

BUDDY WALK '08

TEAMS ARE FORMING NOW, FUNDRAISING HAS STARTED, AND THE AREA IS GEARING UP FOR ANOTHER FUN, FAMILY-CENTERED AFTERNOON!!!

The Red River Valley Buddy Walk is an awareness vehicle, a fundraiser, and a great family-friendly event now in its 5th year. This year, the walk will be held on Saturday, October 4, 2008 beginning at 2 pm. Activities will include loads of children's activities including bounce house and slide, a basket raffle, and a PossAbilities tent. Prizes will be given out at the carnival-type games on the field. More than anything else, it is a great time to see old friends and meet new ones, to share experiences and celebrate each and every individual with Down syndrome. Registration is going on now for all attendees. There is no charge to attend the walk, but with each donation of \$20, RRVDS will give the walker a shirt. In order to receive a shirt by the day of the event, registrations must be in by Friday, September 12, 2008. Extra shirts will be ordered for the day of the walk, but supply and sizes will be limited.

Teams this year will be competing for three prizes: Top Fundraising Team, Team with Most Walkers (this is why it is very important to check in at the registration tent on the day of the walk), and Team with Most Spirit (we encourage teams to use their imagination!). Each year's Top Fundraising Team's name goes on the next year's Buddy Walk shirt, so you'll be remembered all year long!

For those teams who have not registered, please do so that your web page and fundraising tools can be provided. Online fundraising is easy and you'll be amazed at the difference it makes in your totals.

For schools, we are adding a School Competition this year! For more information on the different categories (fundraising and awareness projects), contact Sabra Vaughan at buddywalk@rrvdss.org or call the DS Resource Center at (903) 783-1922.

Help us celebrate our 5th anniversary of support and awareness by participating in the 2008 Red River Valley Buddy Walk on October 4th! For more information, go to www.redriverdss.org and click on the Buddy Walk logo!

Stewart Wins at Pinto World Show

Susan Stewart, RRVDS member, took home top honors in the 2008 Pinto World Show recently in the Youth Miniature category and was honored with an article in the Pinto World magazine. Susie, who also has Down syndrome, won the competition by getting Top 5 in Halter, Western Showmanship, and Trail in Hand.

Susie and Olla (also known as Hidden Hollow Olla) have been together as a team for 15 months, and make their home in Powderly, Texas. Susan is the daughter of Dr. David and Johnnie Stewart and is not the only one in the Stewart family that participates in horse competitions. Both dad David and sister Sara have been pictured in the Pinto World magazine.

Susie's favorite event is Trail in Hand. "Susan shows Olla much better in halter classes than I do, probably because Olla knows Susan has some treats in her left pants pocket," said David Stewart. "I can't convince Olla that I have the same pocket of treats."

Susie is a student at North Lamar High School in Paris and an active member of school activities, the Special Olympics bowling league, and of RRVDS events and programs. You can see more of Susie in the 2009 RRVDS Awareness Calendar which will be available for purchase in October.

Palin as VP Nominee: An Opportunity to Educate

Yesterday, Senator John McCain announced his decision of Governor Sarah Palin (AL) as his vice-presidential running mate in the 2008 election. If you are not aware, Governor Palin and her husband had their 5th child, Trig, in the spring. Trig has Down syndrome. The governor and her husband were aware of Trig's diagnosis before his birth. In the 2 months to come, we will hear much about the governor and I am sure we will hear some about Trig and Down syndrome. As I watched commentators yesterday on cable television news channels, I heard the words and phrases: "Down's syndrome" "Downs child" "Down syndrome child" and "afflicted with Down syndrome". The last one made me laugh...I wanted to ask Joel later if he felt "afflicted" or not.

My point is...we are going to hear a lot of language that is not "people-first" in the next couple of months (and maybe next four years) but we have to remember that not everyone is as knowledgeable about DS as we are in the RRVDSS. Treat it as an opportunity to teach people how to use People-First Language! Don't CORRECT someone; just use the correct language in the conversation. For example, if someone says, "I heard she has a Downs baby"...you could say "Yes, her child with Down syndrome is named Trig." You get the idea. It is an opportunity for us to remind people that our child/friend/family member/student is not "afflicted" with some sort of "disease" and they don't "suffer from Down syndrome." If you know someone with Down syndrome, you will agree with me that they don't suffer and that it is a genetic condition rather than a disease.

Whether you are Republican or Democrat, RRVDSS does suggest that you find out about the candidates' stance on disability issues as well as the economy, foreign policy, energy, and education.

Senator Obama's position on disability, education and health can be found at www.barackobama.com/issues. Senator McCain's stance on education and health issues can be found at www.johnmccain.com/informing/issues.

Creating Understanding in the Classroom

The Down Syndrome Association of Central Texas have been groundbreakers in the field of producing materials for other DS support organizations. One such item is the Peer Presentation. Peer Presentation is a 15-20 minute classroom or grade level presentation tailored around a specific student to address any issues related to their disability that others in the class may need help to understand.

When there's an obvious difference and no one is talking about it, children become confused and think there must be something 'bad' about it," said one mother. One of the best ways to teach the community about appreciation of diversity is through our schools. Following peer presentations, there is often improvement in the way students with Down syndrome are perceived and treated.

Parents and professionals find that when classmates understand a student's disability, they may become allies in helping the student and less likely to view accommodations or individual support as unfair advantages.

Through the great generosity of the DSACT, RRVDSS is able to help parents either 1) conduct the peer presentation themselves or 2) do the peer presentation with them in their child's classroom. Presentations are available for PreK through middle school and differ for each age group.

IEP Clinic in Idabel

In lieu of a formal meeting on September 8, 2008, the F.A.C.E.S. of

Autism will be sponsoring individual meetings with D'Anna Graham from Paris, Tx. She's an

inclusion specialist. This is a person who focuses on making the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general classroom successful.

She'll be available (by appointment) to examine your child's IEP with you. She'll cover such things as what to include on the IEP, how to write an effective IEP, and give you tips on having an effective IEP meeting. She'll also answer questions you may have about your child's IEP. This is a free service. Space is limited so be sure and call to schedule your time as soon as you can.

Call to schedule your appointment. You'll need to bring a CURRENT copy of your child's IEP and a list of questions that you may have. She would like to meet for about 30 minutes with each family but may not take as long, or maybe longer. Please try to be there 5-10 minutes before your scheduled time in case she finishes early with the family before you.

Feel free to share this information with ANYONE who may have questions regarding their child's IEP regardless of the child's disability. As always, call with any questions you may have and Spread The Word! Contact Stephanie Dillen (580) 208-3317 or (800) 223-5527 for more information.

Victory on the Hill

INFORMATIONAL BULLETIN FROM THE NDSC GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS DEPT.

Higher Education Act Passed

Congress has approved a bill to reauthorize the Higher Education Act. This act, which sets federal higher education policy for at least the next five years, will expand eligibility for grants and work study jobs to students with intellectual disabilities; authorize new model programs; and, infuse the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) into the higher education law.

Summary of provisions for students with intellectual disabilities

- Allows students with intellectual disabilities, who are attending programs designed for them in higher education, to be eligible for the first time for Pell Grants, Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants and the Federal Work-Study Program.
- Authorizes the development and expansion of high-quality, inclusive model comprehensive transition and post-secondary programs.
- Authorizes the establishment of a coordinating center for the new model programs. This center will provide technical assistance, evaluation, and development of recommendations for model accreditation standards as well as outreach and dissemination to postsecondary programs, families and prospective students.

Ensure equal college opportunities for students with disabilities

- Establishes a national center to provide support services and best practices for colleges, students with disabilities, and their families.
- Helps colleges recruit, retain, and graduate students with disabilities and improves education

materials and facilities.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

The Higher Education Opportunity Act contains numerous provisions regarding the preparation of educators in early childhood, elementary, secondary and postsecondary education settings to use the principles of UDL in their instructional practices. UDL provides flexibility in the ways information is presented, in the ways students respond or demonstrate knowledge and skills, and in the ways students are engaged. It also reduces barriers in instruction, provides appropriate accommodations, supports, and challenges, and maintains high achievement expectations for all students.

The recent UDL efforts were led by a task force headed by Ricki Sabia, Associate Director of the National Down Syndrome Society Policy Center, and 24 general education and disability organizations, including the National Down Syndrome Congress. For more information on the Task Force and Universal Design for Learning see www.udl4allstudents.com .

Play 2 Learn Classes Filling Up

The Red River Valley Down Syndrome Society is excited to begin the fall term of Play 2 Learn with classes now on Thursday evenings as well as on Saturdays. Registration will be open to children with Down syndrome as well as those who do not have DS. The program is aimed at children who learn differently and benefit from specific teaching strategies...and this may fit other children with or without cognitive disabilities. If you feel that your child might benefit from supplemental instruction, we invite you to contact us for further information. New policies for the 2008 Fall Term will include not only the option of students attending up to two classes per month (a Thursday evening and Saturday morning), but also the addition of parental instruction during class time. Parents will be given opportunities to see the hand-out materials and learn strategies to use at home with those materials. It is a large part of the vision of P2L—teaching parents how to teach their children so the learning process continues at home.

There will be three classes offered: Mommy & Me (2-3 year olds), Pre-Kindergarten (4-5 year olds), and Elementary I (6-10 year olds). Class size is limited to 6 students. Registration will be first-come, first-served, with priority given to returning students. Students missing two months of classes without prior approval of the P2L coordinator will lose their place in their program. The program remains at no charge, but registration and membership in RRVDSS is necessary. (Membership in our organization is also free.) To register online, please go to our website at www.redriverdss.org and click on the Play 2 Learn logo on the main page. If you would like to register in paper form, call 903-783-1922 to have a form mailed to you or to make arrangements to pick one up at our resource center in Paris. To donate your time or money to this program, contact RRVDSS today!

Educating the Community

(Press Release Sent to Area Media Outlets)

Governor Sarah Palin of Alaska has been selected as John McCain's choice for Vice Presidential nominee of the Republican Party. Governor Sarah Palin recently gave birth to her son who has

Down syndrome. The Palins knew before their son's birth that he would have Down syndrome.

The Red River Valley Down Syndrome Society would like to take this opportunity to educate both the press and the community on Down syndrome and "People First Language". We welcome any questions regarding Down syndrome or issues relating to DS.

Below are tips for the proper use of language for 'Down syndrome'. The National Down Syndrome Society and the National Down Syndrome Congress encourages all media to use the below language:

- Down vs. Down's. NDSS and NDSC use the preferred spelling, Down syndrome, rather than Down's syndrome. While Down syndrome is listed in many dictionaries with both popular spellings (with or without an apostrophe s), the preferred usage in the United States is Down syndrome. This is because an "apostrophe s" connotes ownership or possession. Down syndrome is named for the English physician John Langdon Down, who characterized the condition, but did not have it. The AP Stylebook recommends using "Down syndrome" as well.
- People with Down syndrome should always be referred to as people first. Instead of "a Down syndrome child," it should be "a child with Down syndrome." Also avoid "Down's child" and describing the condition as "Down's," as in, "He has Down's."
- Down syndrome is a condition or a syndrome, not a disease.
- People "have" Down syndrome, they do not "suffer from" it and are not "afflicted by" it. It is clinically acceptable to say "mental retardation," but you may want to use the more socially acceptable "cognitive disability" or "cognitive impairment."

Down Syndrome Myths and Truths

Myth: Down syndrome is a rare genetic disorder.

Truth: Down syndrome is the most commonly occurring genetic condition. One in every 733 live births is a child with Down syndrome, representing approximately 5,000 births per year in the United States alone. Today, more than 400,000 people in the United States have Down syndrome.

Myth: People with Down syndrome have a short life span.

Truth: Life expectancy for individuals with Down syndrome has increased dramatically in recent years, with the average life expectancy approaching that of peers without Down syndrome.

Myth: Most children with Down syndrome are born to older parents.

Truth: Most children with Down syndrome are born to women younger than 35-years-old simply because younger women have more children. However, the incidence of births of children with Down syndrome increases with the age of the mother.

Myth: People with Down syndrome are severely "retarded."

Truth: Most people with Down syndrome have IQs that fall in the mild to moderate range of intellectual disability (formerly known as "retardation"). Children with Down syndrome fully participate in public and private educational programs. Educators and researchers are still discovering the full educational potential of people with Down syndrome.

Myth: Most people with Down syndrome are institutionalized.

Truth: Today people with Down syndrome live at home with their families and are active participants in the educational, vocational, social, and recreational activities of the community.

They are integrated into the regular education system and take part in sports, camping, music, art programs and all the other activities of their communities. People with Down syndrome are valued members of their families and their communities, contributing to society in a variety of ways.

Myth: Parents will not find community support in bringing up their child with Down syndrome.

Truth: In almost every community of the United States there are parent support groups and other community organizations directly involved in providing services to families of individuals with Down syndrome.

Myth: Children with Down syndrome must be placed in segregated special education programs.

Truth: Children with Down syndrome have been included in regular academic classrooms in schools across the country. In some instances they are integrated into specific courses, while in other situations students are fully included in the regular classroom for all subjects. The current trend in education is for full inclusion in the social and educational life of the community. Increasingly, individuals with Down syndrome graduate from high school with regular diplomas, participate in post-secondary academic and college experiences and, in some cases, receive college degrees.

Myth: Adults with Down syndrome are unemployable.

Truth: Businesses are seeking young adults with Down syndrome for a variety of positions. They are being employed in small- and medium-sized offices: by banks, corporations, nursing homes, hotels and restaurants. They work in the music and entertainment industry, in clerical positions, childcare, the sports field and in the computer industry. People with Down syndrome bring to their jobs enthusiasm, reliability and dedication.

Myth: People with Down syndrome are always happy.

Truth: People with Down syndrome have feelings just like everyone else in the population. They experience the full range of emotions. They respond to positive expressions of friendship and they are hurt and upset by inconsiderate behavior.

Myth: Adults with Down syndrome are unable to form close interpersonal relationships leading to marriage.

Truth: People with Down syndrome date, socialize, form ongoing relationships and marry.

Myth: Down syndrome can never be cured.

Truth: Research on Down syndrome is making great strides in identifying the genes on chromosome 21 that cause the characteristics of Down syndrome. Scientists now feel strongly that it will be possible to improve, correct or prevent many of the problems associated with Down syndrome in the future.

For more information, contact the Red River Valley Down Syndrome Society locally at (903) 783-1922 or info@rrvdss.org, the National Down Syndrome Society at www.ndss.org or the National Down Syndrome Congress at www.ndscenter.org

September Happenings
DSG Fall Conference

The Down Syndrome Guild of Dallas Fall Conference - Learning Together, Focusing on Possibilities is planned for later this month in Dallas. The conference is all new - totally revamped with 3 key note speakers and 3 break out sessions with many sessions to choose from - pick the ones that meet your needs! The conference is designed for educators, parents, self-advocates, medical providers, direct care providers, etc. who are involved with someone who has Down syndrome or another developmental disability.

The DSG invites you to join them on Saturday, September 27 at The Crowne Plaza Dallas Hotel!! Call early to reserve a room if you are coming in from out of town. It will be a great day!!

Teaching Children with Down Syndrome

The Red River Valley Down Syndrome Society is offering a free workshop for parents/educators of children with Down syndrome on Saturday, September 20, 2008 beginning at 10 am at the DS Resource Center in the Village Shopping Center in Paris. The workshop will focus on the research of Sue Buckley and Patricia Olwein, discuss how to really help your child with Down syndrome learn with proven methods, and how the Play 2 Learn program is putting research into action.

Attendees will be given hands-on opportunities and will take home incredibly useful handouts that can be shared with teachers (both preschool and public school). Parents of children as young as 2 years are invited to attend. Childcare is provided but must be reserved one week prior to the workshop. Register by contacting RRVDS

Basket Raffle Added

This year, the Buddy Walk's annual silent auction gives way to a new and exciting event: the Basket Bucket Raffle. Teams and community members are encouraged to donate a themed basket or high-ticket item to the raffle (with donation amounts credited to teams' fundraising totals). Raffle tickets will be sold in sets on the day of the walk, and walkers will be distribute raffle tickets into the corresponding bucket (or buckets) of the basket or item of their choice. To find out more about how to donate a themed basket for a team or just as a community donation, please contact Basket Raffle Chair Gail Pitt at gpitt@rrvdss.org or (903) 966-2041. Baskets will be featured on the website as they are donated.