Our 13th annual Buddy Walk was a hit! We had Spiderman, Mr. Incredible, Wonder woman, and other superheros make an appearance on that beautiful Saturday. That was a treat! The weather was perfect, the food was amazing, and everyone that came out to the Spring River Park and Zoo was phenomenal! We are so thankful that everyone had a great time and we are so excited to plan next year’s!

Each year there are over 250 Buddy Walks® throughout the country that help to raise awareness and celebrate individuals with Down syndrome. Our Buddy Walk® is our biggest fundraiser and awareness platform for Southeastern New Mexico. All the money that was raised and donated from the Buddy Walk® will go to funding programs, events, workshops, and socials for individuals with Down syndrome and their families in our community. That is why we are so very grateful to our community for believing in this work and helping to make the dreams and goals of individuals with Down syndrome a reality.

We would like to send a special thank you to Roswell Toyota and Sam’s Club for presenting this year’s Buddy Walk®. Thank you to all of our corporate sponsor who donated to our cause. Thank you to all of our families that worked so hard in raising money toward their team and getting friends and family to walk with them.

To each of you who came out to the Buddy Walk® we can not thank you enough for your continued support for the Down syndrome community.

If you would like to continue to donate to the Down Syndrome Foundation throughout the year please visit our website! Thank you so much for all your support and blessings!

Thank you to each and every one of our sponsors and donators! We can’t change lives without your support! These were our 2017 corporate sponsors: Roswell Toyota, Sam’s Club, Bean Family Ltd., Blue Cross Blue Shield, A-Z Therapy, Bryan Printers, BCA, Primm Drug, Coca Cola, CB Labs, Farm Credit of NM, The Eagles, MECA, Vet. Outlet of NM, Xcel Energy, Sierra Blanca Motors, Southwest Dairy Farmers, Sunrise Optimist, WRH, EOG Resources, Snowberger Management Inc., Glen Cheng Farmers Insurance, Vantage Engineering, Holsum Inc., Martin Wells & Associates, Rhoads, Featherstone Farms, J.S. Ward and Sons, Central Valley Electric, R.R. Hinkle Co., Ballard Funeral Home, and Paul’s Veterinary Outlet.
Santa is coming to Town!

Join us for breakfast with Santa and Mrs. Claus! This event is for individuals with Down syndrome and their families.

Roswell
When: December 2nd
Where: Fraternal Order of Eagles
3201 S. Sunset
Roswell, NM 88203
Time: 9-11am

Artesia
When: December 9th
Where: Central Valley Electric Co-op
1403 N 13th St
Artesia, NM 88210
Time: 9-11am

Our newsletter will be sent via email as of the end of 2017! Please give us a call at 575-622-1022 if you have recently changed your contact info to make sure you will still get the most up to date information from the foundation.

Scholarship opportunities!!!!

2018 Down syndrome Conferences
Buddy Walk on Washington
Washington D.C.
April 10-11

Parent’s Reaching Out Conference
Albuquerque, NM
April 19-20

NDSC Convention
Dallas, TX
July 12-15

The Down Syndrome Foundation offers scholarships for individuals with Down syndrome and their family members to attend conferences throughout the year to gain knowledge in many different topics and to network with families across the country. If you are interested in applying for a scholarship, please visit our website at dsfennm.org or if you would like a hard copy please come by the office. Deadline for all scholarships is January 31st.

If there are any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact us.

If there are any other conferences that you would like to attend, please let us know!
RECOGNIZING YOUR CHILD IS READY TO ENTER THE DATING SCENE ISN’T ALWAYS EASY. NOTED SEXUALITY EDUCATOR TERRI COUWENHOVEN HELPS BOTH CHILDREN WITH DOWN SYNDROME AND THEIR PARENTS NAVIGATE THESE DIFFICULT WATERS.

RELATIONSHIPS GIVE EVERYONE a chance to love and be loved, avoid loneliness and depression, and gain self-esteem — and people with Down syndrome have the same right to these relationships as typical teens and adults. However, “it’s common for people with Down syndrome to experience oppression, denial, and control over the same sexual aspects of being human that typical adults enjoy in their lives,” said Terri Couwenhoven, M.S., AASECT, Certified Sexuality Educator. “This can lead to a denial of feelings and a reluctance to express themselves.” That denial can perpetuate the myth that people with Down syndrome are asexual, she said. Parents can, and should, take the lead in helping their children develop the foundations of healthy relationships, and Couwenhoven shared three key tips for parents to approach the subject of dating and relationships.

1. ATTITUDE MATTERS. Parents need to have a positive attitude toward their teenager’s or adult child’s dating. “Let’s face it, parents are influential in the dating scene for teens and adults with Down syndrome,” Couwenhoven said. “In addition to making sure their children have active social lives so they can access to potential partners, parents often need to coordinate, help plan, transport, chaperone, and coach — at least initially.” Parents also serve as role models. Engage in honest and open communication with your own partner, and be attentive to your child’s needs.

2. OFFER CONCRETE INFORMATION ABOUT THE DATING PROCESS. Look for opportunities to explain dating before your son or daughter is old enough to actually date, Couwenhoven advised. For example, if an older sibling has a partner, explain why people date. Use specific language, such as “they spend time dating to see if they are a good match for each other.” If the couple breaks up, you can explain, “not all relationships work out. It takes time to find the right person.” When your child gets older and develops a crush on someone who doesn’t return the affection, remind him or her that a romantic relationship can’t start unless both people have feelings for or are interested in each other, she added.

3. LET THEM PRACTICE DATING SKILLS. “Life experience is the greatest teacher of all.” Couwenhoven said. “Chaperoning is an excellent way for inexperienced newbies to practice the rituals of dating in the context of supervision and coaching.” As your teenagers and young adults with Down syndrome become more mature and gain self-confidence, chaperoning becomes less necessary.

Q&A WITH TERRI COUWENHOVEN
Down Syndrome World™ asked Terri Couwenhoven, M.S., AASECT, Certified Sexuality Educator, to answer some of the most common questions the Global Down Syndrome Foundation receives about sexuality in people with Down syndrome.

DSW: Are children with Down syndrome more at risk for sexual abuse? If so, why? Couwenhoven: All the data we have suggests this is true. Common reasons reported in literature that apply to people with Down syndrome include:

- Expressive language struggles can make abuse hard to report.
- People with Down syndrome have less information about sexuality than the typical population.
- People with Down syndrome are often dependent on others for help with self-care and daily living tasks. Throughout their lives, they are also exposed to a larger number of support providers. The dynamic of dependency on others, routine praise, and learned compliance with authority figures can make them more vulnerable to abuse.

What can parents do to educate their children with Down syndrome about protecting themselves from sexual abuse? Give your child permission to talk openly with you about sexuality. Praise them for asking questions and do your best to answer. Teach rules about body ownership and touching. With children, for example, “Your body is private, and there are very few times when anyone should be looking at, or touching, your most private parts.” When a child is old enough to date, you can add, “Sometimes dating couples may share their bodies — but only if they both agree. No one should ever force you to do things you don’t want to do.”

Encourage assertiveness. Helping your children understand they have a right to say no or leave when something doesn’t feel right is an important skill.

You addressed that people with Down syndrome are not asexual. Is this true? No. People with Down syndrome have the same range of feelings and emotions as the typical population. I believe this myth stems from others seeing people with Down syndrome exhibit inappropriate sexual behaviors — such as masturbation or genital touching in the presence of others, sharing affection indiscriminately, or overt expression of sexual feelings that you or I might be thinking but keep to ourselves. These behaviors are often related to information deficits, societal attitudes such as infantilization, immaturity, age, and life experience.

Can people with Down syndrome have children? Will their children have Down syndrome? There are documented cases in the literature of men and women with Down syndrome having children. Some children of adults with Down syndrome are typical, while others have Down syndrome.

Terri Couwenhoven, M.S., AASECT, Certified Sexuality Educator, hosts sex education workshops and even made a guest appearance on the hit A&E series Born This Way, offering sex and dating advice to the young adults on the show. She’s written four books for children who are differently-abled and their parents that cover topics such as puberty and dating. For links to her books and other resources, visit terricouwenhoven.com.
The Down Syndrome Foundation of Southeastern New Mexico is a 501(c)3, not for profit organization. It was started by a grassroots parent group in 2007. Its goals are to encourage and advocate on behalf of individuals with Down syndrome and their families. It does this by providing support for families, educators, and medical professionals as they support those with Down syndrome in southeastern New Mexico. Find out how you can help, call 575-622-1099 or visit our website at http://www.dsfsenm.org/.