



MONTGOMERY COUNTY
Down syndrome
INTEREST GROUP



2021

ANNUAL REPORT

Montgomery County Down Syndrome Interest Group



“On behalf of the Montgomery County Down Syndrome Interest Group (MCDSIG) I wish everyone a happy, healthy 2022!”

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

The year 2021 was an incredible year during which our Village showed its resilience and fortitude in the face of the challenges brought by a worldwide pandemic. Despite these obstacles MCDSIG continued to offer important programs and support for our families. We have touched many lives in Montgomery County and beyond and I’m incredibly proud of the work we have done. Our success would not be possible without the commitment and passion of our board of directors, committee members, financial supporters, volunteers and the families in our Village.

To meet the needs of our families — and keep them healthy — MCDSIG had to get creative, adjust our processes and make tough decisions. We started 2021 with our first-ever formalized board of directors and committees in place in an effort for MCDSIG to have more structure as a nonprofit organization. In May we leased shared office and community space that allows us to hold meetings and social events and gives us storage space. We’ve continued our strategic planning process to better define our mission and prioritize our initiatives for 2022. This was a critical year for MCDSIG given our budget surplus due to the inability to plan in-person events. In November we were so proud to invite our MCDSIG families to participate in our first public board meeting conducted virtually, allowing for transparency by our organization, feedback from attendees and recruitment of volunteers for our committees.

I’m grateful to our committee volunteers who enabled us to keep doing the ongoing initiatives for MCDSIG, including welcoming seven new families to our Village with a gift bag, encouragement and support. Through our Learning Program, which continued online year, 40 parents learned strategies that helped empower them and improve their child’s academic outcomes. Through the generosity of our donors, we were able to send meal vouchers to families at the hospital and provide support to a few families who experienced extreme financial hardships. We wrapped up 2021 by hosting two successful IN-PERSON events — Trunk-or-Treat Spooktacular (our first in-person event since the COVID-19 pandemic began) and Pictures with Santa! We loved the opportunity to see the smiling faces from our Village that we’ve missed so much!

My hope is that 2022 will allow us to reflect on the things that are important in life, to value friendships and family that grace us and to appreciate the opportunities that come to us in the months ahead. I look forward to seeing you all IN PERSON soon! Everything is possible if we work together. It’s time to move our organization to the next level. Are you with us?



KIM KRAUTER
President, Board of Directors



OUR MISSION

The Montgomery County Down Syndrome Interest Group of Pennsylvania (MCDSIG) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to support individuals with Down syndrome and their families from diagnosis to adulthood through education, advocacy, support, outreach, and social opportunities.



WE ACCOMPLISH OUR MISSION BY:

- **EDUCATION** – we provide information and host programs to advance knowledge on Down syndrome.
- **ADVOCACY** – we advocate for best practices backed by research to support the effective growth, development, and education of individuals with Down syndrome.
- **SUPPORT** – we connect families with resources and with each other to address the unique challenges faced by our community.
- **OUTREACH** – we equip hospitals and doctors’ offices with information for new and expectant parents.
- **SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES** – we engage individuals with Down syndrome and their families through events and activities to connect with others sharing the same lived experiences.



OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS



KIM KRAUTER
President, Board of Directors



JACQUELINE BUCHNER
Vice President



KARYN BUCHANAN
Secretary



CAROLA CRONAUER
Treasurer



MICHELE HOENIG
Communications Committee



MICHELLE VIALL
New Families/Medical Outreach Committee



SANDY KATZ
Program Committee



DR. JENNA RUFO
Program Committee



DANIELLE THOMPSON
Program Committee



EVENTS

2021 YEAR IN REVIEW

• WORLD DOWN SYNDROME DAY (WDSD) CELEBRATIONS:

ROCK YOUR SOCKS FOR WDSD

MCDSIG celebrated WDSD with the “Rock Your Socks” campaign. More than 20 school districts in the county and local law enforcement and community members joined the celebration. The MCDSIG website offers schools educational tools to help the Rock Your Socks event generate conversations in the classroom about Down syndrome, celebrating differences and fostering acceptance and inclusion.

WDSD ZOOM PARTY CELEBRATION WITH RAINBOW PHIL

We’re grateful to the volunteer family who jumped in to organize a fun virtual event for younger kids in celebration of WDSD21. We had over 20 children dance along to “Rainbow Phil,” an English/Irish kid’s musician and entertainer and he performed his “Down on the Farm” show with many kids’ sing-along classics!



• YOU’VE BEEN EGGED FUNDRAISER

The Easter Bunny delivered lots of eggs to our Village this Spring! Families ordered pre-filled eggs that were scattered in their yards by the Easter Bunny’s helpers so kids could enjoy a fun Easter egg hunt! We had 54 families that participated, helping us raise \$2,200.

• NATIONAL SIBLING DAY

Our Learning Program volunteer, Rachel Older Hellinger, shared her experience growing up with her sister, Melissa, who has Down syndrome in a blog on our website. The MCDSIG village was invited to share sibling photos to celebrate all the siblings in our village who love so deeply. They are unsung heroes.



• MOM’S NIGHT IN

As a busy mom, making time for yourself is one of the greatest gifts you can give, not just to yourself but to your loved ones as well. It’s not easily done, particularly for special needs moms. Add a global pandemic on top of it and self-care feels like a dream fantasy most days. The Mom’s Night In was an online event, facilitated by an MCDSIG parent, Erin Simek, where moms learned about “Soul Care” and why it’s so important to slow down and start prioritizing themselves. The session explored beliefs that were holding them back from caring for themselves and how to “flip the script” and start believing their self-worth. After the session, the participants chatted about motherhood and its challenges and got support from the other participants.

• PEAC BILINGUAL PRESENTATION ON SPECIAL EDUCATION

MCDSIG was so proud to collaborate with Pennsylvania Education for All Coalition (PEAC) to bring a bilingual presentation to answer questions about how to go about getting your child extra help, implementation of the IEP and when to know you need help from an advocate or a special education attorney.

• TRUNK-OR-TREAT SPOOKTACULAR

On October 30 we were so happy to host our first in-person event since the world shut down in 2020. Thirty families decorated their cars and dressed in costumes to trick-or-treat at our first-ever “Trunk-or-Treat” event.



• PICTURES WITH SANTA

Because we couldn’t host our annual Breakfast with Santa event, we got creative to make sure our families could see Santa in a safe, sensory-friendly environment. We set up Santa’s sleigh outdoors and families could drive up, talk with Santa and take a photo with him. Each child received a gift box to take home. The Farm-to-Table team at Variety — the Children’s Charity of the Delaware Valley, an organization that supports individuals with disabilities — made sugar cookies for us to include in the gift boxes and we added some decorating supplies and other fun toys. A special thanks goes to the Barren Hill Volunteer Fire Company who allowed us to use its parking lot and Santa’s sleigh, and to our MCDSIG friend, Brad, who donned a Santa suit and was jolly all day, spreading Christmas joy to our kids and the 35 families that attended. We also want to recognize the mothers and daughters of the Valley Forge Chapter of National Charity League who stuffed the gift boxes and helped greet families as they arrived.



INITIATIVES

ONGOING INITIATIVES

• WELCOMING NEW FAMILIES

In 2021, we welcomed seven new families into our village. Volunteers from our Outreach Committee connect with these new families to support them so they know they aren't alone in the journey. MCDSIG presents them with a gift bag that has a resource flier, toys and books we love, a therapeutic item such as a honey bear, and Down syndrome gear such as a onesie or tee shirt. The volunteers are there to help offer support, guide them to much needed resources, and welcome them to the MCDSIG family.

• OUTREACH TO OB/GYNS

In 2019, MCDSIG received a grant through the Down Syndrome Diagnosis Network in partnership with The Human Development Institute at the University of Kentucky to help grow our medical outreach program. The goal is to connect with all health care providers who are involved with families at the time of a pre- or postnatal diagnosis. Through these connections we hope to improve the experience for families receiving a diagnosis by having accurate and up-to-date information about having a child with Down syndrome. The pandemic had a huge impact, limiting our access to health care providers. Despite this challenge, we connected with 20 health care providers between 2020 and 2021 and sent them resource packets from Lettercase (National Center for Prenatal and Postnatal Resources), supplied free to MCDSIG through this grant.

• THE LEARNING PROGRAM™ 2021

The Learning Program (TLP) is a research-based educational model and resource to empower parents as advocates for their children, improve academic outcomes and to train parents as first educators. In the 2020- 2021 school year, we were able to provide access to TLP Online to 40 families. We also facilitated virtual instruction, a Q&A session, community building and discussion forums. We piloted social and conversation skills and transition curriculum for students 14 years and older and launched adventures into independence for middle-high school and beyond. Additionally, we launched Stepping Up Teens Level for middle schoolers. The Learning Program requires participants to pay a tuition for the year but some materials are paid for by MCDSIG.

• EDUCATION RESOURCES

MCDSIG volunteers continually curate and access resources that can improve education for our kids with Down syndrome. We collaborate with local organizations, including the county Local Taskforce on Right to Education, to share events and speakers that are important to our families. We share information to help parents navigate the school system, including information on individualized education plans (IEPs), a child's right to education in the least restrictive environment (LRE) under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and inclusion.

• SUPPORTING FAMILIES IN CRISIS

During 2021, MCDSIG was proud to be able to connect families with much needed support and financial resources. Meal vouchers were sent to families who had a child in the hospital to help ease the stress and financial burden of an extended stay. Plus, it was our way of letting the families know we truly care for them. We also helped ease the financial burden some were facing over the holidays by providing gift cards to a few families so they could buy gifts for their children.

• SOCIAL MEDIA CONNECTIONS

MCDSIG is actively engaged in social media which is a great tool to connect families and share information. We have nearly 900 followers on our public page where we share news, upcoming events, photos of past events and celebrate our community. We also have a private discussion group that is a safe place for families to seek support and ask advice from the community. More than 200 people engage with that group. MCDSIG also is present on Instagram and Twitter.

• DUAL DIAGNOSIS SUPPORT GROUP

The MCDSIG has a private subgroup on Facebook devoted to the dual diagnosis of Down syndrome and autism. You can request to be a member of this subgroup to make local social connections, seek and share information and post questions. The group, run by parent volunteers, meets regularly for discussion.

• SPANISH-SPEAKING SUPPORT GROUP

The MCDSIG has another private subgroup on Facebook called "Somos Puro Amor" ("We are Pure Love"), devoted to supporting Spanish-speaking families who have a child with Down syndrome. The group provides support and information to parents when they welcome their child, and access to education and resources in the community, social connections, and collaboration with other organizations already serving the Hispanic population.



FORWARD

MOVING US FORWARD

• FORMALIZED BOARD OF DIRECTORS

2021 was our first year of having a formalized [Board of Directors and Committees](#). An attorney helped us to finalize and file important paperwork as a nonprofit organization. In the final meeting of 2021, the board approved the creation of a new committee on public housing.

• STRATEGIC PLANNING

This summer, the Board of Directors started the process of developing a three-year strategic plan to determine where we want to go as an organization, define the goals that will help us achieve our plan and allocate the budget to support those goals. The plan will be finalized in 2022.

The first step in the planning process was reworking our mission statement and creating a vision that will be the funnel through which we make all decisions.

• OUR VISION

MCDSIG strives to build a community where individuals with Down Syndrome are independent, contributing, and valued members of society who are authentically included in all aspects of life. From diagnosis to adulthood, MCDSIG provides education, advocacy, support, outreach, and social opportunities for people with Down Syndrome and their families with the goal of creating a world where differences are celebrated and one in which all people can live fulfilling lives.

• SHARED FLEXIBLE OFFICE SPACE AT AMBLER YARDS

In May 2021, the Board approved the leasing of shared office space that gives MCDSIG a place to host meetings and special events plus much needed storage space for supplies. The location also has a Community Room and outdoor space for parties and other events. We were able to use our new space to host our first Trunk-or-Treat event for Halloween.





2021 INCOME AND EXPENSES

This section provides an overview of MCDSIG's income and expenses for 2021 which will be audited by Spring of 2022. We saw a surplus in our budget due to the inability to plan our numerous in-person events that are of no cost to our families. MCDSIG is undergoing a strategic planning process to allocate funds to align with our mission.

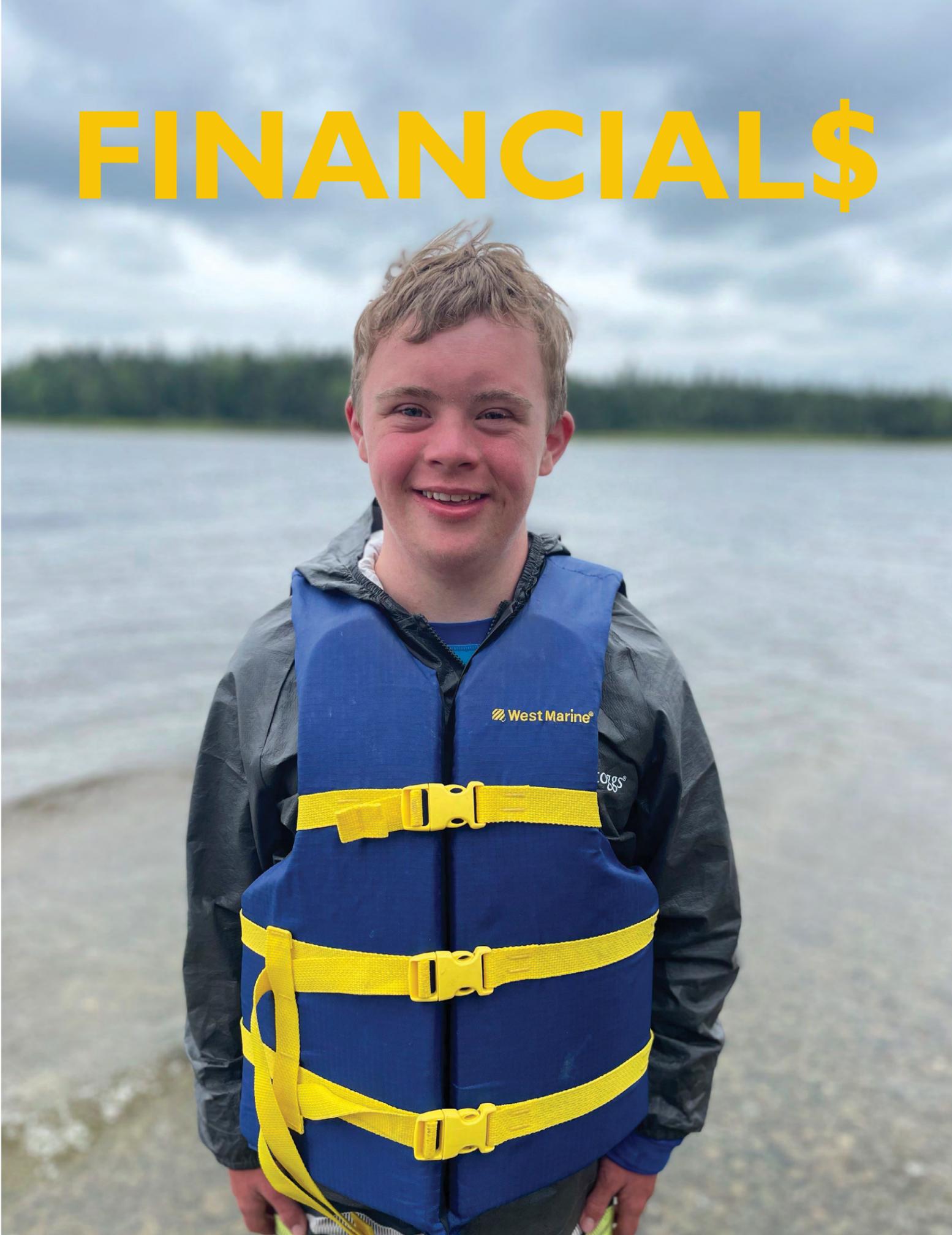
Balance Sheet (As of 12.31.2021) Total

ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Bank Accounts	
Money Market	\$142,032.22
Checking	\$84,651.53
Total Bank Accounts	\$226,683.75
Total Current Assets	\$226,683.75
TOTAL ASSETS	\$226,683.75
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	
Total Liabilities	
Equity	
Opening Balance Equity	\$92,568.67
Retained Earnings	\$108,606.75
Net Income	\$25,508.33
Total Equity	\$226,683.75
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	\$226,683.75

Profit and Loss (Jan - Dec 2021) Total

INCOME	
Donations	
Amazon Smile	\$258.80
Benevity Donations	\$4,788.16
Direct	\$23,835.00
Merck Matching	\$250.00
Network for Good	\$435.00
United Way	\$1,859.85
Total Donations	\$31,426.81
Fundraising	
Fundraiser - Egg My Yard	\$2,200.00
Total Fundraising	\$2,200.00
Grants	\$173.16
Interest	\$124.85
Misc Fundraisers	\$693.10
Total Income	\$34,617.92
GROSS PROFIT	\$34,617.92
EXPENSES	
Admin Fee	
Constant Contact	\$775.39
Insurance	\$325.00
Office Expenses	\$818.39
Website	\$156.31
Total Admin Fee	\$2,503.62
Family Support	\$1,000.00
Fundraising Expense - Egg My Yard	\$606.25
Total Fundraising Expense	\$606.25
Learning Program	
Food	\$402.52
License Fee	\$3070.49
Other Misc	\$685.20
Printed materials	\$2,364.90
Total Learning Program	\$893.01
Outreach Program	\$1,080.93
PayPal Fees	\$301.41
Social Events	
Breakfast with Santa	\$1,291.33
Other Events	\$349.99
Trunk-or-Treat	\$416.02
Total Social Events	\$2,057.34
Welcome Baskets	\$667.03
Total Expenses	\$9,109.59
NET OPERATING INCOME	
NET INCOME	\$25,508.33

FINANCIALS\$





GET INVOLVED

When you are ready, there are many ways to get involved with MCDSIG and connect more closely with other parents. Join our Village so we can email information about events, advocacy and Down syndrome in the news. We have a private Facebook discussion group, too, for parents to post questions within our community. MCDSIG is a parent-run organization so we are always looking for volunteers to help us plan and implement events and special programs. If you find time is not on your side, you can also get involved with MCDSIG by donating or shopping through our partner sites that give back a percentage of sales to our organization. No matter where you are in your journey, there is a place for you in our village.

VOLUNTEER: If you are interested in helping out at an event or joining a committee, visit:
<https://mcdsig.org/get-involved/volunteer/>

DONATE: If you wish to make a donation to MCDSIG, visit
<https://mcdsig.org/get-involved/donate/>

All donations are eligible for tax deductibility and will be used to provide vital programs and services to our 200+ families in Montgomery County and neighboring counties. Thank you for supporting our important work!



WWW.MCDSIG.ORG



P.O. Box 703, Blue Bell, PA 19422
484.808.2160 | info@mcdsig.org

