

The inclusion of individuals with Down Syndrome on the Board of Directors

Serving on a Board is not an easy task. It is an important responsibility. I

want to share my personal experience. I also want to make sure that others who want to serve can be successful and make an impact. A successful experience means it is rewarding for the individual with Down syndrome but also for the members of the Board and the Down syndrome organization at large.

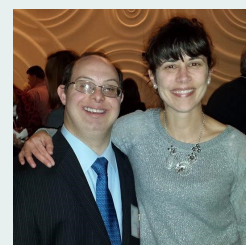
In 2004, when **Phil Pedlikin** was DSANV president with **Lisa Roti** as vice-president, they were interested in including an individual with Down syndrome on their Board of Directors. A few among the Board Members were not sure it would work. They were willing to explore while at the same time, they had their doubts. The decision was to have a process to select the individual. All interested, ten of us at that time, applied and were interviewed. I was the lucky one to be chosen. I was fully included and my contribution was mostly in fundraising events, networking, employment issues and legislative meetings on Capitol Hill. At that time, the meetings were held in Board members' homes. My home was no exception. In fact, I even hosted the meeting all by myself when my parents were out of town. I ordered pizza and served drinks too. **Steve Beck, Heather Trammell, Carolyn Scott, Sheila Erhart, and Brian Ray** were on the Board in those beginning years. Later I met **Dorene Ryder** who started the Learning Pro-



DSANV Board 2004



David and Heather



David and Lisa



David and Phil

You can learn more about me in my book: "More Alike Than Different: My Life With Down Syndrome."

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David with Brian, Heather, and Steve

gram and chose to be my buddy giving me a ride to the Board meetings. Based on my personal experience, I became successful when I had mentors who supported me. They would help me prepare for the meetings, answer questions before and after the meetings. I was not chosen to help with budget issues. I was chosen to be the voice of those with Down syndrome and making sure

that our perspectives were addressed. I am a good ambassador advocating for our cause.

I am truly included. **I am One Of them and not One Among them.**

I am writing about this subject because I care about this and also because not all Down syndrome associations throughout the country include individual(s) with Down syndrome to serve on their Board of Directors. DSANV is a model. Three individuals with Down syndrome serve on the Board of directors. Erin Thompson, Charlotte Woodward and I are Board members who are fully engaged in committees and advocacy projects. We help each other. In my view, it is not enough to have someone on the Board. What matters, is that the individual(s) are engaged. We do not want to be a token. It is important to discover unique skills and assign specific tasks and areas of involvement that the individual can bring to the table.

Inclusion on the Board of Directors means that I am accepted in that group and **people respect me. They ask for my opinion. They have expectations. They believe in me and I am empowered to contribute. When we serve on the Board, we are Leaders in Action!**



David with Charlotte and Erin



David and Charlotte

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