Over 30 years ago, the Up Side of Downs began as a parent-led organization focused on ensuring inclusion for their children in the schools and in the community as well as providing support to parents as they adjusted to a new diagnosis. Throughout the years, the Up Side of Downs has grown, changed and evolved to meet the needs of the 900+ families whom we support. USOD continues to evolve and as we reflect upon 2016, we are grateful for this opportunity to share our work with you through this report. We simply could not do what we do without our families, our donors, our supporters and our volunteers.

What a year we had in 2016! We moved to our new Independence location, began The Learning Program in our children’s classroom, and opened Artful 21, our gift shop featuring beautiful items handmade by artisans with Down syndrome.

We are grateful for the investment we receive from foundations, corporations, schools, and many individuals and families. All this enables the Up Side of Downs to provide support, education and advocacy to individuals with Down syndrome, their families and communities in 16 counties in Northeast Ohio. THANK YOU!
## Programs and Services

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Programs and Services

- **Family Support**: Provides support, education, and advocacy for people with Down syndrome, their families, and communities.
- **Advocacy**: Organizes events and provides resources to new and expectant parents.
- **Education**: Offers enrichment programs for parents and PreK–K children with Down syndrome.
- **Medical Outreach**: Addresses health care providers and provides information to medical professionals.
- **Social Programs**: Organizes family days, Buddy Walks, and other social events.

The mission of the organization is to provide support, education, and advocacy for people with Down syndrome, their families, and communities.
The Learning Program

In 2016 shortly after moving to our new office, we put our new children’s classroom to good use with The Learning Program. It offers three levels of classroom programming for children and their parents and runs from October through June each year. The goal is to empower parents to be advocates for their children and to improve academic outcomes. The program complements formal instruction in literacy and math, and it includes occupational and speech therapy components.

“Luke is so excited to participate in the Learning Program that each month when we pull into the parking lot he begins to clap and cheer! He has benefitted greatly from the opportunity to learn through play, meet new friends and to be supported in an environment rich with thoughtful educators. The parent sessions have been invaluable as they’ve provided opportunities to network with other parents of children with Down syndrome (Ds) and have offered information on proven education strategies for learners with Ds and we’ve gone home from each session with flash cards, handouts and other materials to help Luke build confidence through vocabulary acquisition. Even with limited verbal skills, Luke is able to use the materials for matching exercises and we’ve incorporated the vocabulary into his augmentative communications device so he’s able to execute the vocabulary on his own. Since beginning the program 9 months ago, Luke has been more willing to imitate verbal sounds and in general, is beginning to have emergent skills in this area. We are grateful for the opportunity to participate in The Learning Program; it’s something I envision our family participating in for years to come!”

—Kristin Taylor, mom of Luke

Artful 21 is the new retail store at the USOD office. Located in the Independence Square Shopping Center, the store features a variety of goods made by artisans with Down syndrome and is staffed by self-advocates.

Artful 21 Gift Shop gives creative and entrepreneurial individuals an opportunity to sell their products. Thus, they create their own jobs by having their merchandise accepted on a consignment basis.

The store also provides job training and part-time employment at a fair wage for adults in Northeast Ohio, enabling these individuals to meet their personal employment objectives. Artful 21 raises awareness of the talents and abilities of individuals with Down syndrome. By offering products in a retail environment with self-advocates employed in a very visible local shopping center, the store enhances the community’s knowledge of Down syndrome and the positive contributions they are making to the community.

MEET APRIL
owner of April’s Cottage Soaps

April has been making soaps for 5 years. Her product line includes bubble bath, lip balm, lotions, bath salts and more. She also creates greeting cards and gift bags. April’s favorite part of the soap making process is painting. She paints her pieces with a glycerin-based soap paint. April’s work has been featured in Artful 21 since it opened. “The shop is really nice. I love to sell my soap and bags there. The paychecks are great too.”
“Katie Stephens was born on March 29, 2009. She was an unexpected and much loved gift to our world. If we didn’t realize it then, we do now because of the Up Side of Downs. From day 1, our children were connected to the organization and comforted and encouraged by Family Outreach Coordinator, Laurie Kowalski.

My involvement came a few months later when I attended USOD’s newly formed Grandparents Group. Looking to be informed so that I could better support our children, I found that I was also given encouragement and support by grandparents who had experienced all the emotions, confusion and misinformation that often surrounds the birth of a child with Down syndrome.

Almost 8 years later, I am now a “veteran” of the group and find that I can offer hope to new grandparents. The group is one of my passions, a place where I can voice my concerns and share my joys. It has also become a vehicle through which I am able to invest my time, talents and resources in fundraising events and in growing the group through the New Parent/Grandparent Event, which we undertook several years ago under Laurie’s able leadership. Being a part of this group, building friendships through it, and volunteering because of it has been a personal blessing to me and to my family and to the Down syndrome community of which I am proud to be a part.”

—Susan Stephens, grandmother of Katie

The Grandparents Group and other USOD support groups are informal and give family members through Northeast Ohio an opportunity to connect, share and support one another.

MEET ALBERT

“Albert participates in the Adapted Fitness & Yoga program. When he first started he was a little overwhelmed, but the instructor had a peer buddy in class to help him feel welcome and partner with him for several weeks. From the first class, ‘Jazzercise’ became the highlight of Albert’s week. He loved the music and movement, but the opportunity to socialize with same age peers was something he craved and had been missing. Over time he’s made new friends that he looks forward to seeing each week. As a parent it’s hard to put into words when you know your child is lonely but the opportunities for socialization are limited. This program has been a breakthrough for our family. Tuesday night fitness class is still a weekly highlight and now Albert relishes going to the front of the class and helping lead the routines. During a recent class he was hamming it up next to the teacher and I was trying to prompt him to take his place back with the group. Another participant waves me back and says, “he’s fine, he’s fine.” Among friends. It’s all good.”

—Anne Waters, mom of Albert

The Up Side of Downs provides a variety of social outings and programs for individuals of all ages with Down syndrome and their families.

NEW PARENT SUPPORT

“Nearly 1 year ago, we were blessed with our second child, Andrew. At 2 days old, the hospital doctor brought Andrew back to my room after a short stay in the special care unit and informed us that Andrew had Down syndrome—then she walked out. Obviously my husband and I had a thousand questions, but it was a Saturday and no one at the hospital was able to talk with us. So we searched everything possible about Down syndrome online and ultimately were scared to raise a child with Down syndrome according to the online interpretation.

In our search, we realized the Up Side of Downs was available and close to our home. Hence, I called Family Outreach Coordinator, Laurie Kowalski, first thing Monday morning. She met my family for breakfast and did a wonderful job explaining Down syndrome to us—the truths—not the internet interpretation. We quickly learned that it wasn’t going to be as scary as we thought and that there was an incredible support system available at USOD.

We are so blessed to be a part of this new family. The New Parent Day was really educational and exciting. USOD celebrated our new babies and our families and made us feel so welcome. The Buddy Walk truly brought tears to my eyes. The amazing coordination and work that was put into the event, along with the incredible support and cheering, just melted my heart. Every month I look forward to the Medina Parent’s Night Out. My son is one of the younger ones of the group and having experienced moms to ask questions to is priceless.

USOD has been an amazing support system and has shown me that raising a child with Down syndrome is not scary, but rather a blessing.”

—Kelly Pappas, mom of Andrew
We are grateful for the hundreds of generous donors, friends and sponsors that support our mission.

**FOUNDATION SUPPORT**

- The Catanzarite Foundation
- The Cleveland Foundation
- Conway Family Foundation
- Different Needz Foundation
- Dollar General Literacy Foundation
- Gertrude F. Orr Trust Advised Fund of Akron Community Foundation
- Global Down Syndrome Foundation
- The GROW Foundation at Hathaway Brown
- Kohl’s Cares
- Lozick Foundation
- The Max & Victoria Dreyfus Foundation
- Pentair Foundation
- Ronald McDonald House Charities of NE Ohio
- Staples Foundation
- Walmart Foundation

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- Adventure Subaru
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- Indiana-Kentucky-Ohio Regional Council of Carpenters
- Millwrights & Pile Drives Local 1090
- United Brotherhood of Carpenters & Joiners of America Local 435
- Interior Systems Carpenters Local 373

**IN-KIND SERVICES**

- ACM Graphics
- Cleveland Photographic Society
- The DJ Company
- Focal Point Social Media
- Labels & Letters
- Lamar
- Madison Graphics

**TOP 10 BUDDY WALK FUNDRAISING TEAMS**

- Amazing Macee’s Marchers
- A.J.’s Amigos
- Beckett’s Buddies
- Callen’s Buddies
- Cooper’s Crew
- Greyson’s Homies
- Ian’s Idols with Grayson’s Groupies
- Kayla’s Kingdom
- Super Joe’s All Stars
- Sophia’s Sidekicks

_Special thanks to Dempsey Scheiman & Associates for hosting their annual golf outing in support of the Up Side of Downs. 2016 marked their 23rd annual outing for USOD._
Two USOD brochures are now available in Spanish.

We will once again hold the Buddy Walk at the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo. This year’s walk is on Saturday, August 26th.

We are partnering with other local organizations in NE Ohio to present the Transition Boosters series focused on the transition from school to adult life for youths with disabilities.

We are an official internship site for the Occupational Therapy Assistant Program at Bryant & Stratton, and we are working with their students and staff on programming while providing interns with the knowledge and experience to work with children with Down syndrome in the future.
Mission: To provide support, education and advocacy for people with Down syndrome, their families and communities.

Supporting and Celebrating Down Syndrome in Northeast Ohio

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The Up Side of Downs is proud to have been named 2016 Affiliate of the Year by Down Syndrome Affiliates in Action

Follow Us:

USOD is a member of the following organizations:

GLOBAL DOWN SYNDROME FOUNDATION
DOWN SYNDROME AFFILIATES IN ACTION

MISSION: To provide support, education and advocacy for people with Down syndrome, their families and communities.