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Reclaiming beauty: Moms on a mission push for ads showing 'people of all abilities'

Meghan Holohan

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Four years ago, Katie Driscoll gave birth to her sixth child. While she was pregnant, she and her husband didn't know the baby's sex, but they did know their child had Down syndrome. The two were overjoyed to welcome their first girl, Grace, but Driscoll worried that others would pity her because her daughter had special needs.

"I wanted them to know that I was so proud of her," Driscoll, 40, told TODAY. "And so from there, I picked up the camera and ... one thing led to another."

As a way to document her love for her daughter and highlight her adorable looks, Driscoll began **photographing Grace** and posting the images to her **blog**. She also started the organization **Changing the Face of Beauty** with friend Steve English to persuade media and advertising to include more photos of children and adults with special needs.

"When I look at my daughter, I see a 4-year-old girl ... I see her beautiful blue eyes and I don't often see Down syndrome," she said. "I don't want people to think that I am sad that I don't have a daughter that is perfect in terms of typical ... She's perfect to me."

Advertise



Katie Driscoll

Campaigning for inclusion of children with special needs and disabilities "is about the opportunity I wish for my daughter when she is old enough to go out in the real world. It is about jobs and independence," Driscoll writes on her blog.

Advertise

Recently, large companies, such as Target and Nordstrom, have included children with special needs in their advertisements. Eight-year-old Ryan Langston, who has Down syndrome, has modeled for both companies. And Diesel recently ran an ad featuring an adult model in a wheelchair. While parents of children with special needs are happy to see models like their children, they do wish it were more common.

"It's popping up here and there. And that is a great thing, of course. It still uncommon enough, though, that whenever it does happen, it gets a lot of attention," says Ellen Seidman.

Seidman [blogs](#) about her son, Max, who has cerebral palsy, and in 2011 she challenged [Tweeters users](#) to no longer use the word "retard." While many people told her off, others thanked her for educating them or took on the cause themselves.

Katherine Wintch, CEO of The Mom Complex, a consortium dedicated to changing marketing toward mothers, says it's time to see special needs children and their parents in advertising.

"Companies owe it to mothers to reflect all different aspects of motherhood," she said. "The bond between a mother and child with special needs is so special ... [these parents] have every right to be disappointed not only that their children are not being depicted but their relationships [are not]."

Advertise



Katie Driscoll Photography

"All these kids have something to offer to the world and I firmly believe advertising is the vehicle to help the world recognize those abilities," Driscoll writes on her blog.

While some companies embrace diversity, others remain fearful that something too different might spark controversy. Remember the Cheerios ad that showed **a biracial girl and her parents**? This ad reflects the American family, Wintsch says, but many companies shudder at the thought of backlash.

"[Big brands would] rather not offend anyone," Wintsch said. "I think the entire point of advertising is [saying], 'We understand you and we understand your needs.'"

She believes that moms like Driscoll and Seidman can play a huge role in changing media. For her part, Seidman says she blogs about Max to show others that he is just like other kids; he's funny and smart and misbehaving and maddening. She'd like to see more children like Max on TV or in movies — not as the character with a disability but as just another character.

"It would just mean that children like my son are an organic, natural part of the world," Seidman said. "Diversity includes people of all abilities."

Do you have a "model kid" with a disability or special needs? Share your photos with us on Facebook and we'll include them in an online gallery.



Katie Driscoll

Tags: [Love your selfie](#), [Style](#)

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Beauty

DIY your blowout: Stylist spills ways to save money on your hair

TODAY

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Celebrity stylist Ted Gibson stopped by TODAY on Tuesday to share his secrets to great hair — without spending a lot of money.

Video: Celebrity stylist Ted Gibson joins TODAY to give you tips to keep your hair looking fabulous in between salon visits.

DIY your blowout!

While salon blowouts are incredible, there's an easy way to get a blowout at home:

- You'll need a good blow drying hair spray — look for sprays that say they will add volume and shine and have a heat and UV protectant. Spray this throughout your hair while wet.
- The secret is to start with your fingers. Pull them through your hair, starting at the roots, and shoot the heat at the roots while holding the hair taut. Get your hair about 75 percent dry using this method. Then, part it in your

desired way.

- One of the biggest mistakes women make in their at-home blow dries is that their sections are too large, resulting in flat hair. When blow drying, focus on 1-1 ½ inch sections.
- In the salon, most stylists blow dry hair using a boar bristle and nylon round brush, but this method requires practice and skill. If you're not comfortable using a round brush, use a boar bristle and nylon paddle brush. The boar bristle gives hair great body and shine. Avoid using a metal brush when blow drying your hair — the metal heats up too fast and can damage your hair.
- Take one section of hair, hold your dryer by the handle about 3 inches away from your head, and blow dry while brushing with the paddle brush.
- Once your section is dry, curl the hair up in a Velcro roller. Do this to your entire head.
- Once you're finished and your hair is cool, take out the rollers and lightly rake through with your fingers. Turn your head upside down, shake it out a bit, and spray with a light, flexible holding spray. Flip your head up and you'll find you've given yourself a sexy salon quality blowout at home.



TODAY

Be sure to hold your dryer by the handle about 3 inches away from your head.

Trim your own bangs

Bangs are sexy and chic and any woman care wear them, but they do require a bit of maintenance. To save money in between salon visits, here's how to trim your bangs at home:

- Make sure that your hair is 100 percent dry. If you cut them while they are wet, your bangs will shrink up once the hair is dry.
- Make sure that you're cutting the bang from "iris to iris" — from above the iris of your left eye to above the iris in your right eye. Follow the lines that your hairdresser already established in the initial cut.
- Cut your bang vertically, holding your scissors up and cutting into the bang. This will allow your hair to have a softer edge to it rather than a hard, sharp edge.
- Make sure that you don't take the tip of your shears too far up your bang, keep them at the ends and clip to your desired length. Take your time.
- Be sure to use small shears so that you can have more control.

Clipping tips and straighter hairlines for men

For men, those visits to the barber can really add up — some men need to make visits every week. To maintain a clean look in between barber visits, here's how to line your hair up at home:

- You will need a T-trimmer. This T-blade is ideal for trimming around the ears, back of the neck, edge ups, beard and mustache. To get started, you will want to make sure that your hair is 100 percent dry, otherwise you can cause your trimmer to rust.
- When using the trimmer, it's important to understand the construction of the blade. The blade has two parts: the stationary blade and the mobile blade. The stationary blade picks up the hair like a comb would, while the mobile blade moves back and forth, cutting like scissors would. It's imperative that the stationary blade is resting on the skin while the clipper is moving in an upward motion, shaving the stubble on the neck and sideburn area.
- To make a line to square off the sideburns, square the back hairline, or line up on the forehead and temple area, hold the clipper with the blade facing the skin, gently touch the skin with the blade and pull it directly back at the same angle you touched the skin.
- Proceed with the clipper in an upward motion. Making a line and dragging in a downward motion will cause razor burn, pinching or biting of the skin, or an abrasion. This will be the result of the mobile blade coming in contact with the skin at the same time as the stationary blade.



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Make sure you're cutting the hair in the direction the hair grows. Cutting against the grain can cause ingrown hairs, razor burn, or general irritation.

Touch up your roots

Finding a great colorist is like finding gold, however those visits to the salon can definitely add up. While it's best to have a skilled professional do your highlights and extensive color, it is easy to save money from the salon by doing simple root touch ups at home.

- To find your drug store color, you'll need to know your "level" and "tone." You will find your level on a scale of 1-10, with 1 being the darkest, blackest color and level 10 being very light blond color. Look at the pictures on the box to find the level that most closely matches yours.
- You will want to match your tone, which will be warm, cool or neutral. A good trick to finding your tone is to think about clothing — if you look best in jewel tones like blues, greens, purples or pinks, then you are "cool." If earth tones like yellow, orange or brown look better, then you are "warm." Neutrals look great in everything and can go either way when selecting tone. When you decide on your desired color, find a tone that's one shade lighter on the box, since these formulas tend to dye hair darker than promised.
- Once you've purchased your root touch up and are ready to apply it, make sure you perform a strand test before applying all over your entire head. This way you will be able to ensure that the color you've purchased is the

right one.

- When you're ready to apply, make sure you're wearing something you're not afraid to get dirty and put on plastic gloves. Divide hair into four sections, down the middle and from ear to ear. Pin each section up with plastic hair clips.
- Apply petroleum jelly along your hairline to prevent the dye from staining your skin. Mix color as directions suggest on box. Unclip one of the front sections and, using a brush, apply color evenly around the perimeter of the section from the roots up to the point where the processed color begins. You will want some overlap. Don't massage into your scalp. Use the applicator tip to work in 1-inch panels.
- Flip hair over and apply color to this new part. Repeat halfway until all roots in that section are covered. Re-clip saturated hair, then repeat on remaining three sections.
- Use any leftover color from the bottle. Leave on for five minutes. Rinse hair thoroughly in the shower with lukewarm water until the water runs clear.
- Condition according to package directions (most kits come with conditioner).



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Be sure to perform a strand test before applying. This way you will be able to ensure that the color you've purchased is the right one.


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