very dear friends. I couldn't have been prouder to be part of such an amazing organization and event. We also had great workshops, parent support groups, speech consultations, Step classes, grant approvals, reading classes, and so much more this year.

This spring we have two very inspiring events that I want to personally invite you to. The first will be our Annual Meeting on Saturday, March 17, 2012. This will be a day of workshops, speakers, networking, lunch, and community. There will be something for everyone in your family, including siblings. This is the first time the Connection has sponsored such an event so be sure to look for more information about this day.

Our next big fundraiser for the year, the annual Gala for Giving, will be held May 5, 2012, at the Diablo Country Club. We had our first gala last September 2010; it was an elegant evening with both a silent and a live auction, dinner, and dancing. Many tears of joy flowed that night from the outpouring of giving and generosity from so many friends of the Connection. Definitely put this date on your calendar.

I want to tell you how much I enjoy being your President. However, I could not do my job without the commitment of each Board member and our fearless leaders in the office: Nancy, Marianne, Martha, and Peggy. Thank you to all of you. For any of you who feel moved to be a part of the work we do at the Connection, there is always room for you as a volunteer, committee member, or Board member. Feel free to contact me any time at teresemarieg@comcast.net.

Can't wait to see you at the Connection Annual Meeting and Gala!



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Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area

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Board Meetings – 2012

101 J Town & Country Drive
Danville, 6:45 – 8:15p.m.
The Board meets on the 3rd Tuesday of the month: Feb. 21, Mar. 20, Apr. 17, May 15, Jun. 19, Jul. 17, Aug. 21, Sep. 18, Oct. 16, Nov. 20, no Dec. meeting. To attend or bring a guest please call the Board President, Terese Ghilarducci at 925-872-5858.

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2012 Parents Support Group*

Meetings scheduled for Jan. 24, Feb. 28, Mar. 27, Apr. 24, May 22, Jun. 26.

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 Danville Connection office, 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.

Masthead background artist: Rachel Warren from Benicia Step.



Special Education at Sylvan Learning: Our Personal Experience

Vivek Mathrani

Through the monthly Education Support Group meetings and the DSCBA Yahoo! Group I've shared the improvement we've seen in our daughter Maia's expressive language and academic confidence since enrolling her in our local Sylvan Learning center in Walnut Creek. Nancy LaBelle encouraged me to write a newsletter submission to describe our experience of how a private learning center can immediately benefit our special needs kids. Initially, I didn't think it could.

Being relatively new to the Bay Area and thrifty by disposition, I relied heavily on Groupon and similar websites to sample Bay Area businesses and services at a substantial discount. Last August, Sylvan Learning offered a Groupon coupon for the registration fee, initial skills assessment, and four one-hour tutoring sessions. I was drawn to the offer because I felt Maia could benefit from some outside structure and academic supplementation to her school program. Plus, there was a location in our very neighborhood.

Admittedly, I was skeptical that a small learning center could cater to Maia's academic needs—after all, her education plan at school was drawn up by a roundtable of educators, specialists, and caregivers, and still occasionally begged for revision as unforeseen issues arose. I also thought a learning center essentially served as an academic boot camp for kids whose parents always wanted them ahead of grade level and for those who desperately needed to fix a slipping grade. All the same, I figured the worst that could happen was that Maia would burn out shortly after starting and that I'd have blown \$100 to confirm my suspicion that she didn't belong there.

Nonetheless, before purchasing the Groupon coupon and signing Maia to a trial period with Sylvan Learning, I contacted our local center in Walnut Creek to inquire if they had what it takes to teach a child with developmental delays and behavioral issues. I spoke at length with the center Director, Karen, about Maia's learning challenges and escapist behaviors. I also opened up and shared some of the challenges we had had with our school district in making a case for Maia's academic potential in an inclusive educational setting. Karen, unfazed by my questions yet sympathetic to the learning needs I described, expressed confidence that the Sylvan Learning program could be tailored to address behavioral and sensory issues that we had seen impede access to learning. She went further to say that *Sylvan attends Individual Education (IEP) meetings and meets with school staff if the family requests this.*

I acknowledged that my wife, Fatima, and I were uncertain about what teaching formats could engage Maia and whether Maia had the stamina for one-hour sessions. But if we could boost Maia's confidence in the classroom we might mitigate escape behaviors and eventually make academic tasks preferred activities. Shortly after signing on to the Groupon trial, Karen reached out

to Maia's teacher and resource support staff at school to get a further understanding of what academic challenges needed to be addressed. My wife and I were eager to facilitate Sylvan's access to Maia's school program by sharing her IEP and behavioral support plan. Drawing on these resources, Sylvan Learning devised a multisensory, multimedia math and reading program and selected an ideal tutor for Maia. Within three weeks, Maia was tolerating full hour sessions and wanting more.

After a nine-hour stint at school and afterschool care, Maia still looks forward to 5:30 p.m. sessions with her tutor. My wife and

I periodically peek through the glass from the waiting room, paranoid that teaching materials are being flung in protest, but delighted to see Maia with her face lit up and engaged in her lesson plan. We see her embrace the learning experience at Sylvan and increasingly so at school and home. Classroom centers and writers' workshops are being done more independently with very few and very minor disruptive behaviors. Her Speech and Language Pathologist (SLP) is delighted by the marked improvement in her expressive language and attentiveness.

While we're thrilled with the current educational program at Maia's elementary school in Walnut Creek, we feel Sylvan Learning has bolstered Maia's performance and learning acquisition. In

several ways, they have supplemented and reinforced strategies for Maia to meet her IEP goals. They've offered a level of attention and solutions which most families would hope their school districts would offer. They are eager and willing to share their assessments and progress reports with Maia's school and participate in IEP meetings. After seeing a functional behavioral assessment and intervention plan implemented for Maia, we know first-hand how invaluable a third-party perspective on a child's learning progress and needs can be when the school district and parents have disparate views or have run short of ideas. Fortunately, we are blessed with a teacher, support staff, and private learning center that take genuine interest in preparing Maia for further learning in years to come.

For any questions regarding this article, Vivek can be reached at dosawalla@gmail.com.



Maia Tenoria



SOCIALLY CONNECTED!

Check us out on Facebook at

WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/DSCBA

260 FANS SO FAR – WHY DON'T YOU BECOME ONE TOO?
GET UPDATES FROM THE CONNECTION AND LEARN ABOUT EVENTS
FANS CAN POST TEXT, PHOTOS AND VIDEO TO DSCBA'S PAGE



Bringing Vika Home: Our Adoption Story

Janeé Pedersen

I will never forget the moment I met my third child, my daughter Viktoria. Unlike our first two children, who came to us the old-fashioned way, my husband and I met Vika (pronounced VEE-kah) on a beautiful sunny morning in a century-old orphanage on the other side of the world. Also unlike my first two children, Vika was born with Down syndrome. It's why she was there in the first place. Her birth parents, young, most likely poor, and living in a society where people with disabilities are viewed as social outcasts, felt unable to care for her. By the time she was a week old, the test results were in, the papers had all been signed, and she was officially an orphan.

I think that my husband and I had always known we would adopt, but we never imagined it would be a child with Down syndrome. When we first considered adoption, we were certain that we wanted to adopt a waiting child: a child who was already cleared for adoption and was just waiting for a family to come for them. Waiting children are almost always those with disabilities or health issues or children over age five or six. After a lot of research, we felt quite certain that we wanted to adopt an HIV+ child.

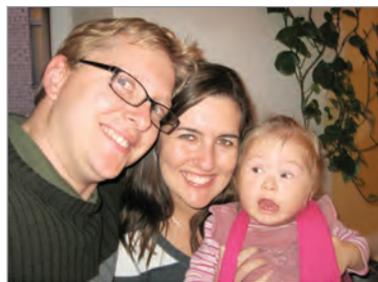
By April of 2010 we were ready to begin. We decided to pursue an independent adoption from Ukraine—meaning that we would be adopting without the help of an agency. We completed our home study and prepared to bring home an HIV+ child under age two.

Then in July, just before we were ready to submit our paperwork to the Ukrainian government, our hearts began to change. We learned more about the plight of those with physical and developmental disabilities in Eastern Europe—that the vast majority of these children are legally abandoned by their parents at birth, and are sent to orphanages where they spend their early childhood. By the time they turn four or five, they are transferred to mental institutions where they live out the rest of their lives. The conditions in these “invalid homes” are horrific. There is inadequate health care, few caregivers, and no education or therapy. Many do not survive. The most high-functioning children spend their days lined up on benches in cold concrete rooms or crowded into outdoor sheds. The less fortunate ones are sedated and kept in cribs 24/7, wasting away.

As we considered these things, our hearts were broken. We found ourselves unable to sleep, unable to think of anything else. We spent hours in prayer, considering if we might be called to adopt one of these children. We researched Down syndrome and explored resources in our community (including the DSCBA!). We grappled with the thought of having a “forever child” who may never leave our home. We talked to other adoptive families and considered the affects that years of neglect would have. Within about two weeks we had made up our minds. We made some last-minute changes to our paperwork, specifically requesting to adopt a child with Down syndrome.

In October 2010 we flew to Ukraine, excited to meet the little girl we had heard about from another adoptive family. After spending a few days meeting with officials in Kiev, we traveled 12 hours to the south, to a city called Nikolaev.

The papers had been signed, the Ukrainian social workers had approved us, and now there we were. We were led into the room



Top left, Us visiting Vika at the orphanage.

Above, Vika on a family trip to Disneyland, August 2011

Left, Vika with her siblings, Noelle (4) and Levi (2), Easter 2011



where she was living with 11 other children, all ages two through five—some of them healthy, some of them with obvious delays and disabilities. Then we saw Vika. She captured our hearts immediately, and as her nanny helped her take a few wobbly steps toward us, tears filled our eyes and we knew instantly she was meant to be ours. After just a few minutes our translator asked us if we were sure we wanted to proceed with her adoption. There was not a doubt in our minds!

A little less than a month later, after a couple more flights across the ocean, everything was finalized and I landed in SFO a few days before Thanksgiving with our new daughter. We were met at the airport by Vika's new grandparents and our two other children, who were then 3-1/2 and 1-1/2 years old. My 3 year old daughter, after hugging and kissing her new sister, asked us if we could please go back and get her a little brother, too!

Over the last year we have learned a lot as we've parented Vika. She is an amazing girl, so bright and so determined. She has made incredible progress and adds much joy to our lives. Of course it is not always easy. Even after a year, we deal with the effects of her institutionalization on a daily basis. We are all still learning to better understand each other, and she's learning what it's like to live in a family and be loved. Every day we thank God for the beautiful gift He has given us in Vika.

At the same time, not a day goes by when we don't remember the ones we had to leave behind. There are currently 165 million orphans in the world, and thousands are wasting away in institutions like the one Vika was headed for. We plan to adopt again in the next few years, and in the meantime we love talking to other families who are interested in adopting waiting children, both domestically and internationally. If you think you might be interested in adopting a child with special needs, please feel free to contact me by phone (925-784-7530) or e-mail (janeenoel@yahoo.com). I would love to talk to you! You can also read more about our journey to meet Vika at www.iwillcometoyou.wordpress.com.



Engaged!

– Karen Peterson

It was bound to happen. On Friday, December 16, when Heather Peterson and Mark Vukelich were en route to Half Moon Bay to celebrate



A very happy Heather and Mark

Heather's birthday, they made a slight detour to the DSCBA for a surprise marriage proposal. Since their second date had been at the Bowl-A-Rama, it seemed only appropriate to come back full circle to the DSCBA which holds a very special place in their hearts. Mark, with the assistance of others, arranged to have many onlookers on-sight to witness this special moment. Encircled in red roses, Mark got down on bended knee and popped the question to the delight of Heather, her family, invited friends, the DSCBA staff, and many of Heather's clients. Afterwards, everyone shared champagne and a healthy round of picture-taking.

Congratulations to the newly engaged couple.

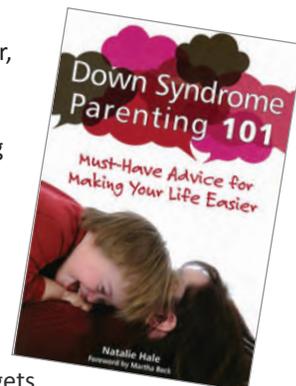
New Book!

Down Syndrome Parenting 101: Must-Have Advice for Making Your Life Easier

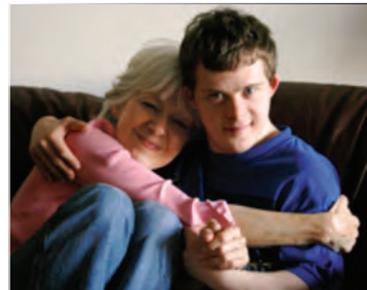
– Natalie Hale, author

Exciting news comes from DSCBA's reading teacher, Natalie Hale (mom of Jonathan, 27): Woodbine House has just published her latest book, *Down Syndrome Parenting 101*. This book spans parenting our kids from the cradle to independent living and is the first book of its kind. Woodbine House explains it best with the following description.

Down Syndrome Parenting 101 will be cheered by parents, grandparents, siblings, teachers—anyone who shares life with a person with Down syndrome—for delivering inspirational advice, nuggets of wisdom, and plenty of laughs. Throughout, author Natalie Hale draws upon her personal and professional experiences raising a son, now an adult, and teaching educators and parents how to teach children with Down syndrome to read.



Beginning with a Foreword by Martha Beck, parent of a child with Down syndrome and author of the New York Times bestseller, *Expecting Adam*, *Down Syndrome Parenting 101* offers inspired takes on a host of important issues, from learning to recognize and celebrate your child's personality and gifts to finding a great teacher for him, and from insisting your child pull his own weight to giving your child his space as an adult. The



Natalie and her Son Jonathan

author—equal parts mentor, humorist, enthusiast, and realist—masterfully takes readers by the hand and walks them through the various life stages, experiences, and people they will encounter with their child including: getting to know and fall in love with your child, interacting with medical professionals, literacy, discipline, school, transitioning, and independence.

Chapters are short, a plus for busy parents, and can be read individually or sequentially. Turn to this upbeat book for credible, realistic advice and for a dose of bibliotherapy when you need validation and perspective.

And here's an unsolicited Amazon customer review:

"I've read them all but this one is GREAT!"

My lovely daughter Lilya (who has Down Syndrome) is now 5 years old. From day one I read many many books that were available concerning Down Syndrome. Many were good, but this book is a GEM. It is grounding, uplifting, funny, serious and SMART! It reminds us about the essentials of life - to recognize and to remember to appreciate the gifts life give us.

I heartily recommend this book to new and seasoned parents of children with Down syndrome. It is uplifting and encouraging to new parents and puts the seasoned parents (with busy life schedules) "back on track" to what life is about. And - just for the record - I found this book on Amazon and was reluctant to buy it as I've read so many already... but so glad I got it! Thank you Ms. Hale! Warm regards to you and your family!"

Save the date to "Step Up for Down Syndrome"

(Formerly known as the Buddy Walk)



Benefitting the Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area

**SUNDAY OCTOBER 7, 2012
LITTLE HILLS RANCH, SAN RAMON**



Thank You NAILBA Foundation

Nancy LaBelle



A huge thank you goes to Jeff Mooers, President of H.D. Mooers & Company, who sponsored our request for funding.

As you can see, Jeff enjoyed meeting our Danville Steppin' Up class and a little bit of fun floor-time with one of our Baby Steppers, Oliver Pongkhaming.



Thank you to the NAILBA Charitable Foundation for a generous grant of \$15,000 supporting Baby Step classes for ages up to three years old. This is the second year in a row NAILBA has supported DSCBA programs.

AAC Lending Library Debut



Join us for the debut of the DSCBA Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) lending library on

Monday, February 27, 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. at 101 J Town & Country Drive in Danville.

Explore AAC devices currently in inventory and their applications for practical use. Learn check-out processes and how we can help with education plans as it pertains to AAC.

Call the DSCBA at 925-362-8660 to RSVP.

Thank you to the California Communications Access Foundation for making this all possible.

Thank You Heritage Bank of Danville



Heritage Bank of Commerce gives back to their community and offers a full array of innovative, custom-tailored business and personal banking services and products.

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SUPERIOR PRECISION EYEWEAR FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE SPECIAL

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SPECS4US, Superior Precision Eyewear for Children Who Are Special, introduces a new concept in eyewear for children with Down syndrome that eliminates the problems commonly associated with traditional eyeglasses. The mission of SPECS4US is to improve the vision and quality of life for individuals with Down syndrome by providing affordable custom frames designed especially for them.

The Erin's World line of frames is engineered to fit the unique facial features of children with Down syndrome while offering stylish options handcrafted for an active lifestyle. Each pair of frames offers special design features not found anywhere else. Adult sizes and sunglass clips are also available.

Created by the mother of a child with Down syndrome and 25 years experience as an optician, the Erin's World eyewear from SPECS4US will help children and adults explore their world with enhanced vision combined with an exciting level of style.

You can find the Erin's World line of frames at:

Unique Eyecare, 1875 S Bascom, Suite 162 Campbell, CA 95008
408-377-2076

For more information and additional locations, visit

www.SPECS4US.com or call 1.800.586.1885



Speech Therapy Update

– Heather Peterson, MS SLP-CCC

Happy New Year, everyone! There has been so much going on in the communication world here at the Connection over the past few months! Here is a recap and a teaser of what is to come.

Level 4 Training, aka “Boot camp” with Sara Rosenfeld Johnson

Sara Rosenfeld Johnson visited the DSCBA in November 2011 to perform 20 oral placement therapy evaluations in just four days! Part of her work was also to continue my training as a Level 4 therapist. This level of certification was very different than Level 3. This time around, I was doing a lot of the work and Sara was doing a lot of the “constructive criticism.” If any of you have had the pleasure to work with Sara, you know that she is a no-nonsense, tough New York woman. Needless to say, she didn’t hold anything back. She told me how it was and how it was going to be no matter how many people and video cameras were in the room with us!

We evaluated babies for the first time and updated program plans for some of the older children and adults. Despite the intensity of the days, it was very easy to get completely and totally caught up in a euphoric moment when a child said a perfect word or voiced a new sound for the first time. Many of Sara’s long time clients were speaking in clear sentences. I still think those children and families are incredible! To experience the humor and sarcastic personalities of some of our children was very moving and very motivating for me.

As the weeks have progressed since her visit, I have realized that Sara’s training, including all of her “constructive criticism,” has immensely helped my current practice.

I have noticed my evaluations are more thorough, and my skills are more refined. Sara made a few recommendations to me before she left. One of them was to become PROMPT certified. PROMPT therapy is a tactile (facial prompting) technique used for children with motor planning difficulties in order to help them create sounds and sequence them together to form words. This technique coupled with strong oral musculature enhances motor planning for speech development at the sound, word, and sentence levels.

As always, training with Sara was truly beneficial, utterly exhausting, but ultimately inspiring. Thank you, Sara, for everything!

PROMPT Therapy Training

The DSCBA will be holding a PROMPT certification class in the spring (TBD) for all speech therapists in the area. If your speech therapist is interested

in PROMPT training, please pass along their information my way. (See the above paragraph for a description of PROMPT.)

Augmentative and Alternative Communication Recommendation

The California Communications Access Foundation and the DSCBA have teamed up with an Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) specialist, Kati Skulski, in order to provide assistive technology for our children who need a voice. Our AAC library was unveiled this February 2012, giving families the opportunity to try a variety of low, medium, and high tech devices with their children. Kati and Nancy have been hard at work to create the library, seminars, and alliances with funders and outside

professionals/schools so that our children can have the best possible communication experience. Please come in and check out one of the devices for your child. Heather is available for AAC recommendations for your school system. Kati is available for AAC evaluations and specific training. Please contact Kati Skulski at kaskulski@gmail.com. Please contact Heather Peterson at heather@happykidstherapy.com. Please contact Nancy LaBelle with ideas at: nancy@dsconnection.org.

At the DSCBA web site you will find information about: AAC Basics, The World of Education and Communication Applications and AAC in the School Setting.

Additional information is available at <http://www.dsconnection.org/information/augmentative-alternative-communication.php>

Explore Gary Shupin Independent Living Community Today

Shupin Community offers young adults with developmental disabilities a unique living experience in San Francisco’s vibrant Laurel Village neighborhood. Residents live independently in a supportive environment with these benefits:

- Apartment living
- Regularly scheduled programs to meet individual needs and interests
- Independent-living skills training
- Vocational resources
- Financial/money management
- Social skills coaching

Learn more at www.shupincommunity.jfcs.org or call 415-449-3822.



The Shupin Social Club offers cooking and music classes, holiday get-togethers, recreational opportunities, and social and cultural outings—for residents and nonresidents.



Jewish Family and Children’s Services
of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties

STRENGTHENING INDIVIDUALS. STRENGTHENING FAMILIES. STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY.

Benicia Step
Tamara Reed

At right: The group saw the movie *Mr. Popper's Penguins* and then made a movie review. Find the review on YouTube, search for the title "Benicia step group reviews the movie Mr Poppers Penguins."



Benicia Step group Christmas party
by Martin Gonsalves & Lisa Silva

We had a really cool Christmas party. We set up, planned, and shopped on our own. We learned to cook and make appetizers. We felt proud of ourselves. It was fun to have our friends and family together. Thank you for coming to our party!



Above: Andrew, Mike and Lisa having a great day; they sold over 40 hot dogs and sodas as a fundraising activity in conjunction with the Grocery Outlet for their Independence from Hunger July event!



At right and below: In October we visited Dream Dinners in Benicia. The group made French crispy chicken and tasty appetizers. Many thanks to owners Esther Hassard and John Lucchesi for helping make this a great afternoon!



Below: In November, the group toured the Benicia Fire Museum. Assistant curator Christine Cooley & fellow volunteer fighter Robert Bruce explained how various equipment was used throughout history. The group tried on hats from different eras and had fun looking at the older trucks on display.





Pasta dinner

by Andrew Vasquez

I love to get together and cook with my friends! Lisa and Rachel made salad. Martin, Mike, and Damien made ravioli casseroles, and of course I make the best garlic bread. We all set the table, and cleaned up. It's fun to hang out with my friends!



Down Syndrome Awareness Horse Show

Melissa Lucia

I am blessed to be the mother of three wonderful children, one of whom, Bella (19 months), happens to have Down syndrome. I am also blessed to be the daughter of two wonderful parents, Lamont and Helen Brown, and by all other members of my family. My parents, who live in Forest, Virginia, wanted to do something special in October in honor of National Down Syndrome Awareness Month. They own a horse farm in Virginia, where my mom boards many horses and teaches students; she also rides competitively. She decided to host the First (hopefully annual) Down Syndrome Awareness Horse Show and Competitive Trail Ride.



This event was held on October 15, 2011, at their amazing equestrian facility. All money raised through the entry fees, raffles, craft sale, food, and drink was donated to the DSCBA. There were 48 horse riders competing at this show and approximately 350 spectators. This was a very large turnout! To put it into perspective, a typical event will have about 30 riders and maybe 100 spectators. In addition to the Horse Show itself, there was a raffle, a bake sale, a craft and yard sale, a magic show, and food and drink provided by a local barbeque company. There were also 25-30 local sponsors. Everyone was so excited to be a part of something like this—many have already committed to doing it again next year! Bella was even entered into one horse class and she happily waved to all of the spectators as she was led around the ring (see photo)! She was definitely the star of the show! Altogether we raised \$3,800 for the DSCBA! For a small town horse show, this is an amazing amount.



Additionally, and more importantly than the monies received was the community awareness raised by this event. Even though the area I am from has a population of about 150,000 people, they do not have their own Down syndrome organization. This event brought out five families with children having Down syndrome. My hope is that they will begin and continue to foster a support network for themselves. Additionally, many people who were unfamiliar with the specifics of Down syndrome received a great education during this event! I am so thankful for my parents and entire family and their willingness to undertake such a huge event in a showing of support for Bella and for raising awareness for Down syndrome! Bella sure is one lucky cowgirl! If you want to see all of the pictures from the horse show, you can view them online at my parents' website at <http://www.willowcreekfarmsva.com/horse-show-2011.html>.



Continued from page 12:

More photos of fun at the highly successful 2011 Buddy Walk.



Tatiana Visits Family in Puerto Rico during Christmas



Tatiana and cousins in Culebra, Puerto Rico

Messages from her Family

A genuine smile worth waiting for...
I love to see you smile
When I do, nothing else matters!

-Tia Rosa

Tatiana, we love you and miss you a lot when you are in California. It's fun and rewarding when you are around. You always make us feel happy and loved.

Kisses - Tia Mercedes and family

Tatiana, you bring the best out of each one of us

- Tia Dulce

I love when you come to Puerto Rico because you make me happy. I miss you (and Marco)

- Yaya

Tatiana Aurora at 16 years old

You are an amazing girl
You make me smile
You are so beautiful
You make the sun shine
When you saw Santa
your face lit up
You know what Christmas means and you felt God



Tatiana's heart filled with joy as Santa entered the gymnasium at the 2011 Holiday Party.



SF Step's Día de los Muertos Celebration

– Harold Burns

The SF Step group celebrated Día de los Muertos this year for the first time. The idea came from multiple conversations with the group about the sorrow that they felt losing loved ones over the past few years. We asked the students to bring photos and stories for their memory boxes. We spent two sessions decorating the boxes with photos, drawings, and poems while also sharing stories with the group. We then created an altar for the boxes with flowers, candles, and traditional paper decorations. It was very meaningful and cathartic and brought us closer together as a group. We look forward to making this a yearly tradition.



Cloe Pollock



Jackson Soderquist



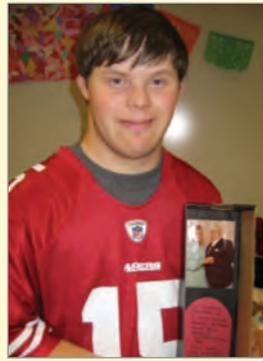
Olivia Byers-Straus



Nina Krietzman



Matt Hillman



Robert Humphreys



Emma Yungert



Emma Darby

Steppin' Up's Holiday Celebration

Laura Briggs

The Steppin' Up class walked over to the Luna Loca restaurant to celebrate the holidays. Great fun and food were had by all.



Shawn Swienton



Nicole Remy



Right: Clio with Pal volunteer Camille Hunt



Shawn Swienton, Daniel Sodestrom, Anthony Godinez



Left: Amin Ridzuan with volunteer Wendy Blalock



Daniel Sodestrom, Anthony Godinez, Jason Hawkins, Nicole Remy



The Gang



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

AT&T Employee Giving Campaign

David Kimble
Joanne Leach
Raymond Rhodes
Krista Veri
Kim Wolken

Chevron Human Kind Matching Gifts Program

Paul Casadont
Mark T Janke
Scott Truger

Community Health Charities of CA

Janet Holmes
Edwin Ostrowski

Kaiser Community Giving Program

Rick LaBelle

Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund

Mr. and Mrs. William Calhoun

PG&E Corporation Campaign for the Community

Mary Galvin

Car Donation Services

Steve Benson
Cesar Dantes
Joyce Meshinsky

PC World Communications Matching Funds

Katelyn Vandenberg

Columbus Foundation - Diamond Hill Investments Matching Funds

Richard Snowdon

Applied Materials Matching Funds

Michael Kamp

Kennedy/Jenks Consultants Matching

Mike McLeod

General Donations

Alta Bates Medical Group
Baking for Good
James and Veronica Barillas
JH & Betty Barr
Hellen and T Lamont Brown
Peter Straus and Lili Byers
Garrett & Cathy Girvan
Nancy Henderson
Heritage Bank of Danville
Arthur and Jane Hillman
Sunita Sayana Lokuge
Melissa & Christian Lucia
Velma & Mario Magnani
Geetanjali Magodia
William McClure
Mike McLeod
Kevin & Lori McNally

Bob and Marlys Randick
Kenneth & Marilyn Rasler
Steven & Angelica Rettig
Libbie Shimer
Victoria Smith
Barbara Strehlitz
Vallejo Grocery Outlet
Neil Wallace
Whole Foods, San Ramon

Foundations, Family Funds and Service Organizations

Anonymous Family Fund
Barr Family Foundation
The Ray Benton Family Fund
California Communications Access Foundation
Chatowski Family Fund
CVS Caremark Community Grant
Diablo Country Club Foundation
The Carl Gellert and Celia Berta Gellert Foundation
Jam Handy Character Building Foundation
Heffernan Group Foundation
Kiwanis Club of Pleasanton
Kiwanis Club of San Ramon Valley
Knights of Columbus Council 9206
Lencioni Fund
The Joseph and Vera Long Foundation
The Thomas J Long Foundation
Lowell Berry Foundation
M Squared Consulting, Inc
Maurice Amado Foundation
The Peter Musto Charitable Trust
NAILBA Charitable Foundation
The Noll Foundation
The Oakland Athletics Community Fund
The Quest Foundation
San Ramon Rotary
Wayne & Gladys Valley Foundation
Wells Fargo Foundation

In Honor of Kathy Zolnier's Birthday

The Vandenberghe Family

In Honor of Mason Zolnier

James and Kathy Zolnier

In Honor of Damian Lawton

Susan Stanton

In Honor of Patrick Harkins

Mary M Greene

In Honor of Garrett Rebelo

Diane Greenspan

In Memory of Eugenia Carter

Nancy & David Cleary
Ian & Debra Copeland
John & Linda Harkins
Carol & Tom Huvane
John & Donna McMorrow
Matthew & Megan Portoni
Bert & Evelyn Schroeder
Jean Wright

In Memory of Annette Albro

Cathy Buffington
Mel and Wanda Jones

In Memory of Emma Krumwiede

Lisa M Priggs

In Memory of Tom Northrup

Mary Rettig

In Memory of Aoife McConn

Patrick & Ann Aherne
Anne Burke
Dean and Anne Fogel
Brian Kyne
Frank Kyne
Gertrude Kyne
Kevin Kyne
Martin Kyne
Rita Kyne
Teresa McDonagh
Ann O'Connell
John, Josephine, Aidan, Aisling,
Nial & Maura O'Flynn
Adrian Parr
Lisa Whitman

In Memory of Rochelle Ann Batti

Victor Vandenberghe

2011 Holiday Party Volunteers

Mary Ballin	Stephanie Hansen
The Bornstein Family	Maria Huether
Tawny Burns	Deana Leibowitz
The Cannon Family	Jan Mallari
Circle K Volunteers	The Mistry Family
Laura Redmond	National Charity League - Diablo Valley Chapter
May Cook	Nicole Patton
Mike Demasi	Tabatha Roderick
Girl Scout Troop #31700	Liana Sapiadante

2011 Buddy Walk Volunteers

Laura Azzopardi	Girl Scout Troop Cal High #30940
Leadership	Melissa Jimenez
Tami Castelluccio	Jo & Rich Kelley
Circle K-East Bay State University	Heidi McLaughlin
Circle K- University of California Berkeley	Nicole Pansini
Maureen Cummings	Laura Redmond
St. Joan of Arc-Light Youth Ministry	Angela & Steve Rettig
Valley Rotary: Robert Fuenzalida	Lynn Sanford
Ray Hoyt	St. Joan of Arc-Light Youth Ministry
Mike Sherrill	Staples-Business Advantage-East Bay
Karl Weber	Kylie Traver
Tammy & Brian Garcia	Valley Cheer & Dance
	The Vaughn Family 2ENDEAVOR

Our Amazing Volunteers

K. Leigh Alfrey	Mira Khawam
Wendy Blalock	Jennifer Kilian
Lauren Bruno	Macee LeMoine
Tawny Burns	Alexis Liebowitz
Aleece Cancellia	Toni Liebowitz
Andrea Chiang	Elyse Perry
Andreas Dereschuk	Marlys Randick
Matthew Duckett	Laura Redmond
Sean Duckett	Paula Ridley
Dawn Handley	Heather Rigby
Maria Huether	UCB Circle K International
Camille Hunt	

DSCBA Programs Can Only Continue with Your Help!

43% of our funding comes from our 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 our Gala and 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?

The 1st Annual DSCBA Empowerment Conference and Annual Meeting

Saturday, March 17, 2012

9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Rolling Hills Community Church, Danville
1565 Green Valley Road Danville, CA 94526



The Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area is pleased to announce our first **Empowerment Conference and Annual Meeting** which will take place on Saturday, March 17, at the Rolling Hills Community Church in Danville. The Empowerment Conference will provide information and practical advice to help parents and extended family members regarding someone they love who has Down syndrome.

Registration is \$25 for one attendee or \$40 for two attendees.

The registration fee includes breakfast, lunch, and the Conference. All-day child care, an all-day Sibling Support workshop, and Music Therapy for those in either child care or the Sibling Support workshop are also provided.

(Call for scholarship information if needed.)

March 2, 2012, is the Registration Deadline
– Space is limited

REGISTRATION FORMS ARE BEING MAILED TO YOUR HOME,
OR YOU CAN REGISTER WITH A CREDIT CARD BY CALLING
THE DSCBA AT 925-362-8660

Morning session: 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
(For child care you must arrive at 9:00 a.m.)

DSCBA News, Board of Directors' Business, and Excellence in Education Awards

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Frank Marone – We are delighted to have Dr. Frank Marone as our speaker for the morning session. Dr. Marone is an Applied Behavior Analyst who has been successfully assisting individuals with intellectual disabilities and their families for 38 years, in all settings. Applied Behavior Analysis is the scientific study of the causes of behavior. From this study we know what to do to understand and remedy behavioral difficulties. Dr. Marone will discuss the current understanding of behavior and its remedies, reflecting research of the past 100 years and his extensive clinical experience. Questions from you will be used to help make the discussion most relevant to your current challenges.

Lunch: 12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Enjoy a delicious lunch prepared by Gagnon's Catering. A Q&A with Dr. Marone will also be available at this time.

Afternoon Breakout sessions: 1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
(Choice of one)

Younger Children Needs – Panel of Experts

- **Oral Motor and Health** – Heather Peterson, MS CCC-SLP and Dr. Hockel, DDS
- **Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)** – Kati Skulski, MS CCC-SLP
- **Sign Language and Hearing Loss** – Carol Lettko, M.A. CCC-SLP & Jennifer Wayman, MS CCC-SLP - Center for Early Intervention on Deafness (CEID)

Adult Needs – Panel of Experts

- **Conservatorships 101** – Deborah M. Wilhelmus, Esq.
- **Transition and Adult Programs** – Carol Gonsalves, Coordinator of Training - Matrix Parent Network and Resource Center
- **Available Services for Adults** – Therese Bush, Case Manager - East Bay Regional Center

All-day child care provided by Circle K of UC Berkeley

All-day Sibling Support provided by Terese Ghilarducci, MFT

Music Therapy Sessions provided by Nicole Patton, CMT



Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area
Encouraging the unlimited potential in children and young adults with Down syndrome

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ **UPCOMING EVENTS** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The 1st Annual DSCBA Empowerment Conference and Annual Meeting

Saturday, March 17, 2012 • 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. • Rolling Hills Community Church • 1565 Green Valley Rd. • Danville

2012 Annual Gala for Giving and Celebrating Acceptance

Saturday May 5, 2012 • 5:30 p.m. – 11:00 p.m. • Diablo Country Club • 1700 Club House Rd. • Diablo

Step Up for Down Syndrome

Sunday October 7, 2012 • Little Hills Ranch • San Ramon



Making The Connection

Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area

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SAVE THE DATE

2012 Gala for Giving – Celebrating Acceptance

Benefitting the Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area

MAY 5, 2012

DIABLO COUNTRY CLUB

5:30 p.m. – 11:00 p.m.

Join us with master of ceremonies **Tom Vacar, KTVU/Fox 2's Consumer Editor, & dance to the sounds of popular cover band Public Eye.**

Live Auction, Silent Auction, Raffle, Delicious Dinner, Dancing and more...

TICKETS GO ON SALE IN FEBRUARY or you can pre-order by calling the Connection at 925-362-8660 (\$120 per person)

Sponsorship Opportunities are Available – We need Auction Items

