

Unique Dining Experience in Dallas Serves Up Awareness for Disability Employment
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Individuals with disabilities prove they are ready, willing and able to work

The [National Down Syndrome Society](#) (NDSS), with support from [Voya Financial®](#) (Voya), are advocating for equal rights for all individuals with Down syndrome through a unique dining experience known as C21.

This press release features multimedia. View the full release here:
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Voya's President of Corporate Markets for Retirement, Bill Harmon, National Down Syndrome Society President and CEO, Sara Hart Weir, Self-Advocate, Kathy Mai and Voya President of Tax-Exempt Markets, Heather Lavallee, together at the C21 event in Dallas on Wednesday, Dec. 5. (Photo Credit: Sarah Pebworth)

C21, named for the extra 21st chromosome that is characteristic of people with Down syndrome, is traveling to cities across the country. The latest experience took place at Maggiano's Little Italy in Dallas; prior C21 events popped up on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., the New York Stock Exchange and the Atlanta History Center. The goal of C21, which is staffed entirely by self-advocates with Down syndrome and other disabilities, is to demonstrate to the world that these individuals are ready, willing and able to

work.

"We often hear the phrase 'Everything is Bigger in Texas.' This couldn't have been more true when C21, a unique dining experience, landed in Dallas," said NDSS President and CEO Sara Hart Weir. "C21 helps showcase to the world in a 'big way' the real abilities that individuals with Down syndrome bring to the workplace. At NDSS, we are dedicated to working with businesses and organizations, from Main Street to Wall Street, to demonstrate that our future workforce should be integrated, diverse and inclusive."

"At Voya, we believe that all Americans deserve a secure financial future, especially those with disabilities and special needs who may sometimes struggle to be welcomed into the workforce," said Heather Lavallee, president of Tax-Exempt Markets for Voya's Retirement business. "The mission of C21 closely aligns with our broader focus and is a reflection of Voya's unique culture, which is committed to helping *all* Americans achieve the future they envision."

A primary objective of C21 is to call attention to a series of antiquated laws that hinder individuals with Down syndrome from pursuing their career aspirations and living independently. This includes current employment legislation, specifically the passage of the bipartisan H.R.1377, Transitioning to Integrated Meaningful Employment (TIME) Act. This legislation seeks to responsibly phase out an 80-year-old provision of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), which, even in 2018, continues to allow certain employers to pay wages lower than the federal minimum wage to workers who have disabilities.

To learn more about NDSS and C21, visit ndss.org. To experience an example of the impact this unique dining experience has been creating, you can also [watch a brief video](#) of the event Voya and NDSS hosted in Atlanta earlier this fall.

Voya is committed to supporting all Americans with holistic financial wellness, insurance and retirement planning solutions. This includes support for the special needs and caregiver community, where Voya offers a depth of resources focused on holistic education and planning through its Voya Cares[®] program. To learn more, visit Voyacares.com.

About NDSS

The National Down Syndrome Society (NDSS), is the largest nonprofit in the United States dedicated to advocating for all people with Down syndrome in the world. The mission of NDSS is to be the leading human rights organization for all individuals with Down syndrome. NDSS provides state-of-the-art, comprehensive programming to all individuals with Down syndrome and their families, which include: The National Advocacy & Public Policy Center in Washington, DC, its Down Syndrome Health Resources & Promotion Program, the first of its kind #DSWORKS[®] Employment Program, which is showing the world that people with Down syndrome are ready, willing and ABLE to work as well as the National Buddy Walk[®] Program. NDSS envisions a world in which all people with Down syndrome have the opportunity to enhance their quality of life, realize their life aspirations and become valued members of welcoming communities. For more information, visit NDSS.org and follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

About Voya Financial[®]

Voya Financial, Inc. (NYSE: VOYA), helps Americans plan, invest and protect their savings — to get ready to retire better. Serving the financial needs of approximately 14.3 million individual and institutional customers in the United States, Voya is a *Fortune 500* company that had \$8.6 billion in revenue in 2017. The company had \$543 billion in total assets under management and administration as of September 30, 2018. With a clear mission to make a secure financial future possible — one person, one family, one institution at a time — Voya's vision is to be America's Retirement Company[®]. Certified as a "Great Place to Work" by the Great Place to Work[®] Institute, Voya is equally committed to conducting business in a way that is socially, environmentally, economically and ethically responsible. Voya has been recognized as one of the 2018 World's Most Ethical Companies[®] by the Ethisphere Institute; one of the 2018 World's Most Admired Companies by *Fortune* magazine; as a member of the Bloomberg Gender Equality Index; and as a "Best Place to Work for Disability Inclusion" on the Disability Equality Index by Disability:IN. For more information, visit voya.com. Follow Voya Financial on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#) and Twitter [@Voya](#).

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