

***INCLUDING ALL INDIVIDUALS WITH
INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES!!***

Down Syndrome South Africa

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

01st October 2023

NATIONAL DOWN SYNDROME AWARENESS MONTH

**“Empowering Dreams, Embracing Diversity”
Working together with Down Syndrome South Africa**

Friday the 20th October marks National Down syndrome Awareness Day, in honor of this national day, Down Syndrome South Africa stands united with the national community to shed light on the remarkable individuals with Down syndrome and the challenges they face every day. **At Down Syndrome South Africa**, our vision is to create a more inclusive and compassionate society for individuals with Down syndrome across South Africa. We believe that every individual has unique abilities and deserves the opportunity to thrive, be accepted and lead fulfilling lives.

Down syndrome is one of the most common occurring genetic conditions caused by a full or partial extra copy of chromosome 21, known as Trisomy 21. This extra chromosome causes Down syndrome and alters the course of development both physically and cognitively

Persons with Down syndrome bring an undeniable light into our world. Their enthusiasm, creativity and unwavering determination inspire us all. It is, however, crucial to acknowledge that individuals with Down syndrome often encounter barriers that hinder their full participation in society. These challenges include but are not limited to:

1. **Educational Barriers:** many persons with Down syndrome face limited access to inclusive education, hindering their intellectual and social development;
2. **Healthcare Disparities:** They may experience inadequate healthcare and are at a higher risk of certain medical conditions, necessitating greater attention and support;
3. **Employment Challenges:** Discrimination and stereotypes can hinder their access to meaningful employment opportunities, preventing them from fully contributing to the workforce;
4. **Social Isolation:** Stigmatization and societal biases can lead to social isolation, limiting their ability to form meaningful relationships and connections;
5. **Legal and Advocacy Gaps:** Legislative gaps such as the right to legal capacity and supported decision making can create hurdles in securing rights and supports for individuals with Down syndrome.

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Together we can:

1. Advocate for inclusive education policies not only in special schools but mainstream schools as well so that persons with Down syndrome have access to quality learning opportunities;
2. Work towards improved healthcare access and support for all;
3. Collaborate with businesses to promote inclusive employment practices and provide training to employers to better understand the capabilities of individuals with Down syndrome;
4. Create inclusive spaces and events where individuals with Down syndrome can build connections, friendships and a sense of belonging;
5. Lobby for legal reforms that protect their rights and welfare, ensuring they have a voice in decision-making processes.

Join us this October in celebrating the power of Pink as we welcome the release of the new Barbie Doll with Down syndrome in South Africa. As we work hand in hand together, let us envision a better future where individuals with Down syndrome are empowered to pursue their dreams, contribute to society and achieve greater independence. Together, let us embrace diversity to build a more inclusive society.

DSSA and all its affiliates will be hosting various activities throughout October, to find out what events are taking place in your area please contact the national office or follow us on Facebook to see our activities.

You can also show your support by wearing your jeans on **20 October** (It's all in the Genes) and making a donation to support our work- **Banking Details: Standard Bank, Account No: 202470695, Branch code: 051001**

To see our work go to: www.downsyndrome.org.za

For more information please contact: Annelise Boot at: dssaoffice@icon.co.za

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