



Gratitude Report

A future full of
potential made
possible by **YOU**.

DELTA GAMMA

CENTER

2023 to Spring 2024

Letter from the Executive Director



Friends of DGCKids,

This year has been incredibly bright. Our recent online fundraising campaign and family event, Celebration for Sight, was a tremendous success, raising over \$370,000! It is with your unwavering support that we continue to make a significant difference in the lives of children with a visual impairment and their families.

We are growing and expanding our team to serve our community better. Under the thoughtful guidance of Lisa Rohr, Senior Director of Programs, we have hired Early Intervention staff to reach more children and families. Our commitment to preparing children with visual impairments, including those with multiple disabilities, to succeed in the sighted world remains resolute.

The success stories of our kids remind us of the unlimited potential that exists in all children. Their achievements are a testament to the strength and dedication of our community. **YOUR belief in our mission and dedication to our cause inspires us daily.** Your support makes our work possible, and together, we are lighting the path to possibility for children who are blind or visually impaired and their families.

Thank you for being an essential part of our journey. We look forward to many more successes and bright futures together!

Executive Director, DGCKids

MISSION

To help children who are blind or visually impaired reach their full potential through family-centered, specialized services, and community support.

VISION

That children who are blind or visually impaired will achieve their full potential, have strong relationships with family and friends, and have equal opportunities to participate, contribute, and lead joyful lives.

Celebration for Sight

April 21, 2024, was an amazing afternoon celebrating our past and present families at Faust Park! Over 250 people joined us for a day filled with free fun for families. Highlights included the Bubble Bus, BeepBall demos, carousel rides, and a lively music therapy session.

Families enjoyed crafts, popcorn, snow cones, face painting, pony rides, and a petting zoo. The beautiful weather added to the joy of the day, creating the perfect setting for kids and families to connect and play. It was a day that brought our community closer together, celebrating the strength and spirit of the children and their families served by the Center.

YOUR generosity makes a difference in their lives!



We look forward to hosting this family event next spring on Sunday, April 27, 2025, and continuing to build these cherished memories together!

Alumni Update!

Josh Fields, a DGCKids alumnus, has made the U.S. Blind Hockey Team this spring! Introduced to skating at 4 years old through DGCKids programming, Josh has always excelled as an athlete, especially with the St. Louis Blues Blind Hockey Club. He shared, "It means a lot to me to represent my country on and off the ice. Being a member of Team USA has given me the opportunity to play blind hockey at the highest level.

Having younger hockey players or others with visual impairments look up to me makes me so happy, knowing that I'm inspiring others." His achievements and spirit embody the mission of DGCKids!



Early Intervention (EI)

Eighty to ninety percent of learning occurs through vision; therefore, a visual impairment from birth can impact all areas of a child's development. Children with visual impairments need specific adaptations and strategies to help them access their world and reach their full potential. When children and families have access to specialized services that address unique learning needs, it can significantly impact parent-child bonding and foster developmental growth.



A toddler utilizes a white cane to explore his environment.

171

Children Received Early Intervention Services in 2023

DGCKids offers **in-home EI services to children from birth to three years old within 50 miles of the Center**. We provide specialized education in natural environments like homes or childcare settings.

Our services include tailored education on the child's diagnosis, adaptive strategies, and mobility training. We collaborate with specialists and families to ensure comprehensive support and awareness of visual conditions.

Parents receive guidance on adapting environments and maximizing their child's remaining vision and sensory skills, integrating these strategies into daily routines for optimal learning and development.



The EI team includes Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments, an Orientation and Mobility Specialist, Child Development Specialists, a Family Support Specialist, Occupational Therapists, a Physical Therapist, a Speech Therapist, and an Optometrist for low vision evaluations.

GRADS



The GRADS (Group Recreation and Developmental Support) program supports children aged three through high school graduation, promoting social skills, independence, and community participation through monthly activities, a winter camp, and summer challenge trips.

Participants set annual goals for friendship development, independence, and community engagement, enjoying adapted activities like tandem cycling, art, and music therapy to enhance inclusion and personal growth.

29

Children Benefitted from this Inclusive and Adventurous Program in 2023

Family Support Services

Family support services empower families by addressing individual needs through personalized and group services, home-based and community-focused services.

These services aim to strengthen parental and child relationships, facilitate access to resources, and foster supportive networks, enhancing children's development from infancy through high school graduation.

58

Children and their Families Received Family Support Services in 2023



Vision Screening

A screening that takes seconds to complete can change the life of a child forever.

Approximately **25% of children have undetected vision issues** that impact their learning. However, **less than 22% of preschoolers receive vision screenings**.

In the greater St. Louis area, most vision screening resources focus on school-aged children, leaving younger children at risk.

DGCKids aims to bridge this gap by screening children from six months to six years old in Missouri and Illinois.

Our vision screeners offer free, community and on-site vision screenings using the SPOT Photo Screener, a quick, reliable, and non-invasive device that provides immediate results.



The Vision Screening Director holds the SPOT Camera.

5,751 children were screened in 2023.



603 referrals made to an eye doctor.



124 preschools participated in vision screenings.



10% of children screened were referred.



Message from the Board



For 73 years, our organization has been committed to supporting children with visual impairments and their families and this past year has been one of significant growth and progress.



We have expanded our staff, welcomed new families, and forged stronger partnerships within the field and among local organizations.

The staff's dedication and hard work, guided by our board members' strategic vision, have been pivotal in navigating this period of evolution.

Together, we are honoring our past and building a brighter future for the children and families we serve.



Courtney Vomund, Board Chair

Board Officers

Courtney Vomund, Board Chair - **Spire**
Dr. Jay Walden, Vice Chair - **Retired Mercy Physician**
David Lucky, Treasurer/Finance Chair - **Retired Monsanto**
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Matt Schaller - **Moneta Group**
Amy Slone, DGC Parent - **Tutor and Respite Caregiver**
Kate Smith, DGC Parent - **Maryville University**



The Challenge Trip for GRADS to
Park City, Utah, in the Summer of 2023!

3,687

hours of service from volunteers. The Board and DGCKids Staff are grateful for the incredible volunteers who support the mission of DGCKids!



Thank You!

DELTA GAMMA

CENTER



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