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Arkansas Down Syndrome Association NEWSLETTER



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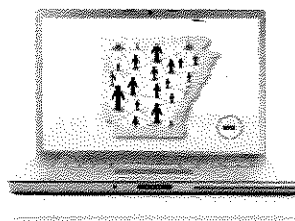


Special thanks to **Horton Brothers Printing** for printing our newsletter.

Want to receive a free copy of our newsletter?

Let us stay in touch with you as we keep our Down syndrome community connected and informed. When you register to receive our quarterly newsletter and special mail outs, you will always be kept up to speed.

Visit us online to register.



Want to become a member of the Arkansas Down Syndrome Association?

By becoming a member of the Arkansas Down Syndrome Association you take the rewarding step of partnering with us in our vision. Members of the ADSA are not spectators, nor are they merely supporters, of our organization. To be a member of the ADSA is to be a true contributor and champion for Down syndrome interests in Arkansas.

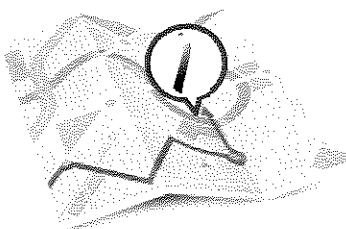
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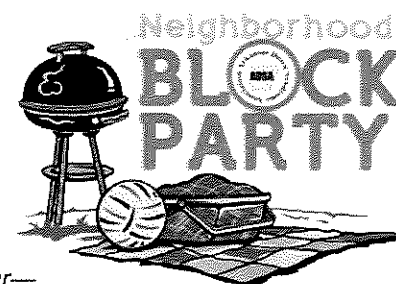
Want to find a list of other Down syndrome groups, sponsoring businesses, or Down syndrome family businesses in Arkansas?

We think it's important to foster a spirit of appreciation and mutual support within our Down syndrome community. Therefore, we point you to a listing of those groups and businesses in Arkansas we want to acknowledge, and think you might enjoy too.

Visit us online to begin your search.



PO Box 55675, Little Rock, Arkansas 72215 • 501-223-3696
www.ardownsyntax.org • contact@ardownsyntax.org



“Aaah, summer—that long anticipated stretch of lazy, lingering days, free of responsibility and rife with possibility. It’s a time to hunt for insects, master handstands, practice swimming strokes, conquer trees, explore nooks and crannies, and make new friends.” Whether that’s a fair description of your summer plans this year or if you’re expecting a little less nature and little more air conditioning, the Arkansas Down Syndrome Association wishes you a fun-filled, hope-filled time with family.

As you make your plans to soak up some rays at the pool or to dive imagination-first into that bestselling novel you’ve been waiting to read, the ADSA is planning its own time for recreation with the scheduling of its 2nd Annual Neighborhood Block Party.

The memories made at last year’s Block Party were precious. Presented in a meet and greet format, the event provided attendees a free lunch, games, carousel rides, a dance therapy performance, fingerprint card station, interactions with mounted police, and an ADSA information table to learn more about the purpose, vision, and opportunities of the ADSA. This year promises more of the same, plus a few special surprises!



Caitlyn Fite, UALR student and Bree Washington, Easter Seals
(Photo by David Moody)

Friendships like Caitlyn Fite and Bree Washington have blossomed thanks to the expansion of Best Buddies, an international nonprofit organization founded by Anthony Kennedy Shriver. Dr. Angela Kremers, State Director for Best Buddies Arkansas, flew out to Miami to interview with CEO Shriver and headquarters staff in late fall of 2014. Kremers was hired and the state office was opened in February of 2015.

Kremers began building relationships and infrastructure for the nonprofit to establish itself in the state. “Startups are something I love and have been a part of numerous times throughout my career,” says Kremers, “creating something that will leave a legacy for generations to come gives me the passion, challenge and persistence to make things happen.” Kremers hired staff, established an advisory board and handled all aspects of setting up the state headquarters. Best Buddies Arkansas is now positioned for growth. Kremers credits the generosity and time of others in the community for the organization’s success.

We invite you to mark your calendar for Saturday, August 27th from 10AM to 2PM at Camp Aldersgate (inside the Commons Building at 2000 Aldersgate Road, Little Rock, AR 72205)—rain or shine. Lunch will be provided at 11:30AM.

If you plan to attend this year, we ask you to register online for free at our website: www.ardownsyntax.org.

Event Sponsors:



The main goal of the Block Party is to give attendees a dedicated time to get to know the ADSA as an organization and its representatives as individuals. It is also a chance for the ADSA to get to know its attendees a little better while giving them a free event to enjoy.

(Spotlight Article Continued)

The nonprofit has three main goals: one-to-one friendships, leadership development and integrated jobs for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Best Buddies works with middle school through college students, offering training to students of all abilities. Typical peers obtain leadership development and learn how to advocate at their schools, while their buddy has the opportunity to receive training in writing and public speaking about their disabilities. Two additional programs are slated to be added in the state once funds are raised including the Citizens Program for adults and the Jobs Program to bring competitive wage jobs to individuals with disabilities.

A recent highlight included a buddy pair from Bryant High School and a Best Buddies ambassador who spoke to the Legislative Task Force on Special Education Best Practices and received a standing ovation.

Caitlyn who is part of the UALR Best Buddies Chapter was immediately drawn to Best Buddies because of a sibling with autism. She readily shares that she is very protective of people with disabilities and wishes others could be more accepting.

Dr. Angela Kremers agrees, "We are all about friendships, all about inclusion," says Kremers. "We advocate that we are all more alike than not alike and there should be value placed on all individuals. It's so rewarding when there is this light bulb moment for the typical student, when they realize that this isn't about charity. This is a real friend."

Regular friendship is exactly how Bree Washington describes her relationship with her peer buddy, Caitlyn Fite. "We just hang



Caitlyn and Bree became friends through the Best Buddies Arkansas program at UALR and Easter Seals. (Photo by David Moody)

out. Go to Ulta to buy makeup. We go to McDonald's to get something to eat. I go to her house to eat with her mom and her. This summer, we're going to Magic Springs. It's just normal stuff."

Washington lives in the apartments at Easter Seals. Although she dislikes the word "disabled," she knows that sometimes others perceive her as different. In fact, she was severely bullied in high school. Other students called her vicious names. While she has moved on with her life, the pain is still fresh.

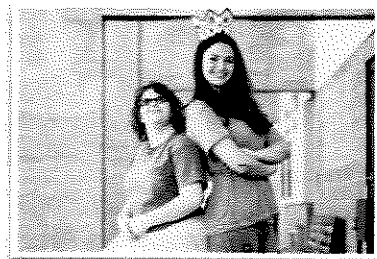
"It really hurt, the names they called me," she says. "To this day, it hurts." Washington says the best part of the relationship with Fite is that she doesn't treat her differently than her other friends, "God made everybody the way they are for a reason, and not to be treated like babies all the time."

Fite says some of her other friends were a little unsure when they met Washington for the first time, simply because they didn't know how to react. "They say, 'I don't want to be awkward.' But they get over that quickly, and just see who she is as a person. They see why I like her. She's my friend."

It's breaking down those barriers between people that Best Buddies is focused on, whether that's through friendships, job

placement or leadership. The Arkansas advisory board has both typical members and members with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities, which allows the organization to be steered by everyone it targets.

To make successful matches, the nonprofit works with special education teachers, school counselors and the students themselves. As much as possible, they try to match students with similar ages, genders and interests. Program Manager, Kristen Taylor who joined the nonprofit team in October of 2015 works directly with schools to help make this happen.



Bryant High School students Lauren Ausburn and Alexis Lorio (Photo by David Moody)

Lauren and Alexis were matched as buddies about a year ago and their friendship formed quickly. The seniors at Bryant High have baked cookies, watched movies, gone bowling (Lauren won), taken tons of selfie pictures, made plenty of Sonic runs and had a lot of dance parties.

If you are interested in beginning a Best Buddies program in your school (middle school through college), contact Angela Kremers at (501) 975-1040 or AngelaKremers@BestBuddies.org. For more information, you can also visit BestBuddiesArkansas.org.

people participated and we truly enjoyed every single photo and appreciated the support for this fun campaign.

Last, but certainly not least, Two Rivers Park Bridge and Big Dam Bridge in Little Rock were beautifully lit in blue and yellow from March 18th through the 21st in honor of World Down Syndrome day.

Down syndrome awareness cannot be accomplished by a single organization—it takes all of us working together. Thank you to all who joined us in celebrating the bright diversity of our own Down syndrome community and the uniqueness it's members bring into the world.

special needs information tables were also a hit, not to mention a luncheon and a guest appearance by emcee, Renee Shapiro of KATV. The dance is a great way to create awareness, help raise funds and, most importantly, to celebrate our community and enjoy great camaraderie!

WDS 2016 continued with participation in the LOTS OF SOCKS campaign. By wearing unusual, different, or brightly colored socks, family and friends showed their support for loved-ones with Down Syndrome. ADSA asked that everyone tag us on social media using hashtags #LotsOfSocks, #WorldDown SyndromeDay, and #DownWithThat. Many

ON THE CALENDAR

The ADSA is committed to remaining a healthy and active organization. Keeping an annual calendar scheduled with opportunities for you and your family to benefit from is among our cherished priorities. We hope you take note of our list of scheduled events and consider participating in as many of interest to you:

Aquatic Park Outing

Our friends at Central Arkansas Buddy Talk invite you to Cabot's new Aquatic Park on Friday, July 15th at 10:30AM. This water recreation offers zero entry and baby slides for the little ones and water slide and lazy river for the older crowd. Daily admission for those 48" and above is \$8, and below 48" is only \$7. Seniors are also only \$7, plus the park offers a \$1 off military discount.

Firebreather Regatta 2016

The Down Syndrome Connection of Northwest Arkansas, in cooperation with CrossFit Bentonville, CrossFit Argonaut, and Special Olympics Arkansas Area 3, is hosting the first event of its kind on Saturday, July 30th called "Firebreather Regatta." Participants, in teams of 10, will compete together by rowing a marathon as a relay team. Proceeds help raise funds for Special Olympics Arkansas Area 3. The registration fee is \$50 per participant, \$500 per team of 10. The fee will cover an event t-shirt, refreshments, and lunch in addition to the opportunity to compete. For more information go to www.dscnwa.com.

Summer Sports Camps

Participating in Leaping Beyond's Summer Sports Camps is a great way to learn about sports by receiving specialized attention from a pediatric physical therapist and volunteers from the community! Providing access to adaptive sports and horing children with disabilities, Leaping Beyond offers 6 weeks of adaptive sports camps throughout June and July in the Cabot, Lonoke, Bryant, and Jaconsville areas. To learn more visit Leaping Beyond's website at www.leapingbeyond.com.

Neighborhood Block Party

Mark your calendar for Saturday, August 27th and join the ADSA for its 2nd annual Neighborhood Block Party. The event is at Camp Aldersgate (inside the Commons Building at 2000 Aldersgate Road, Little Rock, AR 72205) from 10AM to 2PM—rain or shine. Lunch will be provided at 11:30AM. (See Cover Article for more details). If you plan to attend this year, we ask you to register online for free at our website: www.ardownsyntax.org.

Health Conference

Planning is underway for ADSA's next conference, hosted in partnership with our friends at UAMS. Stay tuned for announcement mailouts or posts online at www.ardownsyntax.org. You can also find the latest news on our Facebook page.

Meet ADSA's new Resource Development Coordinator:

The Arkansas Down Syndrome Association is excited to introduce its new Lifelong Resource Development Coordinator, Lainey Morrow.



Lainey is a wife, mother, and advocate. A 2004 UCA graduate, Lainey had a career in technical writing and web development until she resigned to focus on her daughter's health and development. She has been married to Ron for 12 years, and their only child, Lila, was born 3 years ago with Down syndrome. Sweet Lila has brought the world inexplicable joy since her arrival. Lainey is extremely excited to join the ADSA to promote the interests of people with Down syndrome in Arkansas!

Membership Applications

The ADSA is still accepting membership applications for 2016. Recipients of this newsletter who are currently on our mailing list will receive a paper application form in the mail along with a paper registration form for the *Gettin' Down For Down Syndrome* dance. Both forms may be completed and mailed back to us at PO Box 55675, Little Rock, AR 72215, or an electronic version of both forms may be found on our website at www.ardownsyntax.org.



Amazon Smile Fundraiser

If you shop much on Amazon.com, you can start supporting the ADSA with your purchases. All you have to do is use the link smile.amazon.com when you logon and select our organization. Every dollar makes a difference!

Kroger Card Fundraiser

Simply register your Kroger Plus Card online at krogercommunityrewards.com using the # 80386, and ADSA will receive \$5 for every \$100 that you spend for groceries and gas. Thank you to everyone who participates!

Purchase a Decal Plate

By completing a request for a Down Syndrome Awareness decal plate from the DMV, the ADSA will receive \$10 from your purchase or registration.

* All funds raised by the above give-back programs help support Down syndrome intersts regionally and statewide.

A Call for Volunteers

The ADSA wants to hear from you if you are interested in volunteering to help us continue to make a strong impact in Arkansas. Whether that's fundraising, event planning, or public awareness, e-mail us at volunteers@ardownsyntax.org and tell us about your interests and availability.



World Down Syndrome Day 2016

March 21 was World Down Syndrome day and this year, Central Arkansas boasted a spectacular celebration on a number of fronts. We kicked off the festivities early with our annual *Getting' Down With Down Syndrome* theme dance. This year, we had a blast rockin' to the DJ stylings of Terry Gee with a special performance from Elvis (Butch Dicus) and some special guests in Star Wars costumes, thanks to *The 501 Legion* and *The Rebel Legion* charity groups. The Star Wars photo booth, art table, games and various

