

Extras



Friendship
MINISTRIES

AMISTAD BEGINS CLASSES IN COLUMBIA

Elizabeth Rodriguez, a native of Columbia, is working to begin Friendship (Amistad in Spanish) classes in Latin America. This is a crucial ministry in this part of the world where people with mental impairments are often invisible. Elizabeth tells us that in Columbia, people who are mentally impaired are often abandoned by their families, either because they are so poor they are

not able to care for them or because they are ashamed of them. Some are “given” to the government; some are abandoned and “picked up” by the government. Many, who are not so fortunate, are simply living on the streets. On the other hand, Latin America does not share the United States principle of separation of church and state, and they are able to provide Christian classes for people with mental impairments.

Elizabeth has begun Amistad classes in several institutions in that country:

- **Asporem** (a private school for people with mental impairments). The school has around 50 students, and Elizabeth reports that they have had an excellent experience with Amistad.
- **Surgir** (an institution for people with mental impairments, funded partly by the government and partly by private donations). They serve 50 people, 19 of whom have been abandoned or abused by their families.
- **Iris** (a government institution for abandoned people with mental impairments) serves around 90 people, basically poor people who are homeless or have been abandoned.
- **El Cenid** (a private school for people with mental impairments). It was begun around 15 years ago and is supported by means of donations. They have around 90 students, ranging in age from 3 to 56 years of age, all from very poor families with no economic resources. Twenty volunteers work here, most of them professionals in the mental health field.
- **Eligios** (a “refuge” for people with mental impairments). This private institution has a minimum of government support and is funded mainly by donations.



"We believe everyone is created in God's image and can relate to God. We also

Mark Is a Faith Role Model

Every Saturday the Grand Rapids (MI) Press includes a column called "Spiritual Journeys," which focuses on the faith of one individual in the community. One Saturday in July they featured Betty Huizenga, who has written various books including *Apples of Gold*, *Gifts of Gold*, and *Appleseeds*.

When Betty was asked about her "faith role model," she answered:

My Down's boy, who's 40. He taught me more about what life should be like. He has a grace and an understanding of people that, to me, is unique. He knows people's hearts. He's tender-hearted. He taught me to value all of my children for who God created them to be.... When you see Mark, the first thing you're going to get is love. And the last thing you'll get is love.

Betty's son Mark is involved in a Friendship program at the Central Wesleyan Church in Holland, Michigan. She reports that he, as well as the other boys from his house, greatly enjoy going every week. She adds that he recently had major hip surgery and is doing great. He is totally pain free and has complete range of motion. He tells everyone that Jesus fixed his hip!

AIM CELEBRATES FRIENDSHIP WITH A PICNIC

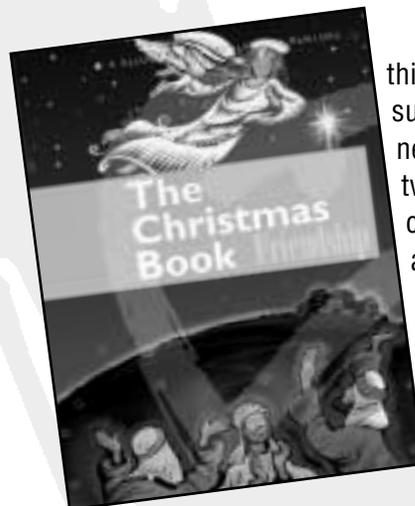
One hundred seventy-five Friends from two counties in Northern Michigan met this summer at a park for a picnic to enjoy food, fellowship, and music. It was the first-ever summer gathering hosted by AIM* for group-home residents in two counties. They report that it was almost standing room only in the pavilion and that the evening proved to be a huge success.

During the event, the Friendship teachers (mentors) circulated among the Friends and asked them, "Are you looking forward to Friendship class beginning? Why?" Here are some of their responses:

- Mary: She loves Friendship because it gives her the chance to learn about God and to be with her friends.
- Carolyn: She likes to get out of the house and she likes Friendship class.
- Kelly: She likes the music.
- Sally: She likes her Friendship teachers and also being with her other Friends.
- Martine: Friendship is fun, and she loves the music and singing.
- Bill: He likes it, they learn about God.
- Dion: He likes the crafts and the singing.
- Sally: She likes the people and the crafts.
- William: He likes the stories about Jesus.

*Association for Interfaith Ministries located in Mt Pleasant (MI)

CHRISTMAS RESOURCE BOOK



It's time to check out this new resource. It will keep you supplied with Christmas ideas for the next several years! It includes dramas, two lessons on the Christmas story, crafts, praise and worship ideas, service activities and celebration ideas. Signing is included for the songs. I know this is the first year I won't be struggling for Christmas ideas!

REMEMBER
our on-line news
For monthly updates
and tidbits, simply
our website
(www.friendship.org)
and click on
Extras online

believe salvation is a gift that is not dependent on a certain level of intelligence.”

HELP SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT FRIENDSHIP

Nearly every day someone calls our office excited about starting a Friendship group. They wonder why they haven't heard about us before. We at Friendship have been working hard to spread the word, but often the best way for people to learn about Friendship is from someone involved in an existing class.

- If you have a class with fewer than 10 friends, I challenge you to double that number. Need help recruiting mentors? I highly recommend "So You've Been Asked To Be a Friendship Teacher," a handy pamphlet that explains what it's all about. Encourage each current mentor to find just one person to volunteer.

Need to find more friends? I encourage you to contact the ARC chapters in your area or social services to find out where local group homes are. Also, friends in our classes can invite people they know to class. This encourages them to do outreach and not rely on us to do it.

- If you have more than 10 friends in your group, I challenge you to persuade at least one church in your community to start a class of their own. Invite someone from each of your neighborhood churches to visit one of your classes. We also have brochures and information packets available that you can give away. Together, we can include even more people in this important ministry.

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FRIENDSHIP CLASS IN GRAND HAVEN IS 20 YEARS OLD

The Friendship Club at 2nd CRC in Grand Haven, Michigan, began in 1983, as the result of a request by Love INC, a community organization that wanted to provide a ministry for mentally impaired persons. Shirley Los and Bette Bosma volunteered to begin the program. Invitations were sent through the newspaper, letters to churches, and notices to mental health social agencies.

Within a few years our membership grew from 6 to 26 Special

Friends, ranging in age from 16 to over 60 years of age, from group homes, families, and independent living. Each person is paired with a volunteer who greets him or her at the door and stays with the friend throughout the singing time, group Bible story, individual interaction time, and refreshments. This mentoring relationship allows for security, communication, and a feeling of love and fellowship.

The club has met continuously for 20 years. We have been fortunate in keeping enough volunteers to pro-

vide one-to-one relationships. We keep in close touch with the participating group home directors, who have testified to their appreciation for the program. Parents and caregivers are invited to a Christmas pageant given by the members, to an August picnic, and to a special evening church service in May.

Bette Bosma
2nd Christian Reformed Church
Grand Haven MI



from the director

The focus of this column has always been news about Friendship Ministries and ideas for your classes. Well this one is about money! Friendship Ministries has been expanding. We now have a volunteer couple working full time promoting Friendship Ministries. Many of you have been recipients of visits by them or myself. We have a part time person working to start Amistad classes in Latin America (see the front page of this issue). Have you ever thought about how these expenses are paid for?

Through my conversations with many of you, I am aware that you have the impression that we are funded either through the publish-

ing of curriculum or by the Christian Reformed Church. Guess what! The sale of curriculum does not pay our operating expenses and, no, the CRC does not fund us, though many individual churches do take offerings for us, which we really appreciate.

Friendship Ministries is funded solely by donations. This year our operating expenses outweigh our donations.

How about helping us out? Here are some ways you might do that:

- Have your Friendship class collect offerings for us.
- Ask your church to take an offering – or put us in the budget for an annual donation.
- Give us the names of potential donors that we can contact. One group leader just gave us 16 names from her church and from among her volunteers. Think of the impact this could have on Friendship Ministries budget if every group did that.
- Send us a direct contribution. We are including an envelope.

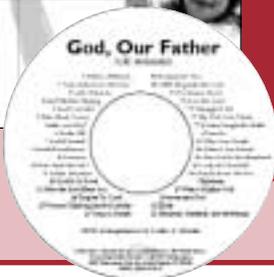
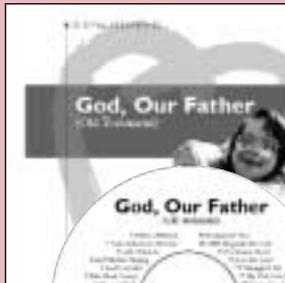
Think about this when you call with questions, read the newsletter or your Program Guide. But if you can't send a donation, please don't let it stop you from calling or enjoying the newsletters!

Nella Uitvlugt



FRIENDSHIP COFFEE TIMES

As we get around in our travels, we would love to visit with you. If you're interested in hosting a coffee for people interested in Friendship or the new curriculum, shoot us an e-mail: friendship@friendship.org



NEW CD IS READY

The new God Our Father music CD has the music for Units 1-7 played to correspond with the number of verses recommended in the materials. We worked on the tempos to make it easier for our friends to sing to. You will love the variety of instruments the musician used to play the songs.



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