

## **NDSAN wants to be a Resource for Workers, Foster Families**

The National Down Syndrome Adoption Network (NDSAN) has been helping children with Down syndrome in foster care since 1982. The mission of the NDSAN is *to ensure that every child with Down syndrome grows up in a loving family.*

The NDSAN is a national adoption program that provides support and information to expectant and birth parents who contact them, who are considering making an adoption plan for their child. They make sure every family is educated on updated information on Down syndrome. Questions about parenting a child with Down syndrome are answered by NDSAN Director, Stephanie Thompson, who is a biological parent of a child with Down syndrome. Stephanie did not make an adoption plan, so families can talk with her about what parenting may look like.

If the family decides to parent their child, Stephanie will connect them with their local Down syndrome support group. If the family decides to make an adoption plan, Stephanie will connect them with a local agency who has experience with special needs adoption. The agency and the NDSAN will work in tandem to support the family, as the NDSAN has a registry of adoptive families who are home study ready and want to adopt a child with Down syndrome.

Another support the NDSAN provides is support and resources to state workers and children in foster care with Down syndrome.

Molly Blaker, NDSAN Outreach Coordinator, checks the Adopt US Kids website a few times a week, searching for children with Down syndrome that need families. When Molly finds a child with Down syndrome, she will forward the child's page to Stephanie, who will then contact the child's worker, asking if she can create a page for the child, using the public narrative and a picture. With permission, Stephanie will create a page for the child and list the children on the "Children in Foster Care" page of the NDSAN website. There are many children listed on that page, and many folks visit that page daily.

Once the child's page is created for the NDSAN site, Molly will share that link on the NDSAN social media pages – Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram. She will then email the link to Down syndrome parent groups in the state the child is located, asking them to share the link with their families and on their social media sites and their newsletter.

The advocacy that the NDSAN has done earned them awards from the Administration for Children & Families, NACAC, and national Down syndrome organizations.

But the NDSAN wants to increase their support to workers and to children in the foster care system by making sure Down syndrome-specific supports are in place the minute a child with Down syndrome goes into foster care.

Stephanie would like to be a first contact, so that she can provide the worker with local support and resources for the child, such as helping the child communicate with new people; making sure medical issues are being properly addressed; educating foster families about Down syndrome and providing a contact from the local Down syndrome support group that the foster family can reach out to with any questions or concerns about the child.

Please consider contacting Stephanie at the NDSAN when you receive a child with Down syndrome into care. All information shared with the NDSAN will be kept confidential.

You can contact Stephanie via email, [stephanie@ndsan.org](mailto:stephanie@ndsan.org), or phone, 513-709-1751. Make sure to visit the NDSAN site at [www.ndsan.org](http://www.ndsan.org) to see work being done to ensure that every child with Down syndrome grows up in a loving family.