

# ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Enabling individuals with Down syndrome to reach their full potential and become respected members of their community.



## About Us

The Down Syndrome Association of Greater Charlotte (DSAGC) is a non-profit, family support organization. The goal of the DSA of Greater Charlotte and its families is to enable individuals with Down syndrome (Ds) to reach their full potential and become respected members of their community.

The DSAGC provides day and overnight camps for youth and adults with Ds, virtual learning series and workshops, social outings, and provides resources for families and individuals to connect with the community to best meet their needs.

## Our Mission

Our mission is to enhance the quality of life for all people with Ds by empowering individuals, families and professionals with information and support through education, social programs and community partnerships.

## Our Vision

We envision a world of true inclusion in which all people with Ds have the chance to lead typical lives of possibility and opportunity, reach their goals and become valued members of welcoming communities.

## Leadership:

### Staff

**Roy Courtney**  
*Executive Director*

**Victoria Coles**  
*Community Outreach  
& Events Director*

**Board Members – Officers**  
**Andrew Spafford**  
*President*

**Melina DeLeon**  
*Vice President*

**Anna Emmerich**  
*Secretary*

**Nicholas Coulsen**  
*Treasurer*

### Board Members – At Large

**Christopher Coggins**

**Stacy Dunleavy**

**Michelle Littlejohn**

**Jocelyn Weber**

**Omar Ritter**

**Neil Middlemiss**

**Brendan Hammeke**

## Counties We Serve:

- Cabarrus
- Catawba
- Cleveland
- Gaston
- Iredell
- Lincoln
- Mecklenburg
- Rowan
- Stanly
- Union
- Lancaster
- York



## The DSA of Greater Charlotte and You

Whether you're the parent of a child diagnosed with Down syndrome, a person with Down syndrome, or simply a member of the community looking to make a difference, there is a role for you at the DSA of Greater Charlotte. We are not just an organization – we are a family, and together we work to make our community a better place not only for its members with Down syndrome, but for all of us. Every donation and effort brings our family closer, and the bonds we make here last a lifetime.



## Letter from the President

---

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As a long-standing member of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to share that 2023 was monumental for the Down Syndrome Association of Greater Charlotte. Last January our board and staff sat down together to map out where our organization could and should go, not just for the year ahead, but three to five years from now as well. For each goal we have we asked, "how we were going to achieve these milestones," and as you can imagine, the brainstorming and planning discussions were exciting to be a part of and opened the door to improvements in our current programs and a chance to revisit some previous successes. We know that our community will feel the positive impact of this work for years to come.

Speaking of successes, we were thrilled to welcome Roy Courtney as our Executive Director to accompany our fearless Director of Programs and Community Outreach, Victoria Coles. We continued our important DSA programs that families hold dear, such as the Buddy Walk, Camp Horizon, Camp Holiday, Adult Retreats, and our Social Programs. We also expanded into a north campus of Camp Holiday. We were able to grow membership and also invest in new technology, and our team has seen immediate impact and growth in fundraising events, planned giving, and grants as a result. It has been a whirlwind year and a privilege to work alongside the hardworking, talented, and dedicated Board of Directors and staff. We are humbled and know we could not have achieved our goals without the support of our donors and volunteers. This holiday season, I wish you all happiness and health.

With Love,  
Andrew Spafford, *DSAGC's Board President*

## Letter from the Executive Director

---



Dear Families, Community  
Members, Supporters, and Friends,

2023 was an amazing year! We experienced a great deal of change in the board, staff, and our programs, and the DSAGC continued to provide services, programming, and incredible events that helped bring us together. We are grateful that you continue to choose us to be a part of your family by participating in our programs and various other events throughout each year. Our mission has been, and will always be, to empower all individuals with Down syndrome, and to serve their communities and families. We look forward to continuing to partner with you throughout 2024 while bringing a new focus to our services.

We're excited to share details of our evolving programming and events to make sure we're continuously meeting your needs. It is my great honor to witness the force of nature of this community, and it is my pleasure to work with an amazing group of volunteers, staff, participants, families, and supporters each day. In 2024 be ready to watch our community shine even brighter. We would not be where we are now without our generous donors and supporters. I hope you will come along for the ride and make a difference in this world with us.

Best Wishes,  
Roy Courtney



## Letter from the Program & Community Outreach Director

This has been a very exciting year of growth within the organization and with partnerships in the community. It's amazing what we can accomplish when we bring like-minded people together to serve the community—in this case, our friends with Down syndrome and other abilities and their families.

Dear DSA of Greater Charlotte Community,

This past summer, we had our first two Camp Holiday locations that provide summer camp experience for individuals with Down syndrome ages 5-21, on the North side and South side of Charlotte.

We celebrated our 20th Anniversary of Camp Horizon in August with nearly 40 camper and 50 + volunteer counselors, nurses, and self-advocate counselors. We hosted two Adult Weekend Retreats and love to see the growth of our campers. We look forward to more and more cabins occupied by our group.

Alongside our camp planning, we are proud to offer scholarships through the newly memorialized "Angel Guyeska Scholarship," which supports individuals attending camps to reduce the financial burden on families.

We encourage families to apply for these scholarships through an easy process to ensure each child and adult can participate in our camp programs.

We have been able to continue providing Mom and Dad's Night Out for respite and parent connection opportunities and offer family outings in the community in addition to the planning and coordination of family support groups with the Latino community and the African American and Multicultural Family groups.

I absolutely cannot wait for what we have planned for 2024 and look forward to more educational and medical outreach in our advocacy efforts.

Peace, Love & T-21-  
Victoria Coles, M. Ed, CMC,  
Program & Community Outreach Director

## IMPACT

Our impact is wide-ranging as we continue touching the lives of people who have Down's syndrome and those within their family, professional, and social circles every single day. Our services range from being the first port of call for expectant parents (before their baby has even been born), to assisting children through education and family life, and walking with young adults and their families as they transition from childhood to becoming more independent members of society and take responsibility for their own lives and choices. And we are there for adults of all ages who are full of aspiration and ambition and who want to live lives just like their peers.

We love talking to professionals who are passionate about helping people who have Down's syndrome achieve their full potential. Doctors, therapists, psychologists, teachers and teaching assistants, care providers, support workers, and social workers, we love to work with all kinds of professionals.

We also seek to influence and inform our society, including government and policymakers, local authorities, media, and the general public. All that we do strives to deliver equality for people who have Down's syndrome every day.

**250 Families Served**

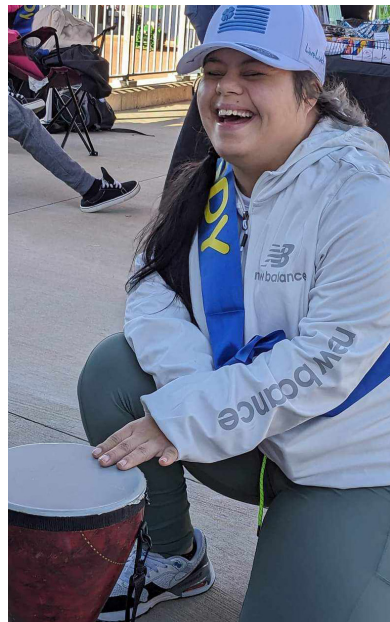
**66 Programs & Events**

**19 First Call Family Referrals**

**1,210 New Supporters**

**210 Volunteers**

**17 Scholarships**



## New Programs 2023

**Ambassador Program with Casey Hemmeke**

**Music Therapy Playdates**

**Collaborative Programming for the Hispanic Community**  
- with Grupo Poder y Esperanza

**Mom's Night of Respite**  
- in collaboration with GiGi's Playhouse

**Carolina's Homecoming**  
- in collaboration with NextStep Clubhouse and Best Buddies

**Bike-A-Thon**  
- at WDSG Goddard School - Concord

## New Events 2023

**Holiday Parade with Birkdale Village**

**Charlotte Ballet Sensory Friendly Experience**

**Big Air Sensory Play Experience**



### Charlotte Buddy Walk 2023

This year, DSAGC celebrated its 27th Annual Charlotte Buddy Walk. The event was hosted at an all-new location, the beautiful Kannapolis Cannons Ball Park, located in Kannapolis, NC. Over 1,200 participants enjoyed music, performances, raffles, games, tailgating and more! The 2023 Charlotte Buddy Walk helped raise over \$138,000 for the Down Syndrome Association of Greater Charlotte, which will go towards the organization's 2023 operations and programs.



## Existing Programs

The DSA of Greater Charlotte offers a variety of program options for individuals with Ds, their families and the community-at-large in an effort educate, empower and advocate for acceptance and inclusion.

### Virtual Programming

We offer a variety of prerecorded and live virtual learning opportunities for all ages. Opportunities include: Parent/Guardian Webinars & Workshops, Hip Hop Dance Class, the Improvaneer Method- Online Style, and more.

### First Call Program

If you have received prenatal or postnatal tests that suggest or confirm Down syndrome or discover your child has Down syndrome, we are here for you - with accurate, up-to-date information and the opportunity to speak with a parent mentor through our Parents' First Call Program.

### Support Groups

We have a number of support groups within and outside of our organization. These groups support families of individuals with Down syndrome from birth through adulthood. Family outings include play dates, social clubs, sibling support, mom's nights out, educational and therapeutic-based activities.

### Adults with Ds

We support and empower adults with Ds through regular social Meet-Up groups, Adult Weekend Retreats, Vocational Programming and Community-Based Experiences to increase independence, encourage self-advocacy and boost self-confidence as contributing members of their communities.

### Social Programs

We actively partner with other organizations throughout the year to offer seasonal gatherings including, but not limited to: Summer Picnics, Holiday Party and Dance, Game Nights and Community Outings.

### Community Education and Support

We support the community-at-large in an effort to promote acceptance and inclusion within schools, community organizations (i.e. YMCAs, local churches) and local businesses through consultation, training and technical assistance.

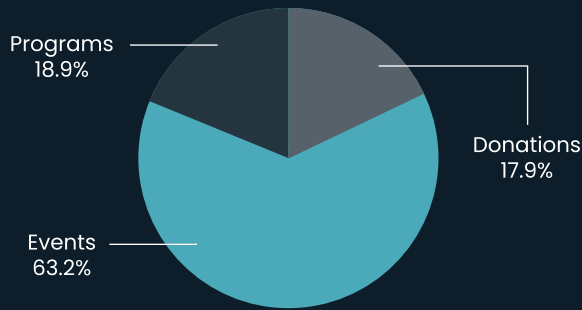
### Summer Camps

We offer specialized day camp (ages 5-21) and overnight camp (ages 10-17) experiences for youth and young adults with Down syndrome.



# Finances

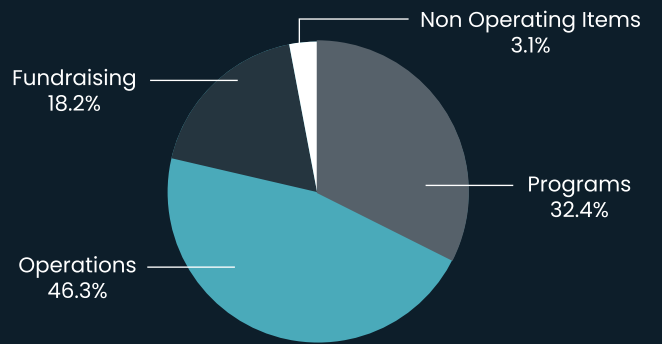
## REVENUE



\$347,193

Donations: \$62,143 | Events: \$219,392  
Programs: \$65,619 | Other: \$39

## EXPENSES



\$410,827

Programs: \$132,975 | Operations: \$190,158  
Fundraising: \$74,790 | Non Operating Items: \$12,904

**2023 Net Profit: -\$63,634\***

\*\$63,634 contribution from reserves to mitigate net-loss from the expansion of programs and camps.

# Thank you to our 2023 Sponsors!

