

extras



SPRING :: 2007

INSIDE THIS ISSUE ▾

| | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| On the Road Friendship | p.2 |
| Family News | p.2 |
| Try This! | p.4 |
| From the Director | p.5 |
| <i>...and more!</i> | |

Sharing God's *Love* with People who have Cognitive Impairments

MORE SPACE FOR FRIENDSHIP



Nella, Marlene, & Gwen plan study materials in the new space (while Ruben sleeps)

After many months spent squeezed into a too-small space, Friendship Ministries has moved! Our commitments remain the same: we are here to serve our friends with cognitive impairments by providing local churches with the Friendship program model, in-depth consultation, and top-quality study materials. With more room to work from, the Friendship staff will not only be able to stretch out our legs and spread out our work, we will also be able to serve our many groups more effectively.

LENDING LIBRARY

One new service we'll be introducing from our new digs is a lending library. We've always been happy to answer your phone calls and emails about which study materials are right for your group. Now, if you're able to pay us a visit in person, we will have sample materials available for you to borrow in order to take a close-

er look. While we're still getting settled in, please call for an appointment if you'd like to take us up on this opportunity.

CONSULTATION AND WORKSHOPS

We'll also be using the expanded space for face-to-face consultation and workshops. When a church is thinking about starting a new Friendship program, we are often asked to consult with the planning team about how to best go about this. We are so pleased that we will now

have plenty of room to consult in person whenever logistically possible.

Though it will take time to start scheduling workshops, we look forward to offering this service to existing groups who are looking for new ideas or additional training. Keep your eyes on *Extras* over the coming months for more details.

AN ARMY OF VOLUNTEERS

Even if you aren't close enough to take advantage of our on-site services, this last item will benefit you. The new location includes plenty of space

continued on page 2...



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for volunteers to contribute their elbow grease to Friendship's mission. At first this will simply mean that staff members will get more help with work around the office, freeing us up to be more attentive to our groups.

Eventually, we hope to establish a team of volunteers that will contact every group leader around the country on a regular basis to help us keep tuned in to your needs. We've long wanted to do this but simply have not had enough staff hours available. So don't be surprised if one day you answer your phone and a Friendship volunteer is on the other end of the line! ■



UPDATE YOUR ADDRESS BOOK:

Friendship Ministries

2215 29th Street SE #B6
Grand Rapids, MI 49508

Local phone: 616.301.7729

Toll-free: 888.866.8966

Fax: 616.301.7761

Make sure the email addresses you're using for us end with "@friendship.org"

FRIENDSHIP FAMILY



WELCOME TO THE FAMILY!

Join us in welcoming the following groups:

- Covenant United Methodist Church of LaGrange, KY
- First Evangelical Covenant of Grand Rapids, MI
- Grace Baptist of Bountiful, UT
- Kennedy Heights Presbyterian Church of Cincinnati, OH
- Redeemer Lutheran of Fond du Lac, WI
- Sparta Church of the Nazarene of Sparta, MI
- United Methodist Church of Oosterville, MA

For the Next Extras

Know of a group that's not on this list?

Has your group or someone in it received an award?
Or appeared in your local newspaper?

If so, let us know!

Contact Renee at 888.866.8966
or buistr@friendship.org

Will one of us be in your neighborhood?
Give us a call or send us an email if you'd like to meet!



Nella

January 31-February 3: Association of Presbyterian Church Educators, Philadelphia, PA

March 23-24: Accessibility Summit, McLean Bible Church, Vienna, VA

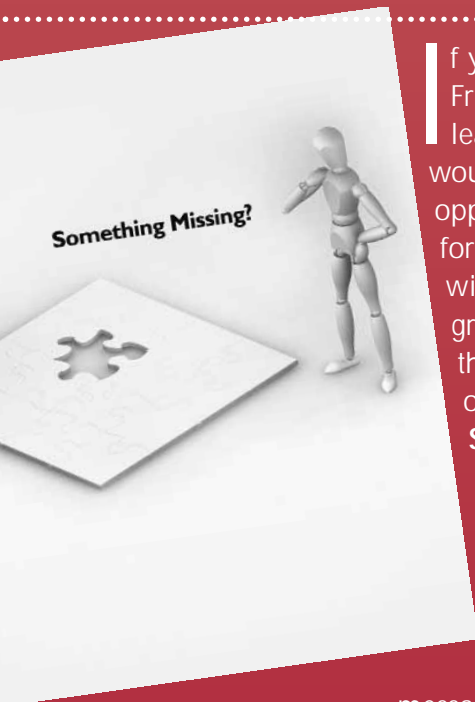
Ralph and Carol

March 14-26: KY, TN, AL, MS

Tony & Diana

March 23-24: Accessibility Summit, McLean Bible Church, Vienna, VA

MISSING A PIECE?



If you're an existing Friendship group leader/mentor, we would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your faithful ministry with our friends. If your group hasn't gone through the entire series of **Friendship Bible Studies** (*God Our Father, Jesus Our Savior, The Spirit Our Helper*), we encourage you to do so.

Our friends need to hear the **COMPLETE** message of the Gospel lest we leave them hanging with an incomplete message.

For those who haven't started a Friendship group just yet, we encourage you to share God's love with our friends who have cognitive impairments through the Studies. They're one of the most comprehensive sets of materials available today. And because we want to see as many churches/congregations/parishes as possible embrace our friends, we intentionally designed the materials to be used across denominational boundaries.

So, our fellow "ministers" of God's love, start/continue sharing the complete message of God's love with our friends without any pieces missing. ■

Questions or comments?

Contact John at 888.866.8966 or kimj@friendship.org
www.friendship.org/BibleStudies

GETTING STARTED IS...

Starting a new Friendship program no doubt feels at times like a daunting task, but we wanted you to know (if you don't know already) that it is also a joyful one! Listen in on what a new group leader told us recently in an email:

To:

friendship@friendship.org

Subject:

Success!!!

Message:

Hi Nella!

I'm not sure if you heard from Pastor John or not, but I just wanted to let you know that we had our first Friendship program last Sunday night! It went really great! We all had so much fun we couldn't sleep that night! We had 15 friends and about 25 volunteers!! We had 5 kids that just graduated last year from high school come as mentors and when it was done they all said how much they loved it! We also had one guy that mentored and he turned down a hunting trip this week because he didn't want to miss the next one!! :) We were so nervous, but thanks to God it all went well! Not that we did anything that great, we just had so much fun meeting our new friends!

--Jodi Raymond, First Evangelical Covenant Church,
Grand Rapids, MI

Thinking of starting a group? Remember: we're here to help! Please don't hesitate to call or email us with your questions: helping new groups get off the ground is one of our favorite things to do!

Already have years of experience under your belt? Maybe it's time to mentor a new group at the church down the street. If you'd like to do so, give us a call! ■

TRY THIS!

CELEBRATE & GIVE THANKS

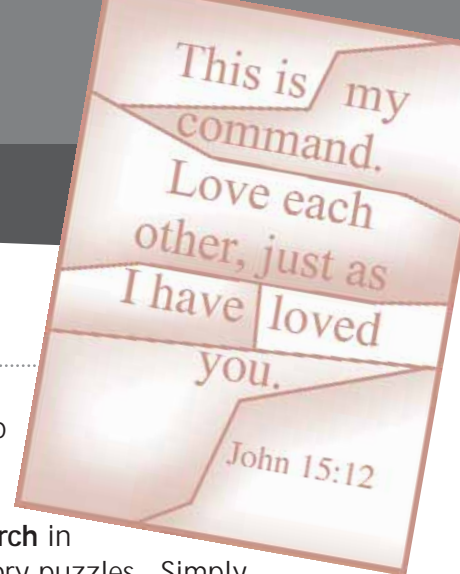
The **St. Theresa REX Friendship Group** in **Federal Way, WA** came up with a unique way to celebrate both Thanksgiving and The Last Supper. After spending time talking about what Thanksgiving is all about, they sat at a long table where they blessed Hawaiian bread and juice in honor of Jesus, who saves us. Another special table was set with Jesus' picture, two candles, and a basket. After the meal, each participant brought a food item to the table, offered it to Jesus, and placed it in the food basket for the poor.

STAY IN TOUCH

It may seem far away now, but summer will eventually return! If your group meetings stop for the summer, consider finding ways to keep in touch. The **Covenant Friends** group in **Appleton, WI** maintains relationships by hosting monthly summer picnics, to which they invite family members. This is a great way to get to know other important people in your friends' lives as well.

MEMORY PUZZLE

Looking for ways to help the readers in your group learn Bible verses? The group at **Willmar Christian Reformed Church** in **Willmar, MN** uses memory puzzles. Simply print the verse in a large font and draw lines dividing the verse into puzzle pieces. Each friend/mentor team can then cut out the pieces and practice rearranging them into the verse.



Share Your Ideas! Each Friendship group is unique and has creative ideas to share. Send yours to Renee at buistr@friendship.org or call 888.866.8966 (mail works, too—see the back page for details).

IS YOUR GROUP SIGNING?



If not, we encourage you to give it a try! Here's testimony from the Friendship Group at **Second Christian Reformed Church** of **Grand Haven, MI**:

To: friendship@friendship.org
Subject: response to new Bible Studies
Message:

Dear Nella,

This past Sunday the Adult Enrichment class at our church had Ralph Honderd for our speaker. After his presentation I told him about my experience with my friend who is non-verbal except for single words (but never complete sentences). Since we began the revised lesson procedure of repeating our Bible verse together many times over and with SIGNING, she would say the entire verse with the use of her hands and be on target most of the time. Our entire class was amazed to see and hear her participate this way. To witness her saying "The Lord is my shepherd, He gives me everything I need" was exciting.

We have a great time on Tuesday evenings at our Friendship Club.
-Dottie Sikkema



FROM THE DIRECTOR

Friendship Ministries is almost 25! This June we will begin our 25th year of ministering with people who have cognitive impairments. Over the years we have accomplished many things. We've developed more sophisticated ways of keeping in touch with our programs. We've completed major projects such as the Life Studies series and the revision of the Friendship Bible Studies. We've visited countless cities, overhauled our newsletter and website, and added staff. In addition to consulting with Friendship program leaders, we have counseled hundreds of church educators, parents, and pastors on issues concerning people with disabilities.

But best of all, I think, our emphasis on building relationships with people who have cognitive impairments has remained the same. Think of all the friends and mentors whose lives have been enriched through these relationships. As I packed up my office for the move, I found a study of an organization that encourages being buddies with people who have cognitive impairments. Many of those relationships lasted only a short time. But as recent issues of *Extras* have shown, many Friendship programs have been around for a very long time, which translates into long-term relationships. In the program I have been involved with for 18 years now, some of the original friends and mentors are still there. God has been faithfully building his kingdom in places most do not expect.

During the ten years I've been Executive Director of Friendship Ministries, I have learned so much from you, and I've tried to lend an ear to your needs. Sometimes we have prayed together over the phone. We have laughed heartily over a funny story or shed tears when someone we care about has been rejected by a person or congregation. I now have friends all over the country! That has truly been a blessing for me.

Today, churches seem to be more open to including people with disabilities than when I started. I recently led an adult education hour that was attended by about 30 people. Years ago, if we found two or three interested people in a congregation it was considered great. It is not uncommon now for a church to begin a program with MORE mentors than friends. God is working ahead of us to prepare the way.



Marilyn, David, and Nella sing "Amazing Grace"



Friendship Ministries is now in a time of new beginnings. I do hope that this office move will help us to better serve our friends, mentors, and programs. We hope to gain more knowledge about your programs in the future in order to shape our service to you.

If you haven't received our online newsletter, please send us your current email address—and include information about your program. We would love to hear about your special activity, a way you have enhanced a lesson, how many mentors and friends you have, how many attend worship on Sunday or have become members of the church. God is working through you and your friends—share the news with the Friendship family.

Got a question about something such as how to gain more mentors? Send me an email at friendship@friendship.org or call me at 888.866.8966. ■

P.S. Remember that I have the same struggles in my program you do. Maybe you can help me as well.

P.P.S. Please pray for Friendship Ministries as we move forward, and consider supporting the ministry financially as well.

SPREAD THE WORD

March is Mental Retardation Awareness Month

Since 1979 The Arc of the United States has dedicated the month of March to increasing public awareness and understanding of the issues affecting people who have cognitive impairments.

How can you participate?

Arc chapters around the country will be sponsoring "Arc Marches" and other awareness events. If you don't know how to connect with your local branch, log on to www.thearc.org for more information or call the national office at 301.565.3842.

Can't find any events happening locally?

- Organize your own awareness activity.
- Contact the church down the road to see if they'd like help starting a disability ministry.
- Organize an awareness evening for your mentors, with speakers such as family members and group home staff.
- Dedicate some personal time to advocating for your friends on an issue such as transportation.
- Contact your local media and encourage them to feature your Friendship group this March.

Special Gifts



We are grateful for the generous donations we received in 2006 from individuals, churches, and organizations. Without them—without you!—Friendship Ministries would not be able to carry out our mission *to share God's love with people who have cognitive impairments and to enable them to become an active part of God's family.*

We give special thanks for **gifts received in memory** and **gifts received in honor** of people whose lives have intersected Friendship in various ways.

In memory of:

Isabelle Honderd
Dorothea Hoogland
Mary Louters

Debbie Niewenhuis
Craig Spidell
Carol Wierenga

In honor of:

Richard & Ruth Postma



We would love to hear from you:

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