

My new pals, Marina and Boaz

By [Todd Franko](#)

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It was tough for me to know who was more scared Thursday — me or my escort, Marina Donadio.

She had a shoulder to bury her head into — mine. I had no place to bury my head (I have a big head; it would have required a big shoulder)

But together, we toughed out walking the catwalk in front of 750 or so women for the annual Angels of Easter Seals Luncheon and fashion show.

Truth: I was more scared. The trouper was Marina, all of 2 years old. She bravely left the arms of her mom, Kelly, to walk the catwalk with me. (Check out the pix at the bottom.)

Marina has Down syndrome, and her mom said the Easter Seals programs aid their lives in so many ways. Their dedication was evident as Marina toiled through the Thursday event despite it slicing right through her nap time. Helping her stay active was playmate Boaz Reigstad, also 2, who was at the event with his mom, Mindy.

Shifting away from Thursday's event, but still regarding Marina: There's another cool event to note this August.

Marina and her family are active in the Down Syndrome Association of the Valley (DSAV). It's a support, advocacy and resource group for families in five counties: Mahoning, Trumbull, Columbiana, Mercer and Lawrence. Their web site is [here](#).

They are planning their annual Buddy Walk August 16th at the Shops at Boardman Park. The event will feature Chris Burke, better known as Corky from TV's "Life Goes On." Burke will perform with a band, an act they're been doing for more than 10 years.

Through sponsorships, the event raises money to help fund the kids' programs. Read more about it on the web site.

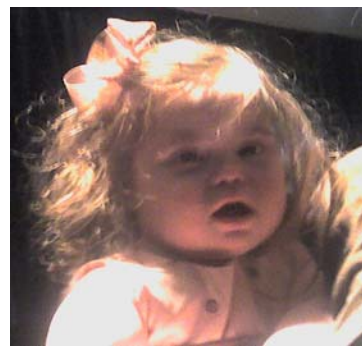
And remember next year's Easter Seals luncheon. It was a great time. Officials were hoping to net \$45,000 Thursday. Publicity boss Julie Costas was all smiles at the end of the long day, so maybe the goal was reached.



Me and Marina



Boaz Reigstad



Marina Donadio