



# 2021 Annual Report



# A Bright future

I am Katie Hollis, the new Executive Director of the Down Syndrome Association of West Michigan (and its Foundation). I am the mother of two children, a 13-year-old girl I adopted in 2019 and a two-year-old boy with Down syndrome. Prior to accepting the role of Executive Director, I was a member of the organization who regularly attended the Moms' Night Out support group and Baby Sign Language classes; and was wondering how I could get more involved. I am trained as a molecular biologist, with experience in teaching and project management, a heart for fundraising, and a hobby in event planning. When the opportunity to lead this organization came up, I knew this was where I was meant to be. I am excited to lead DSAWM and see how we can grow together to support our loved ones with Down syndrome and advocate for their full inclusion in the West Michigan community.

2021 brought a lot of big changes for the Association. At the start of the fourth quarter, the Executive Director of almost 5 years, Jennifer DeVault, accepted an amazing opportunity as the new director of

## Your Staff & Board of Directors

Katie Hollis  
*Executive Director*

Melissa Perrin  
*Program Director*

Victoria Hart  
*Communications Director*

Peri Phillipi  
*Program & Admin. Assistant*

Maria Nykerk  
*Board President*

Roshelle Seals  
*Vice President*

Adam Burzynski  
*Treasurer*

Amy Wigger  
*Secretary*

Chloe Bayer  
Katelyn Benvenuti\*  
Marjorie Hayward\*  
Tierra Jolly\*  
Rich Kloeckner\*  
  
2022-2023  
*Members-At-Large*

*\*elected in 2022*

Thank you to Jennifer DeVault, Nate Clark, and Tom DeVault for their tenures. We wish them the very best in their new career adventures.

We extend a heartfelt thank you as well to our Board members whose service ended in 2022: Niurka Diaz, Tom Hackett, Molly VandeWater, Michael Wolfe, and Dave Wood.

Kent District Libraries. We thank her for her years of service and for helping the organization to thrive during her tenure.

Under her direction, we started 2021 by moving into the Special Olympics Unified Sports and Inclusion Center. The new space has allowed for growth in many ways, including launching our Connecting Communities capital campaign, a summer day camp, and the 21 Shades support group for multi-racial families. While some of our programming remained virtual, we took advantage of our new home's Life Skills room to host our popular Cooking Capers program, providing just a small peak at what this new facility has to offer.

DSAWM also began focusing on collaborative programming opportunities for our members. We hosted a dance program with Reaching with Rhythm and wrapped up the year with a new collaborative therapeutic playgroup with Comprehensive Therapy Center.

As I began my new role in February of 2022, I saw the Association was positioned in an environment full of opportunities. Through townhall meetings with our members and analysis of the organization, we began preparing a new strategic plan. We are now in the process of re-launching committees and improving the efficacy of the organization. We have also been hard at work growing our staff and board, while also embracing collaboration with community partners and other local non-profits. I look forward to continuing the great success of this organization and ensuring a bright future of opportunities for those with Down syndrome in our community!



Katie Hollis  
Executive Director





# Hola, Estrella's!

It's not often that you see Diane Estrella still. Whether she's at the head of the class teaching her students, behind the wheel chauffeuring a group to afterschool activities, or at a beloved nonprofit volunteering her time, Diane is almost always in motion. The same is true of many moms who, like Diane, have a child with Down syndrome. Days are spent moving from the classroom to therapy visits to social programs to doctor's offices and more. It's a busy life, but, Diane says, she wouldn't have it any other way.

In 2003, while living in the Dominican Republic, Diane welcomed her son Elias. A native of Michigan, Diane had moved to the Dominican Republic to teach and start a family with her husband Naun. The couple had previously welcomed three daughters and were excited to have a boy in the family. It was only after his birth and on a visit back to the United States, that they learned Elias had Down syndrome. "We were introduced to the Down Syndrome Association of West Michigan pretty quickly," Diane recalls. "It was so nice to connect with other families."

The Estrella's continued to foster those connections on their return visits to Michigan every summer. Building a community aided their decision to permanently move back to the U.S. when Elias was diagnosed with leukemia at age 6. "We loved our home in the Dominican Republic and that Elias had full inclusion there, but the need to be close to family and have more support played a big role in our decision to return." Thankfully, Elias' leukemia entered remission, and with his health no longer a barrier Diane and her family's involvement with DSAWM flourished.

Elias is now 19 years old and a regular at DSAWM programs including Rapid Runners, Cooking Capers, Music Jamboree, Buddy Up Tennis...the list goes on and on! "He's made great friendships over the years," Diane says. It's these relationships that Diane credits to enriching her family's experience with DSAWM.

"Elias enjoys having friends to go to activities with...and his involvement has created opportunities for his siblings to volunteer and build their own friendships with people with

disabilities." Elias' sisters are now pursuing careers in special education and recreational therapy, paths that Diane says are directly impacted by having Elias as a brother.

Diane's eagerness to build relationships has also shaped her role in the organization. As one of DSAWM's most active bilingual members, Diane has connected dozens of Hispanic families with DSAWM programs and services over the years. In August 2021, she helped launch 21 Shades, a support group for families of color and multicultural families. The group meets for social activities and workshop opportunities every few months, with most families currently participating identifying as Hispanic or Latino. "It's important for families to see other people like them at programs," Diane says. "It's been exciting to see families who come and discover the value in DSAWM and the connections it offers, and are now convincing others to join and participate as well."

Diane and the Estrella's continue to live lives in motion. As Elias grows into adulthood, new opportunities are emerging, and Diane will continue to embrace her roles as teacher, chauffer, volunteer, cheerleader, and friend...aka Mom. She'll also add advocate to that list as she finds more opportunities to connect with families in the community, having recently joined DSAWM's Step Up for Down Syndrome Planning Committee and the First Call Committee. "I want

others to know what we've learned through experience: Here's a place where you'll be welcome and supported. We all need that."





# Our Impact

While the Covid-19 pandemic continued to impact our operations in 2021, widespread distribution of the vaccine gave DSAWM confidence to cautiously resume some in-person programming and events. In the spring and summer, popular skill-building programs including Cooking Capers, Rapid Runners, and Book Club began meeting outdoors. Summer Day Camp kicked off with 27 school-age members enjoying a week of fun activities and socialization with new friends. Important member events like the Summer Picnic on the lakeshore and Holiday Party in downtown Grand Rapids were also well-attended and gave families the opportunity to connect after being apart for over a year. Step Up for Down Syndrome was, as always, a highlight of the year and over \$89,000 was raised to support DSAWM.

We are grateful to our staff, board, and volunteers for working hard to ensure the challenges of the pandemic did not hinder our services and outreach. It takes a village...and we are fortunate to have such an incredible community of support!



## Creating Employment Opportunities

DSAWM is proud to employ our members as part of our Self-Advocate Internship program. The Self-Advocate Intern lends a hand with administrative duties in the office including writing donor and volunteer thank you cards, assisting with event preparations, and engaging in advocacy opportunities within the community. In September 2021, DSAWM hired Eric Willinger for the role. Eric has a sharp sense of humor and is extremely personable, traits which make him an engaging advocate both in and out of the office. Eric also works at Chick-fil-A and was the first person with Down syndrome to be hired at any West Michigan location. In his free time, he's an avid bowler, enjoys basketball, and plays several musical instruments. We're thrilled to have him on the team!



●● We are  
**SUPER**  
excited  
to be  
connected  
with such  
an amazing  
program!

-Member Candace Martin



Serving Individuals and Families Year-Round

**287**

member families  
engaged and  
connected



**16**

unique programs  
and events  
offered



**1,269**

program and  
event attendees



# The Foundation

The Down Syndrome Association of West Michigan Foundation operates alongside DSAWM to support the West Michigan Down Syndrome community. Through the management and growth of its endowment, the Foundation supports the annual operating budget of DSAWM while also supporting other organizations that consistently and actively serve the Down syndrome population.

While the pandemic forced the Foundation to cancel its annual springtime fundraiser, the Winners Cup Benefit, a new event was introduced in October. The Halloween Casino Night invited Foundation supporters, old and new, to a lively “friendraiser” at Kent Country Club. Organized by Winners Cup Committee Co-chairs William and Bobbi Blanton, the event gave attendees the opportunity to mingle and network while enjoying a fun night out.

The Halloween Casino Night was also an opportunity to celebrate the launch of the Foundation’s Connecting Communities Capital Campaign. The \$850,000 fundraising effort will allow the Foundation and Association to invest in their new headquarters at the Special Olympics Unified Sports & Inclusion Center, fund program expansion, and enhance the endowment fund. During the campaign’s public announcement in August 2021, campaign co-chairs Rich Kloeckner and Jim Leach shared that over \$800,000 had already been raised!



## Foundation Board of Directors

Bob Boylen  
*Board President*

Katie Hollis  
*Executive Director*

Robin Zondervan  
*Treasurer*

William Blanton, Cameron Dolbow, Tom Hackett, Jim Scarlett  
*2022-2023 Members-At-Large*



The Foundation is grateful to the following donors who have contributed to the Connecting Communities Capital Campaign.

Chris A. Anderson  
Bill and Carol Ashcroft  
Dan and Jo Bajema  
Chloe Bayer  
Bill and Amy Bennett  
Jim and Judy Blanchard  
Joel and Laura Blanchard  
The Bode Family  
Robert C. Boylen  
Ed and Linda Bueche  
Building Synergy  
Nate Clark  
Bob and Mary Clarkson  
Dan Vos Construction Company  
Dustin and Jill Daniels  
Tom and Jennifer DeVault  
Niurka Diaz  
Cameron Dolbow  
Brian and Cheryl Doyle  
Eagle Industrial Group  
Pete and Anne Eardley  
Eileen DeVries Family Foundation  
Suzy Gill  
Jason and Julie Griffen  
Tom and Julie Hackett  
Victoria Hart  
Steve and Brenda Heacock  
Patrice Heffernan  
Hope Network Foundation  
Keith and Mary Kay Hopkins  
Ben and Dana Hughes  
Dave and Jane Hughes  
Huntington National Bank  
King Milling Company  
Steve and Robin Klaubo  
Rich and Lindsey Kloeckner  
The Labadie Family  
Land & Company

Jim and Michelle Leach  
Lona Leach  
Kim and Mark Lempke  
William & Rochelle Lettinga  
Alyssa Eckel Martin and Shawn Martin  
Erin Melcher  
Mercantile Bank  
James and Nancy Meyer  
Mike and Sue Jandernoa Advised Fund of Grand Rapids Community Foundation  
Jim and Mary Nelson  
Rich and Anne Noreen  
Bob and Carol Nowak  
Nick and Maria Nykerk  
Mark and Judy Olesnavage  
Marsha Rago  
Bradley and Rachael Rivard  
Lois Roelse  
Jim and Bonnie Scarlett  
Steelcase  
Bradley Sturm  
The Anderson Group  
The Hansen Family Foundation  
The Wege Foundation  
Thrive Pediatric Speech and Feeding Therapy  
Tripp and Katie VanderWal  
Brian and Mary VandeWater  
Don, Diane, and Katie VanOeveren  
Paul and Sheena Vogel  
West Michigan Eyecare Associates  
Amy and Mike Wigger  
Eric Willinger  
Margaret A. Wilson  
Matthew and Laura Witkowski  
Dave Wood  
Ray and Robin Zondervan  
Gifts received in memory of Jim Leach, Sr.



**Save the Date**

## The Winners Cup Benefit

*A Kentucky Derby Party and Auction to Benefit the  
Down Syndrome Association of West Michigan Foundation*

**May 6, 2023**

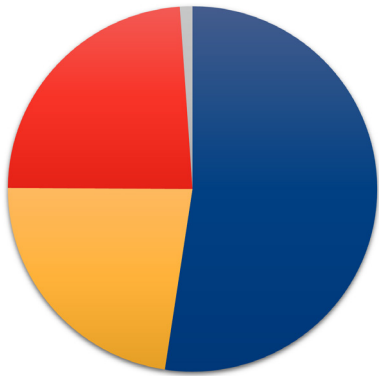
*at Egypt Valley Country Club*



# financials

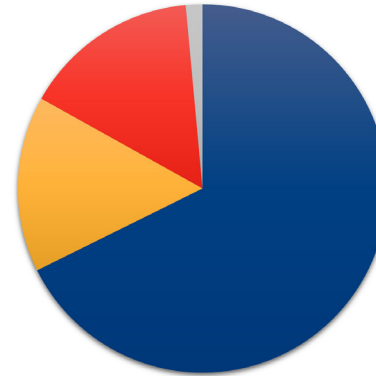


2021 Association Operational Revenue



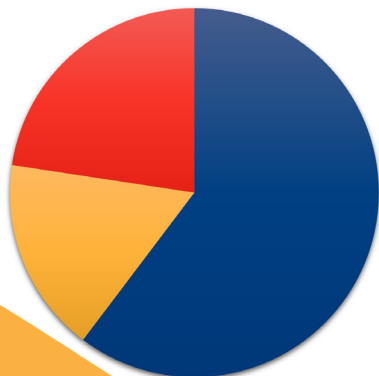
Public Support	\$205,356
Grants	\$93,374
Fundraising Events	\$88,816
Membership Dues	\$4,258
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$391,804</b>

2021 Foundation Operational Revenue



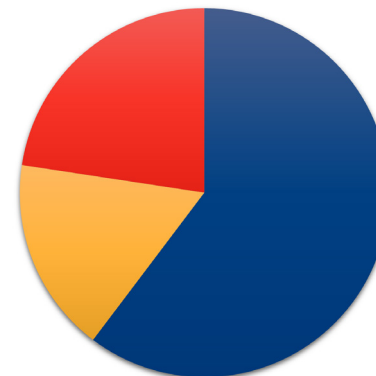
Public Support	\$293,654
Endowment Fund Investment Income	\$67,294
Unrealized Gain on Endowment Fund	\$67,043
Fundraising Events	(\$6,454)
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$421,537</b>

2021 Association Operational Expenses



Programs & Services	\$209,437
Admin & Management	\$78,660
Fundraising Costs	\$59,295
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$347,392</b>

2021 Foundation Operational Expenses



Programs & Services	\$159,097
Fundraising Costs	\$30,000
Admin & Management	\$8,298
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$197,395</b>

At the 2021 year's end, the Net Assets of the Down Syndrome Association of West Michigan Foundation totaled \$1,736,219.



# Thank You!



We are deeply grateful to the many donors who support our organization. Because of your contributions, our programming remains free and accessible to families across West Michigan and we are continuously able to expand our outreach and services. We are humbled by your generosity!

A very special thank you to the following sponsors, grantors, and donors whose \$250+ gifts supported us in the 2021 fiscal year.

Tyler Berger  
William and Bobbi Blanton  
Boardwalk Subs  
Mr. and Mrs. Drew Boersma  
Stephen and Susan Britton  
David L Brooks  
Buist Electric  
Cadillac Jeeps  
Fred and Elaine Cook  
Bill and Kim Daly  
Dan Vos Construction Company  
DK Security  
Brian and Cheryl Doyle  
Kelly Van Dyke  
Therese Fela  
Jane Filipiak  
Suzy Gill  
Avery Glass  
Global Down Syndrome Foundation  
Denise Gritter  
The Kendall Group  
Thomas and Julie Hackett  
Jodi Heeringa  
Herman Miller Cares  
Todd and Melissa Hoefler  
Home Services of White Lake, Inc.  
Wendy Johnson  
Kalamazoo Community Foundation  
Marilyn Karel  
King Milling Company  
KPMG U.S. Foundation, Inc.  
Matthew Kwantes  
Lakewood Construction  
Lona Leach  
Link Manufacturing, Ltd.

Lugers Family Foundation  
Henry and Teresa Maddox  
Maggie's Be Cafe  
Magna Mirrors of America, Inc.  
Jeff and Christina Manion  
Meijer  
Mr. Burger  
MSU Federal Credit Union  
Scott and Mary Nykerk  
Pals Socks  
Penn Station East Coast Subs  
Linda Peterson  
Peterson Farms, Inc.  
Rosann Pitchford  
Robert L. Bytwerk Family Fund  
Trisha Rose  
Samuel L Westerman Foundation  
Susan Scott  
South Christian High School  
Paul and Beth Taylor  
Jordan Thelen  
TJX Foundation  
Tuff Cover  
Paul and Sheena Vogel  
Richard and Julie Wadel  
Patrick and Ashley Warren  
Doug and Tracy Warsen  
Michael and Keri Weber  
West Michigan Eyecare Associates



# On the Horizon

## Year-round Programs

21 Shades Support Group  
Aging with Down Syndrome  
Book Club  
Cooking Capers  
Moms & Dads Nights Out  
Self-Advocate Board

## Winter/Spring 2023

Shape Up (also available in Fall)  
Buddy Up Tennis (also available in Fall)  
Baby Sign Language  
Reaching with Rhythm\*  
Rock Your Socks Dance (March 18)  
Winners Cup Benefit (May 6)  
Annual Meeting (May 8)

## Summer 2023

Rapid Runners  
iCan Bike Camp (June 12-16)\*  
Adaptive Water Ski Clinic (July 21)\*  
Member Summer Picnic (July 23)  
Oh, Baby!

## Fall 2023

Step Up for Down Syndrome (September 9)  
Member Holiday Party (December 3)

\*partner program



## Welcome, Melissa and Peri!

In August 2022, DSAWM welcomed two new staff members: Melissa Perrin and Peri Phillipi. Melissa oversees the development and expansion of our programs and services in the role of Program Director and Peri provides frontline support and assists with program implementation as the new Program & Administrative Assistant. "I am thrilled for the opportunity to take on a more active role in the programming of the DSAWM and help shape the future of this fantastic organization," says Melissa, who first became involved with DSAWM four years ago when her son Osgood was born with Down syndrome. Peri similarly has a strong connection to our community. "After assisting in organizing and teaching a work skills class at DSAWM in 2019 I was very eager to find more opportunities to work with this organization. I look forward to taking on the role of the administrative assistant for DSAWM and getting a chance to find new ways to support and be an advocate for people with disabilities in this community."











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

160 68th Street SW, Suite 110  
Grand Rapids, MI 49548



Connect with us at [dswm.org](http://dswm.org) or on social media

