

DSPTC News

Affiliate, National Down Syndrome Congress & National Down Syndrome Society

July 2007

DSPTC Summer Party!

Please join us for our annual Summer Swim Party and Picnic held at the Chisholm Aquatic Center in Hurst. It will be Saturday, July 14th, 6-8 p.m. Pizza, beverages and cookies will be served inside the park. Come out and cool off for Summer!

Chisholm Aquatic Center
2200 Norwood Dr.
Hurst, Texas 76054
817-788-7250

Please RSVP by Wednesday, July 11 to 817-421-1812
or dsptcnews@hotmail.com

Save the Dates

Saturday, September 29

Co-Sponsored by the DSPTC and Green Oaks School
Fall Conference: Social Skills for Teens, Young Adults & Adults with Down Syndrome and Similar Developmental Delays.

Sessions will be available for parents and educators. There will be a separate session for individuals with Down syndrome and similar developmental delays, followed by dinner and a social event at which they can practice what they have learned. Watch for more details to come!

Monday, October 15th

Our Special Heroes Golf Classic benefiting the DSPTC at the Texas Star Golf Course

Saturday, October 27, 2007

Tarrant County Buddy Walk

This year's walk will be held at S.J. Stovall Park in Arlington, with a portion of the proceeds being donated to the Partnership. Watch for more details!

Thank You to Green Oaks School and the First United Methodist Church of Hurst for allowing the DSPTC to use their convenient facilities and playgrounds for play-groups.

Support the 6th Annual Our Special Heroes Golf Classic

How can you help???

1. **Sign up to Play and/or Solicit Your Friends to Play** for Monday Oct. 15th at Texas Star Golf Course in Euless. (8:30 shotgun start, 4 player Florida scramble) \$125 per player. Sign up as a team or we will group you. Includes continental breakfast, fajita lunch provided by On The Border, and player goody bag.

2. **Ask companies to be sponsors**

Gold Sponsor - \$1000, recognition at a hole, in our program and newsletter and 4 player spots

Silver Sponsor - \$500, recognition in our program and newsletter and 2 player spots

Bronze Sponsor - \$100 - recognition on a cart and in our program.

3. **Provide raffle items and/or contest prizes.** Ask places you frequent for gift certificates or donations.

4. **Gather Items for Player Goody Bags** - We need 150 each of items for the goody bags. Things like pens and novelty items many companies give away, as well as snack type items such as chips, gum, granola bars, etc. Printed items like hats or golf towels with the sponsor company's logo and the golf tourney logo would be greatly appreciated!

5. **Volunteer to print and send letters to potential donors**

6. **Volunteer on October 15th!** We need volunteers from 7 a.m. until around 3 p.m.! For more information, contact Michael Moffitt at 817-987-4501 or Derek Westbrook at 817-295-5346



Erin Goes to Work: Making It in the Real World

—by Jan Farrington

A former principal calls her “a delight.”

A co-worker says she’s “a sweetheart!”

But what matters most to 24-year-old Erin Vickers, a young woman who has Down syndrome, is that people see that she really, *really* knows her job.

For the past two years, Erin has worked 25 hours a week at the downtown branch of the Fort Worth Public Library. Her desk in the periodicals department is tucked away close to the “stacks” of old magazines, newspapers and government documents she helps keep in order.

“My stepdad drives me to work, and then the first thing I do is sort and stamp all the newspapers, and put them out for readers,” says Erin. She collects periodicals that have been used by patrons, logs them back in on a statistics sheet, and then gets them back to their right place on the shelves.

“We call that filing,” Erin says. “The magazines are in order by date and year. Some are in boxes, and I have to count to make sure they’re all in the box.” To save space, the library has movable shelves that can be “cranked” apart to allow employees to re-shelve items.

“You can get some muscles from doing all that cranking,” Erin laughs. “It’s good exercise!”

The library job isn’t Erin’s first work experience. After graduating from Paschal High School, Erin went to work for Mayor Mike Moncrief’s office.

“I had a key to open the office, and was usually the first one there in the morning,” she remembers. Erin did filing, shredded documents, and went across the street each morning to retrieve the office mail. “I sorted it into people’s boxes so they could come pick it up. I got to know the mayor pretty well. He comes to the library to start the summer reading program, and we say hello.”

While she was still in school, Erin also worked as a counselor at Camp El Tesoro. “A camper with special needs would be assigned to me, and we would both be in the same cabin. I’d spend the night, and help with camp and cabin activities.” The best part of that job, Erin says, was feeling that she helped make “the camp experience” really wonderful for kids who hadn’t done it before.

In her free time, Erin takes guitar lessons (she likes country songs), and loves to act. She’s been on stage with Kids Who Care and Casa Manana—most recently as an “evil dwarf” in *The Chronicles of Narnia*. She grins and says proudly, “We dwarfs stole the show!”

Paul Kaufman, who heads the Fort Worth ISD’s transition programs, says Erin’s parents, Karen and Tom Semenoff, “have really done some wonderful stuff with Erin. They always had high expectations for her. They treated her like a real person, not like a pet. If I did anything to help them, it was just to push them over the edge. They were scared by the thought of letting her be a little more independent. In the end,

they just gutted it up and trusted that it would be OK for Erin to work, that there would be natural supports around her—and it’s been really wonderful.

“The city of Fort Worth got a really diligent worker who comes on time, who wants to be there, who is enjoyable to be around, and who makes a genuine contribution. Yes, she needs some accommodations, but then so do many people.” Kaufman says the key to finding real, contributing jobs for people with special needs is something called *task analysis*.

“Just by analyzing everything that a workplace or organization is trying to get done, you can find places where you could let a person with disabilities ‘specialize’ in getting one or more tasks done, often at a lower cost than having higher-paid employees do those things.” For example, he says, a hospital realized that busy employees were taking time away from core tasks to shred documents as required by law—and hired a young woman with Down syndrome to come in a few hours each day and feed documents into a shredder.

“She loved the job, wasn’t bored at all, and the rest of the staff could make better use of their time,” Kaufman says.

“And because it was part-time work, she made a little money but the job didn’t interfere with her SSI or medical benefits.” Finding a job that suits your young adult’s personality, abilities and interests may take some trial and error—so don’t be shy about putting lots of people to work on the problem: job coaches, transition specialists, friendly employers, etc.

Erin Vickers is just one young adult with DS working in our community. She’s a great role model—but we’d love to hear from other families and young adults who are finding ways to “make things happen” in the workplace. If you have a story to tell, contact dsptcnews@hotmail.com. We’d be glad to hear all about it!

Upcoming Conference

Imagine Enterprises and The Arc of Northeast Tarrant County bring you a 2~day conference on the principles of *self-determination* and *freedom* to help people with disabilities change their lives! ...and how the people who care about them (families, public authority personnel, service providers, advocacy organizations and others) play a vital role in making it happen!

Guaranteeing the Promise of Freedom with Self-Determination For People Who Rely on Long Term Supports

Presented by... National Consultants from The Center for Self-Determination (www.self-determination.com)

July 17 – 18, 2007 9:00 a.m. ~ 4:00 p.m.

Ridglea Presbyterian Church, Williams Hall
6201 Camp Bowie Blvd., Ft. Worth, Texas 76116

Please Note: The content of this newsletter is provided for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for medical or other professional advice. The opinions, beliefs and viewpoints expressed herein are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily represent those of the DSPTC directors, members or editors.

A.I.M. High

Area advocates have formed a group (A.I.M. High!) to promote communities wherein individuals of all levels of ability work side-by-side with others, respected for their contributions and inherent value as human beings. A.I.M. High hopes to partner with all organizations within Tarrant County and surrounding areas as they promote awareness, build knowledge, and assist systems in developing inclusive environments for individuals of all levels of ability.

Inclusion has long been accepted as best practice in schools across the United States. Likewise, segregation within the community is being replaced with opportunities for persons of all levels of ability. **If inclusion for individuals with disabilities is important to you, please become an advocate by joining our group. Make a difference, be a positive voice for inclusion!** For more information please contact Paige Wilhelm 817-441-2182, or join our email group to stay informed AIMHigh_NEARC@YahooGroups.com.

Texas Advocates Conference

July 27th ~ 29th 2007

Woodlands Waterway Marriot Hotel
1601 Lake Robins Drive
The Woodlands, Texas 77380

Texas Advocates, run by and for people with disabilities, is a statewide non-profit organization with 20 local chapters. Texas Advocates provides training for members on person centered planning, self-determination and self-advocacy. Board members serve on statewide committees and task forces. At the local level members may visit with their representatives, work on local policy issues, and participate in community service activities and more. If you would like additional information about the Texas Advocates Conference or would like to become a member of Lone Star Advocates, The Arc of NETC Chapter please contact Janice Pike at (817) 569-5057 or Email: Janice.pike@mhmrtc.org. Stipends for conference participation are available.

The Clubhouse for Kids with Special Needs

Fun & fellowship for the mild to moderate mentally/physically challenged teenagers and young adults. Located in Bedford, after-school busing is provided for those in HEB and GC school districts. Other districts may bus as well. Programs are also available on Friday/Saturday Evenings, for Summer, and on a drop-off basis. Visit their website for details.

www.theclubhouse.org

Showing of Libby Kumin's DVD

Green Oaks School will offer a showing of Libby Kumin's excellent DVD "What Did You Say? A Guide to Speech Intelligibility in People with Down Syndrome" on Tuesday, July 17 at 7:00 P.M. Please RSVP to 817-496-5100 if you plan to attend.

DSPTC Officers and Contacts

President:

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(Deadline on the 15th of each month!)

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**DOWN SYNDROME PARTNERSHIP
OF TARRANT COUNTY**

5508 Chaperito Trail
Arlington, Texas 76016

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Fort Worth, Texas
Permit No. 2557

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Things to Remember

Mom's Night Out

July 20

Mimi's Café

I-20 and Bryant Irvin in Fort Worth

RSVP to Cyndi Anderson at
cyndi0633@yahoo.com or call her
cell phone, 817-501-2358. Hope to
see you there!

Bienvenidos!

La Asociacion Syndrome de Down
de Tarrant County prove recursos y
apoyo para gente con syndrome de
down y sus familias. Mas
informacion: Favor de llama a la
Sra. Julia Barbosa, (817) 923-3628.

Down Syndrome Clinic

Upcoming Clinic Dates:

July 20

August 17

For more information or an appointment, call
Sarah Stringer at 682-885-2181.

DSPTC Voice Mail 817-421-1812

Home & Community Based Services
(Kim Lambert) 817-569-4140

Dads

Contact Mike Nelson at 817-723-9051 or
Fnelson@bbar.com for more information.
Thanks!

Northeast Play Group

Contact Sessalie
Shapley
at (817) 358-1879

Arlington Play Group

Saturday, July 21
from 10am -12pm at
Green Oaks School (5508
Chaperito Trl, Arlington,
TX, 76016). Hope to see
you there!! Wendy
Behnke, 817-829-7812 or
behnkesw@yahoo.com

The DSPTC qualifies as a 501c(3) non-profit charitable organization and contributions are tax deductible to the extent the law allows.