



Down Syndrome Association of Greater St. Louis Records (S0270)

Collection Number: S0270

Collection Title: Down Syndrome Association of Greater St. Louis Records

Dates: 1955-2019

Creator: Down Syndrome Association of Greater St. Louis

Abstract: Founded in 1970, the Down Syndrome Association of Greater St. Louis (DSAGLS) seeks to benefit the lives of people with Down Syndrome and their families through individual and family support, education, and public awareness. This collection consists of meeting minutes, financial statements, newsletters, brochures, and newspaper clippings. Also included in the collection are legal materials pertaining to Merry vs. Parkway School District, a legal case that DSAGLS participated in during the 1980s and 1990s that involved Parkway School District refusing to give proper education to students with disabilities.

Collection Size: 0.8 cubic foot
(20 folders)

Language: Collection materials are in English.

Repository: The State Historical Society of Missouri

Restrictions on Access: Collection is open for research. This collection is available at [The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-St. Louis](#). If you would like more information, please contact us at stlouis@shsmo.org. Collections may be viewed at any research center. Folder 20 of the collection contains confidential attorney-client information and cannot be viewed.

Restrictions on Use: Copyright held by the Down Syndrome Association of Greater St. Louis.

Preferred Citation: [Specific item; box number; folder number] *Down Syndrome Association of Greater St. Louis Records* (S0270); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-St. Louis [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-St. Louis].

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Processed by: Processed by AJ Medlock and Zachary Palitzsch, February 2020

Historical Note:

The Down Syndrome Association of Greater St. Louis (DSAGSL) was founded on July 15, 1970, when several mothers of children with Down Syndrome met at Pearl Nelson's home to discuss the health and well-being of their children and families. Attendees included Lois Sterbenz, Carol Igoe, Arlene Jarett, who, along with Pearl Nelson, would later become known in the organization as "The Seven Holy Founders." In 1976, after several members expressed dissatisfaction with the term "mongoloid," as well as the desire to include fathers as a part of the organization, Mothers of Mongoloids became incorporated and changed the name to the Down Syndrome Association of St. Louis. As the Down Syndrome Association of St. Louis grew, it held demonstrations, such as the Down Syndrome Walk on the Arch, as well as dinners, parties, galas, and other events to raise money and awareness for their operations and support for people with Down Syndrome. By 1980, the Down Syndrome Association of St. Louis had three hundred members and forty to fifty parents who regularly attended meetings.

A major change in the rights of students with disabilities came in 1988 when the parents of Jonathan Merry filed suit against the Parkway School District in the United States District Court, Eastern District of Missouri. They argued that Parkway was breaking federal laws by denying students with disabilities, including their son, special education services. According to the lawsuit, Parkway was not providing students with disabilities comparable educational services, such as curriculum, standardized tests, extracurricular activities, and transportation, resulting in an almost non-existent graduation rate for these students. The Down Syndrome Association of St. Louis, the Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities of Greater St. Louis, and Missouri Protection and Advocacy Services co-filed the suit with Jonathan Merry and his parents against Parkway School District. In 1994, a settlement was reached in which Parkway School District was to fully implement activities and educational strategies that ensured opportunities for inclusion for students with special needs.

Nearly twenty-four years following its incorporation, the Down Syndrome Association became the Down Syndrome Association of Greater St. Louis in 2000. The current mission of DSAGSL is to help enrich the lives of people with Down Syndrome and their families through education, outreach, individual and family support, and public awareness. Since the early 2000s, DSAGSL has had a close relationship with the St. Louis Cardinals, often hosting events and golf tournaments with former Cardinal Albert Pujols and his Wellness Center for Adults with Down Syndrome. DSAGSL also started the annual tradition of Walk in the Park at Busch Stadium, which brings together families from the St. Louis area for a day of raising awareness and is the organization's largest awareness day of the year. Walk in the Park brings together nearly 2,500 friends and supporters of DSAGSL each year.

Arrangement:

The collection has been arranged into the following four series:

- Administrative
- Publications
- Events
- Legal Materials

Scope and Content Note:**Administrative**

This series contains meeting minutes, bylaws, tax-exempt documents, budget summaries, expense reports, revenue reports, financial statements, a strategic plan, and certificates of incorporation pertaining to finances, advocacy, family support, development, and membership. Of interest in this series are the meeting minutes of the Board of Directors and Executive Committee, which provide insight into the organization's high-level decision making, although they are incomplete, as they only cover the years from 2003 to 2009. The materials in this series date from 1976 to 2009 and are arranged chronologically.

Publications

This series consists of brochures, newspaper clippings, articles, advertisements, and newsletters relating to the operations surrounding DSAGSL. The newsletters include a brief history of the first ten years DSAGSL operated as both Mothers of Mongoloids and Down Syndrome Association. The newsletters also discuss the name change from Mothers of Mongoloids to Down Syndrome Association of St. Louis. Also included in this series is a newspaper clipping from a 1955 issue of the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* that discusses people with Down Syndrome in Missouri at that time compared to what society thought of people with Down Syndrome in the late 1800s. The materials in this series date from 1955 to 2015 and are arranged chronologically.

Events

This series contains brochures, correspondence and booklets relating to events held by DSAGSL to raise awareness and funds to support their organization and those in which they helped. Some of the events featured in these materials include the Down Syndrome Walk on the Arch grounds, as well as dinners, galas, an annual Albert Pujols Celebrity Golf Classic, an annual Birdies and Bass Tournament, and Walk in the Park at Busch Stadium. The materials in this series date from 1990 to 2019 and consists of one folder.

Legal Materials

This series contains correspondence, court proceedings, memoranda, court transcripts, affidavits, and settlement agreements relating to the Merry v. Parkway School District case in which Jonathan Merry and his family filed a suit against Parkway School District for refusing to take measures to ensure students with disabilities received proper education. This series includes discussions of the development of amendments to the Education of the Handicapped Act, which addresses systematic issues present in special education and further define the joint responsibilities of both the Special School District and the school districts of which it is comprised. The materials in this series date from 1988 to 1994 and are arranged chronologically.

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