

## DSACO wins Affiliate of the Year DSAIA Leadership Conference 2022

Each year, DSAIA (Down Syndrome Affiliates in Action) recognizes one member organization who has shown true dedication to individuals with Down syndrome and their families, who is engaged in their local communities as well as the larger national Down syndrome community, and whose efforts are truly extraordinary.

DSACO is honored to be recognized as DSAIA's Affiliate of the Year Award for 2022. DSACO leaned into 2021 to create effective, strategic, and quality programs that benefitted thousands of lives. In a year of uncertainty and fear, DSACO found ways to address immediate needs like education, mental health, and critical advocacy. We were even able to throw in a little fun, too!

From the first day of 2021 through the very last, DSACO found intentional ways to serve families in an ever-changing environment. We are so proud of our team, our board, committee members, volunteers, and especially our **EXTRAORDINARY FAMILIES** who contributed to this huge accomplishment!

### Testimonials:

"Getting connected right away, being fully embraced by this incredible organization, and meeting other families with young children with Down syndrome made all the difference as my family began on this path. And over the years, the organization has never once stopped being our champion or asking how they can help."

– **Jenny Gatchell, mom to Grace**

"When we could not receive the Pfizer vaccine for our daughter, DSACO went to the Governor's Office. They arranged another county to come to Delaware to vaccinate 36 qualifying teens with DD who had fallen between the cracks. Without DSACO, our daughter would not have been vaccinated and put at additional risk."

– **Diane Godfrey, mom to Katie**

"Without DSACO, our lives would be greatly different. We truly consider the organization and other families, part of our extended family."

– **Sean De Lorenzo & Yirha Torres, parents to Cassian**



"We are SO grateful to DSACO for awarding us with scholarships & providing educators through Teach4Hire that helped Jaiden THRIVE remotely during the pandemic. DSACO's Supplemental Learning Initiative supported our decision to keep Jaiden 100% remote and created a wonderful opportunity for Jaiden to benefit from one-on-one focused learning."

– **Denene Livers, mom to Jaiden**

"We have also benefitted for the last few years through a program that DSACO puts on called the Summer Learning Academy. This program has made learning fun for our two older children and provides a way to help them keep up with their goals set in their IEP's throughout the summer."

– **Jamie Sanders, dad to Elli, Levi & Ana**

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LEARNING AID OHIO  
TESTIMONIALS

Spring 2022



# 3/21 UPDATE

Summer is right around the corner and before we gear up for the fun times ahead, we want to make sure you're aware of all the exciting educational programs DSACO has to offer!

**3** Whether it's heading to a conference like NDSC's national convention in New Orleans or attending a training DSACO has to offer locally, we are ready to equip you—as parents—with educational resources. This spring, DSACO's offerings include Guardianship & Estate Planning and Charting the Life Course, as well as general Conference Scholarships available for workshops or trainings that suit your personal interests.

**2** While we're still in the pilot phase right now, DSACO hopes to open our Adult Literacy program to offer free, individualized tutoring services to adults with Down syndrome who seek to brush up on their literacy skills. We hope this will become an unprecedented investment in helping adults with Down syndrome unlock a new level of independence and opportunities. Read more on page 12 to see what it's all about!

**1** Learning Aid Ohio is available to your school-age students with IEPs now... and until 2024! If you haven't checked out this incredible opportunity, it's not too late to visit [www.learningohio.com](http://www.learningohio.com) now. Students can receive up to \$1,500 per semester for tutors of your choosing!



**DSACO**  
President and CEO



## We are so excited to share with you our new Instagram page called Expecting Extraordinary!

Here at DSACO, we are always looking for new and interesting ways to connect to new parents. We know that when you first receive your child's diagnosis, you may not know what to expect. And while every journey is different, we are certain that you can expect something extraordinary.

Our new Instagram page will take you through the journey of local DSACO families, an extraordinary ride that you won't want to miss! We want to feature the highs, the lows and all the in between, and give local families the chance to share their story with you.

Make sure to give us a follow so you don't miss a thing! You can find us on Instagram @expectingextraordinary.



EXPECTINGEXTRAORDINARY

# The Importance of Advocacy

Advocacy seeks to ensure that all people in society can have their voice heard on issues that are important to them. Throughout the year, DSACO advocates on behalf of individuals with Down syndrome and other disabilities. Many DSACO team members sit on committees, coalitions, boards, and work groups at the local, state, and federal levels representing our families to combat challenges our community faces daily. At DSACO, advocacy is a year-round effort!

Here's what DSACO has been up to these past few months:

**FEBRUARY**—DSACO's Outreach and Advocacy Associate, Stephanie Leppert, testified on House Bill (H.B.) 281 in front of the Senate Health Committee. This bill is to remove derogatory language from Ohio statutes.



*"As a person with a disability, I know that words can hurt and offend people like me,"* Stephanie said in her testimony.

State Representative Tom Young (District 42), one of the bill's sponsors, sent Stephanie a thank you note expressing his appreciation of her courage to speak before the committee in support of the bill.

**MARCH**—Several DSACO staff members attended Developmental Disability Awareness & Advocacy Day at the Ohio Statehouse. This event is held annually in March during National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. It is an organized event at the Ohio Statehouse for people with disabilities, family members and community members. It is a day of reflection and forward thinking about the importance of advocacy and disability awareness in our community. The morning begins with motivational speakers in the disability community and culminates with the opportunity to meet with your local representatives.

**ONGOING EFFORTS:** Through DSACO's Public Policy Committee and Grassroots efforts, we continually share "Calls to Action" to DSACO members, provide written and spoken testimony that impacts our loved ones, and collaborate with state and national partners on issues pertaining to Down syndrome.

Looking for ways you can become more involved? Be a part of DSACO's grassroots efforts! We can help you know who to talk to in your district and how to share your story.

**For more information contact Kim Baich, [kbaich@daco.net](mailto:kbaich@daco.net).**

## Quick tips when speaking to Representatives:

- Speak with staff or representative from your district or area
- When sharing your story be clear, concise and make it personal if possible
- Be able to talk about your issue in 5 minutes, many visits can be short
- Never leave a visit, hang up the phone or finish a letter or testimony without an "ask"



## DSACO's Zoo-pendous Annual Summer Picnic

Saturday, June 11  
10 AM - 2 PM

Columbus Zoo & Aquarium  
Waters Edge  
Plaza 4850 Powell Road | Powell

**COST:** \$10 per family

Join the DSACO team for our Annual Summer Picnic at the Columbus Zoo & Aquarium. We have plenty of wild fun planned! This event has grown quite popular, so tickets are for people with Down syndrome and their parents and siblings only, please.

Registration is required for this event even if you have a zoo membership. Please register at [dsaco.net/summerpicnic](https://dsaco.net/summerpicnic) by Friday, May 20.

### A Family Series by DSACO

## Compelling Conversations with Charting the LifeCourse

**Session Two:** Supporting Your Child to Build a Life in the Community through Work and Play

Wednesday, April 27  
6:30 - 8 PM | Virtual

Working, volunteering, or being an active part of the community may provide opportunities to earn money fill our time, but it also allows us to build friendships, learn new things, and achieve a sense of accomplishment, competence, and pride! It gives structure to our day, builds social networks, and helps attain a sense of purpose and belonging.

#### Join us for conversations about:

- Building friendships and relationships
- Developing leisure activities, and developing personal networks, or a faith community
- Identifying interests and talents leading to employment
- Developing the skills to get and keep a job

**Session Three:** Utilizing the CtLC Framework for the IEP Process

Wednesday, May 25  
6:30 - 8 PM | Virtual

You and your child's vision are imperative pieces to IEP planning. It is important to develop a vision and plan for the whole child. However, the vision we dream of often goes beyond typical special education eligibility. Charting the LifeCourse integrated into the IEP process can support families as they identify what they need to live, love, work, play and pursue their life aspirations in their community. Capturing your vision in the appropriate parts of the IEP can be a powerful tool in changing outcomes.

#### Join us for conversations about:

- Growing a vision of possibility not just disability at school
- Reflecting on past experiences or what has already been tried to inform goals
- Thinking beyond work for my future to include friends, community and beyond
- How a person-centered and family-centered team can change outcomes

These classes are free, but spots are limited. Register at [dsaco.net](https://dsaco.net).



# Strengthen Skills with DSACO's Summer Learning Academy!

**June 13 – July 14**  
**Monday – Thursday**  
**9 AM - 12 PM**

*Times may vary based on location*

DSACO's award-winning Summer Learning Academy (SLA) is returning for Summer 2022, with a new classroom opening at our Newark location! Each classroom will have two certified educational professionals with one classroom aide, serving up to 8 students with Down syndrome and other developmental disabilities. Kids will receive 60 hours of academic instruction throughout the five weeks, to build on their math and literacy IEP goals and enhance social skills.

Students will have access to free, one-way transportation home from the program each day.

## LOCATIONS:

- Circleville:** Grades 1-4
- Columbus:** Grades 1-4
- Marion:** Grades 1-4
- Mount Vernon:** Grades 1-4
- Newark:** Grades 1-7
- Whitehall:** Grades 1-4
- Worthington:** Grades 1-6



Registration is now open, the deadline to register is April 15. Education scholarships are available for DSACO members. Please visit [dsaco.net/sla](https://dsaco.net/sla) for more details.

## Interested in volunteering with SLA?

DSACO is looking for volunteers to support the 2022 Summer Learning Academy! Interested individuals must have a high school diploma and current, valid driver's license to be eligible. You must be willing to commit to a minimum of 2 out of 4 days per week for the entirety of the program (total of 30 hours).

For more details or questions, please contact Emily Callahan, Program Coordinator of Education Services at [ecallahan@dsaco.net](mailto:ecallahan@dsaco.net) or (614) 263-6020 ext. 1035.



## Round Table Discussion with Derek Graham

**Saturday, May 7**  
**10 - 11:30 AM**

**Dublin Library | Meeting Room #1**  
 75 N. High Street | Dublin

Have you ever had a quick burning legal question that you wanted to ask an attorney regarding your loved one with Down syndrome? Join Attorney and DSACO parent, Derek Graham, Esq., from Resch, Root, Phillips & Graham, LLC for a round table discussion where he can answer some simple legal questions. Come prepared with questions of your own or join us to learn some basic information about planning for the future.

### Possible topics that may be covered:

- Special Needs Estate Planning (why it is so important and when you should do it)
- Medicaid and SSI (what benefits are available and why they are so important)
- Guardianship (Is it necessary)

The event is free, but spots are limited and registration is required. Register at [dsaco.net](https://dsaco.net) by Thursday, May 5.

M.O.M.S. Quarterly Outreach Event:

## Brunch

Saturday, May 21  
9:30 - 11:30 AM

### Der Dutchman

445 S. Jefferson Avenue | Plain City

Nothing beats going to brunch with the ladies! DSACO Moms are invited to spend a Saturday morning enjoying brunch at Der Dutchman. This free event is a great way to meet and connect with other DSACO Moms, while also being celebrated for the awesome Mom that you are!

The event is free to DSACO Moms, but registration is required, and spots are limited!

Register at [dsaco.net/momsoutreach](https://dsaco.net/momsoutreach) by May 11.

### Event Contacts:

Janinah Barreto  
[Janinahbarreto@gmail.com](mailto:Janinahbarreto@gmail.com)

Stacia Napolitano  
[stacianapolitano@yahoo.com](mailto:stacianapolitano@yahoo.com)



## 2022 Golf Classic

Monday, July 18  
12:30 PM (shotgun start)

### The Country Club at Muirfield Village

8715 Muirfield Dr. | Dublin

**COST:** \$800 per foursome

Calling all golfers! Play a beautiful course while raising money and awareness for the Down syndrome community. Participation fees include green fees, cart, swag bag, chef-prepared dinner, and beer & hard seltzers on the course.

Registration opens May 2, please register early as this event typically sells out quickly. Only 144 spots are available. Sponsorship opportunities are still available!

For more information and to register, please visit [dsaco.net/golfclassic](https://dsaco.net/golfclassic).

## 2022 Down Syndrome Golf Academy

Meets once a week on Wednesdays  
June 15 – August 10  
6:30 - 8 PM

**COST:** \$100

### Blacklick Woods Golf Course

7309 E Livingston Avenue  
Reynoldsburg

DSACO is pleased to once again offer The First Tee® Program through the Down Syndrome Golf Academy (DSGA). The program focuses on learning all aspects of the game of golf while including the nine core values: Honesty, Integrity, Sportsmanship, Respect, Confidence, Responsibility, Perseverance, Courtesy, and Judgement. This program accepts all who are 12 and older and is open to all skills levels!

Registration opens April 18, 2022 at [dsaco.net](https://dsaco.net). Golf Academy is limited to the first 12 Golfers who sign up, so register quickly!



## iCan Bike Camp – Volunteers Needed

June 20-24

Worthington Kilbourne High School  
1499 Hard Rd. | Columbus

DSACO cannot host a successful iCan Bike Camp without the help of numerous volunteers!

Volunteers must be at least 15 years of age before the start of camp and be physically capable of running alongside the assigned rider as they learn to ride. Volunteers will attend the same session(s) Monday – Friday and with the same rider to help ensure the rider’s safety. Volunteers provide physical, emotional, and motivational support to their assigned rider throughout the week.

To sign up to volunteer, please visit [dsaco.net/icanbike](https://dsaco.net/icanbike).



Little Buddies Playgroup Quarterly Outing:

## Family Yoga in the Park

Saturday, June 18  
10 AM

Selby Park  
355 N Selby Blvd | Worthington

DSACO families with children from birth through preschool are invited to join us at Selby Park for a yoga story time with Miss Julie. Stay for snacks and play time on the playground after the program! Spots are limited and registration is required.

Please register at [dsaco.net/littlebuddiesplaygroup](https://dsaco.net/littlebuddiesplaygroup).

**Little Buddies Playgroup Contacts:**

Chrissy Bailey | [ctriskett@gmail.com](mailto:ctriskett@gmail.com)

Beth Gelfius | [bfgelfius@gmail.com](mailto:bfgelfius@gmail.com)

Jessica Dury | [jessica@dury.ws](mailto:jessica@dury.ws)

# iCan Swim Camp

July 18 – 22

Pickaway County Family YMCA

440 Nicholas Dr. | Circleville

**COST:** \$150

DSACO is pleased to partner with the Pickaway County Board of Developmental Disabilities to present the 2022 iCan Swim Camp. This camp, also in partnership with iCan Shine, is designed to help people achieve their aquatic goals and learn valuable water safety skills during the week-long program.

Swimmers must be at least 3 years old by the start of camp and have a disability. Swimmers will attend at the same

session time Monday – Friday and parents must remain for the entirety of the session each day.

Register at [dsaco.net/events/icanswim](https://dsaco.net/events/icanswim). Recreation scholarships are available for swimmers with a Down syndrome diagnosis and are members of DSACO.

## iCan Swim Volunteers Needed!

Volunteers must be at least 15 years old and able to attend all 5 days during the same session time. Volunteers provide physical, emotional, and motivational support to their assigned swimmer and must be able to swim and be comfortable in the water.

To sign up to be a volunteer, please visit: [dsaco.net/events/icanswim](https://dsaco.net/events/icanswim) and sign up today!



## 2FGR Run for Down Syndrome

Thursday, May 19, 2022 | 6:30 PM

Coffman Park

6631 Commerce Parkway | Dublin

Join us for the 13th Annual 2FGR Run for Down Syndrome on Thursday, May 19, 2022. The family friendly event kicks off at Coffman Park and features a kids race, a 5K run/walk, a 10K run/walk, and even has virtual options for those who want to support the event from afar. Prices for the 5K start at \$35 and prices for the 10K start at \$45 and will increase on May 1st.

Register today at [2FGR.org/run](https://2FGR.org/run)

## DSACO Jump Start Clinic

Dublin

July 5 - August 2 (Tuesdays)

6175 Shamrock Ct Suite G | Dublin

Westerville

July 11 - August 8 (Mondays)

765 Brooksedge Blvd | Westerville

Lewis Center

July 6 - August 3 (Wednesdays)

7838 Green Meadows Dr N | Lewis Center

All sessions will be held between 3 - 3:30 PM or 3:30 – 4 PM

**COST:** \$110 per swimmer

Make a splash with DSACO at Goldfish Swim School! Come swim with us at the DSACO Jump Start Clinic! Goldfish Swim School offers Jump Start Clinics for introductions to swimming and are hosting an exclusive clinic just for DSACO! This clinic will offer 1:1 sessions for each swimmer. The 1:1 ratio will offer a personal, private lesson providing more support and safety for your swimmer.

Registration opens April 4 at [dsaco.net/event/swimclinic](https://dsaco.net/event/swimclinic). Spots are LIMITED at each location, so register quickly!



School Aged Social Group Quarterly Outing:

## Pizza Play Date at the Park

Sunday, May 1 | 12:30 - 2:30 PM

### Fancyburg Park

3375 Kioka Avenue | Upper Arlington

School-aged children with Down syndrome (ages 5 - 12) and their immediate siblings are invited to a pizza party at Fancyburg Park Shelter House with the School Aged Social Group! Get out and enjoy the warmer weather with friends and meet new ones, too!

Register at [dsaco.net/schoolagedgroup](https://dsaco.net/schoolagedgroup) by April 28!

### School Aged Group Contacts:

Erin Peebles | [erinmpeebles@gmail.com](mailto:erinmpeebles@gmail.com)

Jenny Gatchell | [jennygatchell@icloud.com](mailto:jennygatchell@icloud.com)

Teen Social Group Quarterly Outing:

## Experience Scioto Audubon

Sunday, May 22 | 2 - 4 PM

### Scioto Audubon Metro Park

400 W. Whittier Street | Columbus

The weather is warming up and we are excited to get outside! Teens with Down syndrome and their immediate siblings are invited to experience Scioto Audubon Metro Park with the Teen Social Group! Join us on Sunday, May 22 to explore the Scioto Audubon Metro Park and all it has to offer. DSACO will provide light snacks.

Register at [dsaco.net/teengroup](https://dsaco.net/teengroup) by Thursday, May 19!

### Teen Group Contacts:

Lisa McCarty | [liserahmcc@yahoo.com](mailto:liserahmcc@yahoo.com)

Michelle Ruben | [meechruben@gmail.com](mailto:meechruben@gmail.com)

Andrea Bartosch | [andreibartosch@live.com](mailto:andreibartosch@live.com)

## SAVE the DATE

August 19-21

## 2022 Adult Conference

### Cherry Valley Hotel

2299 Cherry Valley Road SE.

Newark, OH 43055

Calling all ADULTS! The DSACO Adult Conference will once again be held at the beautiful Cherry Valley Hotel this August! Come prepared to enjoy a weekend of learning, meeting new friends, experiencing great food, and having tons of fun. DSACO is planning a fun-packed weekend for all! Registration opens in June. Mark your calendars because you won't want to miss out on this great experience!

Cherry Valley Hotel is a charming hotel that has king size beds in every room, with common areas surrounded by beautiful botanical gardens. During your free time you can take advantage of the cozy indoor pool or relax outside near the fountain. Join adults with Down syndrome from all over the state to connect with old friends or make new ones!

For more information visit [dsaco.net](https://dsaco.net).

October 2

## 2022 Columbus Buddy Walk

### Fortress Obetz

2015 Recreation Trail

Obetz, OH

The Columbus Buddy Walk® is more than a walk, it's a family reunion! Whether you have Down syndrome, know someone who does, or just want to show your support, we invite you to join us for the biggest celebration of the year on October 2!

You will join more than 10,000 walkers from all over the state as unite for a common cause and raise funds to support DSACO and the National Down Syndrome Society (NDSS).

Create your team, register to walk, or donate today at [columbusbuddywalk.org](https://columbusbuddywalk.org).



## African American Resource Group

African American Resource Group was created as a safe space for DSACO's African American families to meet and share resources that are relevant to them. The group has monthly events and attempts to address issues that affect the Down syndrome community and the African American Down syndrome community. Please look for information on the DSACO website for our upcoming meetings, or email to get added to the email list.

Group Contacts:

**De Lena Scales** | [bbc.scales@gmail.com](mailto:bbc.scales@gmail.com)

**Shirley Green** | [sag1489@att.net](mailto:sag1489@att.net)

Join our new Facebook group for DSACO's African American Community.  
[facebook.com/groups/3405662016225747](https://facebook.com/groups/3405662016225747)

## Reunión del Grupo de Familias Latinas de DSACO

7 April  
6 – 7:30 PM

**Columbus Metropolitan Library**  
96 S. Grant Ave. | Columbus

¡Esperamos contar con su presencia para la primera reunión en persona del grupo!

La mejor forma de encontrar respuestas y una fuente de seguridad y comprensión consiste en unirse a otras familias, esperamos que puedan acompañarnos para conocer y crear lazos de apoyo en nuestra comunidad mientras disfrutan de una cena ligera.

Contaremos con el servicio de cuidado de niños. El evento es gratuito, pero su registro es necesario. Toda la información en: [www.dsaco.net/our-events](http://www.dsaco.net/our-events)

Si están interesados en asistir y necesitan apoyo para el transporte, por favor, envíen un correo a Vanessa Armenta a [varmenta@dsaco.net](mailto:varmenta@dsaco.net)





## ¡El grupo de MAMAS LATINAS DE DSACO en FACEBOOK crece y cambia de nombre!

Queremos invitar a sus parejas a nuestro grupo en Facebook, el objetivo de nuestros grupos es que padres y madres se unan para compartir consejos.

Esperamos que este cambio sea una herramienta más para que se todos se sientan incluidos. Por favor inviten a sus parejas a unirse al grupo de:

FAMILIAS LATINAS DE DSACO, si ustedes ya son parte de este grupo no tienen que hacer ninguna solicitud nueva.

## ¿Mi Hijo Está Progresando en la Escuela?

Lunes, 16 mayo

6 - 7:30 PM

Los niños van a la escuela para aprender, pero los padres de niños con discapacidades frecuentemente se preguntan: "¿Cómo sé que mi hijo está aprendiendo y progresando?" Los padres pueden responder a esa pregunta tomando en cuenta una variedad de datos, incluida la información de fuentes de educación especial y educación general e información de fuera de la escuela.

A veces, su equipo del IEP (Plan Educativo de Educación Individualizado) no puede ponerse de acuerdo sobre si su hijo está haciendo un progreso significativo y es posible que se necesite una evaluación adicional para proporcionar otros datos.

Participando en esta plática, usted estará preparado para comprender mejor cómo funcionan las evaluaciones, las metas, el informe de progreso y las revisiones anuales del IEP.

Esta charla será presentada en español por:  
*Iliana Martínez, Especialista en multicultural para la Coalición de Ohio para la Educación de Niños con Discapacidades (OCECD)*

Este evento virtual es gratuito, pero es necesario registrarse. Si tiene preguntas, comuníquese con Vanessa Armenta por correo a [varmenta@dsaco.net](mailto:varmenta@dsaco.net) o por teléfono al 614-263-6020 ext. 1060.



# DSACO Adult Literacy Pilot

Justice Wollenburg really enjoyed school. He was heavily involved in band, choir, and theater. His high school career included involvement in two theater productions and a title of Prom King. Months, and then years, flipped by on the calendar, Justice's siblings went off to pursue higher education, and eventually it was Justice's turn to proudly don a cap and gown and celebrate his high school graduation. He climbed the mountain that was the K-12 education system, with a loving and supportive family beside him every step of the way.

## Now what?

"Now What?" is something we hear from so many families. The transition from a school environment into adulthood is a big deal for everyone. No matter what level of support is in place through the local county board, post-secondary settings, or employment-based initiatives – it's a huge transition.

Stories like this sparked DSACO's Adult Literacy Pilot.

"All his siblings are in college. Justice is so happy to be able to continue his education, too. We are just getting started in this pilot, but he is already feeling so excited, fulfilled, and proud. He wanted to call and tell all his family and friends about it." says Michelle, Justice's mom. She is very hopeful about the future of the program and what it



*Justice, proudly holding up his new library card secured after a tutoring session with his tutor, Marlene.*

means for Justice and other adults like him.

"We live in a more rural area where resources are harder to find. Being able to drive a few minutes to meet with a highly qualified reading professional makes this accessible and sets us up for success. What this is doing for his confidence is amazing – all the things he is learning is icing on the cake."

Modeled after DSACO's Learning Aid Ohio program, the pilot features 3 core phases:

- Browsing a selection of available tutors at dsacoliteracy.com
- Booking a free interview to ensure that the tutor is a good fit

- Using a DSACO-funded grant package to book paid 1:1 tutoring sessions

Adult learners meet twice a week with their tutors to work on literacy goals. The goals are established from the results of pre-assessments conducted by the tutor. Since we know that visual learning and sight words are generally a strength, all learners have one goal related to mastery of sight words. In partnership with the tutor, learners decide which "Big 5" literacy component to target in their sessions for an additional goal. The National Reading Panel lists the "Big 5" essentials for successful reading as phonic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary development, and reading comprehension. Each month, tutors conduct formal progress monitoring to track the effectiveness of their interventions and monitor growth for each goal.

All tutors available on the platform are licensed educators with a background in structured reading instruction and a passion for making literacy accessible. Carla Harper, one of our tutors, said it best on her application "Every individual deserves to experience literacy. Literacy is so critical in every walk of life, from using a menu at a restaurant to reading a map at a local park. Literacy is a powerful tool that equips individuals to advance their education,

experience new hobbies, and communicate. I am so excited that this program is launching!!”

DSACO constantly strives to offer resources, provide support, and facilitate relevant programming through every stage of life. We hope that this Adult Literacy initiative will make a meaningful impact on our adult learners—and help to make the “Now What” a little less overwhelming for families. DSACO is excited to share more details about the Adult Literacy Pilot in the next edition of Keeping Up. In the meantime, we encourage you to browse the website at [dsacoliteracy.com](http://dsacoliteracy.com) and reach out to Rachel at [rheber@dsaco.net](mailto:rheber@dsaco.net) with any questions!



*We live in a more rural area where resources are harder to find. Being able to drive a few minutes to meet with a highly qualified reading professional makes this accessible and sets us up for success. What this is doing for his confidence is amazing – all the things he is learning is icing on the cake.*

– Michelle, Justice's mom



## Couples Counseling

Are you a new parent of a child with Down syndrome? DSACO is offering couples counseling to parents whose child with Down syndrome is less than one year old, to help you adjust to your child’s diagnosis and work through those early emotions. Having an unexpected diagnosis can bring along many different emotions, and we are here to help you get connected with a licensed professional who can guide you through this journey.

DSACO will cover the cost of three counseling sessions with a professional who is committed to working alongside us as we help support you during your child’s first year. Sessions will take place virtually to help accommodate for childcare or time constraints.

If you feel this may be beneficial to you, or you and your partner, please visit [dsaco.net](http://dsaco.net) for more information or contact Courtney Frost at [cfrost@dsaco.net](mailto:cfrost@dsaco.net).

## DSACO enhances care packages for babies with Down syndrome undergoing Open Heart Surgery

Did you know that approximately 50% of babies born with Down syndrome have serious congenital heart defects that often require surgery?

Here at DSACO we strive to support our families in every way possible, so we’ve partnered with one of our longtime supporters and local businesses, Red Giraffe Designs, to help show our families just how much they mean to us! When a DSACO family is facing heart surgery, we want them to know that we are right there alongside them, providing support and guidance through such a stressful time.

Each family will receive one of these beautiful heart charm necklaces as a symbol of hope and a remembrance of their DSACO family, during their hospital stay.

Does your child have an upcoming heart surgery? Please email [cfrost@dsaco.net](mailto:cfrost@dsaco.net) to let us know!



# DSACO's Post-Secondary Scholarship Program

Thanks to the support of the GLOW Foundation and the Hughes Family, DSACO awarded a total of \$30,000 in scholarships to six family members of a loved one with Down syndrome planning to pursue careers in which they will positively impact the lives of individuals with Down syndrome. This program is a unique opportunity to meet, support, and develop relationships with family members who are paving the way for a more accessible and inclusive future. The recipients mentioned below rose to the top of

a highly competitive field of applicants and each brought a unique merit for being selected.

Announcing our 2022 Post-Secondary Scholarship Recipients:

**CONGRATULATIONS** to this year's Post-Secondary Scholarship winners! We are confident that these incredible individuals will go on to make a meaningful impact in their communities!



## Audrey Young

College/University: TBD

**Field of Study:** Special Education (Undergraduate)

*Pictured with her sister, Nathalie*

*“With the DSACO Scholarship, I will be able to get the education I need to become a Special Education Teacher to aid kids, like my sister, in achieving the easy lifestyle that they deserve.”*



## Brandi Keaton-Spencer

College/University: Franklin University

**Field of Study:** Doctorate of Business & Leadership

*Pictured with her son, Brady*

*“The reason I decided to pursue my doctorate was to give back to the Down syndrome minority community. This community is suffering at a far greater rate than most from inequality in healthcare and resources. My goal is to bring awareness to this and to help facilitate a way for better communication, equality, and respect within healthcare and public service. This scholarship will allow me to continue my education to do so.”*



### Carter Foerch

College/University: Cedarville University

**Field of Study:** Biology

*Pictured with his sisters, Grace & Josie*

*“This scholarship will allow me to pursue my dream of helping those in my community with special needs through psychiatry and advocacy!”*



### Jessica Nippa

College/University: Miami University

**Field of Study:** Speech Language Pathology (Master of Science)

*Pictured with her sister, Jennifer*

*“Receiving this scholarship would allow me to finish my Master of Science in Speech Language Pathology!”*



### Lauren Rauber

College/University: Arkansas State University

**Field of Study:** School Counseling (Graduate - M.S.E)

*Pictured with her daughter, Amelia*

*“Advocating for my daughter has shown me how much our kids need someone in the school building who will work toward helping them achieve their academic, social-emotional, and career goals. Receiving a scholarship means I can continue to strive for an inclusive school environment in the role of a school counselor.”*



### Olivia Finn

College/University: University of Cincinnati

**Field of Study:** Communications with minor in Nonprofit Management

*Pictured with her brother Brady and friend Avery*

*“Receiving this scholarship would not only help me to financially reach my goals but would give me positive reassurance that people believe in my end goal of employing people with disabilities one day.”*



## Learning Aid Ohio Provides Supplemental Learning Services to Students on IEPs and 504 Plans



### Memphis, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Hamilton County

Memphis is pictured here sitting at the kitchen table and working hard on a research report. Mom proudly shared that Memphis is reading two levels higher with the support of his learning provider, Ms. Amy. She has also observed that his analytical thought patterns have improved. Memphis and his family connected with Ms. Amy through the Learning Aid Ohio platform and now consider her to be an extended member of their family. In addition to the academic interventions facilitated by Ms. Amy, mom shared that having this kind of structured and consistent support has been invaluable to her and Memphis' mental health as well.

### Mrunal, 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Central Ohio

Mrunal, pictured here with tutor Ms. Angela, has made critical strides in reading and has improved math skills during his time in Learning Aid Ohio. Mom shared that remote learning hit their family hard and Mrunal was falling behind. The 1:1, in-person support offered through the program has been HUGE in keeping Mrunal on track towards his academic goals. Mrunal is a freshman and lives in the Central Ohio area. His family knew Angela outside of Learning Aid Ohio and specifically recruited her to join the platform. With a relationship already established, Mrunal and Angela were ready to dive in and focus on academics!



**2000 +**  
students served



**Ohio**  
counties

DSACO families are encouraged to complete an application if 1:1 supplemental learning support is right for your student. DSACO families who apply will receive a grant to participate in the program! Apply now for summer session (beginning June 5th) at [learningohio.com](http://learningohio.com).

These students are geographically separated by hundreds of miles. Their grade levels, learning abilities, and quality of services received through their local school districts are vastly different. Yet, thanks to Learning Aid Ohio, they all have one important thing in common: access to 1:1, in-person supplemental learning services.

This statewide initiative aims to connect Ohio residents served on an IEP or 504 Plan with qualified learning providers for supplemental learning support. To date, Learning Aid Ohio has served upwards of 2,200 students and issued over six million dollars in granted funds. The reach of the program has extended to 74 out of Ohio's 88 counties.

Something we often hear is "How does it actually work?!" The answer to this question is very much grounded in the needs of the student. Once approved for a grant, families have the option of either interviewing learning providers within Learning Aid Ohio's existing pool of candidates or recruiting somebody that they already know and love to join the platform. Families use a scheduling system which houses calendars of availability and their granted funds. Most students and learning providers meet in-home, although some opt to meet in a mutually agreed upon neutral location. As sessions are booked, funds are deducted, and tutors are paid for their services. Many students work on fundamental reading or math skills. Others use the grant for things like music, occupational, or speech therapy. If a specific need is documented within an IEP or 504 and the learning provider is vetted and approved by our team, we empower families to use the grant dollars in a way that makes the most significant impact for their student.

Learning Aid Ohio is a reality thanks to the generous support of many partners, including the Ohio Governor's Children's Initiative, The Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities, and The Ohio Department of Education. For more information and to apply for future sessions, please visit [learningohio.com](http://learningohio.com).

### **Gabrielle, 7<sup>th</sup> Grade** **Cuyahoga County**

Gabrielle was failing math prior to linking up with Learning Aid Ohio for supplemental support. In a statement that many of us can probably relate to, mom shared that both her and Gabrielle ended up in tears when trying to work on math assignments together. Mom attributes the 1:1 support from learning provider Hae Kwon to her daughter working her way back up to a "B" in math. "I made the best decision selecting Hae Kwon as our learning provider. She has made learning fun for my daughter. She provides lots of praise and encouragement to keep Gabrielle motivated. My daughter's teachers noticed the improvement and commented that my daughter is excited during math class now. The icing on the cake was when my daughter was selected to be the math teacher for a day. It's hard for me to believe how far my daughter has come. She is more confident, less anxious about math, and doing so much better. I'm very thankful this opportunity was made available. Learning Aid Ohio saved my sanity and my daughters academic success."

# DSACO *in the* COMMUNITY



**Top to Bottom:**

DSACO's Outreach & Advocacy Associate, Stephanie Leppert, with DSACO Parent, Kathryn Scheid at the hearing for H.B. 281 on February 9.

DSACO's Outreach & Advocacy Associate, Stephanie Leppert, attended Project Stir Training sponsored by Franklin County Board of DD. The advocacy and leadership training was held at Crown Plaza North in Worthington February 1-3. Pictured with Stephanie are Marci, Elizabeth, Jessie Project Stir trainers.

DSACO's Outreach & Advocacy Associate, Stephanie Leppert, with H.B. 281 bill sponsors, Representative Young and Jarrells on February 9.

**D.A.D.S.**

1st Monday of the month | 6 PM

Monday, April 4

Monday, May 2

Monday, June 13 (note the change in date)

**Brian Stumpo**

bstumpo@columbus.rr.com

**Justin Whitley**

whitleyj@icloud.com

Contact Brian, Justin or visit DSACO DADS Facebook group for meeting details.

[facebook.com/groups/273810587540605](https://www.facebook.com/groups/273810587540605)

**M.O.M.S. Chillicothe Pop-Up**

Thursday, April 21 | 6:30 PM

**Rooster's**

10 N Plaza Blvd | Chillicothe

DSACO M.O.M.S. are invited to a pop-up meeting in Chillicothe to meet and connect with other local moms! Food and non-alcoholic beverages are covered by DSACO. Hosted by Julia Lane—a fellow DSACO Mom who is also on DSACO's team as the Learning Aid Ohio Family Coordinator.

**Julia Lane**

jlane@dsaco.net

Contact Julia or visit DSACO MOMS Facebook group for meeting details.

[facebook.com/groups/297727160607506](https://www.facebook.com/groups/297727160607506)

**M.O.M.S. – Marion**

2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of the month | 7 PM

Saturday, April 9

Saturday, May 14

Saturday, June 4 (note the change in date)

**Chelsea Johnson**

chelseamjohnson1217@gmail.com

**Dawn Brookes**

dawn.m.brookes@gmail.com

Contact Chelsea, Dawn or visit DSACO MOMS Facebook group for meeting details.

[facebook.com/groups/297727160607506](https://www.facebook.com/groups/297727160607506)

**M.O.M.S. – Marysville**

3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of the month | 6 PM

April | TBD

Saturday, May 21

→ See you at the M.O.M.S. Brunch!

Saturday, June 18

**Katie Furr**

katiel617@hotmail.com

**Lauren Roush**

lauren.roush1107@gmail.com

Contact Katie, Lauren or visit DSACO MOMS Facebook group for meeting details.

[facebook.com/groups/297727160607506](https://www.facebook.com/groups/297727160607506)

**M.O.M.S. – Northwest**

Last Wednesday of the month | 6:30 PM

Wednesday, April 27

Wednesday, May 25

Wednesday, June 29

**Kelly Kuhns**

kellykuhns4@gmail.com

**Rebecca Decker**

familyloveforever@yahoo.com

Contact Kelly, Rebecca or visit DSACO MOMS Facebook group for meeting details.

[facebook.com/groups/297727160607506](https://www.facebook.com/groups/297727160607506)

**M.O.M.S. – Southeast**

2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the month | 6 PM

Wednesday, April 13

Wednesday, May 11

Wednesday, June 8

**Yirha Torres**

dtefamily4@gmail.com

Contact Yirha or visit DSACO MOMS Facebook group for meeting details.

[facebook.com/groups/297727160607506](https://www.facebook.com/groups/297727160607506)

**M.O.M.S. – Westerville**

1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of the month | 6:30 PM

Thursday, April 7

Thursday, May 5

Thursday, June 2

**Mandy Peterson**

mandy\_6862@yahoo.com

**Beth Stanley**

bethstanley321@gmail.com

Contact Mandy, Beth or visit DSACO MOMS Facebook group for meeting details.

[facebook.com/groups/297727160607506](https://www.facebook.com/groups/297727160607506)

**Little Buddies Parent Resource Group**

Preparing for IEPs with Ashley Barlow

Thursday, April 21

6:30 – 8:30 PM | Virtual

This group will be transitioning to in-person meetings starting in May! For more information about this transition and future dates and topics, please visit the Little Buddies-Down Syndrome Parent Resource Group on Facebook.

**Tori Whitley**

tnwhitley7@icloud.com

**Whitney Garrett**

wpwalker86@gmail.com

Contact Tori, Whitney or visit the Little Buddies Down Syndrome Parent Resource Group on Facebook for meeting details.

[facebook.com/groups/339782022866623](https://www.facebook.com/groups/339782022866623)

**Adult Stamping Club**

This social group works on paper crafting skills to create one-of-a-kind greeting cards to give to family and friends.

1st Wednesday of the month | 6:30 PM

Wednesday, April 6

Wednesday, May 4

Wednesday, June 1

**Stamping Club Contact:**

**Sue Leppert**

sdlbuckeye@aol.com

**Facebook Groups:**

DSACO D.A.D.S.

DSACO "Lending" Library

DSACO Moms

DSACO Parents of Adults with

Down syndrome

DSACO School Aged Group

Mamas Latinas De DSACO

DSACO Families with Medcially Complex Needs

DSACO's African American Community

Little Buddies - Down Syndrome Parent Resource Group

DS-ASD Parent Resource Group

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### Send Us Your Smiles: 2023 Faces in the Community Calendar Photo Submissions

DSACO is now gathering photos for the 2023 Faces in Community Calendar. We'd love to see your smiles included!

Once again, many local photographers are offering DSACO families FREE photography sessions this spring & summer.

Please visit [dsaco.net/calendar](https://dsaco.net/calendar) for a growing list of these generous photographers or how to submit your own photos for DSACO's 2023 calendar! Deadline for submissions is August 1, 2022.

### Stay Connected!

Stay up-to-date on all the events in your area by visiting **dsaco.net**.

We are also active on social media! Find us by searching these platforms:

