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OMAHA  
DOWN  
SYNDROME  
PARENTS  
NETWORK



COMMITTED TO  
ENHANCING LIVES



## EXTRA EXTRA (21) READ ALL ABOUT IT

A newsletter from the **OMAHA DOWN SYNDROME PARENTS NETWORK**  
Committed to enhancing the lives of individuals & families touched by Down syndrome

### **ODSPN Annual Meeting** By Amy Amua-Sekyi

What started out as a vision of a few area moms almost 10 years ago has evolved to what you know today as the thriving and ever so present organization, the Omaha Down Syndrome Parents Network. From the smallest of beginnings there can always come great things in the future with the knowledge and persistence of individuals like each and every one who is or has been involved with ODSPN in any aspect.

This is why I encourage you to attend the upcoming 2009 ODSPN Kick Off Annual Meeting to be held on Tuesday, February 3, 2009 at 7 p.m. at the Nebraska Children's' Home. This will be an excellent opportunity to get to know your ODSPN Executive Committee and Board members and learn about what this organization can do for you. We will also introduce the four new board members. Each brings with them a breath of knowledge and experience that will continue to drive ODSPN to new heights. The meeting will be an opportunity to recap all that happened in 2008 and learn of where we're going in 2009. We actively listen to our members as they voice their wants and needs and strive our best to provide and assist in all venues

Please come and join us on Tuesday, February 3, 2009, with your presence you will be eligible to win a door prize as well find a way that you can help ODSPN reach its goals for 2009. If not for the effort of our members and each of you bringing your time and talents to assist our organization couldn't be the entity it is today and we need you to progress to the future.

### **Upcoming Events**

- Tuesday January 27 : Educational Transitions Seminar
- Thursday January 29: DADS Meeting
- Friday January 30: Down Syndrome Specialist Breakfast
- Tuesday February 3 : ODSPN Annual Meeting
- Tuesday February 17: Family Support Group
- Saturday February 21: Mom's Monthly Coffee

**A complete updated 2009 ODPSN Calendar can be found on [odspn.org](http://odspn.org)**

**January 2009**

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A correction: Jill Foster of Westside Community School was responsible for the Dress Down For Down Syndrome in December. We apologize for the incorrect name in the last OPDSN newsletter.

## Grant Update

ODSPN received a grant from The Hawks Foundation to fund the Expectant Parent Booklet and brochure to be printed in 2009. We thank them for their contribution to our organization.

## Young Athletes of Special Olympics

The next session of the Young Athletes program begins Sunday January 25th and will run for 8 weeks. The sessions are held from 3-3:30 pm at Elite Cheer (144th and Center). The program is designed for children ages 2-7 and siblings are welcome.

## Bowling Event

The annual ODSPN Bowling event was held on November 8<sup>th</sup>. Over 100 people attended this family event and enjoyed pizza, pop, cookies and bowling. This was the first year families had the option to sign up for a bowling time. This allowed more people to bowling with less wait. Chops Bowl was again a big hit for ODSPN.



**Bowling Photos**

## Letter from Mary McHale

2009 is an anniversary year for ODSPN. It was January 1999 when ODSPN (original name was NDSSNebraska) met for the first time during a PRISM meeting. Fliers were sent to all of the school districts, asking the Service Coordinators to give to their families who had a child with Down syndrome. At that first meeting, there were 5 families, who came because they wanted to meet other families who had a child with Down syndrome. They wanted to talk about heart surgery, developmental stages for their child, and share other concerns and issues. From a small group of 5 to a mailing list of over 300 families and individuals, we have grown in numbers, in offerings to our families, to services to our families, etc.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Buddy Walk in 2002 was registered by Mary Stuart Hagood and Alexis Bolger- two mothers who wanted to do something in Omaha. Our families in NDSSNebraska heard about these two parents and got together to join in the effort. From the 1<sup>st</sup> Buddy Walk where we had 325 participants to the 2008 Buddy Walk where there were over 2400 participants—the support and interest in what ODSPN stands for and offers to our community has grown year after year.

ODSPN continues to be perceived as the subject matter expert for families who have a child with Down syndrome. We partner with over 20 school districts for our new Down Syndrome Specialist program, present at the area hospitals, present at local schools and have other service providers who look to ODSPN as an organization that not only wants to promote the rights of individuals with Down syndrome, but partner with other organizations who serve individuals with disabilities.

The ODSPN Board is dedicated and committed to serving the needs of the organization. We want to provide programs, events, and seminars that meet our membership needs. On behalf of the ODSPN Board, we consider it an honor to serve and work for your needs.

AND if you are interested in seeing what happened with funds raised in 2008, please plan on attending the ODSPN Annual Meeting on Tuesday, February 3, 2009 at 7:00 at the Nebraska Children's Home located at 4939 S 118<sup>th</sup> St. It is an excellent opportunity to meet the ODSPN Board, see what happened in 2008, what is planned for 2009 and give your input. Look for a flier for more details

## Down Syndrome Specialist Breakfast by Lori Eyth

**ODSPN** will host a breakfast on Friday, January 30th for the DSS from each of the 17 school districts and their Special Education Directors. At this meeting we will:

- Talk about advertising DS Specialists in each District- ODSPN can make business cards, email announcement, press release to media
- Article suggestions for upcoming Inclusion Solutions Newsletters
- Article suggestions for ODSPN Parents- things educators wish parents understood
- ODSPN's 2009 Calendar of Events- helps them know when/where they can get education and encourage families to attend events
- Suggestions for training topics and any speakers they would like to see in 2009
- Resource needs or wish list from each school district
- Encourage each district to share a success story on inclusion
- Train DSS' on how to give peer presentations in classes

## Members Corner

Welcome to:

Amy, Toby, Max and Nathan Marshall,  
Christine Mc Kinney and Sherrie Jindra

Thank you to :

Paige B. Photography who made a donation  
in honor of Bella Hayden.

James D. and Anna Strasheim who made a  
donation to ODSPN.

Karen Campisi for her donation in memory  
of Hope Foster.

Stephanie Sorbellini for her donation in  
honor of Charlie Joseph.

Taylor E.M. Jensen for her donation in honor  
of Brenda Jensen.

Member news:

Cadie Albin's picture was featured in the  
Omaha World Herald on December 23, re-  
ceiving a visit from Santa Claus

Kyle Lacy, brother of Cassie, received the Just  
Friends Mentor of the Year 2008 award from  
The Ollie Webb Center.

Jerus and Janell Sime accepted the Inclusion  
leader of the Year 2008 Award from Coach  
Rick Hook of Millard West High School.

## ODSPN Board News

The ODSPN Board welcomes four new board members:

**Mark Smith** is the Grants Chair. Mark is a Consumer/Family Coordinator for the Munroe-Meyer Institute and has worked in the disabilities area for over 20 years. Mark is the father of 3 children.

**Shelley Cooper** is the External Communications Chair. Shelley is a Senior Account Executive for KPTM Fox 42. Shelley has worked in sales for a number of years and brings valuable Public Relations expertise to the board.

**Allison Machamer** is the Buddy Walk Chair. Allison is a Technical Project Administrator for Gallup Corporation. Allison and her husband have 2 children, Kayla and Allen. Allison was involved with the Down Syndrome Guild of Greater Kansas City and moved to the Omaha area over the summer.

**Steve Kudlacek** is the Treasurer. Steve is a Senior Analyst for First National Bank of Omaha. Steve has served on other boards and has participated in fundraising events for other organizations. Steve and his wife have 2 children.

## Transitioning: Into Kindergarten, Middle School and Beyond By Lori Eyth

If you have a child that fits into these categories or someday will, this meeting is for you. The meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 27th from 6:00 to 8:00 pm at the Swanson Library at 90th and Dodge Street. Come hear from other parents who have already been there and done that. Find out what questions to ask, find out what your options are and other insightful things. Mary Dale Christensen from PTI (Parent Training Institute ) and a speaker from the Ollie Web Center/The Arc to inform you what services they have available that you may take advantage of to help foster your child's growth. You should have received an invitation in the mail with the date and 2 fliers on what questions to ask and what to look for when you are transitioning. You will also learn about our new DSS (Down Syndrome Specialist) program that is in each of the 17 school districts and who your DSS is and how to get hold of them and what their job description is.

## 2009 ODSPN Calendar

The new 2009 ODSPN calendar is now available online at [www.odspn.org](http://www.odspn.org). Check it out to view all of the exciting events and programs planned for 2009!

## D.A.D.S

D.A.D.S. is a national organization designed to assist and support, through fellowship and action, the fathers and families of individuals with Down syndrome.

**Upcoming Meeting Dates:**

**January 29**

**February 26**

**March 26**

**Location: Clancy's 114th  
& Dodge**

**Time: 6:30 PM**



DADS Christmas Party Photos

# OMAHA DOWN SYNDROME PARENTS NETWORK

Committed to enhancing the lives of individuals  
& families touched by Down syndrome

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Our mission is to enhance the quality of life for all individuals with Down syndrome by providing resources and support to those individuals, their families, professionals and the community. Our Vision includes:

- Providing access for individuals of all ages and their families to a wide range of opportunities and resources that meet their needs.
- Full participation of the membership, the community and professionals working together to build resources that inform and support one another.
- An effective coalition with the educational community providing a choice of opportunities for high quality education for individuals with Down syndrome.
- A professional community providing services and advice based on current and accurate information available and acting as advocates for family and individuals with Down syndrome.

## Community Events

- Shopko stores carry the Erin's World Frame Line by Specs4us, eyewear for children who are special. For more information, go to [www.specs4us.com](http://www.specs4us.com)
- Adapted Martial Arts classes are available through the Great Plains PVA starting in January. For more information, contact Great Plains PVA.
- Sensory Friendly Films are held at AMC Oakview throughout the year. AMC Entertainment has partnered with the Autism Society of America to show a film with the lights brought up and the sound turned down. If your child has sensory issues, this may be the setting for you. Contact AMC Oakview when the next film will be shown.
- The Walk and Roll for Disabilities will occur at Westroads Mall on Sunday, Feb 22 starting at 12:00. Funds raised for the Walk and Roll go towards the Adult Recreation Therapy programs at Munroe Meyer Institute. For more information, contact 559-5777.
- PRISM on February 17, 2009 will consist of a Resource Recreation Fair. Different area businesses and nonprofits will have information about their spring and summer programs. The Resource Recreation Fair will be held at the OPS TAC building located at 3215 Cuming St starting at 5:00 pm.
- The Legislative Affairs personnel from NDSS and NDSC met with the Obama-Biden transition team to discuss broad disability issues. The issues raised and discussed with lack of inclusive opportunities, quality instruction and accountability in education for students with disabilities, and lack of job and community living opportunities for adults with disabilities. For more information about the issues raised, go to [www.change.gov](http://www.change.gov).
- There will be a new MTV show starting in February 2009 featuring adults with developmental disabilities who have been reporting the news for many years. The show is titled "How's your News". Check the MTV listings in February. To view an episode, go to [www.howsyournews.com](http://www.howsyournews.com).