

So the Down Syndrome Alliance of the Midlands is, we're a nonprofit based here in Omaha, but we do serve families throughout Nebraska and into Iowa as well. And we are a support organization for individuals with Down Syndrome and their families and really any community members or schools, things like that, that work with people with Down Syndrome as well.

So our mission is that we connect those touched by Down Syndrome through education, advocacy, and support.

So that kind of works in a variety of, you know, educating the community about all things Down Syndrome and then also having, you know, specific programming that is for people with Down Syndrome to kind of, you know, advance their skills or make them more independent in, you know, their endeavors and you know, at the Capitol, on like the national level, and then also just really advocating for people with Down Syndrome to be included and things like, you know, getting a job and included in their classrooms and sports teams and things like that.

And then the outreach, yeah, the outreach piece is that I can let Stacy talk more about that as well. That's where Stacy kind of comes in. And it really kind of starts with new families and then goes throughout the night. Stacy kind of talk about some of that outreach. Yeah. So we connect with new families and oftentimes new families will reach out to us after receiving a diagnosis or they've connected with their child's pediatrician and they get us connected with those families.

And so we reach out and provide information about the organization as well as sending them packets that just kind of help them feel like this is a, we're welcoming you and this is a great thing that you're part of this community.

So supporting families and then reaching out to different organizations within the community so they know that we're here to support and educate and advocate for individuals with Down Syndrome.

So yeah, we kind of want to be like a non, like one-stop shop, you know, for our families and the community.

So our resources are really like we've got events, we've got programming, we have social, like support groups, like we've got a mom's group and a grandparent's group, we do a sibling group.

And then, you know, we're really a resource in that we will help you get connected to anything else.

So that's where Stacy and then we have speaking who also works in the outreach aspect of our organization.

So, I mean, we get phone calls, everything from, you know, navigating a daycare that they think is appropriate for their child or finding a swim lesson to, you know, how do I plan for the future of, you know, having a will or, you know, housing for an adult with Down Syndrome. And that's not, you know, things that we specialize in or that we do, but we connect them with the community.

So that's, yeah, I mean, we really just want to be a resource in every aspect of, you know, educating ourselves on what's out there and then being able to help, you know, bridge those gaps where families are looking for it.

Yeah. And the one, a great resource that we have available are classes like the Lunch and Learn, and it's an online, it's a Zoom that families can connect and the community really, but they, they're just a variety of different topics.

Today we had one on respite care. So there's the Lunch and Learn, and then there's the Down Syndrome Education Series, and they're just wonderful opportunities to connect families that are part of DSA as well as the broader community and learning about a variety of topics.

So some great resources, for sure.

And we have like events specifically for individuals with Down Syndrome as well. That's definitely a call, you know, we get, especially like the teen and adult population saying, you know, I'm looking for activities for my, you know, 20 year olds to be involved in or things like that. And we have those events. And then we also, like I said, kind of connect them to the things that we know that are out there in the community as well. Both actually kind of have similar stories. We are both parents of children with Down Syndrome. So I have an 11 year old son who has Down Syndrome. And then I was an educator formally, I was a science teacher. And so, you know, I was teaching and nonprofits aren't the same, but they're a little in the same kind of social work realm. So I had, I stayed home from teaching for a couple years and then got involved with the Down Syndrome Alliance. And I feel like I am still kind of teaching, but in like a different way. You know, I get to educate the community or work with like new parents and kind of share like my knowledge of what this journey has been like. And I can let Stacey talk, but she kind of has a similar.

Similar, I have a daughter with Down Syndrome. She's 15. And so I was involved with DSA as a parent, first, when she was born and through the different activities that take place here.

But as a professional career, I was a director of an early childhood center and so have been involved with families and children for all of my professional life.

And then decided to retire and took a couple of years off and was gained work in advocacy and just came to DSA and had this awesome opportunity open up.

And so work now is the outreach coordinator. So it's great working with the families and then friends at DSA. We're lucky to have my kids and the individuals with Down Syndrome.

I mean, it's just making those connections is, it's always, it's just so much fun.

And it's so rewarding getting to see the families interact with one another and then watch these amazing humans grow into adults from the young babies into the adults that they become.

So it's great. It's great, great people. Yeah, I agree. And the friendships are really cool. I think that's something that people don't, some of the friends that I've made, like other moms, I probably would have never met because they live in like Bellevue or, you know, but we have this unique, you know, joy in our lives that brought us together. And then it's the same thing for like the kids with Down Syndrome. Like we see they have these friendships that they maybe met at, you know, an event that we had when they were two and now they're 15 and they're still friends and they hang out even though they go to different schools.

And so yeah, it's really fun to watch and to get to be part of it. We're our website is pretty, you know, thorough on things.

We've got an event calendar that really shows a lot.

And then the social media. I mean, we're on Facebook, we're on Instagram. That's really it. We're not cool enough to be like on TikTok yet. Maybe someday we need

somebody young to join our team. But yeah, we, you know, we post a lot on there, just kind of just people can see what we do or there's links on like how to, you know, I think that's probably the best way.

You know, obviously, if they're a family or they're, you know, wanting something a little more intense, they can call the office, they can, you know, do all those things. And we'll walk them through how to become members or how to, you know, sign up for an event. I think so. I mean, we're really excited about this opportunity. We love to go to like networking type things where we meet other organizations and we partner with other organizations a lot, you know, Special Olympics, or we're going to do it something with duet soon. And, you know, just knowing that there are a lot of great disability organizations in Omaha, and, you know, being able to kind of have those partnerships has been really cool. So we like to meet new people and new families that way.