The self advocates are becoming a more prominent, visible part of DSANI. Their greatest contribution to the group is their presence and work at the Buddy Walk, manning the T-shirt booth. Steve Mikulski's presence on the Buddy Walk committee has insured the self advocates' visibility and contribution to the success of our Buddy Walks. David Miller continues on the Board as our self advocate representative.

The self advocates have been involved in two rounds of peer advocacy and awareness through the PALS program. This group is meeting currently for the second 6 week session of a group interaction facilitated by Frank Mikulski.

Otherwise, the self advocates of DSANI find themselves involved in community wide recreational activities, like weekly bowling throughout Ft Wayne, Monday night basketball at Turnstone, various weekly outlets for Bible study through Lutheran Disability Outreach friendship classes and other church related social events. This is a very social and active group of people with Down syndrome, who through various parent driven outlets find themselves out in the community all the time.

Another focus of DSANI has been to support and encourage the "Parents of Older Kids Network," a group of parents of sons or daughters with a disability who are in the adult world of services. This group meets periodically with speakers and programs revolving around issues of having older "kids" with a disability. We have had speakers on estate planning, creative approaches to housing, service providers, recreation and supported employment.

The Down Syndrome Association of Northeast Indiana exists as an advocacy organization to enhance the lives of individuals with Down syndrome, provide information and support to families and professionals, and promote awareness and acceptance of individuals with Down syndrome within our community.

DSANI is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization as determined by the Internal Revenue Service.
During 2006 we hosted numerous social activities for DSANI members including: Wizards Game – In April, DSANI hosted a trip to the Wizards game for member families.

FW Children’s Zoo – we had 52 people in attendance all had a wonderful time exploring the zoo with their DSANI friends.

Halloween Bowling party – About 30 people attended the bowling party and “knocked down the pins”

Holiday Party – the DSANI Holiday party provided to once again be a favorite of members with over 160 adults and children filling the room, visiting with Santa and receiving a gift.

Nina Fuller – DSANI hosted a reception for Nina Fuller, author of Special Strength for Special Parents and mother of 2 children with Down syndrome.

Other activities for families included the revived Playgroups, “Safe & Sound All Around” safety training at McMillen Center for Health Education, family movie at Mitchell Books, Red Cedar Day Camp and a trip to Black Pines Animal Park.

Jen & Randy Pickard:

Jen is one of the founding members of DSANI and served on the Board of Directors for 5 years. However, it isn’t possible to mention Jen without mentioning Randy for Randy served on the Board in a more behind the scenes role. Over the years, they have always been a team effort. Both Jen and Randy wrote, edited, created and published the DSANI Star newsletter for 5 years. They educated, enlightened and entertained us with stories about individuals with Down syndrome, people who support the Down syndrome community and current events that impacted our lives. Jen and Randy covered our events, lifted our spirits and enriched our families, always promoting awareness and acceptance of individuals with Down syndrome within our own community. Despite no longer being on the Board, Jen continues to contribute as a Buddy Walk committee member, promoting the effort to involve school teams to participate in the Walk and she has recently volunteered to coordinate the Books to Schools Program.

Sujeet Desai:

The Down Syndrome Association of Northeast Indiana would like to recognize Sujeet Desai as an extraordinary self-advocate.

As an accomplished musician, student and athlete, Sujeet has proven himself to be an outstanding role model for individuals with Down syndrome. Internationally, Sujeet has brought inspiration and hope to individuals with Down syndrome and their families. He has been consistently diligent and worked very hard to make his dreams reality. His self-advocacy workshops help other self-advocates realize that they too can fulfill their dreams. Sujeet is a fine example of what is possible for individuals with disabilities. He seems to embody the idea that with hard work, desire and support nothing is impossible.

DSANI is very honored to host Sujeet during our 7th annual membership meeting.

2006 Buddy Walk:

What a great day – sunny skies, happy families and LOTS of supporters filling Foster Park for the annual DSANI Buddy Walk. We had school groups, scout troops, families, friends, co-workers, firefighters, Komet’s players and more – all to support individuals with Down syndrome here in northeast Indiana and raise over $60,000 (cash and in-kind donations). What a sight to see all the kids sporting John O’Boyle’s wonderful artwork – great job John! Thank you to the committee members and volunteers who helped make the day a success and a special thank you to the self-advocates for the great job they did at the walk. Thank you to everyone that came out to support DSANI – it was another great day! It was a great day of fun and acceptance so mark your calendars now for October 6, 2007 to join us for another great day!

2006 BuddyWalk.

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Linda Jackson:

For the past 2 years, Linda has welcomed us with open arms to be on her “Weekend News Now” program that airs on both Saturday and Sunday. We aired the show weeks before the Buddy Walk to help promote the walk. The most important thing we accomplished by being on her show was to help advocate for individuals with Down syndrome and to better educate the viewing area on Down syndrome. We would like to thank Linda for allowing us to be on her show, by awarding her a DSANI Star Award.

Automotive Color and Supply:

For the years of support of the Buddy Walk as a Corporate sponsor of the event. Their support has helped DSANI and the Buddy Walk for many years.