

The CIDSO News

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"A Brighter Tomorrow"

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Conference Wrap Up

March 9th and 10th was the realization of a dream of leaders from across the state of Illinois. On those dates, a free conference was held for individuals with disabilities and their families. The newly formed Illinois Family Leader Collaboration group hatched this event out of personal experience that taught them the need for inspiration and resources for those living with disabilities. Funding came from such agencies as Illinois State Board of Education, Illinois STARNET Region I & III, Project CHOICES, Parent and Educator Partnership, Family Matters Parent Training and Information Center, and CIDSO.

The weekend began with fun. A dance/social was hosted for all, but the most active were the young and young adults. This included students from Illinois Wesleyan University.

Then, on the first nice Saturday of the season, over 200 attendees spent the day 'inside' listening to speakers and participating in dreaming and planning for a fresh vision of the future. New Dreams: Resources and Inspiration for People with Disabilities and their Families Conference allowed young adults with special needs, and their

families, to realize it is possible to achieve accomplishments when accepted and supported by those without such challenges.

Hearing the journey of Karen Gaffney, a 29 yr-old woman with Down syndrome who swam on a relay across the English Channel and completed an Associate's Degree in Child Development, the participants saw the possibilities for themselves and their families. Yet such achievements come from a mix of personal commitment and hard work, and a society ready to invite and welcome the unusual. Until Karen found such attitudes and environments, she was lonely and stifled.

Followed by Karen's inspiration, attendees got to learn of some of the nuts and bolts of laws that recognize the need for leveling the playing field in the lives of those with disabilities. Mathew Cohen of Monahan & Cohen, Chicago, highlighted the recently revised Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Across the day eager families were provided face-to-face contact with over a dozen representatives of major

agency/organizations related to disability services in Illinois.

Before returning to Portland, Oregon, the conference organizers arranged for Karen Gaffney to speak to elementary school assemblies in the area. Bloomington-Normal's own Central Illinois Down Syndrome Organization (CIDSO) concluded the weekend with a Saturday evening dessert reception.

Yet the real conclusion lies in the outcomes from changed attitudes and new knowledge of those attending. One mother's evaluation comment solidified the organizer's goals had been met. She wrote "This was extremely beneficial to me as a parent. I have felt isolated, frustrated and had have feared the unknown, especially with the transition to kindergarten next fall. Seeing all the young adults in attendance who have a disabilities, talking with their parents, hearing Karen's inspiring story has given me some much needed strength to move on to our next step in my daughter's life and to have real hope for the future."

Council on Exceptional Children

The CEC (Council on Exceptional Children) from ISU is a student group that has helped CIDSO in several capacities in the past and they are stepping up with two new events to involve CIDSO families.

On April 29th (Sunday), they are hosting a family get

together. The event will be at a yet to be determined park from 2 to 6 PM. It will include a meal and a wide variety of games and activities. It will be a great family event and give the ISU students a chance to interact with and get to know our families.

These students are very

interested and enthusiastic about being involved with our kids. We would like to show our support and appreciation to the group with good turnouts for these events. The family get together will need some advance planning for food, so please RSVP to Jean Bates, batesy5@verizon.net

Barnes & Nobles Night

Approximately 20 people took part in the Barnes & Nobles Reading Night which focused on the the topic of Down syndrome. "We'll Paint the Octopus Red" was the feature book and after a discussion, children were encouraged to color pictures or if they were feeling brave, try their hand at writing poetry. Despite the nasty weather that night, everyone was feeling warm and fuzzy when they realized how nice it was to have such wonderful community support. We were also very excited to know the event helped reach a new family in our area.

Potbellies

The CEC is sponsoring a fundraiser for CIDSO on May 2nd at Potbellies on Main Street in Normal. From 4 to 8 PM, 20% of all sales at Potbellies will go directly to CIDSO.

Bowling

Want to join us May 20th from 1-3 PM for free bowling at Pheasant Lanes? Just call Dawn at 750-9164 to let us know you are coming so we can be sure to have enough lanes reserved.

Editor's Note

This newsletter marks the beginning of the third year of the CIDSO News. I just want to thank everyone who has contributed by writing articles and/or submitting ideas. I am especially grateful to those of you who have shared kind words with me about particular articles. My goal is to provide useful information in a concise and positive manner concerning Down syndrome and CIDSO. If you suggestions for improvements or ideas for articles you would like to see featured in the newsletter, please let me know. Thanks, Dawn.

Disclaimer Policy

The editor of this newsletter writes as a non-professional. CIDSO does not promote any therapy, treatment, institution or professional system, etc. Please discuss specific concerns with your health care professional.

Mark the Date:

April 19:

First Buddy Walk meeting

April 23:

RSVP for CEC Family Fun Night

April 29:

CEC Family Fun Night

May 1:

Grant winners announced

May 2:

Potbellies Fundraising Night for CIDSO

May 7:

CIDSO Board Meeting

May 20:

Bowling at Pheasant Lanes

June 1 & 2:

CIDSO Gala & Open

August 3-5:

NDSC Conference in Kansas City, MO

August 25:

CIDSO Picnic

September 29:

Buddy Walk

Buddy Walk Begins

The Buddy Walk will be held on Saturday, September 29, 2007. It will take place at Carden Park in Normal. Prairieland Elementary has again agreed to let us use the school for our event.

Planning for the 2007 Buddy Walk will officially begin with our first meeting on April 19th at 6:30 PM. If you are interested in taking a more active roll in this year's event, please contact Dawn at 750-9164 for directions to the meeting.

For those of you who may not be interested in being part of the Committee but would still like to help with this event, we can always use assistance gathering donations for the \$1 raffle and other prizes.

Our focus this year will be on "teams" so if you would like to form a team or perhaps you are involved in a group or your employer would be interested in putting together a team, now is the time to start making your plans.