

Alexander's Angels Donates \$44,000 to Down Syndrome Organizations

Esther and Juan Gomez-Nieto, president and treasurer of Alexander's Angels, recently hosted a reception at their Jericho residence to distribute funds from Alexander's Angels Fourth L. I. Buddy Walk and to establish Alexander's Angels Advisory Board. Attending were directors, committee chairs, as well as representatives of local and national Down syndrome organizations—including Dr. Robert Schoen, president of Research Down Syndrome who flew in from Chicago. Exchange of ideas for future collaboration highlighted the conversation that extended late into the night. Esther and Juan have a grandson with Down syndrome, Alexander.

Thanks to the generosity of sponsors like Clintrak, Onyx Packaging Corp, 110 Sand Company, Bold Systems, and TRC Vending, among others, Alexander's Angels raised over \$54,000. As a result, each of two local and of two national organizations received \$11,000 for a total of \$44,000. The remainder of the funds will be used as seed money for next year's Buddy Walk (site and place to be announced), for three planned DOWNrightART exhibits, as well as for a small stipend for "The Up of Down" panelists.

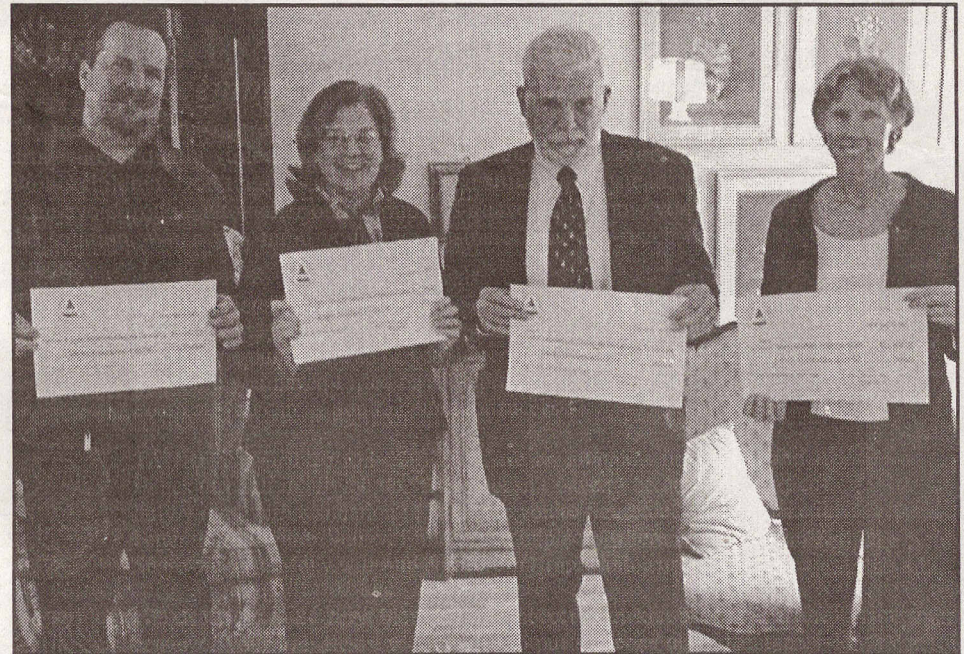
Receiving checks on the local level were Michael Smith, executive director of the Association for Children with Down Syndrome located in Plainview, and Michael Hoffman, president of the Down Syndrome Advocacy Foundation located in Hauppauge. Both joined Alexander's Angels Advisory Board. On the national level, Patricia Baker, program manager of the National Down Syndrome Society located in New York

City, represented Jon Colman, their president, who accepted a place on the advisory board. The check to the Down Syndrome Research and Treatment Foundation, located in Palo Alto, California, will be mailed.

Over 1,500 people attended the Buddy Walk at Heckscher State Park that included dances and songs by both Queens College and St. Joseph's College Dance Clubs, LIACTS, and Create Dance; the participation of Star War characters of the 501st Legion Empire City Garrisons; Hofstra students in costumes; face painting; games; D.J. Danny Walsh, and the participation of actor Chris Burke and his band, among others. Food was provided by Whole Foods of Jericho and Taco Bell, and refreshments by McDonald's.

The Buddy Walk was created by the National Down Syndrome Society in 1995 to celebrate Down Syndrome Awareness Month in October and to promote acceptance and inclusion of people with Down syndrome. The Buddy Walk has grown from 17 walks in 1995 to nearly 300 planned for 2010 worldwide. In 2009, more than \$10 million was raised nationwide to benefit local programs and services, as well as the national advocacy initiatives of NDSS that benefit all individuals with Down syndrome.

Down syndrome is the result of an extra copy of the genetic material on chromosome 21. A recent study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Birth Defects Prevention Network indicates that there are about 6,000 diagnoses of Down syndrome each year in the United States.



Receiving \$11,000 checks each from Alexander's Angels are, from left to right, Mike Hoffman, president, DSAF; Esther Gomez-Nieto, president, Alexander's Angels on behalf of DSRTF; Michael Smith, executive director, ACDS; and Patricia Baker, program

One in every 691 babies is born with Down syndrome.

Alexander's Angels is an IRS approved charitable 501(c)(3). With a mission to further awareness of the needs and contributions that individuals with Down syndrome have made to society, Alexander's Angels aims to serve as a bridge between the Down syndrome community and the community at large. To achieve its goal, in addition to organizing Buddy Walk in Long Island, Alexander's Angels has established two activities: "The Up of Down: An Insight into the World of Down

Syndrome," a 90-minute panel presentation by experts in the field and family members touched by Down syndrome, and DOWNrightART, aimed at showcasing the abilities of the Down syndrome community through exhibits of the works of artists, and concerts by musicians with Down syndrome.

Please visit www.alexandersangels.org for more information on upcoming activities, including the New York Islander's game on Dec. 26, when Alexander's Angels will be the Islander's Charity of the Game.