



INSIGHTS

Fall Issue 2016

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The Delta Gamma Center welcomes Trisha Doyle, Emily Steinhoff and Elizabeth Tackett to the 2016-2017 Board of Directors.

We thank Beth Bell, Cindy Melvin, Danielle Uy and Beth Vlasaty for their years of dedicated service in the areas of technology, administration and resource & development.

From the Desk of Debbie Naucke Executive Director

I have decided there is simply too much to share and not enough space! While there is a definite rhythm to the year, it is that time when we are wrapping up the past fiscal year and launching into new initiatives simultaneously. In reality, new initiatives have been in the planning stage for some time. And some of the exciting activities from this past year will continue to grow. As they say, the only constant is change.

There is yet another change in the offing - new leadership for DGC. Yes, I plan to retire at the end of 2016 after 21 years. I take comfort in knowing that DGC is in the strongest position of my tenure, with a talented and dedicated team who will take it to new heights under the next leader. Also of great comfort is a capable search committee, chaired by past board member, Danielle Uy, and the engagement of local search firm, EMD Consulting.

In my remaining months, I am excited about advancing initiatives in our new 3-year Strategic Plan. Highlights of the plan include a major focus in three areas: serve more children; increase community awareness and acceptance, and continue to be innovative in service delivery. Initiatives for these three focus areas are already underway such as exploring partnerships to highlight the important role of vision in learning, of reading and literacy, and the importance of inclusion and acceptance. The changing lives of families, and changing needs of young children requires new thinking about best practices and new avenues to support parents.

I want to end this final article with my deepest appreciation for the privilege of serving alongside each and every one of you, and share an insight. In my job, I have observed repeatedly that it is passion that takes something from good to great. In fact, when I meet with potential board candidates, I often say "the most important consideration for a board position is whether our mission speaks to your heart, and if you are passionate about our mission, you will do great things on behalf of the children we serve." Our kids and families need you to believe in our mission! If our mission speaks to your heart, stay focused and remain involved in a way that ignites your passion. I promise to continue doing so long into my retirement.

MISSION:

The mission of the Delta Gamma Center for Children with Visual Impairments is to help children who are blind or visually impaired reach their full potential through family-centered, specialized services and community support.

“Oh Baby, Go Baby”

- Early Intervention Graduation

Pomp and Circumstance filled the air on July 22 to celebrate graduation for three year olds exiting the Early Intervention Program. Proud families filled the community room and applauded as the young graduates, looking adorable in their mortarboards, filed in with parents in tow. Teachers presented diplomas and canvas totes embellished with each graduate’s name in both print and braille letters, made by Becky Lambert, Teacher of the Vision Impaired, who is the tote bag creator for 17 years. This year’s graduating class, again the largest with 32 graduates, enjoyed the Dr. Seuss story “Oh Baby, Go Baby” and individual remarks from teachers about their “most memorable moments with each child.”

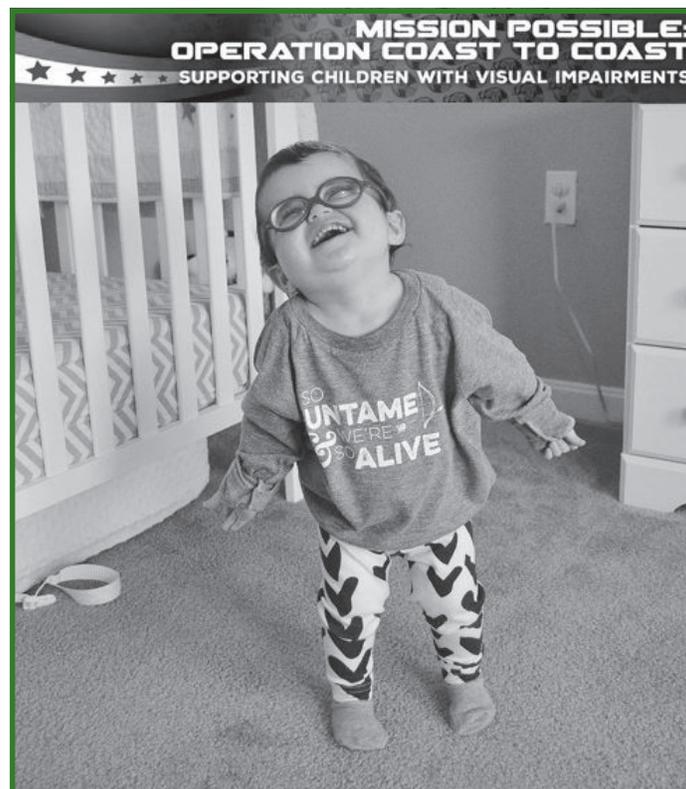


Mission Possible

Deployed in early July to an undisclosed location, U.S. Air Force Captain John Dolan (aka Charlie’s Dad!) is nearly halfway to his goal to cycle 3,000 miles on a stationary bike, the distance coast to coast across America, to raise funds and awareness for Delta Gamma Center.

With a \$4,000 gift in mid-August, the family of George Hays (Mary Kay Hays Graham, Mimi Vatterott and Laura Reeves) inspired others to join them in supporting Capt. Dolan’s efforts by matching Mission Possible gifts made between mid-August and Labor Day. Their generosity stoked a fire that ignited a spirit of support from supporters coast to coast, with one supporter as far away as Hawaii. When results were tallied, Capt. Dolan’s Mission Possible campaign raised an incredible \$12,385!

Delta Gamma Center salutes Capt. Dolan for his commitment to DGC services and children who are blind or visually impaired. As he continues toward his 3,000 mile cycling goal, follow Capt. Dolan’s progress on DGC’s Facebook page and at www.dgckids.org.



MISSION

Videos of Parent University Workshops on the Web



Family Support Services offer opportunities and activities for families to learn, develop a network of support and effective parenting skills, access community resources and be effective advocates for their child. Family Support Services group outings to the Missouri Botanical Garden, The Magic House and Daniel's Farm are a few of the many fun, family-focused activities that offer DGC families a way to meet and network with each other throughout the year.

Parent University workshops are yet another way for DGC parents to connect with each other. This valuable educational resource is coordinated by social worker, Debbie Chapius, Director of Family Support. Workshop sessions may include information on specific eye conditions, current research, and adaptive technology.

To accommodate parents whose schedules and/or transportation challenges make it difficult or impossible to participate in Parent University, DGC is now posting video segments of the workshops on its website. Funding for recording and editing of Parent University videos has been provided by a grant from Enterprise Holdings at the recommendation of longtime DGC friends and supporters, Butch and Carol Welsch, owners of Welsch Heating and Cooling, an Enterprise Leasing customer.

A Salute to our Supporters!

Serving more children and families than any other program, Early Intervention services had a record breaking year of service to 217 children and their families through home-based education and therapy services. Approximately 40 percent of Early Intervention services are funded by state funds, and the gap between state funding and the actual cost of service is covered by contributions from individual donors, corporate and civic friends, foundations, special events, and United Way.

Delta Gamma Center is grateful to all who play a role in making DGC services accessible for families seeking answers, guidance and hope. We appreciate the following grant funders for their support: Employee Community Fund of Boeing St. Louis, Cardinals Care, Mimi Fishman Foundation and the National Association of Independent Life Brokerage Agencies (NAILBA) Charitable Foundation for their grant. Additional thanks goes to NAILBA member, Alan Protzel, for his sponsorship of DGC's application.

United Way of Greater St. Louis produces a video each year to illustrate the impact that community support for United Way makes in the lives of people served by United Way member agencies. This year DGC parents John and Kristin Dolan are featured with their young son, Charlie. Some readers have undoubtedly seen little Charlie's face on posters and witnessed his boundless energy in the campaign video. As he giggles throughout the video, viewers can't help but smile as they gain greater awareness of DGC and understanding of the impact of our services. If you haven't seen the video, please visit our website dgckids.org, it's a must see!

Run for Sight ...

On May 1st, an overcast but dry Sunday morning, 1,200 runners and walkers gathered at Union Station for the 24th annual Delta Gamma Center Run for Sight. This 5K timed run, 1-mile walk and fun-filled kid's dash - a crowd favorite with Fredbird, Ronald McDonald and Blues mascot, Louie, is the biggest event of the year for the Center. As runners jockeyed for position at the starting line, Brian Owens, professional musician, "DGC dad" and father of five, wowed the crowd with his rendition of the Star Spangled Banner.



In a mere 20 minutes, Stephen Vyn and Molly Koch, crossed the finish line within seconds of each other, capturing first place overall male runner and female runner. Others celebrated placing first in their age group and still others were happy to complete the race! Walkers, many pushing strollers and pulling wagons filled

with toddlers, strolled their way to the finish line. "Our families and their teams provide extraordinary support for the Run for Sight." said Executive Director Debbie Naucke. "I am overflowing with thanks for the 57 teams and generous sponsors for the Run for Sight. Together you raised more than \$114,000 that will be put right to use to fund services."



Congrats to the top 5 Run for Sight fundraising teams:

Team Santi
Kitsmiller Kids
Team Gwen

Team Reese Cup
Team Chatmon/Olson

A million thanks to the following sponsors, many of whom have generously supported Run for Sight for years:

Gold Sponsors

Brady Koch Fund
Express Scripts
The Frane Family

Concord Village Lions Club
Lighthouse for the Blind-St. Louis
Ravarino Family Foundation



Silver Sponsors

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Ameren Missouri
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Imo's Pizza
Missouri Foundation for Health
St. Louis Children's Hospital

Cockriel & Christofferson
Galanis Cataract & Laser Eye Center
Kohl's Cares
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The Soffer Family

Bronze Sponsors

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Drury Hotel
Paul Heimann
Welsch Heating & Cooling

GFI Digital, Inc.
Nanne Simonds

Last but not least, we give a standing ovation to the 2016 Run for Sight committee: Brian Ashley, Tina Bauer, Francis Baum, Jennifer Kendall, Jeff Kitsmiller, Lisa Marquard, Paul McGee, Cindy Melvin, and Bill Naucke.

Summer Challenge Trips

This summer three groups of GRADS program participants set personal goals and challenged themselves to meet their goals during overnight trips away from home.

In June three Challengers I members spent two days at Trout Lodge in Potosi, Missouri where they went horseback riding, climbed Pine's Peak, a 35-foot climbing wall, enjoyed swimming and a waterslide, miniature golf, boat ride, campfire and more. It was their first time away from home for two of them!

A group of six Challengers II members traveled to the Breckenridge Outdoor Education Center (Breckenridge, CO) where they took part in many exciting new challenges. Climbing a 30 ft. high ropes course, whitewater rafting, kayaking, and hiking offered challenging adventures while food prep, cooking and time spent around the campfire helped members build skills and friendships.

Five Chat & Party members traveled to Copper Mountain, Colorado to participate in a No Barriers Summit. This national event offered a wide range of adventurous activities including skateboarding, kayaking, archery, self-defense, cardio drumming, and cycling. Participating in an amazing race clinic, one of the boys drove a fork-lift and moved a large log from one part of the forest to another. Another excelled at archery, hitting the bullseye more than eight times! One of the girls kayaked independently, proving to herself and everyone, she can do it on her own!

Over the course of these three Challenge Trips, DGC youth met or exceeded personal goals and made memories that will last a lifetime!



Shining Light Tree Lot Shines On

Sixty-five years ago members of the Delta Gamma Fraternity had a notion that they could sell enough Christmas trees to hire a teacher who would teach area parents how to educate, and raise their children who were born blind. Our founders firmly believed that children with limited vision or blindness would learn best in their own home with their families. They were determined to make the 1951 Shining Light Tree Lot a financial success and, they did just that!

With funds from the Shining Light Tree Lot supporting programs and services, Delta Gamma Center for Children with Visual Impairments today has a staff of 28 and serves over 300 children and their families living within a 50-mile radius of its Richmond Heights facility. The Shining Light Tree Lot is one of the longest running charity Christmas tree lots in St. Louis, and in spite of changes and growth, the Christmas tree sales remain vital in funding services.

Once again, starting this November 25th, friends and families, youth groups, DGC staff (and families), Delta Gammas, and countless volunteers will, with good cheer and enthusiasm, sign up to work Tree Lot shifts during the weeks leading to Christmas. Make a holiday memory and volunteer for or visit the Shining Light Tree Lot! Visit www.dgckids.org/treelot for more information and volunteer sign-up.



2016 Recognition Event

On September 21st, at the lovely Third Degree Glass Factory, Delta Gamma Center recognized the extraordinary service and support from volunteers, foundations and professionals. A welcome from Debbie Naucke included recognition of a record 898 volunteers who provided 8,000 hours of service from July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016. She remarked, "Our volunteer needs have increased, become more specialized, and continue to be a critical component to our services and operations." Her quote for the audience, from Margaret Mead, was "Never believe that a few caring people can't change the world. For indeed, that's all who ever have."

The featured speakers were Randy and Brett Wilhelm. Randy Wilhelm recalled his son Brett's diagnosis, and how the entire Wilhelm family gained strength from services provided, including the impact that volunteers made in their lives as Brett grew up with DGC programs. Brett, now 23 years old, spoke of the independence and social skills he gained through his participation in GRADS groups, including Tandem Adventurers cycling and summer Challenge trips.

Emcee and DGC Board Chair, Martha McGeehon, presented the following 2016 awards:

Jean Andersen Award

Anne Grossmann

Visionary Award

John Thompson

Shining Light Award

Heather Backes Chavez

Volunteer Service Award

Barbara Aumiller

Jennifer & Lucas Kendall

Hugh Share

Community Service Award

The Mimi Fishman Foundation

Delta Gamma Foundation

Saigh Foundation

Professional Service Award

Michael Katz - St. Louis Spinning

University of Missouri - St. Louis College of Optometry

Martha also recognized the outstanding service of retiring board members and Special Event committee chairs:

Retiring Members of the Board of Directors

Beth Bell

Cindy Melvin

Danielle Uy

Beth Vlasaty

Eye for Style Chair

Robyn Huhn

Holiday House Co-Chairs

Jill Miller

Kevin Glazer

Shining Light Tree Lot Chair

Heather Chavez



Ride to Unite 2016

Ride to Unite is no longer just a DGC event. While Tandem Adventurers is still the only organized group for youth with disabilities to enjoy cycling, a larger effort is underway to promote an inclusive community where everyone can ride. As a result, Ride to Unite 2016 took on even more importance in creating awareness and support.

This year's Ride to Unite was offered by Cycle St. Louis, a partnership of 19 agencies dedicated to opportunities for children and adults with disabilities. Ride to Unite once again kicked off the events for Day 2 of the Gateway Cup Races organized by Big Shark Bicycle Company with a 5-mile demonstration ride on their closed race course. It is long time Tandem Adventurers friend and supporter, Mike Weiss, owner of Big Shark, who makes it possible. Mike is also a Cycle St. Louis partner.

We salute United Healthcare for being a key champion for both DGC's Tandem Adventurers team and Ride to Unite! Through their sponsorship and a unique endorsement from two professional cyclists on the UHC teams, UHC elevated the importance of the message. Both Katie Hall and Ty Wagner are cyclists on United HealthCare's pro cycling team. They joined the riders on the course to provide encouragement, cheer them on, and support this platform to promote the joys of riding a bike for individuals with disabilities.

Accomplished "champion" cyclists from other teams traveling to St. Louis for the Gateway Cup rode the course as well, and together, they all provided a powerful platform for conveying the message that we "all ride the same road."



*Above:
United Healthcare Account Manager, Janet Lowe and UHC pro-cyclists, Katie Hall and Ty Wagner pause before the start of Ride to Unite on Day 2 of the 2016 Gateway Cup.*

*Below:
Members of DGC's Tandem Adventurers cycling team join United Healthcare pro-cyclist, Ty Wagner, on the Gateway Cup race course.*





**Delta Gamma Center for Children
with Visual Impairments**
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Cassidy Johns, *Assistant Director of Development*
Sharon Niethe, *Office Manager*
Flora Robinson, *Facilities/Housekeeping*
Anne Silea, *Director of Community Engagement*
Ann Weidemann, *Director of Administration*
Peggy Welker, *Data Entry Clerk*

Program

Ellie Aboussie-Ashley, *GRADS Program Coordinator*
Crystal Brown, *GRADS Music Facilitator*
Debbie Chapuis, *Family Support Services Program Director*
Noreen Conte, *Vision Screening Coordinator*
Laura Cooper, *Teacher of the Visually Impaired*
Jennifer Cox, *Teacher of the Visually Impaired*
Karen Eckert, *Teacher of the Visually Impaired, O & M Specialist*
Patti Hamill, *Physical Therapist*
Emma Hurley, *GRADS Group Facilitator*
Ashley Keegan, *Teacher of the Visually Impaired*
Christine Krekow, *Speech Therapist*
Rebecca Lambert, *Teacher of the Visually Impaired, O & M Specialist*
Ruth Nothdurft, *Vision Screening Technician*
Lisa Rohr, *Early Intervention Program Director*
Margaret Russell, *Occupational Therapist*
Jo Russell-Brown, *Teacher of the Visually Impaired*
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Patti Seagraves, *Occupational Therapist*
Ann Tienter, *Early Intervention Administrative Assistant*
Rebecca Tobar, *Occupational Therapist*
Sarah Valenza, *GRADS Group Facilitator*
Lindsay Wayne, *Teacher of the Visually Impaired*

