



Our mission is to educate, support and give a voice for those touched by Down syndrome. DSNetwork helps over 2,500 individuals with Down syndrome (Ds) and their families. When a parent learns their child has Ds, the news can be overwhelming. Questions of how, why, and a roller coaster of emotions take over. From the initial diagnosis through school-aged years and beyond, individuals with Ds and their families find themselves on a wonderful, but complicated journey. Individuals with Ds are bright and creative and with every challenge they are given, they provide laughter and joy to those around them. DSNetwork assists families every step of the way.

The Tweens & Teens UP program, for which we are requesting funding, assists participants in being more active and advancing their abilities/skills. Watching the transformation as they gain confidence and self-esteem is heartwarming. Those with Ds have a wide variation of abilities. Each has their own unique personality and talents. The program provides community-based opportunities/activities (such as spring training games) for youth with Ds to socialize and meet friends. These activities help youth connect with one another and celebrate their unique nature in a supportive atmosphere. The monthly sessions/activities include the basics on social skills, team building, daily life skills, community outreach. The objective is for the participants to grow up in a more inclusive environment, with the experience of being more independent in life. The program promotes awareness and understanding of Ds. Peers, without a disability, learn not only the differences/challenges individuals with special needs have, but the likenesses. Volunteers provide encouragement, physical/safety support.



Research shows only 17% of youth with Down syndrome socialize with friends outside school. Many of their friends from elementary school start outgrowing them while their friendships evolve into more of a “big sister/brother” who tend to watch over them rather than socialize with them as an equal. This causes youth with Ds to become less socially involved and isolated, putting them at risk for depression. Individuals with Ds who grow up in a social inclusive environment are likely to be more independent in life. Population served: 88% youth with Ds ages 8-17. 12% are their typical peers/volunteers. The program indirectly impacts the youth’s family members. Family sees how the program is helping their child in everyday life and at school. They are more active, self-confident, socially and physically engaged, and the program helped them form friendships.



www.dsnetworkaz.org

DOWN SYNDROME. Connect. Inform. inspire

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