

Partners in Grant Writing

Shoestring Solutions and Down Syndrome Association of Delaware

Down Syndrome Association (DSA) of Delaware began in 1979 as a grassroots parent-run organization, fueled by passionate individuals with a desire to make an easier path for the families raising children with Down syndrome in Delaware.

In 2017, Lauren Camp Gates, who began her career with DSA as a volunteer during college, was promoted from Program Director to Executive Director. Under Lauren's leadership, the organization continued to make inroads to help more families raising children with Down syndrome, and annual programs grew.

DSA has a strong list of individual donors. Fundraisers and an annual golf outing provided significant funds, but success was dependent on good weather and high turnout. Foundation funders approached DSA, but with a small staff, DSA did not have the bandwidth to organize a grants strategy.

When the organization opened its headquarters in Newark in 2021, Lauren and the Board knew diversifying revenue streams would be critical to long term success. They looked for help with grant writing, and found Shoestring.

Shoestring began our work with DSA of Delaware in October 2021. We conducted grants research for general operations, program support and capital needs that included local, regional, national and government funders. We developed a strategy of outreach to new prospects and potential corporate donors. We wrote appropriate grant requests that matched the need with the foundation's purpose.

Within the first 9 months of working together, Shoestring surpassed DSA's FY 22 annual fundraising goal. So far in FY 2023, Shoestring and DSAD's partnership has again successfully surpassed the organization's fundraising goal.

Shoestring loves being partners with DSA of Delaware because we can see how every dollar raised is put to use to truly impact the individuals they serve.

“The Down Syndrome Association of Delaware’s decision to hire Shoestring can be looked back on as a pivotal point for our organization’s growth. We were able to diversify our income stream by significantly increasing our foundation grant support. The team at Shoestring makes the grant writing process dare-I-say easy- from a task that typically is a cumbersome and time-consuming part of running a nonprofit. I am so grateful for their services.”

– LAUREN CAMP GATES
Executive Director, Down Syndrome Association of Delaware



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