



*Hi, my name is Katie VanOeveren.  
I live at home with my mom and dad and two dogs. ...*



**DSAWM**

Down Syndrome Association of West Michigan  
*Empowering individuals. Supporting communities.*

*2020  
Annual  
Report*



Meet  
Katie

... I'm 25 years old and work at Forest Hills Foods where I bag groceries and bring them to the cars. I also volunteer at Whistle Stop Child Development Center with my mom. I like playing with the kids. I have a bunch of hobbies: music, reading, singing, word search, Wii games, playing on the computer, and watching sports and cooking shows. I'm very busy with a bunch of groups too: Special Olympics, cooking and singing with DSAWM, ACT classes, Capernaum with YoungLife, and Noorthoek Academy.

#### How has Covid-19 changed your day-to-day?

I didn't work that much in the beginning, but I am working now. My Special Olympics basketball team had to stop playing and we didn't get to go to State. All my activities and summer camps got shut down and I don't get to do anything with my friends.

#### How have you adapted?

I stay at home and do stuff by myself. I wake up early, eat my breakfast, and then do activities like Zumba, reading, word search, coloring, and watching shows on my phone. After that, I play Wii games and play on the computer. When the weather is nice, I take walks in the neighborhood.

#### How have your favorite activities adapted?

A bunch of my programs are on Zoom now like singing with Leah. Camp Sunshine did some Zoom stuff last summer too like dance parties, cabin connects, and a talent show. I even do Zoom on the bus and in the car.

#### What are your hopes for 2021?

I don't like wearing masks and hope they go away, and I want the virus to go away. I want to be in-person with my friends again.



At the Down Syndrome Association of West Michigan (DSAWM) we advocate for and provide services and programming through all stages of life to individuals with Down syndrome and their families. We are committed to creating communities that embrace Down syndrome, empower individuals, and promote opportunities for meaningful lives.

## Our Impact in 2020

296 Families Served

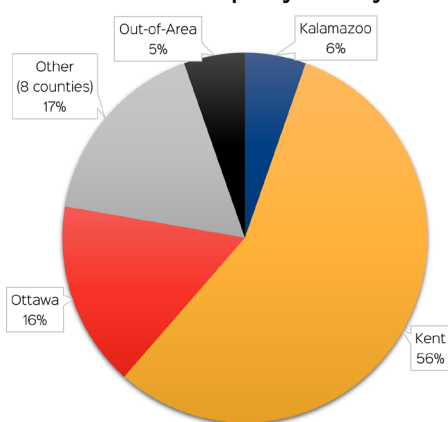
35 New Members Joined

22 Counties Represented



New members like Liam are welcomed to our community with a beautiful quilt handmade by a talented group of parents and friends.

Memberships By County



DSAWM's service area includes 12 West Michigan counties, but we never turn away a family who would like to participate regardless of their location.

13 Programs & 3 Events Offered

2,161 Total Program Attendance

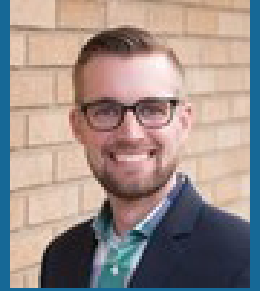
12 members, including 11-year-old Piper, attended our Adaptive Kayaking clinic in partnership with Kentwood Parks and Recreation in July.





## A Message from Our Leaders

2020 was a year of trauma, loss, and grief for our community due to COVID-19. It was also a year of slowing down and appreciating spending time together. We have worked from home and closed schools, opened, and closed again. Our children have had to learn a new normal and this has taken a toll on everyone, but especially so for our members with Down syndrome. Hopefully, everyone took some extra time to love the ones you are with every day.



The Down Syndrome Association of West Michigan has done everything in our power to continue programs and social events and serve new members and their families. We were able to do some in-person programming during the summer and held Step Up for Down Syndrome with 700 people participating in-person and virtually and raising just over \$95,000 for our important services. Our staff has also advocated for the vaccine rollout for our members and their families.

The largest change for the Association and Foundation is that we have moved our headquarters to the new Special Olympics Michigan Unified Sports and Inclusion Center, located at 160 68th Street SW in Grand Rapids, where we can reach more children, teens, and adults. This new venture allows us to partner with agencies that also serve our members, raise our visibility, and enable us to expand our reach and services.

The board and staff of DSAWM look forward to the rest of 2021 with hope and anticipation of being able to gather again and joyfully be reunited with our friends and families.

**Jennifer DeVault**  
Executive Director

**Brad Rivard**  
Board President

## Your Staff & Board

**Jennifer DeVault**  
Executive Director

**Brad Rivard**  
President

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& Administrative Assistant

**David Wood**  
Treasurer

**Lisa Glover** (July-Present)  
**Erica Bode** (January-June)  
Secretary

*In June, DSAWM welcomed Niurka Diaz to the Board of Directors. Niurka is integral to our team and plays an important role in our outreach to and engagement with Spanish-speaking members. She is pictured at center with her family, including 14-year-old daughter Anna.*



# 2020 Highlights

## Covid-19 Response

Covid-19 ushered in a wave of change to our personal, professional, and social lives in 2020. For many in our community, isolation became the norm. Individuals with Down syndrome are at an increased risk for certain health challenges, such as cardiovascular abnormalities and sleep apnea. Because of this, exposure to the virus has a greater risk of being life-threatening for those with Down syndrome. As hospitalizations surged across the country, DSAWM acted fast to ensure Michiganders with Down syndrome did not fall behind in the pandemic response.

- On April 13, 2020 DSAWM signed a joint statement with eight other local disability organizations advocating for nondiscriminatory healthcare for persons with disabilities. The statement was sent to Spectrum Health, Mercy Health, Metro Health, and the Kent County Health Department.
- On December 14, 2020 DSAWM supported a letter distributed by the National Down Syndrome Society and LuMind IDSC to MDHHS advocating for individuals with Down syndrome to be prioritized in the vaccine distribution process. Shortly thereafter, on December 23rd, the CDC added Down syndrome to the list of at-risk persons. As a result, people with Down syndrome were added to Phase 1C of Michigan's vaccine distribution plan.
- On February 2, 2021 DSAWM signed a vaccine advocacy letter organized by Disability Advocates of Kent County and Disability Network Michigan. The letter was sent to West Michigan healthcare leaders, MDHHS, and Governor Whitmer urging for the immediate vaccination of those with disabilities as well as advocating for equitable access for those with disabilities at vaccination sites.

Throughout 2020 and continuing into 2021, DSAWM has made advocacy a priority. We have shared relevant and vetted resources and updates with our community, communicated with county health departments and local and state leaders, and amplified our calls to action through strategic partnerships with West Michigan advocacy organizations. We were ecstatic that on March 22, 2021 all Michigan residents with Down syndrome became eligible to receive the vaccine. With distribution efforts continuing rapidly across the state, we are hopeful that a return to normal is on the horizon.

## Virtual Programming



When public concerns about Covid-19 first surfaced in March 2020, we were a week away from one of our most popular events of the year—our World Down Syndrome Day Dance. The decision to cancel this big community celebration was difficult, but we were certain that we would bring everyone together again at our Member Picnic that summer. ...Obviously, Covid had other plans.

As our office closed and staff began to work remotely, we focused our attention on how we could continue to serve our membership while adhering to CDC and state guidelines. In April, we began transitioning several programs to a virtual format. Baby Sign Language, Book Club, and Shape Up all moved online. We also introduced a new Music Jamboree program for multiple age groups which saw 114 unique members participate throughout the year—making up over 40% of our total program attendance! Offering virtual activities not only kept our members engaged and gave them the opportunity to socialize with friends, it also created greater accessibility for members in outlying counties who were often unable to attend our programs due to the long commute.

Eased restrictions in the summer months allowed us to incorporate some in-person programming including Rapid Runners, but by fall we were back to an exclusively virtual schedule. One of the most difficult decisions



staff made in 2020 was to cancel the annual Holiday Party. The event is much loved and an opportunity to see old friends, meet new families, and snap a coveted photo with Santa. We could not let the season go by without some celebration though, so we hosted a special virtual Holiday Talent Show. 11 members showcased their unique talents with festive singing, dancing, and an electric DJ set! It was a spirited end to a challenging year.



## Step Up for Down Syndrome



Throughout the summer, our staff worked diligently to modify our plans for our annual Step Up for Down Syndrome celebration. Ours is the largest Down syndrome awareness event in the state and our biggest fundraiser of the year. Cancelling was simply not an option. Instead, we decided to host a limited capacity and socially distanced in-person event as well as offer a virtual activity packet for families who preferred to participate at-home. On September 26th, 39 teams were engaged online and over 300 walkers attended our in-person Field Day themed event on the Special Olympics Michigan campus. Though less than half of our usual attendance, our community still came together in full force and helped us raise 85% of our fundraising goal. This meant a lot to us as other similar events around the state struggled to hit even 25% of their goals. A special thank you is needed for our Title Sponsor, Dan Vos Construction Company, as well as our top

fundraising team, Lindsey Lu Who! We would not have been successful without the support of either. Save the date for the 2021 Step Up for Down Syndrome on September 18th. We hope to see you there!

## Change of Address

Since our founding in 1985, DSAWM has continued to grow and impact more and more lives. Our membership is constantly increasing, and participation is at capacity for most of our programs. While our service area includes 12 counties, our limited resources prevent us from providing programs for as many of those areas as we would like. We know that with more resources and space we could be impacting many more people. The decision to move from our small downtown office in Grand Rapids to the first-of-its-kind Special Olympics Michigan Unified Sports and Inclusion Center is the first step towards realizing that goal. As 2020 came to a close, we were opening the doors to our new office at 160 68th Street Southwest. The move will give us opportunities to reach more children, teens, and adults throughout our 12-county service area; allow us to partner with other existing agencies that serve those with physical or cognitive challenges by sharing space on the Special Olympics campus; and significantly raise our profile and visibility throughout the community. We are so excited for the sustainable growth that this move ensures for our organization and the endless possibilities it will create for our community. Turn the page to learn how you can be involved in supporting DSAWM's growth.



*Congratulations to DSAWM member Cody and his partner Lisa who got engaged in October! On his advice to other people with disabilities who want to find love, Cody says, "If you have a dream, you need to go for it because it's important to have faith in yourself, be honest with yourself, and someday you will find the right person who may make you as happy as you can be."*

## Board of Directors

**Robert Boylen**  
President

**Jennifer DeVault**  
Executive Director

**Thomas DeVault**  
Fund Development Director

**Robin Zondervan**  
Treasurer

**Cameron Dolbow**  
**Tom Hackett**  
**Brad Rivard**  
**Jim Scarlett**  
Members At Large

*DSAWM members Allie and Meredith enjoyed one another's company at the Foundation's Winners Cup Benefit in 2019. While the event was cancelled in 2020 and 2021, we look forward to resuming the annual Kentucky Derby themed party next year on May 7, 2022.*



The Down Syndrome Association of West Michigan Foundation (DSAWMF) was established to provide a permanent source of principal, so that funds would be available in the future to support individuals with Down syndrome, their families, and the West Michigan communities in which they live, work, and play. DSAWMF is a separate not-for-profit organization from the Down Syndrome Association of West Michigan (DSAWM), funded by cash, securities and other assets, and helps to fund the vital programs, supports and services provided by DSAWM.



Connecting Communities is an \$850,000 capital campaign that will continue to support individuals with Down syndrome, their families, and communities across 12 West Michigan counties.

In early 2021, DSAWMF and DSAWM moved our headquarters to the new Special Olympics Michigan Unified Sports & Inclusion Center at 160 68th Street SW, Grand Rapids, MI. We plan to invest nearly \$1 million in our new home, funding program expansion, and enhancing our endowment fund.

When complete, this project will:

- Give us opportunities to reach more children, teens, and adults throughout our twelve-county service area.
- Allow us to partner with other existing agencies that serve those with physical or cognitive challenges by sharing space on the Special Olympics campus.
- Significantly raise our profile and visibility throughout the community.

We are now approaching those who support our mission to seek your help with this important initiative. Please join us in supporting the Connecting Communities campaign as we seek to help all members of our region reach their full potential.

*Learn more and help us Connect Communities at*  
**[www.dsawmfoundation.org](http://www.dsawmfoundation.org)**

\*Public announcement and campaign launch coming August 2021\*



We are continuing to take things day-by-day as we plan for our Summer 2021 programming season, but feel optimistic that we will be able to incorporate some in-person programming back into our schedule. Keep an eye on our weekly newsletter, website, and social media for announcements about returning favorites and new engagement opportunities for members of all ages! In the meantime, be sure to save the date for the following events:

*Looking Ahead*

### July 12-14 Summer Day Camp

SOMI Unified Sports & Inclusion Center,  
Grand Rapids

*sessions for children and teens/adults*

### July 25 Member Summer Picnic

Tunnel Park, Holland

### September 18 Step Up for Down Syndrome

SOMI Unified Sports & Inclusion Center

*While we couldn't bring families together in Summer 2020 for our annual Member Picnic on Lake Michigan, John and his sister and Ella and her brother sent us photos of their own backyard Fourth of July picnics.*



## 2020 Financial Report



### The Association

Revenue	Dollars	% of Total	Expenses	Dollars	% of Total
Public Support	\$180,801	60%	Programs & Services	\$199,494	65%
Fundraising Events	\$98,100	33%	Admin & Management	\$54,467	18%
Grants	\$13,950	5%	Fundraising Costs	\$52,683	17%
Member Dues	\$6,482	2%			
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$299,333</b>		<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$306,644</b>	



### The Foundation

Revenue	Dollars	% of Total	Expenses	Dollars	% of Total
Unrealized Gain (Loss) on Endowment Fund	\$149,288	63%	Programs & Services	\$49,826	48%
Endowment Fund Investment Income	\$56,278	24%	Fundraising Costs	\$41,053	40%
Public Support	\$17,221	7%	Admin & Management	\$11,877	12%
Fundraising Events	\$15,135	6%			
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$237,922</b>		<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$102,756</b>	

Thank  
you!

DSAWM is grateful to the generous donors who made contributions in 2020. Your support was critical in keeping our programs and services continuing throughout the year. A very special thank you to the following donors who made gifts of \$500 or more in 2020.

Best Financial Credit Union  
Custom Profile  
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DK Security  
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Ray & Robin Zondervan



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Learn how you can support or join our  
community by visiting [www.dsawm.org](http://www.dsawm.org).

 /dsawestmi   /dsawm

*left: Jay and Jack celebrate World Down Syndrome Day.  
right: Emmalyn has fun at Step Up for Down Syndrome.*

