



KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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COMMISSIONER LENDS SUPPORT FOR DOWN SYNDROME AWARENESS

(FRANKFORT, Ky.) – Commissioner of Education Stephen Pruitt is asking Kentuckians to join together in support of Down Syndrome Awareness Month in October.

“This is a time to celebrate people with Down syndrome and make others aware of their abilities and accomplishments,” Pruitt said. “Many of their talents go unnoticed due to their disability, which is a shame. Instead of focusing on what they can’t do, we should be focusing on what they can do.”

Down syndrome is the most commonly occurring genetic condition and is caused by a full or partial extra copy of chromosome 21. According to the National Down Syndrome Society (NDSS), about one in every 700 babies in the United States is born with Down syndrome – about 6,000 each year. People with Down syndrome may or may not exhibit certain physical characteristics. They have an increased risk for certain medical conditions and experience cognitive delays.

“Down syndrome does not discriminate. It affects people of all ages, races and economic levels and has an impact not only on the individual, but also on family members, educators, employers, peers and others,” Pruitt said. “Yet people with Down syndrome can and do attend school, work and contribute to society in many positive ways. We as Kentuckians need to recognize and celebrate this and support these individuals reaching their full potential in whatever way possible.”

Life expectancy for people with Down syndrome has increased dramatically in recent decades – from 25 in 1983 to 60 today. According to NDSS, good health care, quality education programs, a stimulating home environment and positive support from family, friends and the community enable people with Down syndrome to lead longer and more fulfilling lives.

To find out more about Down syndrome and annual Buddy Walks®, the most widely recognized public awareness and advocacy program for the Down syndrome community, visit the [National Down Syndrome Society website](http://www.ndss.org).

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