

2016 Team Fundraising Run for Sight

The Kitsmillers

Run for Sight Participants & Delta Gamma Center Family

All three of Jeff and Darla's sons have genetic vision conditions, Ocular Albinism and Nystagmus. All three boys have received services from Delta Gamma Center for Children with Visual Impairments and are graduates of the Center's Early Intervention program.

Our Mission at Work

The Kitsmillers began working with the Delta Gamma Center back in 2010, shortly after Jeff, Darla, and at the time 20 month old twins, Ashton and Ayden moved to St. Louis. Within weeks of being in the area Jeff and Darla enrolled the boys in the Buddy Builders Play Group, which is part of the Center's Early Intervention program and provides families the opportunity to connect with other families while engaging in specialized sensory activities and meaningful learning opportunities. "It was a breath of fresh air from the services we were receiving from our state program in Oklahoma," said Jeff.

Just as Ashton and Ayden graduated from Buddy Builders at age three, Darla and Jeff had their third son, Jeffrey. He too has the same vision conditions as his older brothers, so the Kitsmillers were back for services for another 3 years! Jeffrey celebrated his graduation fall 2014 with big brother's Ashton and Ayden there to cheer him on. (Photo of Jeffrey's Graduation, right)

Three graduations and four years later the Kitsmiller family continues to be active with the Delta Gamma Center by staying connected with the DG staff and attending Family Support events. Most recently Jeff and Darla have taken on a whole new level of participation as Co-Captains of team Kitsmiller Kid's at the annual Run for Sight event.

The Kitsmillers first participated in Run for Sight in 2010 as a family of four, then two years later as a family of five. The past two years they have set out to increase their impact. They set goals and put efforts into fundraising. The 2015 Run turned their family of five into a team of 29 and together they raised \$6,405 for the Center, putting team Kitsmiller Kids in the number one spot for overall fundraising totals.

Team Kitsmiller Kids is back for the 2016 Run! Commitments like Jeff and Darla's play a tremendous part in making Run for Sight a success and allowing the Delta Gamma Center to continue to make the biggest possible impact in this community. "Our family alone has received so much from the staff and services provided by Delta Gamma. We want those services to continue for others, as well as our own 3 boys as they grow up and have new challenges that can be addressed by the services of DG. This is our way of "giving back" to the Center that has provided us with so very much."



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Questions & Answers with Jeff and Darla

What would you tell a DGC family who is considering starting a Run for Sight team?

Quite simply- just do it! It's an incredible event where a massive group of people band together with the same purpose and mission -- giving back to one of most valuable and generous resources our families have here in St. Louis.

Last year Team Kitsmiller Kids came second in over-all funds raised, how did you do it?

Our main focus was to stick with social media. We would post something every few days on each of our accounts and were mindful to keep our ask amount at a low-level; more along the lines of a "micro-transactional" approach to fundraising. We figured that it would be easier to get 10 friends to donate \$10 as opposed to finding 1 that would donate \$100. What we found is when we asked low...we received way more.

Further to that, and with the assistance of Delta Gamma, we've been extremely cognizant of educating our own families about the boys' conditions and what the Center has provided to them. Thus, it becomes an incredibly easy task by going to our extended family and very close friends for the "big ask".

Do you have any other tips you'd like to share?

It's so easy in today's society to give an excuse of "I'm too busy"... or "I can't spare the \$10". Whatever the response may be; turn it positive and involve them first in the education of the condition(s), introduce them to the Center, and welcome them to your team. Our team has organically grown from our own family and friends talking about how enjoyable a time it is to be surrounded by like-minded people.



Jeff Kitsmiller

February 26 at 6:48pm · St. Louis, MO · 🌐

Well, friends...it's that time of year again when Darla and I do our best to give back to the place that has given to us (and our boys directly) so much over the last several years. You see, Ashton, Ayden, and Jeffrey won the genetic lottery at birth and were blessed with a visual impairment. I use the word "blessed" because, quite honestly, that's all we've experienced since their birth -- blessings.

But for the boys' genetically provided vision conditions (Ocular Albinism and Nystagmus), we would have never met their incredible vision teacher at Francis Howell School District, the wonderful folks with the Missouri First Steps program, the generous friends we've met at Lighthouse for the Blind... but most especially the most caring, patient and giving team assembled at the Delta Gamma Center for Children with Visual Impairments.

This Center has provided us with so very much; there's really no way for us to give back everything that we've received. That's why we turn to you — our loving and caring friends and family that've been through this journey with us... with the boys... with Delta Gamma and their staff.

Once again, we've assembled a team for the Delta Gamma Run for Sight and we've got our eyes set on placing in FIRST this year! Last year, thanks to some very incredible friends and family, we were the second highest grossing fundraising team; this year... the top spot is ours. Help us hit our goal of raising AT LEAST \$5,000 for DGC!

If you're able, I hope you can share a few of your hard earned dollars with this organization by supporting our team (all proceeds are directly provided to the organization) by donating here: <https://raceroster.com/.../23rd-annual-run-for-s.../pledge/team....> Further, if you're interested in taking part in the Run for Sight on Sunday, May 3, 2015 in Downtown St. Louis, please comment below or message me for details.

On behalf of our three very blessed kiddos, we most earnestly and sincerely thank you for your kind generosity and support. May you and your family be just as blessed as we have been!

(Jeff's Initial Facebook post to friends and family)