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[<mailto:DSALAparents@yahoogroups.com>] On Behalf Of ginavivona  
Sent: Wednesday, February 17, 2010 1:40 PM  
To: [DSALAparents@yahoogroups.com](mailto:DSALAparents@yahoogroups.com)  
Subject: [DSALAparents] DSALA - response

Dear Friends

It is DSALA's position that we will treat people like we wish to be treated; with acceptance, respect, and understanding. Within those guiding principles, our goal is to extend the reach of our community by building relationships, providing education and increased awareness whenever possible.

There are many ways to be heard. One is to show people who don't understand just how amazing our community members with Down syndrome are. Many of us, as biological parents, had our hearts changed when we embraced our little ones. We can extend that understanding by welcoming those who have not had this amazing experience. It's harder to be hurtful when you can put a face to a diagnosis. Maybe with face-to-face relationships and education comes understanding, then acceptance. Then people have to think twice about using certain language again. Then the "word that shall not be named" may lose it's hurtful meaning.

The strategy we intend to implement at TwentyWonder is not a new one. As a matter of fact, the NDSS sent this response in reminder of their positive reactive outreach:

*Hi Gail,*

*I wanted to share some of the successful reactions NDSS had had when we chose to engage with a media outlet or public figure who may have used inappropriate language or actions towards a person with Down syndrome.*

*Over the past few years several situations have occurred. One example that has benefited the entire Down syndrome community is the reaction NDSS took towards the Regal Entertainment Group. A few years back a father and his teenage daughter, who has Down syndrome, were treated inappropriately and unfairly and were kicked out of the theater. We contacted Regal with a letter inviting them to learn more about our community. It was clear that the managers, staff, as well as other guests in the theater had no awareness for people with Down syndrome or this situation would never have occurred. Rather than reprimand them for their lack of knowledge, we asked and invited them to get involved in the national Buddy Walk program by donating valuable air time in their theaters to promote acceptance and inclusion. For the past 2 years the Regal Entertainment Group has donated over \$500,000 in air time and has become a valuable partner for NDSS and our affiliate Buddy Walk organizers.*

*More often than not, we have been able to take negative situations and turn them into positive*

*experiences and partnerships that have proved to be genuine and real.*

*Sarah Schleider  
VP Marketing & Communication  
National Down Syndrome Society*

DSALA, along with other organizations that serve our community, are united in pushing forward the acceptance, even more so, the full appreciation of individuals with Down syndrome. This unity is important in changing minds. Just as important is the respect we give to one another as we implement differing strategies and community practices.

If you are interested in helping grow our community, we again invite you to participate on a committee where change is truly possible.

Regards,

Gina Vivona

President, Board of Directors