



January 2010
First Quarter Newsletter

Down Syndrome Association of Brazos Valley

Spotlight on Michael Schmitz

ALWAYS LOVED

Most of us have never seen 12-year-old Michael Schmitz without that ear-to-ear grin on his face. This fourth grader at South Knoll loves to swim, go camping, dancing and having sleepovers.

His Dad Dave is a vet who directs Texas A&M's Ultrasound Services at the Large Animal Hospital. His Mom Rose works part-time as a professor in A&M's health and kinesiology department. Michael loves to watch his big brother Jonathan play high school baseball, and they wrestle every chance they get.

Rose says her greatest hopes for Michael are that he will always be loved, have the ability to take care of himself safely, and will be surrounded by people who have his best interest at heart.



"His innocent acceptance of everyone as a friend, his forgiving nature and wonderful smile are what we love most," says Rose. "He helps us see life through his eyes and it is beautiful!"

Rose says that her family's membership in our support group is essential to Michael's development because few "outsiders" realize the impact of everyday accomplishments and challenges. "Our families are vital to living this special life to the fullest!"



Inside this issue

- Buddy Walk 2
- Who Says He Can't be a Mathematician? 2
- Handwriting Shouldn't Hurt..... 3
- Buddy Skate..... 4
- Family Camp 4
- What's FADS? 5
- Making Progress with Mouse Models Links/BOD6
- DID YOU KNOW?

You can get a free one-day pass to Disney World by giving a day of volunteer service. Go to disney-parks.com for details. Opportunities are available in Austin, Houston and the Waco area.



We're Gearing Up for the 2010 BUDDY WALK

Mark your calendars now for this year's Buddy Walk, scheduled for October 10 at Wolf Pen Creek Amphitheater in College Station. Already a group of DSABV members have met to begin making plans, but WE NEED YOU to make this year another success!

Buddy Walk is our largest fundraiser. It's getting bigger and bigger each year, but with that growth comes the need for more

volunteers. Please consider helping out with this year's Buddy Walk. We've put together several working committees, from publicity to volunteers to entertainment and food.

Last year's rainy day put a little damper on Buddy Walk, but we consider it a great success and look forward, with your help, to beating our fundraising record in 2010.

*The National **Buddy Walk on Washington** is Feb. 24 and 25.
Go to ndss.org to learn more!*

Help Us Sell Calendars

We need your help to complete sales of our 2010 Down Syndrome Association calendars, which feature many of our kids and adults with Down syndrome. Please purchase your own calendar, and help us spread the word to friends and family. You can order online at www.firstgiving.com/bcsbuddywalk or fill out a short form on our Web site and mail in your check. The photos in this calendar are incredible, so don't miss this chance to help us spread the GOOD NEWS about Down syndrome.



Who Says He Can't be a Mathematician?

Mark your calendars now for our spring workshop: "**Teaching Math to People With Down Syndrome and Other Hands-On Learners.**" We're hosting the same workshop on two days: April 23 and 24, so you can choose which day is best for your schedule.

We are thrilled that DeAnna Horstmeier, who authored the book on this subject, agreed to travel to the Brazos Valley to give our parents and teachers some of the highlights of her book. DeAnna is an experienced educator, who was inspired to write the book to meet the needs of hands-on learners after observing the difficulty her son with Down syndrome and his peers had in applying math skills to everyday life.

Registration fees for members of DSABV are \$30 for individuals and \$50 for couples, and includes a copy of DeAnna's book. The workshop will be at the College Station Conference Center from 8 a.m. to 3:45 p.m.

Don't miss this opportunity to learn from a nationally known expert in teaching math to people with Down syndrome. You can register now on our Web site, www.downsyndromeofbcs.com.



Members of the Down Syndrome Association of Brazos Valley braved the cold and rain for the 83rd annual B-CS Christmas Parade on Dec. 6, 2009.

Handwriting Shouldn't Hurt

It's not too late to sign up for this spring's session of **Handwriting Without Tears**, each Monday from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., March 22 through April 26, at Henderson Elementary School in Bryan.

This fun, interactive class is taught by Phyllis Hodges, a local teacher who is certified in the Handwriting Without Tears method, and her one-on-one Aggie volunteers. (And did we mention that Phyllis is Madee Hodges' grandmother?)

The class helps kids of all ages make legible and fluent handwriting an easy and automatic skill. Phyllis follows the unique curriculum design and teaching strategies that have already helped many of our kids dramatically improve their handwriting. The class helps improve self-confidence, pencil grip, body awareness and posture. And Phyllis makes it lots of fun!

The class is designed for children with special needs, ages 3 and up, who have difficulty with fine motor skills. Phyllis will work with your child at his or her own pace according to his or her own skill set.

Call Christy Knight, our president, at 218-2892 for more information.

GET MOVING

This spring's **GET MOVING fitness class** is scheduled to start up on Saturday, Feb. 6, from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. at the EXIT Teen Center off Rock Prairie Road in College Station. The class instructors are Aggies Kristi Tackitt and Ross Bruns, and they are gearing up for our third semester of GET MOVING! Kristi and Ross lead children and adults in indoor and outdoor fitness routines and activities, along with a cadre of devoted volunteers who are there to help encourage your children to participate. The class is \$25 per semester, and we've had about five children and five adults participate in the past who we hope will register again this semester. E-mail Kristi at fitness@downsyndromeofbcs.com to sign up. We realize that the class conflicts with Challenger Basketball, but we hope if it does you will join us again when b-ball is over!



Time to Paint!

Join us on Feb. 18 at **U Paint It** in College Station from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. to paint a ceramic tile with your child.

The cost is free for children and adults with Down syndrome. Parents who want to paint along must purchase the tile for \$4.

RSVP no later than Feb. 15 with Christy at 778-7010 or dsabv@yahoo.com



Don't Miss the Next BUDDY SKATE

We've scheduled our second Buddy Skate session at Arctic Wolf Ice Center on Sunday, Feb. 21, from 11 a.m. till noon.

The cost is only \$5, and for that you get a full hour of ice skating with the entire rink devoted to our group and the one-to-one volunteers.

During the last Buddy Skate, Arctic Wolf found enough enthusiastic volunteers to devote two or even three people to each of our children or adults with Down syndrome.

So even if you don't know how to skate but want to try it for the first time, don't miss it!

Parents are welcome to skate, too!



Let's Go CAMPING Again!

We've booked the Kingdom Ranch in Snook for our second annual family overnight camp on April 10.

Join us for baseball, great food, fishing, a ropes course, potato sack races and s'mores at the campfire.

The cost to members is \$20 for a family of four and \$5 for each additional immediate family member. It's \$30 for non-members for a family of four and \$5 for each additional immediate family member.

Registration forms, available on our Web site, are due by March 29.

Members said last year's family overnight camp was a blast, and they can't wait to get back out in the great outdoors.

Chill out and get dirty with us! Go camping!



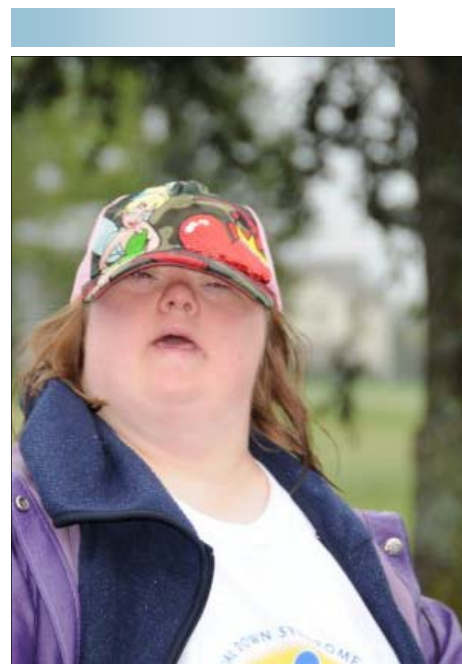
What's FADS?

FUN FOR ADULTS WITH DOWN SYNDROME!

If you're an adult with Down syndrome in the Brazos Valley and you're not part of **FADS**, you're missing out! The group meets regularly to play bingo, go see movies, dance and do other fun things together that don't require heavy parental supervision.

The idea is to give our adults with Down syndrome quality time together without their parents or guardians so they can relax, socialize and exercise the independence they deserve. OK, so few chaperones do attend, but this is a great chance to get involved with the group.

Bingo Night is Feb. 12 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at Trinity Baptist Church in Bryan. FADS members get in free; others pay \$5 per person. Pizza will be served and you can RSVP to Christy Knight at 778-7010.



The average life expectancy for people with Down syndrome is now approaching that of their peers without Down syndrome. — National Down Syndrome Society

Making Progress With Mouse Models

All of us would like to help make the lives of people we know with Down syndrome a little easier. At last year's national convention some of our members heard a great presentation from the **Down Syndrome Research and Treatment Foundation**.

This organization is devoted to biomedical research that will accelerate the development of treatments to significantly improve cognition for individuals with Down syndrome. **TREATMENT** is the key word. They are not trying to "cure" anyone or "prevent" Down syndrome.

Researchers funded by the foundation are developing treatments

to improve memory, learning and speech that will allow individuals with Down syndrome to :

- Participate more successfully in school;
- Lead more active and independent lives;
- Prevent early cognitive decline.

Go to dsrtf.org to learn more about what they do. Such research is not a priority in the United States, so it's going to take a lot of time and money to make significant progress. You can donate to the cause or help spread the word.



BIRTHDAYS!

Reese Adams - Jan. 15

Michael Schmitz – Jan. 31

Chris Massey – Feb. 1

Michelle Doucet – Feb. 6

Julianna Silva – Feb. 18

Adam Wright – Feb. 26

Ava Hooks - March 12

Colton Knight- March 23

Caleb Benner - March 29

Veronica Bender - March 31

Links to Down Syndrome Information

Down Syndrome Association of Brazos Valley

(www.downsyndromeofbcs.com)

Down Syndrome Congress (www.ndscenter.org)

National Down Syndrome Society (www.ndss.org)

Down Syndrome Research & Treatment Foundation (dsrtf.org)

Down Syndrome Association of Houston (www.dsah.org)

Down Syndrome Association of San Antonio (www.dsasa.org)

Down Syndrome Association of Central Texas (www.dsact.com)

Down Syndrome Association of Brazos Valley

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College Station, Texas 77845
Phone: 979-778-7010
E-mail: dsabv@yahoo.com
Web: downsyndromeofbcs.com
Find us on Facebook!

Membership Levels

Individual and family member of DSABV: \$30 (*Due now if you haven't paid for 2010!*)

"Friend" of DSABV: \$100 (name on Web site)

"Partner" of DSABV \$200 (name or business logo on Web site)

Look for forms at www.downsyndromeofbcs.com.

Board of Directors

Christy Knight – President (president@downsyndromeofbcs.com)

Darla Dyke – Vice President (vicepresident@downsyndromeofbcs.com)

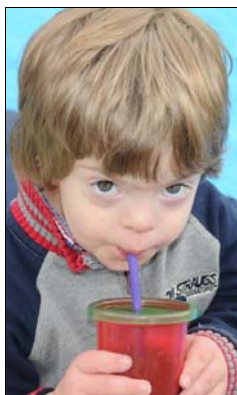
Mandy Hooks – Treasurer (treasurer@downsyndromeofbcs.com)

Sondra White – Secretary (secretary@downsyndromeofbcs.com)

Katie Marino – 1st Member at Large (1member@downsyndromeofbcs.com)

Jessica Mikulin – 2nd Member at Large (2member@downsyndromeofbcs.com)

Heather Rutledge – 3rd Member at Large (3member@downsyndromeofbcs.com)



We Want Your Input

Want to get involved with the Down Syndrome Association of Brazos Valley but don't want to make a huge time commitment? We're looking for looking for volunteers to join the following committees: education; fundraising; publicity; advocacy; social and volunteer. Please call Christy Knight if you're interested.

The Down Syndrome Association of Brazos Valley is a non-profit 501(c) (3) organization comprised of families and friends of people with Down syndrome. Our goal is to provide information and support to anyone interested in Down syndrome. If you would like to get more information about our group please feel free to contact Christy Knight 979-778-7010. If you are a new parent, please contact us via phone or e-mail and we will mail helpful information immediately.