Down Syndrome Association OF NORTHEAST OHIO

Impact Report

2025

Down Syndrome Association OF NORTHEAST OHIO

Mission

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

SUPPORT

for families from the moment of diagnosis through adulthood

EDUCATION

to ensure that students with Down syndrome have tools for success

ADVOCACY

to promote inclusion and protect the rights of people with Down syndrome.

Note from Executive Director

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As we reflect on 2025, I remain grateful to so many in the community who support DSANEO's mission. While the year presented challenges, it also came with opportunities – for program growth, increased empowerment of individuals with Down syndrome, and more connection with so many throughout Northeast Ohio who volunteered, donated and helped us in wonderful ways.

We continue to build upon the momentum of 2025 and expand our work on behalf of individuals with Down syndrome and their families. Together we will strive to support families and provide opportunities for a more inclusive society where people with Down syndrome have limitless opportunities and the ability to pursue their dreams.

Thank you for standing with us and for believing in our mission. Your support makes a world of difference.

Warm regards,
Toni Mullee
Executive Director

Down Syndrome Association OF NORTHEAST OHIO

Meet the Team

We couldn't possibly serve and support individuals with Down syndrome and their families in Northeast Ohio without the passionate individuals who are members of the DSANEO staff. They dedicate themselves to the organization's mission and to providing programming to ensure that the people we serve are celebrated and empowered. DSANEO board members donate their time and talent to the organization, helping to maintain a strong foundation for the present and the future.

DSANEO Staff

Toni Mullee, Executive Director

Andy Bean, Programming

Casey Brown, Educator

Leslie Burke, Development Director

Matt Chernitsky, Adult Employment Coordinator

Laura Cifra-Bean, MD, Medical Outreach Director

Denise Cirino, Director of Teen & Adult Engagement

Calli Fenik, Special Events Coordinator

Melissa Khorana, Early Childhood Support Coordinator

Carrie Linden, Office Assistant

Gina Mitchner, Education Director

Debbie Picker, Healthy Aging Support Coordinator

Amy Sivertson, Educator

Maria Sivertson, Director of Community Relations

Mandy Spisak, Office Manager & Volunteer Coordinator

Cori Thomas, New Parent Support Coordinator

Barb Waddle, Social Programs Manager

Board Members

2025

Mark Szczepanik, Chair

Michele Dynia, Vice Chair

Sarah Csongei, Secretary

Michael Winschel, Treasurer

David Banas

Dave Barth

Bruce Batista

Justin Eisinger

Todd Eisinger

David Gifford

Brendan Hardin

Betsy Lambert

Michael Lobaza

Thom Majka

Jeff Shaw

Ellen Spear

Year in Review

$10k+
in grants to families

30+
new families welcomed to the DSANEO community

1,100+
families served in Northeast Ohio

50+
programs held throughout the year

2025 Program Highlight: 21 Smiles, Down Syndrome, and Dental Education

In 2025 DSANEO was chosen as a winner in the first round of the NIH Community Champions for Disability Health Challenge for Medical Outreach: DSANEO recruited and trained four self-advocates with Down syndrome, including one who communicates using an assistive technology device, to develop and deliver presentations to healthcare students and professionals. These self-advocates were paid participants who helped shape the content and tone of the educational materials. Our team also produced a dental education video featuring professional interviews and a filmed mock dental visit, designed to give dental students and practicing dentists practical, respectful guidance on caring for patients with disabilities. Oral health screening events conducted in partnership with dental students and faculty from Case Western Reserve University provided hands-on experience for students while connecting families to dental care.

Additional 2025 Highlights:

- Participated in the NDSS Down Syndrome Advocacy Conference in Washington DC, meeting with Ohio's US Senators and Congress members: Advocating on behalf of the individuals we serve and their families makes sure the voices in our community are heard.
- Worked with photographer Barb Pennington on "The ExtraOrdinary Ones", a book highlighting individuals with Down syndrome in our community: Now available for purchase, this book shares the stories of local families that DSANEO serves.
- Distributed Book Bundles to over 40 schools nominated by DSANEO families. Book Bundles are designed to spark curiosity, encourage conversation, and celebrate inclusion at schools througout Northeast Ohio.
- Hosted a retreat for fathers of individuals with disabilities as part of Pathways for Pops, DSANEO's state-funded program to create a supportive community for fathers to connect, share experiences and empower each other to be more involved in their children's lives. The weekend event provided over 20 dads with information to help their children through breakout sessions and keynote speakers as well as a chance to connect with fellow fathers.
- Collaborated to provide a pilot support program for moms, Flourish Forward~The Extraordinary Mother Initiative: serving 10 moms, this 6-month program focuses on mental wellness through small group sessions, wellness exercises and a weekend retreat.
- Partnered with the Ashly's Melody of Hope Music Camp, hosting 10 campers: what an amazing experience for our 10 campers who spent a week at DSANEO learning how to play several instruments and even how to conduct!

Special Events

Sunburst Gala

The 2025 Sunburst Gala was held at the Intercontinental Hotel Cleveland. The event included the Artful 21 Marketplace, games of chance, raffles, silent auction and live auction. Fox 8 Morning Anchor, Todd Meany served as Master of Ceremonies. The Sunburst Gala raised over $150,000.

Trivia Night

DSANEO added a new special event, Trivia Night, for a fun and casual evening. This year's event was held at Brennan's Party Center and Cleveland City Councilman, Brian Kazy, served as Master of Ceremonies and Quizmaster. This event raised over $10,000.

Northeast Ohio Buddy Walk

The 25th annual Northeast Ohio Buddy Walk was a wonderful celebration of individuals with Down syndrome in our community. The walk was held at the Great Lakes Science Center in downtown Cleveland on a spectacular October morning. This year's Buddy Walk raised over $286,000 and welcomed over 2,000 participants.

2025 Walmart Buddy Walk team

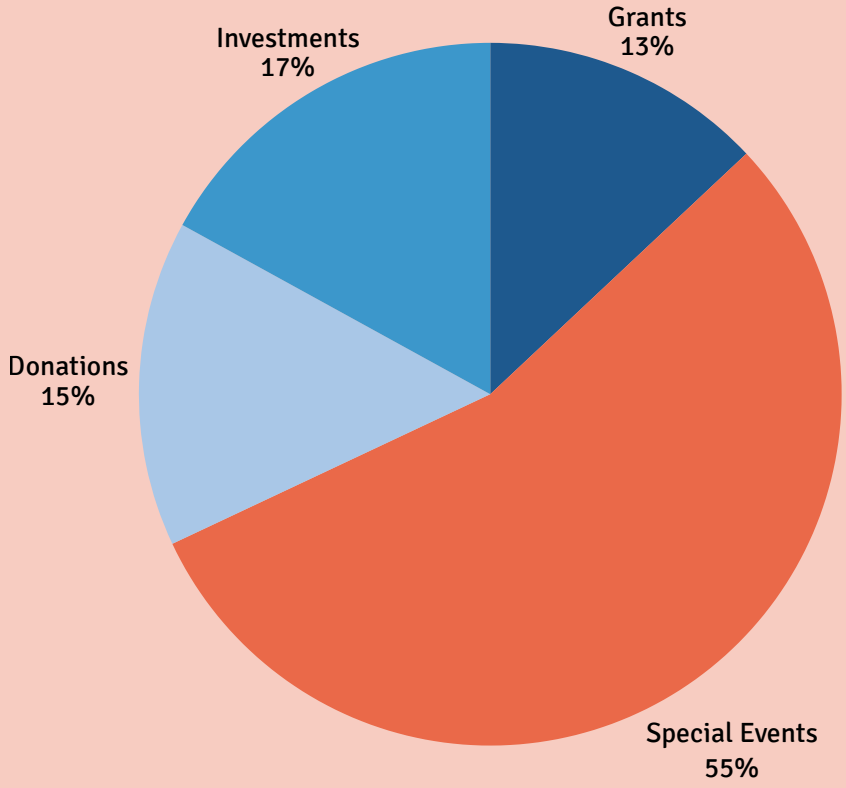
Our Presenting Sponsor, Walmart, has been part of DSANEO for 25 years, and their associates genuinely look forward to this day every year. One of their associates even walks alongside us, and you can feel that connection when the team shows up. They're ready to walk, ready to cheer, and ready to be part of the celebration.

Thank you, Walmart!

Finances

We are grateful for the support we receive each year from volunteers, individual donors, foundations, corporate sponsors, and special event attendees. Each and every donation makes a difference and contributes to our advocacy efforts on behalf of people with Down syndrome and their families.

Revenue



Total Revenue: $801,313,31

Total Expenses: $802,780.39

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DSANEO DSANEO

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