



down syndrome community connections

INCLUSION + SUPPORT + ACCEPTANCE

March 2026

IN LOVING
MEMORY

James Keith Dobbins

May 8, 2009 - February 24, 2026

Forever loved, forever remembered

HONORING JIM

MARCH 15TH

3:30 PM - 6:00 PM

WAVERLY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION BUILDING

A Life Well Loved: Celebrating Jimmy

At just sixteen years old, Jimmy lived a life rich with love, purpose, and joy; a testament to the unwavering dedication of his parents, who gave everything to ensure his world was full and bright. His absence leaves a deep ache in the hearts of his family and the community they have so faithfully served, but his spirit endures in every life he touched.

The loss of one of our own is a tender reminder of how precious and fleeting the lives of our loved ones with Down syndrome can be; lives that ask much of us in time, energy, and heart yet return immeasurably more than we could ever give. In our grief, we are reminded of why we are here: to pour ourselves into every moment we are blessed with, to stand beside one another in hard seasons, and to celebrate every milestone, big and small, with the love it deserves. Let this loss draw us closer together. Let us hold each other in sorrow, lift each other in weariness, and press forward with renewed purpose, knowing every life we love and support is worth every sacrifice.



3.15.2026

A life that touched us all



James, Jimmy, & Natasha Dobbins.

Forever Triumphant

It is with profound sadness that we remember the life of James Keith Dobbins, affectionately known as Jim or Jimmy, who passed away at the age of 16. Jimmy was a beacon of joy and love in our community—his smile, laughter, and gentle spirit touched everyone who knew him. He will be remembered not only as a beloved son, but as a friend and a source of inspiration to his family, educators, neighbors, fellow parents, and everyone he met. Jimmy's journey was one of courage, resilience, and boundless love. His family shared unwavering devotion that defined their life together.

Jimmy's journey, though far too brief, was filled with love, courage, and inspiration. He showed us the beauty of resilience, the importance of kindness, and the profound impact one life can have on a community. His presence was a gift, and his memory will continue to guide and uplift us all. We also want to recognize the extraordinary dedication of his mother, a cherished volunteer for more than a decade and DSAF's Events Coordinator. Her tireless efforts and unwavering commitment have strengthened the fabric of our community for years.

Never defined by challenges, Jimmy was a quiet force of inspiration.

"When I found out there was a good chance my son would have Down syndrome, a medical professional asked me, 'Are you sure?' I was shocked. I was furious. 'This is my son. Yes, I am sure.' I never looked back. I decided it would be him and me against the world. 16 years later...Do I wish I had made a different choice? If I knew then all that I know now, would I make the same decision? If I knew he would only get 16 years, would I still go forward? Yes, I would. We would still rock every vacation, every illness... I would still wear my Mama Bear badge proudly. It would still be he and me against the world... I would change nothing." -Natasha Dobbins



CELEBRATION OF LIFE

Now, in this time of grief, we are called as a community to come together, to honor Jimmy, and to support Natasha, James, and the family he loved so deeply.

March 15th

3:30 - 6 pm

**Waverly Community
Foundation Building**

WORLD DOWN SYNDROME DAY 2026

Together Against Loneliness

MARCH 21, 2026 | YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Every year on March 21, communities around the world come together to celebrate World Down Syndrome Day (WDS), a day of awareness, joy, and advocacy. This year, a coalition of leading global Down syndrome organizations has chosen a theme that speaks directly to one of the most pressing challenges facing our community: **"Together Against Loneliness."** It is a theme rooted in honesty. Loneliness is real. It is widespread. And within the disability community, for individuals with Down syndrome and for the parents, siblings, and caregivers who love them, it can feel overwhelming. Yet it is a theme rooted in hope, too, because the antidote to loneliness is something every one of us already possesses: the power to show up for one another. This March 21, we invite you to celebrate, give, volunteer, and, most importantly, to reach out. to someone in our community needs to hear from you today.

THE REALITY: LONELINESS IS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

Loneliness is not simply about being alone. It is a deep, aching gap between the connection we need and the connection we have. For people with disabilities, that gap is staggering and is shaped not by personal failing, but by systems that have failed them.

A landmark study from Brown University, published in the Annals of Internal Medicine, found that nearly two-thirds (65–68%) of working-age adults with disabilities experience severe loneliness – compared to just 8–10% of adults without disabilities. That is not a gap; it is a chasm.

68%

of working-age adults with disabilities experience severe loneliness – more than six times the rate of the general population. (Brown University School of Public Health, 2024)

2X

People with complex disabilities are twice as likely to report feelings of loneliness as the general public, with 55% feeling lonely always, often, or some of the time. (Sense, 2024)

40%

of adults with disabilities in a national survey reported often feeling isolated – up from 34% just a few years earlier, suggesting the problem is growing. (Annals of Internal Medicine, 2025)

Researchers point to structural barriers, not personal shortcomings, as the primary drivers. **Limited accessible transportation, a lack of inclusive workplaces, inadequate community support, and the enduring stigma of disability all conspire to keep our loved ones and neighbors on the margins of social life.**

"We think people with disabilities may be predisposed to loneliness, since disability is a byproduct of social and structural barriers that restrict people's access to full societal participation," wrote the Brown researchers. This is not fate. This is a fixable failure, and our community has the power to help fix it.

THE HIDDEN WEIGHT CARRIED BY FAMILIES

The loneliness crisis does not only affect individuals with Down syndrome. It reaches deep into the homes of the parents, grandparents, and siblings who love them most. Research consistently shows that caregivers of children with developmental disabilities experience significantly higher levels of loneliness, social isolation, and stress than parents of typically developing children.

Caring for a child with Down syndrome, including navigating medical appointments, advocating within school systems, coordinating therapies, and managing the unpredictability of each day, leaves little room for the spontaneous social connections most people take for granted. Many parents find that old friendships quietly drift away, that social invitations dry up, and that the world simply does not always understand the life they are living.

"I think our experiences are challenged by multiple facets. It is harder. And lonelier." – A parent of a child with Down syndrome, from a 2024 qualitative research meta-synthesis

A 2025 study on family caregivers found that parents of children with special needs reported significantly lower perceived social support and significantly higher loneliness than parents of typically developing children. The causes are well documented: reduced employment flexibility, the need to relocate for specialized services, social stigma, and the simple exhaustion of intensive caregiving all erode support networks over time.

One study of caregivers of individuals with Down Syndrome Regression Disorder found that over 65% reported a negative impact on their adult friendships, and over 71% described a negative impact on broader social relationships. These are not outliers. They are the rule.

These families carry extraordinary joy alongside extraordinary weight. They deserve our solidarity, our practical help, and our presence.

TOGETHER, WE CAN CHANGE THIS

The theme "Together Against Loneliness" is not just a statement, but an invitation. It asks each of us to look around and consider: who in our community might be sitting alone right now? Which parent hasn't had a conversation with a friend in weeks? Which young adult with Down syndrome hasn't been invited somewhere in months?

The good news is that the research also tells us what works. Protective factors against loneliness in people with disabilities include meaningful employment, accessible community spaces, and – above all – strong social support networks. **We are that network. Here is how you can help:**

REACH OUT

Check in on a family in your circle. Send a text. Drop off a meal. Invite a parent for coffee. Sometimes the most powerful thing you can do is simply say: "I see you, and you are not alone."

VOLUNTEER

Our programs and events are powered by people like you. Whether you can give an afternoon or a regular commitment, your time directly creates the connection and belonging our community is built on.

PARTICIPATE

Join us for our World Down Syndrome Day celebration on March 21. Every person who shows up – every smile, every hug, every cheer – sends a message to our members that they matter, that they belong.

GIVE

Our organization is in urgent need of financial support. Every donation – of any size – funds the programs, resources, and advocacy work that break down the barriers causing loneliness in the first place. Your gift is an act of solidarity.

A CELEBRATION WITH PURPOSE

World Down Syndrome Day is one of the most joyful days on our calendar. It is a day of bright socks and bright spirits, of laughter and pride and the deep love that holds this community together. This year, we celebrate with extra intention by honoring not just the incredible individuals with Down syndrome in our lives, but also the quiet courage of every parent who has navigated this journey often without enough support.

Loneliness does not have the last word. We do. When we show up at events, in text messages, at fundraisers, in the simple act of sitting with a friend, we are building something structural barriers cannot easily destroy: a community of genuine belonging.

JOIN US

MARCH 21ST

CITY IMPACT

5 PM - 7 PM

CELEBRATE

CONNECT

VOLUNTEER

DONATE

Together against loneliness. Together for each other. Together – always – for every single one of us.

Sources: Siliezar, Juan, "Higher rates of loneliness persist among working-age adults with disabilities, study finds." Brown University School of Public Health, August 21, 2025, <https://sph.brown.edu/news/2025-08-21/disabled-adults-loneliness>.

"Potential and Possibility 2024: Tackling loneliness," Sense Potential and Possibility Report, 2024, <https://www.sense.org.uk/about-us/research/potential-and-possibility-research/potential-and-possibility-2024-tackling-loneliness/>;

Katherine N. Chow, Lilia Kazerooni, Maeve C. Lucas, Samuel T. Otey, Mariam M. Yousuf, Ruth Brown, Eileen A. Quinn, Jonathan D. Santoro, "Caregiver-reported social impacts in down syndrome regression disorder" PLOS One, <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0342148>

"Together Against Loneliness," World Down Syndrome Day, <https://www.worlddownsyndromeday.org/>

DSAF NEBRASKA

UPCOMING EVENTS

MARCH 2026 · Together Against Loneliness

SAT Mar 7		
9:00 am	New Family Meet Up	Member
10:00 am	CFAA – CrossFit for Adaptive Athletes	Public
10:00 am	Kickboxing Friends (KBF): Ages 14+	Public
11:00 am	Kickboxing Friends (KBF): Ages 6–13	Public
TUE Mar 10		
4:00 pm	Bee Me Social Group – Lil' Stars & Super Stars	Stars
SAT Mar 14		
10:00 am	CFAA – CrossFit for Adaptive Athletes	Public
10:00 am	Kickboxing Friends (KBF): Ages 14+	Public
11:00 am	Kickboxing Friends (KBF): Ages 6–13	Public
2:00 pm	Bee Me Social Group – Lil' Stars & Super Stars	Stars
TUE Mar 17		
7:00 pm	Ed Series: Ron Riggle w/ SYNERGY – Presents on LRI	Ed Series
SAT Mar 21 ★ WORLD DOWN SYNDROME DAY		
10:00 am	CFAA – CrossFit for Adaptive Athletes	Public
10:00 am	Kickboxing Friends (KBF): Ages 14+	Public
11:00 am	Kickboxing Friends (KBF): Ages 6–13	Public
5:00 pm	 World Down Syndrome Day Celebration	WSDS ★
SAT Mar 28		
10:00 am	CFAA – CrossFit for Adaptive Athletes	Public
10:00 am	Kickboxing Friends (KBF): Ages 14+	Public
11:00 am	Kickboxing Friends (KBF): Ages 6–13	Public
SUN Mar 29		
5:30 pm	Children's Museum & Easter Egg Hunt – Lil' Stars & Super Stars	Stars

EVENT CATEGORIES

Member Event	Public Event	Stars Program	Ed Series	WSDS ★ Special
--------------	--------------	---------------	-----------	----------------

VISIT

WWW.DSAFNEBRASKA.ORG

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Thank you for supporting
our important work!

MIRIAM MOELLER CHARITABLE TRUST





We are grateful and thankful for our sponsors!