community impact report

pivoting during a pandemic

2020
105 parents, family members, self-advocates and professionals attended workshops

DSNetwork assisted 144 ADULTS with Down syndrome as they experience accelerated aging that affects them medically, physically and functionally

2,500 individuals with Down syndrome and their families receive essential services from DSNetwork

136 YOUTH were engaged in team building activities while gaining self-confidence

949 FAMILY MEMBERS participated in new innovative ‘drive-thru’ designed events

1,567 VOLUNTEER HOURS were provided in countless ways, valued at $44,722
2020 will be remembered as the year of COVID-19, but even more so as the year of EMBRACING DIVERSITY.

**DSNetwork Enrichment Center:**
- provided a myriad of resources for families, educators, service providers and medical professionals
- families accessed hundreds of relevant books from the lending library
- pivoted from in-person services to virtual programming
- distributed 500 PPE masks and hand sanitizer to families
- agency e-newsletter total impressions: 44,806
- social media total impressions: 153,100

2,500 individuals with Down syndrome and their families were reached with essential services

**Volunteer Engagement:**
- volunteers were an integral part of programs and provided encouragement to the participants, even as the platform pivoted from in-person to virtual.

118 volunteers contributed 1,567 hours, valued at $44,722

**Demographics:**
- 2% asian
- 8% native american
- 10% african american
- 45% american caucasian
- 30% hispanic
- 5% unknown

**Ages of those with Down Syndrome:**
- 31% ages 0-7
- 41% ages 8-17
- 28% ages 18+
CLUB XTRA FOR KIDS (0-7):

- prior to the pandemic, 20 children along with a parent, participated in program activities
- since the pandemic did not make it safe for in-person programming, parents were surveyed to find out how they felt about participating in a virtual platform
- survey results indicated parents preferred not to attend virtually with their little ones; therefore, the Club Xtra program was placed on hold
- parents were encouraged to participate in the virtual Moms Night Out and Dads Appreciating Down Syndrome (D.A.D.S.) groups

MOMS’ NIGHT OUT:
78 moms attended monthly gatherings

D.A.D.S. (Dads Appreciating Down Syndrome):
63 dads participated in monthly gatherings

DOWN SYNDROME NETWORK

DS CONNEX workshops

- two workshops were held in the first quarter of 2020
- topics focused on ‘communication and nutrition, and ‘bodies, boundaries & puberty’ which included adolescents with Down syndrome
- Adult Summit scheduled for May, pivoted from an in-person conference to a virtual one
- the Adult Summit was in collaboration with the National Down Syndrome Society and the topics were based on vital information related to aging with Down syndrome
**XCELL FOR ADULTS: AGING WITH DOWN SYNDROME:**
- monthly group sessions were held for aging adults with Down syndrome, addressing safety, stability, social (emotional) issues, and symptoms.
- since the pandemic made it nearly impossible for people with Down syndrome and their families to meet up in a community environment, virtual experiences were developed for the participants.
- program addressed how issues of loneliness, social isolation and inactivity was affecting this vulnerable, at-risk population.
- on a weekly basis, volunteers safely delivered the activity materials, food, and whatever else was needed to the participant’s homes so their virtual experiences were meaningful and productive.

**TWEENS & TEENS UP FOR DOWN SYNDROME:**
- monthly group sessions assisted youth to be more socially involved and emotionally healthy, while making long-lasting friendships.
- when program pivoted from in-person to virtual due to the pandemic, participation decreased; however, the popularity of the virtual sessions grew after a few months.
- safely delivered activity materials, food and other program items to the participant’s homes so their virtual experiences were meaningful.
- to avoid the feeling of isolation and lack of physical exercise, participants were kept engaged while making new friends and enjoying virtual activities.
- Absolute HCBS, Inc., a collaborating partner, provided qualified individuals to assist the youth.

*144 adults with Down syndrome were assisted as they experience accelerated aging that affects them medically, physically and functionally.*

*ADULTS with Down syndrome who needed services relied on DSNetwork for ways to cope with the challenges that arose from concerns about the pandemic. As a result, the number of program related activities increased from once to 3 times a month by offering virtual exercise and activities to maintain a HEALTHY balance and lifestyle.*

*136 youth participants with Down syndrome (ages 8-18)*
DSNetwork closely monitored the situation with the pandemic while planning for how to best deliver programs and services.

The agency’s number one priority was the safety of the people served, its volunteers, sponsors, and staff.

With the pandemic, DSNetwork quickly adapted the ways in which family gatherings and outreach programs were conducted.

**Outreach and Awareness**

**Holiday Celebrations:**
Trunk or Treat Drive-thru replaced the in-person Halloween gathering and a Drive-thru Merry Everything & Happy Always holiday special & turkey giveaway replaced the family holiday gathering.

**Zumba Zoom!**
Zumba for all ages was offered virtually in order to keep everyone physically active during the pandemic.

**Buddy Walk Together We Are One:**
- A hybrid approach ensured everyone could be involved from the comfort of their own vehicles, assuring a successful Buddy Walk Arizona fundraiser in a fun and different way.
- 18th annual Buddy Walk went mobile with a parade of 237 cars with 647 attendees driving through Phoenix ZooLights.
- Safety precautions included: 50 volunteers wearing PPE face masks and shields; hand sanitizer provided; drivers wore face masks while interacting with volunteers.
- Although the walk felt and looked different, we celebrated Down syndrome and raised $104,424.

**Buddy Up Tennis:**
- 34 children, youth and adults with Down syndrome participated in 8 clinics
- learned tennis, fitness skills, became more self-confident, fostered friendships
- 31 volunteers assisted athletes with nearly a 1:1 ratio
- 100% of participants rated the program as ‘Excellent’; 88% felt the program was ‘Extremely Organized’.
- fall clinic was not held due to COVID-19

raised nearly $105,000

302 family members participated in the comfort of their own vehicle

65 people participated
In March 2020, the COVID-19 outbreak was declared a pandemic. The duration and volatility of the pandemic’s impact on DSNetwork is still unknown. As a result of necessary social distancing measures, DSNetwork’s planned programs moved to a virtual platform. Some events, such as the agency’s spring fundraiser and World Down Syndrome Day celebration, were cancelled. Others were adjusted to innovative ‘drive-thru’ designed events, allowing families to experience the festivities from the safety of their own vehicles.

All programming was offered free of charge to help families who were struggling with the financial impacts of the pandemic. Because participants could join virtual programming from anywhere, the agency saw increased attendance for many of its programs.

The economic downturn attributed to a decrease of individual contributions by 47%. However, DSNetwork received federal relief funding in the form of a $26,902 PPP loan and $19,000 EIDL loan. The loans qualified for forgiveness and met the criteria, eliminating the need for repayment.

As the pandemic is still ongoing, uncertainty of future economic conditions persists, and the impact of this economic turmoil may not be reasonably estimated.
Our mission at DSNetwork is to educate, support and advocate for those in our community touched by Down syndrome.

A community that embraces, supports and inspires individuals with Down syndrome to live healthy, self-determined and fulfilling lives.

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