

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Contact: Lauren Smith  
Executive Director  
Centre Region Down Syndrome Society  
814-360-7112  
lauren@centreregiondownsyndrome.org

## **Down Syndrome Awareness Group Hosts Annual Buddy Walk** *Together Again at Medlar Field in State College*

Centre Region, PA – October is Down Syndrome Awareness Month and the regional group promoting inclusion and advocacy is kicking off the month with their largest event of the year – the Buddy Walk.

Centre Region Down Syndrome Society (CRDSS) is a vibrant, hands-on organization that provides individuals with Down syndrome and their families the tools, resources and support necessary to participate in, contribute to, and achieve personal health and fulfillment.

Their flagship event, the Buddy Walk, has traditionally brought the expanded community together to celebrate individuals with Down syndrome, as well as raise the necessary funds to keep their year-round work functioning. This year the group is excited to be together again at Medlar Field in State College for the 16<sup>th</sup> annual event on October 8<sup>th</sup>, which is expecting near-record turnout.

“Our community gathers incredible strength by being together, so having that ability after two years of holding the Buddy Walk virtually is fantastic,” stated Becky Brigman, board officer with CRDSS. “It’s about the people we walk for, like my son Elwood. This will be the first in-person Buddy Walk for my family and we are really looking forward to everything from the celebration walk itself, to the entertainment, lunch, games, a photo booth, face painting and more. But best of all will be the smiles, hugs and our community sharing in our common purpose of helping those with Down syndrome live life to the fullest.”

“Those involved in our work will all tell you – it’s rewarding,” added Lauren Smith, Executive Director. “The Buddy Walk is a fun day to be sure, but it’s also a very important one. Bringing our families together from throughout Pennsylvania is an extraordinary experience. We gain tremendous momentum when we are together, sharing in our common bond, conviction, and mission. Everyone is welcome to join us at the upcoming Buddy Walk to be a part of that camaraderie. Registration is open and people are busy building teams and donating. It’s a special time of year!”

The organization is active year-round offering a variety of programs, including educational workshops, new family counseling and support, special member events, and a performance arts program - the *For Good Troupe*, which performs for the public seasonally. CRDSS recently partnered with the YMCA of Centre County to launch the well-being program *Community Connections*, which focuses on the social, emotional, physical, and educational well-being of individuals with disabilities. A hallmark program, the *Enrichment Fund*, specifically fuels activities that keep people with Down syndrome physically active and socially engaged. Through a mini-grant program, the fund assists families with things like purchasing adaptive bikes or defraying the cost of therapeutic horseback riding and swimming lessons.

Due to advances in medical technology, individuals with Down syndrome are living longer than ever before. In 1910, children with Down syndrome were expected to survive to age nine. With the discovery of antibiotics, the average survival age increased to 19 or 20. Now, with recent advancements in clinical treatment, most particularly corrective heart surgeries, as many as 80% of adults with Down syndrome reach age 60, and many live even longer. More and more Americans are interacting with individuals with Down syndrome, increasing the need for widespread public education and acceptance.

“We are proud to serve the central Pennsylvania region,” continued Smith. “CRDSS is one many organizations across the US that provide an array of programs to serve the Down syndrome community. Personal support is priceless for families with Down syndrome – that is what our founders recognized 16 years ago when they saw the need for this organization, and strategically built support programs with their steadfast volunteer drive. Our current leadership is dedicated to honoring our early pioneers and taking CRDSS to the next level. We take our role very seriously.”

2022 Buddy Walk® sponsors include: University of Pittsburgh Alzheimer Biomarker Consortium-Down Syndrome, Jersey Shore State Bank, Lotsa Laffs, Dr. Marla Moon & Heimer, Fiore, Turco Eye Care, RE/MAX Centre Realty, Restek, Spikes, Steinbacher Goodall & Yurchak, and Truist Bank.

To learn more about CRDSS and support the 2022 Buddy Walk, visit [www.centregiondownsyndrome.org](http://www.centregiondownsyndrome.org)

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**Let's Buddy Walk!**



Caption: The Buddy Walk is Together Again and welcomes families, students, community leaders, and Superheroes!