

Annual Meeting Highlights

Out-going President Julie Tutwiler opened the 2007 Annual Meeting with a review of DSANI's accomplishments in 2006. She then presented gifts to the following out-going Board members, Theresa Bickel, Karen O'Boyle, Jessi Kamleiter, Brenda Amburgey and Marsha Scheitlin, and expressed her thanks and appreciation for their dedication to DSANI.

Sujeet Desai and his mother, Sindoor, then entertained and inspired the almost 100 in attendance with a PowerPoint presentation, and some video footage, including Sujeet's proposal to his new bride Carrie, which was recorded after one of Sujeet's presentations. Sujeet played several songs on his clarinet and violin and we were able to see firsthand how this young man has made his motto, "Making Possible, Mission Impossible" come true in his life. Sujeet's mother, Sindoor, also talked about the challenges and successes in helping Sujeet and Carrie move away from home and live together as a married couple.

Jenny Bockerstette, DSANI's incoming President, then discussed some plans for 2007, presented DSANI's Buddy Walk donation of \$15,000 to Tom O'Neill accepting on behalf of the National Down Syndrome Society, and also presented the DSANI Star Awards to the following individuals for their outstanding contributions:

Jen & Randy Pickard - Jen, one of the founding members of DSANI, served on the Board of Directors for 5 years. Jen and her husband Randy also wrote, edited, created and published the DSANI Star newsletter for 5 years. Jen serves as a Buddy Walk committee member and coordinates the Books to Schools Program.



Praise Lutheran Church - Praise Lutheran Church has been a model of outreach into the community of people with disabilities. They have opened their preschool/daycare doors to embrace children with Down syndrome and have hosted dinner/dances for adults with disabilities in the community.

Sujeet Desai - Sujeet was recognized as an extraordinary self-advocate. Sujeet brings inspiration and hope to individuals with Down syndrome and their families.

Susan James and Carol McCracken - Susan and Carol teach the special needs pre-school class for Northwest Allen County schools. Susan and Carol have always been great supporters of DSANI. They care about the future success of their students. Often parents will visit them for encouragement and advice even after their children are no longer in their class.

Linda Jackson - For the past two years, Linda invited DSANI to promote the Buddy Walk on her show "Weekend News Now" that airs on both Saturday and Sunday. Linda touched our hearts as she shared with us her desire to help DSANI promote awareness and acceptance of individuals with Down syndrome in our community.

Automotive Color and Supply and Keith Byers - This company has been a Corporate Sponsor of the Buddy Walk for several years.

Special Olympics

Special Olympics – Allen County

Calling all athletes! Special Olympics Allen County is now forming! A County Management Team is actively working to create a program for youths with intellectual disabilities. The first organized sport will be bowling, beginning this fall, and they are currently seeking athletes, volunteers, coaches and donors. Athletes will practice with a team for 8 weeks. Although present planning efforts are focused on youths, there are resources for adults with intellectual disabilities who would like to take part in a Special Olympics program. For more information or to be placed on the mailing list for the youth or adult programs, please contact Stacey Fleming at 260-434-0651 or jastfleming@juno.com.

Special Olympics – Huntington County

Special Olympics is already an established program in Huntington County Schools. Team awards are currently on display at Huntington North High School.

Basketball begins in December and continues until the State Competition in March. The junior team is for boys and girls ages 8-15. The boys senior team and girls senior team each consists of boys or girls ages 16-21. Practices are once a week.

Bowling practices begin in August at Rainbow Lanes in Huntington and continue until the Regional and State Tournaments in November. Practices are every other Saturday afternoon and athletes bowl two games each.

Track is in the Spring. There are practices and meets from March until the first of June. Track events include softball throw, standing long jump, meter-races, shot-put and wheel chair events.

If you'd like to become of Special Olympics in Huntington, either as a coach or participant, please contact Nancy Hartley at 260-672-8316.

No Child Left Behind

Many of you have probably heard of “No Child Left Behind.” This law requires annual testing in reading and math for grades 3 through 8 and again in high school. Information taken from <http://answers.ed.gov> explains that under “No Child Left Behind,” each state has developed and implemented measurements for determining whether its schools and local educational agencies (LEAs) are making adequate yearly progress (AYP). AYP is an individual state's measure of progress toward the goal of 100 percent of students achieving state academic standards in at least reading/ language arts and math. It sets the minimum level of proficiency that the state, its school districts, and schools must achieve each year on annual tests and related academic indicators. Parents whose children are attending Title I (low-income) schools that do not make AYP over a period of years are given options to transfer their child to another school or obtain free tutoring (supplemental educational services).

A key principle of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is that schools should be accountable for the education of all of their students, including students with disabilities. Under current law, students with disabilities may be assessed in the following ways:

- The regular state assessment.
- The regular state assessment with appropriate accommodations.
- Alternate assessments aligned with grade level achievement standards (for students with physical disabilities, for example).
- Alternate assessments aligned with alternate achievement standards (for students with

the most significant cognitive disabilities).

- Alternate assessments based on modified academic achievement standards (for students with persistent academic disabilities).

Additional information detailing NCLB can be found at <http://answers.ed.gov>

“No Child Left Behind” is due for reauthorization this year. Congressman Mark Souder and a U.S. Department of Education official recently met with the public in roundtable discussions at East Noble and Homestead high schools. DSANI was the only advocacy group invited to attend. Several members of DSANI, Tom O’Neill, Kathy Meeks, Julie Tutwiler and Debbie Gavette attended the Homestead discussion. Most of the attendees were education professionals. The two biggest concerns voiced during the discussions were the impact of English as a Second Language and Special-Needs students and many of the educators expressed concerns that these two groups of students could negatively impact their schools’ test scores. Since all students must show that they are continuing to achieve improvement, many believe there must be additional funding to allow school districts to hire adequate resources for the additional help that many students need.

Different people have different opinions as to whether “No Child Left Behind” has helped or will help children with Down syndrome achieve academic standards. NDSS officially supports this law. Their official response is posted on their website, however due to its length, it is not included in this article. Parents can contact

either Madeleine Will mwill@ndss.org and/or Ricki Sabia at rsabia@ndss.org to receive the NDSS Summary & Talking Points on NCLB. As parents of special needs students, we would like to encourage each and every one of you to become educated on this law, talk to your schools and find out how your child is participating in the annual testing process. Once you become informed, contact your congressional representative and let them know your thoughts and suggestions. Tell them about your child and what he/she has experienced in your school system.

Editorial Comment: I attended the forum at Homestead not really knowing what to expect. I had always assumed that ‘someone’ out there was protecting my child’s best interests. To my surprise, I heard several comments that really made me sit up and take notice. One school official commented that when a school was approached about starting a special education program their first question was how would it impact their school relative to “No Child Left Behind.” There is a danger that our children might not be welcomed by all schools. Another comment made by a school district’s school board member suggested that maybe the answer would be for all of the special-needs kids to be sent to just one school. In order for our children to really be able to exert their rights we need the support of families who are willing to be informed and get involved.

