

Rock Issue #1

NOVEMBER 2015

We are three families who are proud parents of children with Down syndrome. Many challenges that arise for families with a loved one who has special needs stems from the lack of social awareness and education in our communities. For us, Rock the 21 and the fundraising and awareness events we host, and organizations and families we support serve as an opportunity to help further foster social awareness and educate our friends, family, local businesses and community on what Down syndrome is.

Have a message or idea for Rock the 21? Please send us an email or visit our Facebook page:

Rockthe21ds@gmail.com

<https://www.facebook.com/Rock-the-21-979905802022606/>

Do you need to individually contact our Rock families?

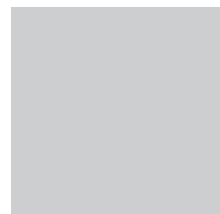
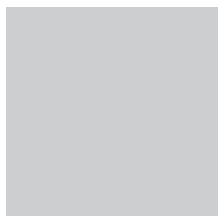
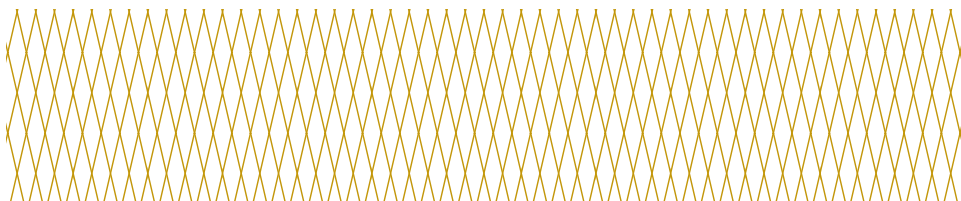
Beth Freeman:
eafreeman09@gmail.com

Ana High:
anakhigh@gmail.com

Tara Stauber:
tarastauber@gmail.com

Rock

THE 21



YES, WE ARE STILL ROCKIN'!

It's been a busy few months since our World Down Syndrome Day celebration and fundraiser and we are excited to share Rock the 21 updates with the start of our Rock newsletter. What a perfect time to share updates as we end a successful Down syndrome awareness month in October and enter a season of thanks and gratitude in November.

And, to answer the question we get the most...yes, we are planning another celebration! We plan to kick off Down syndrome awareness month with our next major celebration and fundraiser in October 2016. Stay tuned for details.

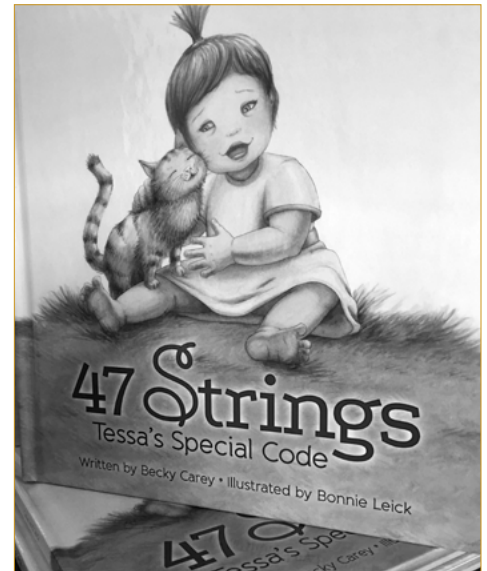
We are thankful for your support and can't wait for you to read about the activities we've funded and families we've assisted with your help. Keep rockin' with us and read on...

.....

CREATING AWARENESS WITH CHILDREN'S BOOK

In celebration of Down Syndrome Awareness month, Rock the 21 purchased a children's picture book about Down syndrome (DS) and donated a copy to more than 100 elementary schools and public libraries across the northern New Jersey / New York City metro area. The book – *47 Strings: Tessa's Special Code* – is an invaluable tool for families and educators in discussing DS with children. The book explains, in easy-to-understand language and with sensitivity, the "special code" Tessa has and the remarkable lessons to be learned from her.

The author, Becky Carey, has a daughter with DS and beautifully articulated what it means to not



only have a child with DS, but what it also means to have a friend or sibling with DS.

The book is a Gold Medal Winner of the Moonbeam Children's Book Awards and Silver Medal Winner of the Benjamin Franklin Awards. For more information on 47 Strings, please visit: www.facebook.com/47-Strings-Tessas-Special-Code-105253909620355/

We will continue to distribute books! Please email Rockthe21ds@gmail.com if your local school or public library would like a copy.

It is our hope that students, parents and teachers will gain a better understanding of DS from reading this book and learn that children with DS are more like a typical child than different.



ICE CREAM CREATES A FUN LEARNING EXPERIENCE

In August, Rock the 21 funded an ice cream truck to visit the Stepping Stones School, a school for children ages three to 10 who have DS or other cognitive impairments. The event provided the opportunity for students to practice their communication and math skills. Each student was given three dollars to purchase an ice cream treat of their choice. In doing so, they utilized skills such as selecting, ordering and working with money. Their hard work paid off and everyone enjoyed the delicious ice cream with smiles! Camp Hope was also treated to ice cream the same day. Camp Hope is a summer day camp program for campers with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

SPECIAL READS FOR SPECIAL NEEDS

Dozens of children with DS will be “going places” as they prepare for a lifetime of reading with the *Special Reads for Special Needs* reading program, which Rock the 21 purchased and distributed to families. This program, specifically developed for learners who have DS, is

designed to make perception and retention as easy as possible. How does the reading program do this? By utilizing:

- ♦ Large sans-serif type.
- ♦ Double spacing between words.
- ♦ Extra space or leading between lines of type.
- ♦ Extra white space surrounding the text.
- ♦ Separation of text and illustrations at the emergent reader level, reducing distractability.
- ♦ Topics of high interest to the learner.

The program, delivered to each family, included instructions on how to successfully implement the program at home, printable books and flash cards, as well as several pre-printed books. Feedback has been incredible and students as young as three-years-old are reading!

Additionally, Rock the 21 funded the creation of high-interest books for the pre-school class at the Stepping Stones School. These books were tailored to each student and included pictures of his/her friends and described in a few pages what they do together – “play and play”, of course! The kids loved them!

For more information on the *Special Reads for Special Needs* program, please visit: www.specialreads.com

“The more that you read,
the more things you will
know. The more that you
learn, the more places
you’ll go.”

- Dr. Seuss



ROCK THE 21 MEETS A NEW FRIEND AND SUPPORTS A GREAT ORGANIZATION

Rock the 21 is excited to introduce our new friend – Alicia – who was adopted in February from Nicaragua. Prior to her adoption, Alicia was cared for as part of the Mustard Seed Communities (MSC), a non-profit that focuses on caring and nurturing abandoned children with special needs. Since 1978, MSC has provided care and shelter for children living with varying degrees of disabilities, including DS. With care communities in the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Zimbabwe and Nicaragua, their mission is to

advance the moral, mental and physical well-being of children with disabilities. Alicia's parents met and fell in love with her during a mission trip, and after going through the international adoption process, brought their beautiful 5-year-old daughter home to Hoboken, NJ – the same neighborhood as “Rockers” Cael, Emma Kate, Harper and Micayla.

Rock the 21 is honored to utilize funds from our World Down Syndrome Day celebration to make a donation to MSC.

For more information on how you can help, including sponsoring and/or participating in a mission trip or making a direct donation, please visit: www.mustardseed.com

IPAD HELPS STUDENT READ INDEPENDENTLY

Rock the 21 donated an iPad to a 21-year-old student at Hoboken High School who has DS and is legally blind. This personal iPad will enable the student to see and access information and e-books in large print. Touch devices like the iPad and their easy-to-use applications and functionality are changing the lives of children, adults and seniors with special needs. Recent

reports estimate that nearly 40,000 apps have been developed for the special needs demographic.

For example, with the simple download of a voice recognition app and a simple touch of an iPad, a non-verbal person can communicate exactly what he or she needs and wants to learn. Apps can be customized with photos or features to suit an individual's needs.

For information on educational and special needs apps, please visit: www.oneplaceforspecialneeds.com/main/library_special_needs_apps.html



DELIVERING TOOLS, RESOURCES AND LOVE

Shocked. Sad. Confused. These are typical feelings that parents feel when hearing the diagnosis of DS. Rock the 21 has partnered with the Candle Lighters to develop diagnosis support baskets to be provided to parents before and/or after

the birth of their child with DS. The goal of the baskets is to provide information and resources to parents, as well as congratulate and celebrate the family with gifts. The baskets will include:

- ◆ Hand-written letter from a parent raising a child with DS.
- ◆ DS informational pamphlet.
- ◆ Diagnosis to Delivery Book: A Pregnant Mother's Guide to DS.
- ◆ Sophie the Giraffe toy.
- ◆ Information on support groups, such as local Early Intervention programs, the Stepping Stones School, GiGi's playhouse and the NDSS.

We will start delivering baskets to doctor offices and hospitals in the NJ/ NY metro area starting in January. If you would like more information and/or would like to help deliver baskets, please contact Ana at:

anakhigh@gmail.com or rockthe21ds@gmail.com

ROCK THE 21 ORGANIZERS NOMINATED AS NJ HEROES

Ana High, Beth Freeman and Tara Stauber — the organizers of the World Down Syndrome Day Rock the 21 celebration — were nominated to be NJ Heroes. NJ Heroes is a private, non-partisan, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, founded by New Jersey's first lady, Mary Pat Christie. NJ Heroes encourages, recognizes and supports the tireless efforts of unsung heroes that make the lives of New Jersey citizens better. Unlike many other non-profit organizations, NJ Heroes does not directly serve a specific community need, but rather recognizes and celebrates the work done by individuals and non-profit organizations in New Jersey. It is an honor to be nominated. Stay tuned to see if we are selected as recipients of this distinguished award!



For more information, please visit: www.newjerseyheroes.org

ROCK KIDS ROCK A MUSIC VIDEO

Rock the 21 kids were excited to be part of the Costa Crew's music video "If I Could See Through Your Eyes". Inspired by children with disabilities, the song takes you into the world of a child with special needs. Click on the links below to see the making of the video and finished product.

Making of the video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=dysHLKN18g0

Finished video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=O2CGFuqFt7E



BUYING GIFTS FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The holidays are nearing and we often get asked what types of toys are best for children with special needs. There are several great reference guides that will help you select developmentally appropriate toys for a child with special needs. Please visit the sites below.

Also, purchase your gifts and donate to a great cause at the same time! When you shop at AmazonSmile, Amazon donates 0.5% of the purchase to the Candle Lighters. Bookmark <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/23-7328095> and support us, and Stepping Stones School, each time you shop. It's free to set up and an easy way to support students with DS.

www.toysrus.com/shop/index.jsp?categoryId=3261680
www.fatbraintoy.com/special_needs

WHY IS OCTOBER SO SPECIAL?

Because it's "Rocktober" — Down Syndrome Awareness Month. Every October, people across the U.S. celebrate DS awareness month, taking the opportunity to spread awareness and celebrate the abilities and accomplishments of people with DS. Didn't get a chance to celebrate this year? Mark your calendar for our next Rock the 21 fundraiser and celebration in October 2016, and also visit the websites of the local chapters of the groups below for awareness activities in your area.

www.ndss.org/Resources/Local-Support
www.thecandlelighters.org
www.gigisplayhouse.org

CREATING CHANGE — SMILE FARMS

Many have not had the opportunity to work with someone that has special needs or a developmental disability. The last U.S. census counted only 1.2 million working-age people with intellectual disabilities; 85% of them do not have paying jobs. Change is needed...



A great organization we recently learned about is Smile Farms — a non-profit that is dedicated to providing meaningful work to developmentally disabled adults at local farms, urban gardens and greenhouses. Smile Farms believes that "communities are made of all types of awesome people, and by bringing together innovators, collaborators and makers of change — we can create a movement that nurtures a world where people with differing abilities are always included and employed". Co-founded by Jim McCann, CEO and founder of the company 1-800-flowers.com Inc., they have one farm in Long Island, NY and plans to establish more farms around the country. You ROCK, Smile Farms!

To learn more, visit:

<http://www.smilefarms.org>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TznbBnvionl>

"We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give and what we help to change."

– Winston Churchill

INCREASE YOUR AWARENESS OF DOWN SYNDROME

Know the Facts - What is Down Syndrome?

Typically, each cell contains 23 pairs of chromosomes. DS occurs when an individual has a full or partial extra copy of chromosome 21. This additional genetic material alters the course of development and causes the characteristics associated with DS.

One in every 691 babies in the U.S. is born with DS, making it the most common genetic condition. There are approximately 400,000 people living with DS in the U.S.

Quality therapy and education programs, and positive support from communities, families and friends have allowed individuals with DS to lead longer and more fulfilling lives than ever before.

Use this language when referring to DS and those who have DS:

- ◆ Remember the person first – not the disability. Instead of “a Down syndrome child,” it should be “a child with Down syndrome.” Also avoid verbiage such as “Down’s child” or “he has Down’s.”
- ◆ DS is a condition or a syndrome, not a disease.
- ◆ The words “typically developing” or “typical” are preferred over “normal.”
- ◆ “Intellectual disability” or “cognitive disability” has replaced “mental retardation” as appropriate descriptions.
- ◆ Never use the “R-word” in any context. Its hurtful and suggests that people with disabilities are not competent. Increase your Awareness of Down Syndrome

“Its not our disabilities, but our abilities that count”.

- Chris Burke,
Activist and Actor with DS