

*A SEASON OF CHANGE....  
A SEASON OF GROWTH....*



*DSACK has seen tremendous growth and change over the last 18 months.*

*The officers of the Board have worked diligently to provide a strong foundation for our organization, so that we can continue to grow and sustain DSACK not only for the families we serve now, but for generations to come.*

*We started 2009, by meeting with a strategic planner to help us analyze our mission and values. This was an all-day work session in which we set goals for the next three years, metrics for accomplishment, and timetables to keep us on track. Many of these*

goals are being realized now, and we are so excited for the accomplishment of future goals.

Our new treasurer, Lee Ann Mullis, has hit the ground running by updating our software and recategorizing our budget income and expenses. She was instrumental in helping us with our 2009 budget and has prepared the following chart to show the percentages of our expenditures.

A very important part of our budget is supporting families in crises. This past year DSACK helped four families in need. One family was in a terrible car accident, another had a house fire, and two families had children hospitalized for surgery. It is an honor for DSACK to provide financial support, meals, visits and encouragement to these families. Our own Dr. Malkanthie McCormick, who is on staff at UK, has been a great source of help to these families during difficult times. Michelle Gilliam maintained contact with these families and helped coordinate meals and visits. In addition, several DSACK families have taken meals, written letters of encouragement and visited the families in the hospital. This is one of the most important functions of DSACK, and our families have never failed to show their love and support.

In February, three officers and one advisory council member attended the Affiliates In Action Conference in Washington D.C. This conference was structured for board members of Down syndrome affiliates around the country. We gained invaluable insight and tools for board development, education programs, faith inclusion, adult transitions and post-secondary education. We also met with several members of congress regarding the new Kennedy Brownback bill, which mandates truth in prenatal/postnatal diagnosis, and the ABLE bill, which allows individuals with

*disabilities to have a savings account in excess of \$2,000.00 without losing their government benefits. I can't begin to tell you how much we learned and how anxious we are to implement some of these ideas.*

*April was a very eventful month for DSACK. We met with the Advisory Council regarding our new strategic plan to gain more insight from those that have been with DSACK from the beginning. A task force was formed to amend the bylaws and restructure the Board of Directors. This was a very successful endeavor and will benefit DSACK for years to come.*

*Let me just take a moment to mention board members that have served our organization so diligently in the past. We owe a HUGE debt of gratitude to Caroline Baesler, Karen Boudreaux, Becky Lesch, and Meg Steinman. These ladies did the grassroots labor of starting DSACK. They did so much work that went unnoticed and never asked for recognition. Thanks to these ladies, we have our annual Buddy Walk, holiday party, summer picnic, a lending library and much, much more. They gave huge amounts of time and sacrificed much to bring DSACK from a fledgling group of parents to the current organization that serves over 200 families. Ladies, we just can't thank you enough!*

*The first Buddy Walk conference was held in April, as well. Regina Schmutte, Buddy Walk Chairmen, and Deanna Dillender, event coordinator, attended the conference in Columbus, Ohio. This was lead by the National Down Syndrome Society. Best practices were discussed with other affiliates, and some great ideas will be implemented at the upcoming Buddy Walk on October 3<sup>rd</sup>.*



*Speaking of the Buddy Walk, this year's walk will be the best ever! Regina has recruited new volunteers from the community, formed new committees and has already saved over \$3,000.00 in expenses. This year will also include on-line registration and donations. This will help the registration process go smoother and increase the amount of donations over all. Even though the economy is down, the Buddy Walk committee is confident that with careful planning and keeping expenses at an all-time low, we will have the most successful walk ever! I urge you to look into volunteering for the walk. There are so many opportunities to help make the Buddy Walk a huge fundraiser, but more importantly, a wonderful day of celebration for our loved ones with Down syndrome. This is our biggest fundraiser, and DSACK depends on this income to offer programs and services to our families.*

*More exciting news comes in the form of the development of a new website. Your DSACK officers have been busy writing content and gathering photos of our beautiful families. Courtney Elbert has been the coordinator of this huge endeavor. Thanks Courtney, for your tenacity in seeing this project to fulfillment. We should have a brand new professional site very soon! Our web address will remain DSACK.org, so keep checking the site!*

*Our newsletter continues to receive recognition in our community. The editor of the Exceptional Family KY magazine read our newsletter and contacted Courtney for an article in their 2009 edition. Way to go Courtney! You will also notice that the newsletter is now in color. Thanks to bidding out the job, DSACK will not incur additional expense for the color production. I think we all agree that our newsletter is a wealth of information that can be used by all. I know I can't wait for each new edition.*

*Our new parent group continues to grow and attract new families. Over 20 families have participated in this group which has been so beneficial in forming friendships and support over the last couple of years. Michelle Gilliam does a fabulous job in organizing this group and arranging for many guest speakers ranging from therapists, parents of older children, medical professionals, and educators to give advice and perspective to new parents.*

*Michelle also helped organize our teen/young adult group led by our first UK practicum student, Brooke Reed. Brooke has done an outstanding job with this group which averages 10-13 members. These young adults enjoy an activity monthly such as attending Disney on Ice or a college basketball game, having potluck dinners, or just hanging out together. I know this group will continue to*

*grow and will amaze us with their leadership in DSACK and our community.*

*Two more UK practicum students will be starting an elementary group this July. Ashleigh and Melissa are collecting names and information on this age group and are planning some exciting activities for kids and parents. Information regarding our first get-together is in this newsletter.*

*DSACK families have participated in the education of UK Physical Therapy students by attending learning labs with their children who have Down syndrome.*

*DSACK officers and families have also participated in the Human Development Institute's mentoring program for UK medical residents and graduate students. This program is designed to give students entering the fields of medicine, education or ministry a deeper understanding of what it means to have a child with disabilities, so that they can better relate to families once they enter their professional career.*

*Along those lines, DSACK has held several presentations at local schools. Courtney Elbert organized an "Everyone Counts" day at St. Leo's school in Versailles. Several of us took our children to visit the school for the day. Our parents talked to the entire school during an assembly and then visited individual classrooms to allow the children to interact one-on-one with our children. My daughter, Hannah, and I delivered presentations in classrooms at Veterans Park Elementary, and I, along with Melinda Ault, a UK doctorate student in the area of special education, spoke to a class at Asbury College regarding faith inclusion for individuals with disabilities. The Board is also looking at some education programs to implement*

*in local schools. If you would like someone from DSACK to talk to your school, please contact us. We would love to spread the word about our wonderful children and how capable they truly are!*

*I hope you had the chance to attend some of the social functions we hosted over the last year. These include our annual holiday party, which is always a success and includes that special visitor from the North Pole, the appreciation reception held in April every year to honor our past board members and our volunteers, and our annual summer picnic in July. Also in July is the Fayette County 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade. Last year DSACK received the Mayor's award at this parade! Make plans to join us in the parade again this year. There has been an average attendance of 75 at all of these social functions, with some families traveling over 100 miles to attend. WOW! They are a fun time for everyone and a great way to make connections with other families. Don't miss the opportunity to join us!*



*What about the future? I can't begin to tell you how upbeat I am for the future of DSACK. Our biggest goal is to acquire office space in the near future. In order to do this, our fundraising must increase. Let me just mention some of the opportunities that could be realized by having our own space. Our vision includes summer math and reading programs, cooking classes for all ages, a place for all of our peer groups to meet monthly, a conference room for our Board meetings, playgroups, location for our library, computer skill classes for all ages, sibling workshops, seminars to educate teachers and medical professionals, and the list could go on and on. Imagine the growth and outreach DSACK could have in our community with all of these programs! Wouldn't it be great to hire an Executive Director to help with administrative duties, fundraising events, and coordinating more programs? The future holds endless possibilities for our loved ones, but DSACK must establish a presence in our community.*

*To that end, I urge you to form a team now for the Buddy Walk in October. Start contacting friends, family, and associates to walk and reach out to everyone you can think of for donations. I also urge you to get involved by volunteering for the Buddy Walk or other needs DSACK has throughout the year. Our new website will have a section with volunteer opportunities. Be sure to check it out. I promise you will receive more than you ever imagined!*

*Our message is simple: Our loved ones are beautiful, capable and loved! Join us today and help spread that message to the world.*

*Looking Forward to Our Future,*

*Traci Brewer  
DSACK Chairperson  
Fall 2009*

