Volunteer Information

What is DSACT? The Down Syndrome Association of Central Texas (DSACT) is a non-profit organization that is a resource for the Down syndrome community, including individuals with Down syndrome, their families, educators, and volunteers.

DSACT Mission: To provide education, support, and resources to individuals with Down syndrome, their families and professionals and the community while building public awareness and acceptance of the abilities of individuals with Down syndrome.

The following information is to help you learn about our volunteer opportunities, choose the best opportunity for you, and to have the best experience while volunteering with DSACT.

Facts, Myths, and Helpful Information

What is Down Syndrome?
Down syndrome is a genetic condition that is the result of an extra copy of genetic material on all or part of the 21st chromosome. Health and developmental challenges occur in varying degrees for individuals with Down syndrome.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nguLcSzN7mM
Myths about Down syndrome:

**MYTH:** All people with Down syndrome have a severe cognitive disability.

**TRUTH:** Most people with Down syndrome have a mild to moderate cognitive disability, or intellectual disability. This is not indicative of the many strengths and talents that each individual possesses. Be considerate of the extra time it might take a person who has a disability to get things done or said.

**MYTH:** It is ok to use the “r-word” if you don’t really mean it.

**TRUTH:** It is never acceptable to use the word “retarded” in any derogatory or joking context. Using this word is hurtful and suggests that people with disabilities are not competent.

**MYTH:** Adults with Down syndrome are the same as children with Down syndrome.

**TRUTH:** Adults with Down syndrome are not children, and should not be considered children. They enjoy activities and companionship with other adults, and have similar needs and feelings as other adults.

Volunteer Opportunities

**Social, Recreational & Programs**

**Recreational Programs:** Every year, DSACT offers recreational programs for individuals with Down syndrome of all ages during four unique 8-9 week sessions. Volunteers assist DSACT program instructors and participate in the class alongside our members. Volunteers are expected to pick a program that matches their interest. We prefer that volunteers commit to attending as many dates for that session as possible.

**Events:** DSACT hosts several fundraising and member activities throughout the year. Volunteers help with event setup and breakdown, event registration, child- and family-friendly activities and games, fundraising, and occasionally, in-office preparation. This is a great group volunteer experience.

**Teen Group Social Program:** Recreational therapy students are invited to attend our teen socials on the 2nd Friday of each month to socialize, dance, and serve as peer models for teens with Down syndrome.

**Adult Group Social Program:** The adult group social gatherings are generally held once a month in rotating locations throughout the Austin area. Recreational therapy students will assist in the planning and set up and tear down of activities and spend time socializing with our adults with Down syndrome.
Individual Volunteer vs. Group Volunteer

DSACT offers various opportunities to volunteer, either as an individual or a group.

Individual:
Recreational programs are ideal for individual volunteers. The programs are fast-paced and involve moving around a fitness room. Volunteers are encouraged to be role models.
Examples are:
- Social Dance
- Fitness Boot Camp
- Warrior Storm
- Performance Art

We suggest when volunteering as an individual to commit to a recurring program for the full experience of being a part of a DSACT program and get to know our wonderful members.

Group:
We welcome all levels of any previous volunteer experience in our classes/programs but we feel our social groups would best suit an individual with previous recreational therapy experience.
- Teen Social Group
- Adult Social Group

If you are looking for a one-time volunteer opportunity for larger groups, some of our events include:
- Buddy Walk (mid-late October)
- Austin Marathon (late February)
- Cocktail Bash (spring)

Please fill out the Group Interest Form and we will get back to you.

All volunteer experiences need to be coordinated with our Programs and Events Coordinator. Refer to Volunteer Chart below for a breakdown of which opportunities are best for individuals and groups and when they occur.
Volunteer Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities/Events</th>
<th>Monthly/Weekly</th>
<th>Individual</th>
<th>Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teen Social Group</td>
<td>2nd Friday each month</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2-4 rec therapy students)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Social Group</td>
<td>4th Friday each month</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2-4 rec therapy students)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Dance</td>
<td>Saturdays</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitness Bootcamp</td>
<td>Saturdays</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warrior Storm</td>
<td>Sundays</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance Art</td>
<td>Sundays</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddy Walk</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cocktail Bash</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austin Marathon</td>
<td>February</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Volunteer Process:

Volunteers must be at least 14 years old.

Individual(s)

1. Fill out the INDIVIDUAL volunteer interest form online
2. The Programs and Events Coordinator reviews your form and adds your information to our database and volunteer newsletter
3. Once approved, you will get a link to sign up for open opportunities and will receive all volunteer newsletters in the future

Please note: during busy seasons, this process can take up to 2 weeks to complete

Groups

1. Fill out the group GROUP volunteer interest form online
2. The Programs and Events Coordinator reviews your application and will respond with a list of opportunities that fit your needs
3. Once you have chosen your opportunities, the Programs and Events Coordinator will work with you to organize the logistics of your volunteer experience

Please note: You will hear back from Programs Coordinator within 2 weeks
FAQs

What Should I wear?
For recreational program volunteering and volunteering at the Buddy Walk, comfortable and appropriate athletic clothes are appropriate.

Can I talk to the media?
When you are volunteering with DSACT you are representing our organization. We ask that any requests from media be directed to a DSACT staff member by emailing admin@dsact.org.

Who teaches the classes?
DSACT classes are not instructed by the Programs and Events Coordinator or DSACT staff. They are provided through partnerships with local instructors and/or organizations. We would like to remind our volunteers to check in with the instructors to see where their services will be best useful. Volunteers are participants, not instructors.

How often do recreational programs run?
Our recreational programs run seasonally. Each season’s session is approximately 8 weeks long, and each class is held weekly. Information on when the next season starts is sent out via email in the volunteer newsletter. To be added to the volunteer newsletter, please fill out the volunteer interest form.

What age groups do you serve?
Each group is designed to cater to our members as they enter into stages of their life: from childhood through adulthood. We offer programs for all age groups; however, volunteer opportunities are only available for programs serving KidsAct (6-12 years old), Teen (13-19 years old), and Adult (20+ years old) groups.

What types of recreational programs do you offer?

Class: CampFire
A class for learning the basic skills needed to safely and confidently spend time in the outdoors! Explore plant identification, wildlife tracks, camping how-tos, and other fun activities. The schedule for this class may vary, and sometimes volunteers may not be needed.

Class: Warrior Storm Martial Arts
Lightning Tikes is a fun, exciting interactive program to teach children of all ages to STAY SAFE!
Warrior Storm Self Defense and Leadership Academy has developed a curriculum that uses traditional martial arts techniques to teach self defense and leadership skills to children.
Class: Performing Arts and Behind-the-Scenes Production
KidsActing Foundation is to give children and teens who are often overlooked by traditional theater programs the chance to LEAD, LEARN, THRIVE and GROW through the magic of performing arts.

Class: Social Dance
Social Dance with Stacey is a class that allows our participants to move with freedom while exploring various groovy movements across the floor and in place.

Class: Fitness Boot Camp
Fitness Boot Camp is a non-stop class that is lead by a long time member of DSACT, the structure is geared toward keeping the heart rate up and the body moving.

When you are volunteering for DSACT you are representing DSACT. If you have any questions or concerns, please direct any questions to the Programs and Events Coordinator at admin@dsact.org