

What is Operation Housecall?

Operation Housecall is a partnership SVDSN has with Stanford University's Genetic Counseling Master's Degree program: each year, every incoming student is paired with a family to enable students to get a sense of what it is like to have a family member with Down syndrome. It is as easy as setting up one meeting with the student, inviting them over to chat, or even asking them to come to the Buddy Walk or attend an activity your child participates in (sports or dance practice, a play rehearsal, anything goes!).

For those who are not familiar, SVDSN started the program after the 2009 NDSC convention in Sacramento when two amazing self advocates spoke and said that they had presented at a conference of genetic counselors and had attendees come up afterward to tell them that they were the first people with Down syndrome they had met! We don't want genetic counselors, often the first point of contact or supporting that first-contact team to be providing information to our families that is from outdated text books or purely from a medical perspective. Operation Housecall is a simple way of tackling this problem by helping these students see the person, not the diagnosis. Operation Housecall began in Boston in conjunction with the Boston University School of Medicine MD program and has been replicated across the country. Working with Stanford when they started the genetic counseling program is our way of changing pipelines and making a difference for the families following us on this path.

Operation Housecall Picnic

The picnic usually occurs in late May to early June at Park in Palo Alto Area. SVDSN provides a free lunch for all attendees and a graduation cake to celebrate the second-year students who will be graduating in June. SVDSN also provides copies of *Gifts* and *Gifts 2* for the students to have these collections of parent- and family-perspective essays in their professional libraries as they set off into the world, supporting families like ours.

The students have cited Operation Housecall as one of the highlights of their program experience, and I've even had several of them share that they chose the Stanford program because of the family-interaction component.

The picnic is open to all (the kids have an especially fun time since it's at the park) and a great way to interact with the students and have them see our kids in action!

Marcy Mamiya – SVDSN Operation Housecall Coordinator