



Spring 2020

Down Syndrome

Association of Central Kentucky

Support • Educate • Celebrate



Rachel Richeson
with Laura, Katherine and Andrew
Laurel Katelyn Photography

MISSION STATEMENT | To celebrate and support people with Down syndrome and their families and to educate ourselves and others throughout Central and Eastern Kentucky.

Keeping up with DSACK

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DSACK Bylaws and financials are open for review, and the Board of Director Meetings are open to our community. Agenda items are determined well in advance.

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The DSACK newsletter is published quarterly by the Down Syndrome Association of Central Kentucky, 1050 Chinoe Road, Suite 204, Lexington, KY 40502



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Stay Connected



You can now RSVP for events right from our website calendar at www.dsack.org



To receive our weekly email blitz, email Terri at: dsack.org@gmail.com



To join our private facebook group where you can communicate with other DSACK families, go to <https://www.facebook.com/groups/82674673490/> and request to be added to the group.



To "like" our official facebook page and receive updates from our association, go to <https://www.facebook.com/TheDownSyndromeAssociationofCentralKentucky.dsack.org@gmail.com>



Follow DSACK @DSAofCentralKY on Twitter.

Visit our calendar on www.dsack.org to see current events, activities and educational opportunities!

From the Executive Director

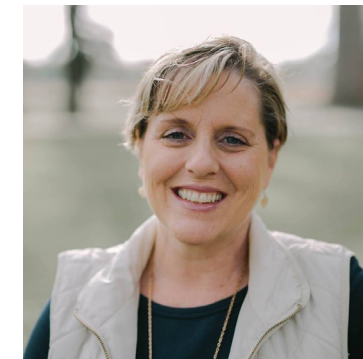
'The greatest disability of all is low expectations'

By Traci Brewer

I have a quote from Henry Ford hanging in my office. It reads: "Whether you think you can or think you can't, you're right."

Another quote I like from a film called "Bottom Dollars," comes from a man with Down syndrome who owns his own company, Poppin' Joe's Kettle Korn. Joe says, "The greatest disability of all is low expectations."

While many things have changed for the better over the past 50 years for people with intellectual disabilities, there is still so much to be done! When I was growing up in a small town in Central Kentucky, I never met or knew anyone with a disability. It still amazes me that in a tiny town of about 10,000 people, I could not tell you the name of one person in my school or community who had a disability. Students who had a disability and attended school arrived 15 minutes before the general population, ate lunch in the classroom, and left 15 minutes before everyone. They never



left the special education room. Never!! I often wonder what their names were, could we have been friends, what has the rest of their life been like? I don't think I will ever know.

Today, we see positive changes such as moving away from institutionalization, better inclusive practices by most schools, and legal rights under federal laws such as IDEA and ADA. But, before we get too comfortable in the positive changes, let's be aware of things that still need to be changed. Per the 2019 Kentucky Post School Outcomes

report (kypso.org), one year after graduating, Kentucky adults with more severe disabilities, which often includes a diagnosis of Down syndrome, report that 80.7 percent have no type of employment, and 74.7 percent are not engaged in employment or higher education. When I think about these figures, I just have to believe that so much of this is due to low expectations whether it be from parents, schools, or society. We have to do better!

Wait! Don't stop reading yet. I know these are depressing numbers, but we have to look at these numbers and decide to do better. Read on about adults connected with DSACK who are taking low expectations and stuffing them in the trash. Read on to hear about the different employment positions that adults with Down syndrome are filling throughout our community. Read on to learn more about DSACK's We Work! program that has helped many of these adults take the first step toward employment. Read on to see how a group of

DSACK young adults gave back to their community by visiting another population that often feels lonely and isolated. Read on to realize that high expectations make all the difference; with a close second being to empower yourself with knowledge.

We, as parents of young adults and children with Down syndrome, are recipients of a legacy left to us by parents who had children born with Down syndrome before the 1980s; that legacy being the fact that we bring our children home to share their love, their joy, and their own intelligence with our families and our community. I hope the legacy we leave for future generations is that employment and higher education opportunities abound because we refused to accept low expectations, and we gathered all the resources and knowledge necessary to make those dreams a reality.

I'll step down off my soapbox now, so you can read on. Hope to see you soon.

Coming up!

There are plenty of exciting events and activities coming up. Here are some to be on the lookout for:



World Down Syndrome Day Celebration	March 20
Nothing Down About It Gala	May 16
Down with Dares	June 12
Brown Bag Lunch at DSACK	2nd Thursday of the month
Fall Family Fun Day & Walk	Sept. 12
Holiday Party	Dec. 12

Be sure to check the DSACK calendar at www.dsack.org for additional information and to register for events and activities.



A Parent's Perspective

In midst of change, job proves beneficial

By Rob Wright

When Maribeth, Emily, and I packed up all our belongings in August 2015 and moved from Camden, Arkansas, to Lexington, we only thought that we knew all the changes that were about to take place in our lives. Our stated reason for moving was to be closer to our son and daughter-in-law. Jonathan, now a DSACK board member, would argue that point since our decision to move coincided with the announcement from him and Ashton that our first grandson was on the way! Four and a half years later we have two grandsons with another coming later this year. That is only a small part of the change that moving to Kentucky has brought about!

Emily had lived her entire life in Camden, a small south Arkansas town with a population of roughly 10,000. When she was born, we were unprepared for her diagnosis of Down syndrome, and like most parents in that situation, we immediately wondered what the future would hold. While we knew that there would be challenges to overcome along the way, our immediate goal was to do everything that we could to enable her to achieve everything that she was capable of. She began receiving a variety of therapies by the time she was 8 weeks old, and when she reached her fifth birthday she was ready to start kindergarten. She attended the local public school throughout her school years. She was fully included in classes with her peers from beginning to end and graduated from Camden Fairview High School in 2008. That is when one of the big challenges for all of us began as we thought about what was to come next.

From 2008-2015, we tried diligently to keep Emily active and



Rob, Emily and Maribeth Wright

involved in everything available to her, but in rural south Arkansas there just wasn't much available. She did volunteer work in a number of different positions, with the longest period of time being in the office at our church. She answered the phone, assisted in the food pantry, proofread the weekly bulletin, and straightened up the sanctuary in preparation for each Sunday. The pencils in the backs of the pews were kept sharpened to the point of being hazardous! It was a great environment for her, but it was still a volunteer position, and most of the other volunteers were much older than Emily. One of them is approaching her 102nd birthday, still volunteers at the church, and still mails Emily a bulletin with a personal note on a weekly basis!

When we arrived in Lexington, we began trying to get Emily involved in everything that we could, and for the first time in her life there were more things to choose from than we could possibly do. We attended a couple of Coffee Chats at DSACK and were fortunate enough for Emily to be a part of the first group of participants in We Work! That has proved to be one of the best things ever to happen for her.

As a result of participating in We Work, Emily has been employed as administrative assistant at DSACK since 2017. She is not a volunteer, she is employed! She loves knowing that she is earning her own money. She has developed a greater sense of self-confidence and frequently

looks for ways to take on more responsibility at her job. Her position at DSACK has given her the opportunity for personal growth and has allowed her to build relationships with her co-workers and peers that are invaluable to her. Of all the changes that we have experienced over the past four years, some of which were very much unexpected, one of the best has clearly been the opportunity for Emily to be employed at DSACK. All of us have benefited from the changes that have taken place, but none has truly profited any more than Emily!

Rob Wright is a retired elementary school principal. He and his family live in Nicholasville.

Fundraisers set for 2020

Plans are already underway for DSACK's three biggest fundraisers – the Nothing Down About It Gala, Down with Dares, and Fall Family Fun Day and Walk.

The Nothing Down About It Gala is up first, on May 16. It will be held once again at the 21C Museum Hotel in downtown Lexington, complete with cocktails, dinner, and live and silent auctions. This year's theme is "Big Hats and Bow Ties - An evening at the Races."

Down with Dares follows on June 12. This photo scavenger hunt around downtown Lexington returns for a second year and gives participants a chance to work in teams to find a list of 21 photo "dares" scattered around town. Of course, big prizes are available.

Then there is the biggest one of all – the Fall Family Fun Day and Walk. We will return to Masterson Station Park in Lexington for all the carnival-like activities and walk on Sept. 12. Look for more fun, more food, and more entertainment.

May 16
Nothing Down About It Gala
dsack2020.givesmart.com

June 12
Down with Dares
Photo Scavenger Hunt

Sept. 12
Fall Family Fun Day and Walk

Last year, these fundraisers brought in a total of more than \$200,000, enabling DSACK to continue to offer all its important programs and services free of charge to families. We want to carry on that tradition, but we need your help. Please plan to mark your calendars for these opportunities to give back to DSACK.

Grant funding a 'vital resource'

The final numbers are in, and DSACK once again had a banner year in grant funding. Nearly \$32,000 was awarded through eight grants. The funds were used for the We Work! Career Planning Initiative, the Learning Program, Summer Enrichment Program, College Bound program, and more.

Increasingly, grants are becoming a vital resource for DSACK. We are devoting much more time and energy to finding the right grants.

Our largest grant - \$10,000 – came after a member of the DSACK family alerted us to his company's grant funding program. If your company offers grants or you know of other grant possibilities, please email dsack.org@gmail.com.



Board holds annual retreat

DSACK's board of directors met for their annual retreat in January. The focus this year was a review of the 2018 strategic plan and a celebration of the progress made, according to Katie Gilley, board chair.

Among the goals met and celebrated was the development of programs that reach across the lifespan of individuals with Down syndrome, specifically for adults, Gilley said. Additionally, the board reviewed the DSACK investment account and made note of its continued growth.

The meeting wrapped up with board members watching "Bottom Dollars," a documentary that sheds light on the practice of paying people with disabilities subminimum wage and the impact on the Down syndrome community.

DSACK Executive Director Traci Brewer recognized the commitment of the "great" board, which is made up of family members and professionals who "really steer the future of DSACK."

College Bound program expands

In an effort to create a true college experience for adults ages 18 and up, DSACK and Bluegrass Community and Technical College are expanding their partnership to offer a three-part series of courses on health and nutrition. The series kicks off with the spring 2020 course – Human Nutrition and Wellness, which started in February. It will be followed by related courses in the fall of 2020 and spring of 2021.

In addition, students are now able to sign up for Blackboard, a virtual learning environment and course management system.

Having their own Blackboard accounts allows them, like other students, to access the class PowerPoints, send messages to the professor, ask questions online, and more.

"I've met with several representatives from BCTC to collaborate on ways to focus on a course of study for several semesters. This is a way for students to be more responsible for their college experience and to better translate what they learn into their everyday lives," said DSACK Executive Director Traci Brewer.

**Para ayudar a traducir
esta revista al español, llame a la oficina de
DSACK en 859-494-7809**



The Value of Work: More than just a paycheck

In Kentucky, only 19 percent of individuals with intellectual disabilities go on to find jobs (or enter college) after high school. And many of those who are working find themselves in meaningless jobs or jobs that pay mere pennies on the hour.

"On the surface, that's a pretty dismal outlook," said Traci Brewer, executive director of DSACK. "But there is a bright side to this picture. With the right training and supports, such as our We Work! program, anyone with an intellectual disability like Down syndrome who wants a job can find a job. And not just any job ... one that aligns with their interests and abilities, and that pays a competitive wage."

Proof positive is a group of individuals in the DSACK community who are employed not only in jobs they love but in jobs that pay them minimum wage or higher.* Here they tell their stories, in their own words.

**Some jobs offered through the 14(C) certificate – sheltered workshops – can, by law, get by with paying people with intellectual disabilities less than minimum wage.*



Bryce Vinson
Common Grounds Coffee Shop

I love my job at the coffee shop. I love all people that help me with my job. Common Grounds is my happy place. My job there is to clean dishes, sweep, clean tables, smile at everyone. Sometimes I get to work the cash register. I work two days a week.

My job means a lot to me. I love all the workers there. They are my best friends.

I wanted to work at a coffee shop and we called Tyrell with Quest Farm and he worked with me to get me ready for the interview. Tyrell was so happy for me. I am so happy to

work at Common Grounds. I like people and being in a place helping others. My motto is "Will work for coffee." My goal is to become co-manager.



Olivia Ash
Kid to Kid

I work at Kid to Kid. I work six hours per week. I fold baby clothes, straighten up toys and books and shoes. I take toys out of bins and put them in the supply room. I take toys and clothes to the shopping area and put them on the shelves. I also sweep the floors with a dust mop and wash the windows.

It's fun and helps me focus on what I am doing. I also like seeing the babies when they come into the store. I love babies!

We Work, job shadowing, and job training helped me get my job and especially Miss Karen at Build Inclusion. We Work! helped me focus on what kind of job I would like to do and would be good at. It was fun!



Tage Cook
Arby's

I work at Arby's. I make the sandwiches. First, I separate the bun. I weigh the meat and put it on one side. I put the cheese sauce on top. On the other half I put the ranch sauce. Then I put the two together and then I wrap the sandwich. Right now, I work 12 hours a week.

It's important to me to have a job I enjoy. I enjoy my job at Arby's. We dance when it's

not busy. I also like to make money. And I get to eat there. I have experience with cooking. I cook at home with my family, and I used to work at a college cafeteria.

The We Work! program helped me decide on the kind of jobs I wanted to look for. It helped me build my resume and taught me interview skills.



Kate Boudreaux
Allegro Dance Project

I work as an assistant dance teacher with Allegro Dance Project teaching dance to students with special needs. Usually, I work two to three days per week or more depending on the school schedule.

Having a job is important for me because I have the chance to teach dance to students with special needs. I love going to work and have fun making a difference in their lives.

Sometimes they are not sure what to do, so I will show them by doing the dance first, then help them do it. Then I cheer them on and tell them great job when they learn how to do it!

There are several skills that I needed to help me do my job:

1. Knowing how to dance and how to work with others as a teacher.
2. Being a team player and good listener.
3. Having a positive attitude, being calm and patient.
4. Teaching students to dance and being their best cheerleader.

The We Work! program helped me to create a "vision board" for my future and understand the skills to do my job.



Troy Lovich
Hartland Hills Retirement Home

I work at Hartland Hills Retirement Home. I set all the dishes on the tables and get the dining room set up and ready for lunch. I work seven hours a week.

I like to work and help people. I like to talk to the people there and they are my friends. I help them to have a nice lunch.

This job was good for me because I like to set tables neatly. I like it to be done right. I also like to talk to the people at the retirement home.

I learned to do my work at Tates Creek High School with my job teacher Mrs. Sparks. She helped me try different jobs to see what I liked to do. I liked this job the best of the four I tried. I have worked there for seven years.



Chad Bell
McDonald's

I work at McDonald's - I take out food to people - I have to match the number on the ticket to the number on their table. Sometimes I cook the hash browns and put them in their little bags. I greet people, straighten up the front and back lobbies and the bathrooms, fill up the condiments and paper products, clean the trays, take out the garbage, and do the best I can for the community.

I love it there. I'm in my 17th year of working at the Paris McDonald's and I take it really seriously. Sometimes I get to see former co-workers and managers and it's great to

see them - people I used to work with. It's also important that I get to see all the people from the community in McDonald's - my former teachers, my church members and former students - it's just great to see all the people. I also work to keep the restaurant safe and that's important - I take care of spills and keep people from falling. And what's important is that I keep getting paid. I just had my performance review and I am a good worker and I just got another 20-cent an hour raise. I get to go to crew meetings and learn about the restaurant and have fun with my co-workers. We have parties at Christmas and in the summer and I get to go to them.

I had to listen when my Paris High School job trainer, Betsy Whitt (now Tako), told me what to do. I had to ask questions when I didn't understand what she wanted me to do. I had to pay attention and try hard to learn how to do the work.

But the most important characteristic that helps me keep my job is that I'm really friendly to the customers and always tell them hello and help them out - holding the doors or helping them with the trash from their meals.

I wish that I could have participated in the We Work! program, but it came after I already had my job. My high school helped me to get my job. I worked at Papa John's, a grocery store, and a video store, but I liked McDonald's a lot so I stayed there.



Callie Baesler
UK Student Center, Champions Kitchen

I work at UK, which is at the Student Center at Champions Kitchen. I do cookies there in the bakery. I am in charge of getting cookie dough out of the boxes and then put them on the tray. Then I put the tray on the racks to wait until they go into the oven. And then they are cookies! I think the students are happy to have cookies and I am happy that my friends come and say hi to me.

I work two days a week, four hours each day. I'm really tired when I get home so I have to rest!

I want to make my own money. When I tell people about my job, it makes me feel happy and it makes my mom and dad proud, too. But I really don't like mornings, so that is hard for me.

Interview skills. We Work! showed me what that was like, so it wasn't a surprise. I was ready for it.

It showed me how to do interviews, and they talked about dress codes so I knew that. Annette and Joe [at Build Inclusion] helped me figure out what I wanted to do and also helped find a place where I like to work. I would tell people to please do We Work,! it will help people find a job and find a good fit.



Emily Wright
DSACK

I work at the Down Syndrome Association of Central Kentucky, and I am the administrative assistant with a lot of responsibilities that I do at my job. I do love what I do in preparing for meetings and taking notes and helping create the website, and especially doing the obvious cleaning of the office, etc. I work three hours, two days a week.

I love what I do for a living, and it makes me feel confident in getting things done effectively. But also another thing that is really important to me are the people I work with - my executive director Traci Brewer and my office coordinator Terri McLean. And Hana Toupin and Courtney Elbert. They are the hardest workers I know, that I always appreciate their loyalty for being my friends and co-workers.

I started the We Work! program in the fall of 2016 and it helped me being able to get a job. It gave me the leadership and teamwork skills that help you in getting a job and in being able to accomplish something that we are capable of doing. I am so proud in working for DSACK.

Continued on page 8



Continued from page 7



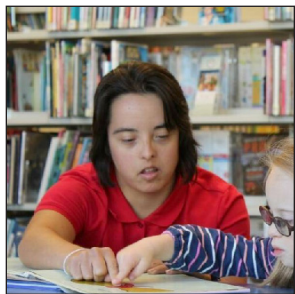
Jonathan Hardy
Kroger and Windy Corner Restaurant

I do grocery bags at Kroger. I double bag heavy stuff, cold stuff, separate bags for chemicals. Then I put them in the cart. I help ladies to their cars. I help put grocery bags in the car. I get my break. I pack my snack or lunch. I clock out for break and I set my phone for 15 minutes. My phone beeps and I go back for more work and grocery bags. I really like my friends at work. They miss me when I'm not there.

My job at Kroger is a good job. I do a good job with grocery bags. I do a lot of work. I like to shop when I get off work. I buy sushi.

At Windy Corner, I watch and wait for people to finish eating. When they finish, I get the dishes. I do dishes, big plates, small plates, and knives and forks. I scrape them and then take them to the kitchen. I get people more drinks, ice and water with lemon. Sometimes coffee. I like talking to people. I take my break and I can order anything I want. Then someone picks me up.

This was my first job. It is a good job. I like working and making my own money. At Windy Corner I get tips. I get cash in an envelope with my paycheck. At home my job is to set the table and clean up the dishes and put them in the dishwasher. I am really good at it. This helped me.



Megan McCormick
Fayette County Public Schools and DSACK Learning Program

I am working as a media assistant and paraeducator. I have been working part-time with the school system since 2013. This year I am working full-time. I work with kindergarten reading and first grade math intervention. Recently, I was asked to participate in a Coach and Enrich program for kindergarten students, as well.

I also work in the learning programs for DSACK. I successfully carry over skills learned from one environment to the other with ease.

It is very important to me to have a job because of the experience working and having the skill set and hands-on. It can put myself in the door for the person in charge who would interview me in the job that I want.

One skill/characteristic importantly is having a resume for the person in charge to see what I have accomplished and the experience I've had in the field of interest that I want to bring to the table to the job.

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Be Inspired

Giving Back to the Community

Residents of Sayre Christian Village – a retirement home in Lexington – were all smiles when students from DSACK’s We Work! program paid a visit as part of their community service capstone project. Actually, the students were pretty happy too, their passion for helping others evident from start to finish.

As part of the project, the students weeded the home’s raised flower beds and planted flowers. They also spent time with the residents, having lemonade and cookies, and listening to their personal stories.

Pictured top right: Layne Boyd, left, Traci Brewer, a resident of Sayre Christian Village, and Joshua Landeene weed a raised flower bed. Middle: The group works together to plant flowers in a freshly weeded flower bed. Bottom right: Eli Taylor, left, and Joshua Landeene share cookies, lemonaid and conversation with a resident. Below: Emily Brewer visits with a resident.



Let's Celebrate



Happy 5th birthday, Conor! We love you bunches - Mommy, Daddy, Davis, and Grayson



Happy Birthday, Joshua! We're so proud of the thoughtful, young gentleman you have become. You keep us laughing and smiling and we are so very proud of you. You're our Super Hero. Love, Mom, Dad, Seth, Ryan, and Chance



Happy 7th birthday Olivia! Keep on dancing and shining little superstar!



Vera James Roberts turns 3 March 11! She knows her ABCs, can count to 20, and loves to sing!! She's a bright light to everyone she meets and is definitely worth celebrating.



Clay is six! Happy birthday to our fantastic kiddo!



Harrison Mizell will be celebrating his 6th birthday on April 21! He is such a bright light he illuminates every life he touches.



Happy 3rd birthday, Abel Grey! We are so proud to be your family! Love, Dad, Mom, Razor, and Wells



Ben and Eliza Johnson turned 2 on Feb. 27. Happy birthday!



Happy Birthday Charlee Girl!

Check the DSACK calendar at www.dsack.org for information and to register for events and activities.



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Lexington, KY

Proceeds from the Fair are donated
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scholarships for high school seniors,
hearing aids and sponsorships.



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MISSION
STATEMENT

To celebrate and support people with Down syndrome and their families
and to educate ourselves and others throughout Central and Eastern Kentucky.

