



Special Edition: Celebrating 20 Years!

down syndrome

community connections
September 2021

Picture from 2011 walk

★ down syndrome
★★ association for families
of nebraska



step up walk turns 20!

a message from the executive director

Dear Friends, Families, and Allies,

Every year at the beginning of October people with Down syndrome and their families have come to count on DSAF's annual Step Up for Down Syndrome Walk as a time to celebrate their friends and loved ones with Down syndrome. This year marks the 20th ANNUAL CELEBRATION!

Yes, I said that right – TWENTY YEARS!!! Even in the midst of a pandemic last year, the Step Up Walk still took place. This Walk is the Capital City's largest and longest-standing annual fundraiser

and awareness event supporting people with Down syndrome, but it is so much more than that.

It's a place where new parents raising a child with Down syndrome can meet seasoned parents and know that it's all going to be okay. It's a place where the meaning of "support" goes beyond just the people who live in your house – it extends to friends, teachers, doctors, local employers, business leaders, coworkers, and more. And it's a place that, for 20 years now, has been teaching Lincoln community members and beyond to never underestimate

the capabilities of people with Down syndrome.

So please join us for this year's Step Up for Down Syndrome Walk on October 2 from 8am-11am at Antelope Park in Lincoln! Whether this is your first year or your 20th, come to the place **where love doesn't count chromosomes.**

With Warm Regards,

Jamie Rejda
Executive Director

Register Today! ds-stride.org/dsafstepup



thank you, donors!

Thanks to donors like YOU, contributions from last year's Step Up for Down Syndrome Walk accounted for nearly 65% of DSAF's annual operating budget! Those funds supported member programs like the monthly Educational Series, New Baby Welcome Baskets, family support groups, COVID-19 advocacy efforts, virtual enrichment events, and more. While we are proud of what has been accomplished, we know our hard work isn't done – and we know can't do it without you! Please consider continuing your support of the Step Up for Down Syndrome Walk so we can make an even bigger impact in 2022. Donations, large or small, can be made at **ds-stride.org/dsafstepup**. Thank you for your generosity!

Special thanks to the Corporate Mission Partners spotlighted in this newsletter for their significant support of last year's Step Up Walk! Contact Jamie Rejda at **director@dsafnebraska.org** to learn more about how your company can get involved.

Mary Catherine

MARKETING



member spotlight:

mary sweeney



Mary Sweeney with her son, Henry.

Our member spotlight this month is Mary Sweeney, owner of the newly founded consulting agency, **Mary Catherine Marketing**. Mary was previously the Marketing Director for DSAF & has recently left the position to launch her own consulting firm! Mary has been responsible for creating DSAF newsletters, Step Up for Down Syndrome marketing materials, educational & informational digital & print materials, to name a few, and although we are heartbroken to see her go, we wish her all the luck, happiness, and success as an independent business owner!

After spending years dedicated to the mission of DSAF & finding new ways to increase revenue for our organization, Mary is now committed to meeting

the marketing needs of nonprofits and businesses everywhere. She is full of fresh ideas, positive energy, and passion for her work. She has been the bridge that has led DSAF to their success over the last few years and she will be greatly missed.

Mary's creativity, courage, & knowledge will aid her in her success as the independent owner and founder of Mary Catherine Marketing. We have been honored to work by her side and hope we continue to have a long & fruitful relationship in the years to come! If you have a business or organization that would benefit from Mary's services, please reach out to her at mary@marycmarketing.com.

Thank you, Mary!

happy 20th birthday

step up for down syndrome walk!

Join us on a fun little trip down memory lane to reminisce and see just how far you have helped us come.

DSAF formed in 1995 as a way for parents to network and share the accomplishments and challenges of family members with Down syndrome. While many may think that is when the first Walk took place, it was several years later in 2002 that this great tradition started.

The original Walk was called the "Capital City Buddy Walk" and took place the first Saturday in October 2002 to bring about awareness and serve as the organization's annual fundraiser. Since October is Down Syndrome Awareness Month, and the Buddy Walk founders, National Down Syndrome Society (NDSS), set the initial precedent, all Walks since have taken place during this month.

It was that first Walk in 2002 that set in motion the future of DSAF and created the framework for everything that you see now today. Because of the funds that were generated at that Walk, DSAF was able to apply for and was granted 501(c)3 status, taking it from a "kitchen table" group to a bona fide nonprofit organization. The first budget was established funding many of the pillars that are still in place today: Awareness, Education,

by
the
#s

2002

1st Annual Walk
\$19,471 raised
360 walkers
DSAF became a
501(c)3 nonprofit

2005

Creation of a dedicated Walk Committee outside of Board to focus annual fundraiser planning

2006

5th Anniversary Walk
\$30,382 raised
1,069 walkers



First Walk Planning Team – 2002



Second Walk – 2003



15th Anniversary Step Up for Down Syndrome Walk – 2016

Medical Outreach, Scholarships, and Donations. And members were officially appointed as representatives of a documented Board of Directors.

Since then, some things have changed. For example, in 2010, DSAF moved from the “Buddy Walk” branding to the “Step Up for Down Syndrome Walk.” This change allowed DSAF to redistribute the 7% licensing fees (added by NDSS several years prior) and allocate those monies more locally for DSAF membership. It also allowed DSAF to support, even still today, more national organizations for legislative advocacy, parent support, research, and affiliate sharing.

The size and makeup of the Walk has changed. The first small group of 300+ attendees in 2002 were made up of mostly parents and family members who helped raise almost \$19,500. Today the Walk has grown to over 1,200 walkers made up of parents, family members, friends, and community members from all across the country! Even in the midst of a global pandemic last year, that broad community of support helped to raise over \$100,000 to benefit people with Down syndrome and make it the most profitable Walk ever.

So yes, some things have changed – in a good way! But what has not changed is the reason behind it.

Every person who comes together for this annual Walk does so because their lives have been impacted by someone with Down syndrome. As DSAF Past-President and original Walk planning committee member, DEan Fuelberth, shared, “The Walk has always been and will always be a celebration event to spread awareness. It shows members and the broader community the value DSAF provides to the state through professional and quality resources, programming, and initiatives. But most importantly, it is a chance to tell the stories of the people we represent and love so dearly.”

Whether you have been a 20-year supporter of the Walk or you are giving for the first time this year, thank you for your support! The impact this Walk has helped DSAF make in the community for the past twenty years has only been possible because of the generosity of YOU.

Remember to celebrate with us this year on October 2 to continue the tradition. We can’t wait to walk with you!



2007
DSAF launches its first professional website

2010
Rebranded from “Buddy Walk” to “Step Up for Down Syndrome Walk”
First paid staff member hired

2011
10th Anniversary Walk
\$66,538 raised
1,280 walkers

2016
15th Anniversary Walk
\$88K raised
1,650 walkers
DSAF is a key player in LB891:
Signed into State Law 4/7/2016

2020
COVID-19 Global Pandemic Year
Planning Meetings all virtual on Zoom
Walk moved to COVID-friendly site at Lancaster Event Center
1,200 walkers
\$100,316 raised
First Executive Director hired

2021
20th Anniversary Walk
Join us October 2, 2021
from 8am-11am
at Antelope Park!



Powering today's steps and tomorrow's strides

Thank you to everyone who Steps Up in support of the Down Syndrome Association for Families of Nebraska!



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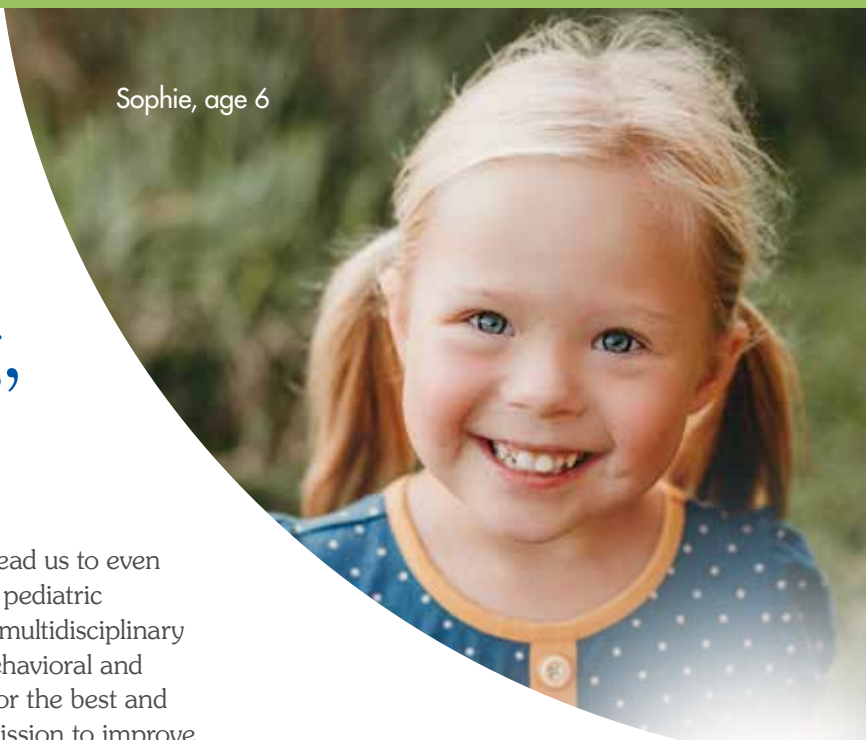
Member FDIC

When children are your everything, Anything can be.

At Children's Hospital & Medical Center, science and heart lead us to even greater pediatric breakthroughs. We provide the very best in pediatric specialty care, including our Down syndrome program. Our multidisciplinary pediatric team specializes in meeting your child's medical, behavioral and therapy needs at every age. Children's is proud to advocate for the best and safest care for children with Down syndrome, fulfilling our mission to improve the life of every child.

For appointments for your child, call **402.955.6100** or visit ChildrensOmaha.org/DownSyndrome.

Sophie, age 6



Care • Advocacy • Research • Education

DSAF Becomes Proud Member of Give Nebraska

Down Syndrome Association for Families is now a proud member of Give Nebraska (formerly Community Services Fund), an organization of nonprofit agencies improving the quality of life throughout Nebraska by preserving resources, expanding knowledge, encouraging creativity, and protecting rights. Give Nebraska conducts campaigns in over 100 companies and workplaces throughout Nebraska, particularly in Lincoln/Lancaster County. Look for Give Nebraska in your next worksite giving campaign to designate your donation to DSAF. For more information about Give Nebraska and worksite giving, visit [GiveNebraska.org](https://www.give-nebraska.org).



GIVE NEBRASKA

Thanks to recurring donations, like those from Give Nebraska, it's easy for donors to continue to support people with Down syndrome while providing the financial stability DSAF needs to bring new programs and services to life.



open a world of possibilities

by diane stewart, enable savings plan director, nebraska state treasurer's office

The COVID-19 pandemic was a difficult time for everyone, me included. But thanks to Down Syndrome Association for Families, and all of you wonderful members, I had hope.

As I saw the organization lead the charge on supporting its members and seeking new, innovative ways to connect, I couldn't have been prouder of the 5-year relationship that Enable has had as a sponsor of DSAF. Some of my favorite memories are of participating in a session of DSAF's Improvaneers class this past year and watching child after child come up and give hugs to my sister, her therapy dog, Teddy, and me as we cheered on walkers in the 2019 Step Up for Down Syndrome Walk.

Yes, I am here as a representative of Enable to help you save for your future and have financial independence, whatever your dream may be. But thank YOU for helping ME by being my glimmer of hope and joy throughout the pandemic of 2020.

Go with joy, have fun, and experience doing something wonderful for the community and yourself at this year's Step Up for Down Syndrome Walk. A world of possibilities awaits you.



Enable
SAVINGS PLAN

If you would like to learn more about the benefits of setting up an Enable Savings account, contact Diane Stewart, Enable Savings Plan Director, at diane.stewart@nebraska.gov.

Please Note: As COVID-19 makes each day a little uncertain, be sure to visit dsafnebraska.org/events or the **DSAF Facebook Page** for the latest event information.

upcoming events

august

31: Deadline for Step Up Walk Corporate Sponsorships to be submitted

september

3: Deadline for donations to qualify for Step Up Walk Fact Posters
 6: Last day to register for guaranteed Step Up Walk T-shirts
 10: Deadline to turn in STARS Bio sheet for Step Up Walk Informed Healthcare Series: School Age
 15: DSAF Ed Series: Re-Evaluation (aka MDT) and Due Process
 21: Step Up Walk T-shirt pick-up
 29-30: Deadline to qualify for Step Up Walk Top Teams

october

2: **Step Up for Down Syndrome Walk**
 19: DSAF Ed Series: Behavior Intervention Plans & Restraint and Seclusion

november

16: DSAF Ed Series: Transportation within an IEP



2021 STEP UP FOR Down Syndrome WALK
 Lincoln's 20th Celebration

Because LOVE doesn't count chromosomes.

WALK WITH US
 October 2, 2021 - 8:00 AM
 Antelope Park - Lincoln, NE

Sign Up Today!
ds-stride.org/dsafstepup


STEP UP DOWN for SYNDROME WALK

thank you mission partners!

Please consider supporting the companies working with DSAF to provide a positive vision of the future for all people with Down syndrome in Nebraska.

