



# PALS



## 2021 Annual Report



**A quick note to say that this week PALS remote camp proves really fantastic - and it gives us a glimpse into the real life of Camp PALS - really well done, you guys are magicians.**

*- PALS Parent*

# From the Executive Director

Our 2021 fiscal year was defined by creativity and resilience. We began this year in the depths of COVID-19, wondering when we'd get a glimpse of normalcy. We used a team of medical experts to inform and guide our decisions, enabling us to understand the pandemic's unique impact on the Down syndrome community, as well as the specific needs of each region we serve around the country. While we considered the best adjusted model for programming, I had the privilege of writing a chapter in a book titled "Excelling in Life with Down Syndrome." Writing a chapter on the PALS model served as a poignant reminder of the continued impact we had as an organization, and the work we've done over the past 17 years to solidify our unique model.

Throughout the year we continued to deepen our commitment to diversity and inclusion, recognizing that inspiring a world of belonging begins with a balanced community full of all the various identities that exist in each region. We established new recruitment partnerships, additional financial support options, affinity groups, and a brand new PALS Promise that helped to create a shared commitment at every PALS program.

The impact and uncertainty of COVID-19 across our universities and communities required us to pivot from our typical model of week-long residential summer programs to find new and safer ways to create friendships and connections.

We began by building out our virtual opportunities, establishing an online curriculum for our volunteer leaders and hosting two fully virtual Director Summits. We gathered participants and supporters together over winter break for "Escape from Polar Palace" a virtual game night and fundraiser complete with full costumes and characters. We launched a brand new spring season of programming, offering a hybrid camp option of virtual programming during the weeknights combined with in-person, socially distanced events on weekends. Our summer was filled with weekend programs, offering in-person full day events on a Saturday and Sunday in 13 locations across the country, including a fully virtual option for those who were unable to join us in-person.



As our summer came to a close, we officially released our 2025 Strategic Plan, a plan that we built right before COVID hit. This plan lays out goals in the areas of growth, recruitment, leadership, community building, and development. We are so grateful for the support and energy we've experienced so far in this plan, and we hope you'll join us as we work on building out new regions, deepening local relationships, and reaching more diverse communities across the country. This strategic plan will be a guiding light towards our future as well as a beacon of hope as we prepare to return to our full capacity of programs.

We hope you'll join us in this mission to inspire a world of belonging.

**Jenni Newbury Ross**  
Co-Founder & Executive Director



# our mission

PALS creates inclusive camp experiences for people with and without Down syndrome. Our volunteer-led programs change attitudes, transform lives, and inspire a world of belonging.

The friendships I made were so incredibly valuable and I cherished every single memory made.

- PALS Camper

2021

stats

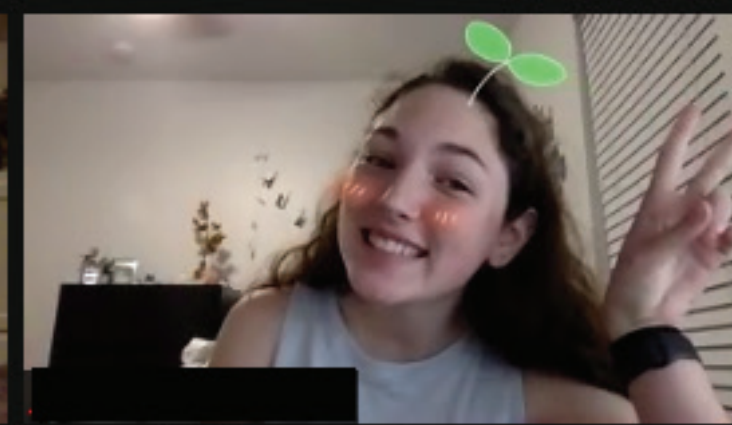
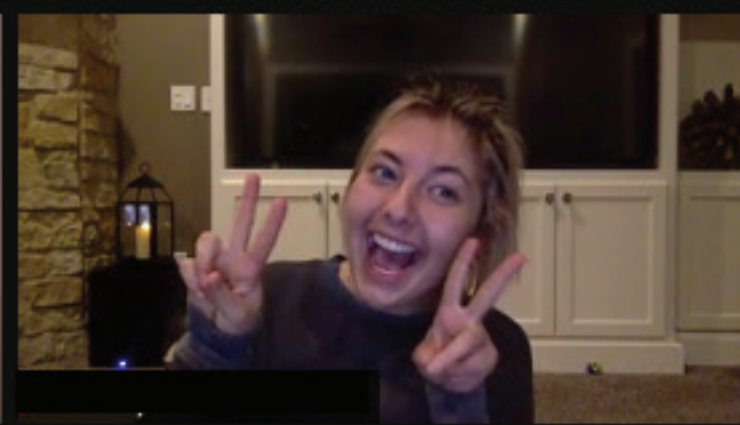
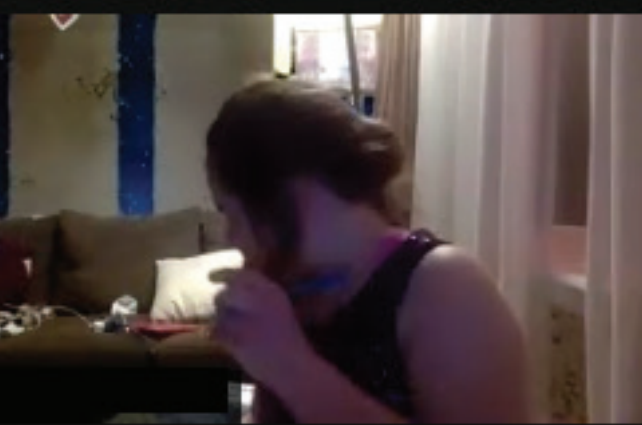
# of unique campers:

414

# of unique volunteers:

588

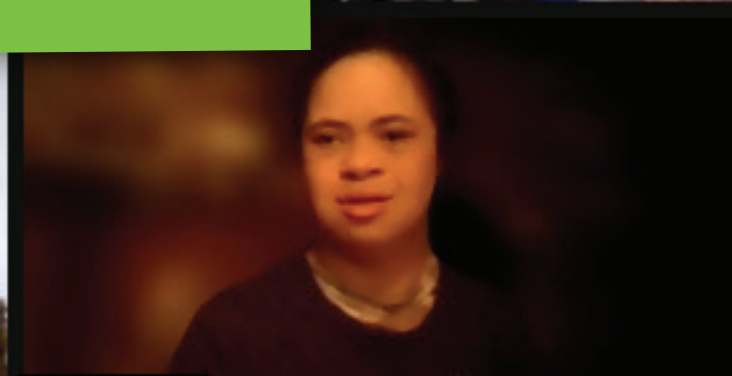
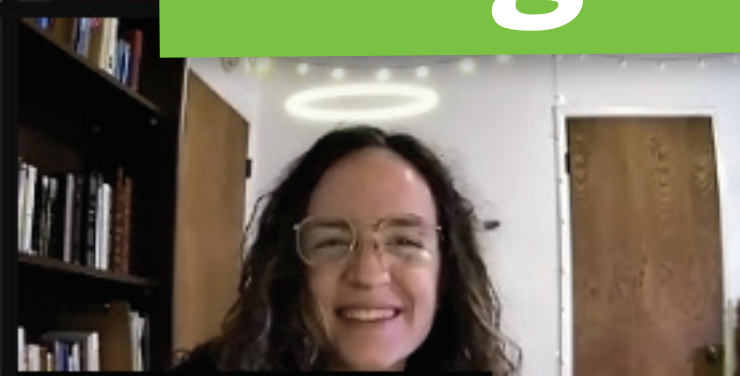
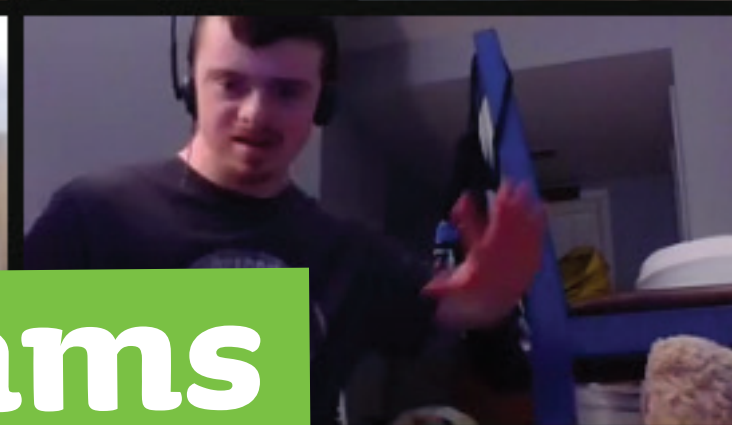
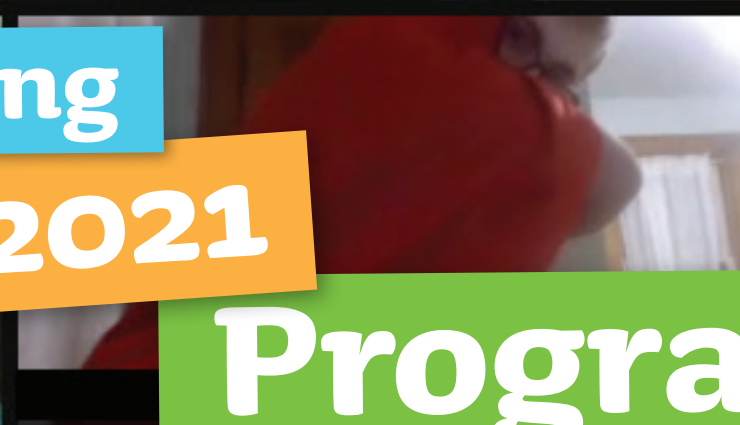




Spring

2021

Programs





From February through April 2021, PALS brought together participants from across the United States in a brand new format: week-long virtual and hybrid sessions. During 5 weeks of virtual programming and one in-person weekend in Cleveland, we joined together in new and meaningful ways. We even sent out kits to all participants prior to camp, so we all had the needed items to participate, along with some cool PALS swag items!

Each night looked a little different, with new leaders and activities. We sang karaoke; played Family Feud and got exercise in a jazzercise session; took some time to relax and do yoga together; made some crafts; reflected on the time spent as a team; and wrapped things up with Olympic games! What stayed the same each night? Connecting with pairs and teams! We were able to build friendships over the course of the week, and log off every night saying, “See you tomorrow!” Spring programming at PALS gave everyone the opportunity to take the PALS magic with them from anywhere in the country.



**Summer**

**2021**

**Programs**



- **Baltimore**
- **Boston**
- **Chicago**
- **Columbus**
- **Los Angeles**
- **North Carolina**
- **Philadelphia**
- **Princeton**
- **San Francisco**
- **Virtual Week**





**Spring & Summer**

**Highlights**

- Casino night in Philadelphia
- Down for Dance partnership
- Silent Disco party in Boston
- Elmhurst University partnership
- End of summer Beach Day



# ESCAPE FROM POLAR PALACE

## Polar Palace

a **PALS** virtual event

In November 2020, we wanted to provide an opportunity for our participants to connect virtually as we were not able to gather in person for the traditional PALS Holiday. PALS staff and a team of volunteers set out to create a one-of-a-kind virtual event: Escape from Polar Palace. The story included an evil ice queen, who, driven mad with hunger and loneliness, captured four Sweets to keep her company. To help the Sweets escape, small teams of courageous participants had to face challenges from the queen's frozen minions: a holiday search & find, a wintry scavenger hunt, chilly charades, and tricky trivia. We created countless videos to guide us along our go-minute virtual adventure to eventually help our Sweets escape the queen's clutches.

After a month of planning, Escape from Polar Palace proved one of our most successful online events. We hosted two sessions with over 300 total participants across the country. The event was also an opportunity for our PALS family to support the organization during our end-of-year fundraising efforts, and we were pleased to beat our fundraising goal of \$10,000!

# Leadership

# Summit



As an integral part of our volunteer-led programs, we hired 54 volunteer Directors that dedicated their time and talents to planning and executing 13 safe, inclusive, and fun programs; both in-person & fully virtual. This group of leaders attended monthly training calls, completed online training modules, worked with a team of co-directors and attended two fully virtual Leadership Summits. These summits serve as opportunities for our staff to train and facilitate connection and collaboration between Directors.

**Additional**

**Stats**

**Directors received  
over 45 hours of  
training throughout  
the season**

**Directors raised  
\$11,670 this year**

**Directors age 18-  
30, representing  
16 states**

**57% of directors  
returning for 2+  
years**



Our first-ever Los Angeles program showcased the value of dedicated outreach and partnership efforts. At this program, approximately 78% of volunteers and 40% of campers identified as BIPOC, and the majority of these participants were local to the greater Los Angeles area and new to PALS.

The success of this new program puts us in better alignment with our strategic plan goals surrounding diverse recruitment and retention, as our program demographics are closer to hub demographics than any other program in PALS history. These numbers were made possible by targeted outreach in diverse communities across Los Angeles, and by leveraging partnerships with other organizations.



# PALS Promise

We are committed to inspiring a world of belonging. We promise to be welcoming, to include everyone, and to stand up for one another. We promise to work together, to learn from our mistakes, and to treat each other like family. We promise to have open hearts and minds, to act with kindness, and to respect the value of every person. Together, we will change our own attitudes, the perceptions of others, and the world.





# PALS

# Promise

This past year, our team spent a lot of time looking at the activities we do during our programs, and thinking critically about how to make them as inclusive as possible to folks of all abilities and backgrounds. We believe that every piece of PALS programming, from participant arrival and karaoke to the Congratulations Project and PALS Olympics, provides us with an opportunity to work towards our mission of changing attitudes, transforming lives, and inspiring a world of belonging. We are actively making modifications to our activities to bring us closer to that goal.

In 2021, we identified our normal “Camp Rules” conversation, which outlined expectations of behavior at camp, as an opportunity to talk more about inclusion and belonging. Thanks to the help of a team of volunteers called the ICAR team (Inclusive Conversations About Race), we established a new and exciting component of our programming called “The PALS Promise.” Rather than focusing on a set of rules, the PALS Promise encourages our community to commit to a set of principles and behaviors, and guides us on how we should treat one another.

The

# Congratulations Project

1,600

letters sent since founding  
of project in 2012

2,240

books distributed

**THE CONGRATULATIONS  
PROJECT GIVES US PALPABLE  
PROOF OF LOVE CIRCULATING  
THROUGH THIS SPECTACULAR  
GLOBAL COMMUNITY.**

- Congratulations Project Letter Recipient



2021

# Expenses

2021 Financials

	Programming	Administration	Fundraising	Total
Food	\$28,197	\$57	-	\$28,254
Housing	\$38,673	-	-	\$38,673
Supplies & Apparel	\$39,555	\$546	\$1,264	\$41,365
Travel	\$9,526	\$69	\$40	\$9,635
Programming	\$26,098	\$250	-	\$26,348
Office Expenses	\$22,057	\$8,191	\$2,686	\$32,934
Insurance	\$3,668	\$5,864	-	\$9,532
Employee Salaries & Benefits	\$346,993	\$36,540	\$56,418	\$439,951
Professional Fees	\$32,583	\$35,360	\$20,045	\$87,988
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$547,350</b>	<b>\$86,877</b>	<b>\$80,453</b>	<b>\$714,680</b>

2021

# Revenue

	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total
Contributions	\$341,318		\$341,318
Contributions, In-Kind	-		\$0
Grants	\$103,898	\$13,428	\$117,326
Tuition, Net	\$155,328		\$155,328
Misc Income	\$3,992		\$3,992
Loan Forgiveness - PPP	\$133,364		\$133,364
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$737,900</b>	<b>\$13,428</b>	<b>\$751,328</b>

2021

# Change in Net Assets

	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total
Expenses	\$714,680		\$714,680
Revenue	\$737,900	\$13,428	\$751,328
<b>Net Gain</b>	<b>\$23,220</b>	<b>\$13,428</b>	<b>\$36,648</b>

A man with glasses and a purple t-shirt is speaking into a microphone. He has his right hand raised in the air. He is wearing a lanyard with a PALS logo. The background is a lush green forest with colorful bunting flags.

# looking ahead

**We are so fortunate to be a part of the PALS family for the past four years. It is the most impressive organization that has touched our lives in the most meaningful ways. We hope to be involved in PALS for many years to come.**

*- PALS Family*