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..and more!

Sharing God's *Love* with People who have Intellectual Disabilities

FRIENDSHIP GROUP MEMBERS USE THEIR GIFTS, **INSPIRE OTHERS**

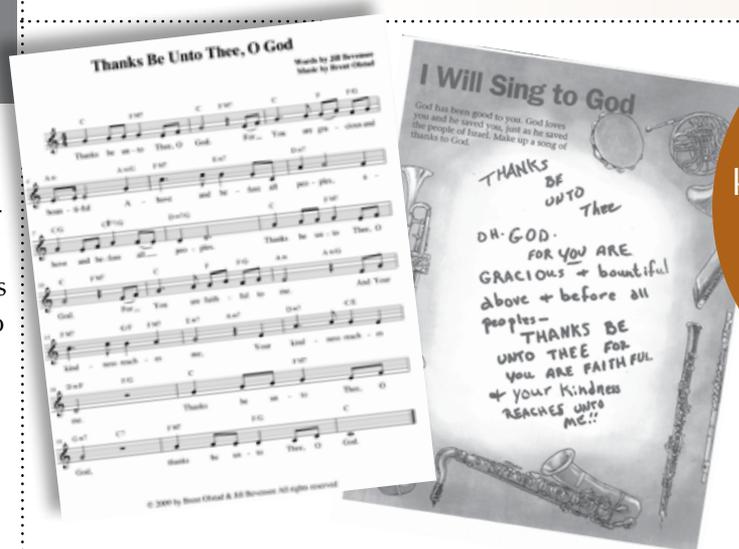
We all have gifts. Some of us know it and use our gifts freely; others wonder what we could possibly contribute. *They differ....* Some gifts are obvious at a glance; others are known only to keen and sensitive observers.

In this issue of *Extras* we have many stories of giftedness to share. Our hope is that these stories will inspire you to recognize the giftedness of each person in your life and to actively encourage others to share their gifts. After all, when gifts are shared, we all are blessed.

Jill:
A song from the quiet center.



"Thanks be unto Thee, Oh God / For You are gracious and bountiful / Above and before all peoples / Thanks be unto Thee / For you are faithful / And your kindness reaches unto me!"



"We all have gifts. They differ in keeping with the grace that God has given each of us."
(Romans 12:6, NIRV)

Jill Bevenssee wrote these beautiful lyrics in response to the Friendship Life Study *Growing Closer to God* in her Friendship group at **Ashland Bible Church** in **Ashland, OR**. Her words inspired Brent Olstad, Minister of Music at the church, and he set them to music. When Jill heard her lyrics and the music together for the first time, she cried. Now the entire group sings this song of thankful praise together.

Jill and Brent have generously agreed to make their song available to you on the Friendship website. Visit www.friendship.org/sing to download the sheet music and to listen to an MP3 of the tune.

Jill also shares this testimony with us: "My Jesus is very special to me—and the study of His life and times. However I must worship in [the] quiet center of my being and find my filling from God...the 'faithful' must depend on the Lord like I barely know how. Jesus blesses my poor old heart! Hallelujah."



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Andy: What's in the bag?

by Friendship leader Renee Leonard



What do you do when you find out that a clothing store in the mall is closing? Do you hope to find a bargain for yourself or a family member or do you ignore the tempting discounts?

Andy Worgul, a member of **River Terrace Church in Lansing, MI** and its Friendship group, thought that someone besides himself might like to have some brand new clothing. So using his earnings from his work at Peckham Industries, Andy purchased this "mountain of clothing" for CAP (Community Assistance Program) in Detroit.

So what's in these bags? Jackets, sweatshirts, jeans, t-shirts, caps, pants, and shoes. Thanks, Andy, for helping us to see shopping with new eyes.

Tim: Faithfully on duty.

by Pastor Mike Abma

More than ten years ago, a council member at **Woodlawn Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, MI** was looking for alternates when there weren't enough deacons to greet at the doors and receive the offering on Sunday mornings. He decided to ask Tim Bolt--who was always in church and always sitting at one of the doors--to help out.



Since that time, Tim has faithfully been on duty: arriving early, handing

out bulletins as people enter, and passing the offering plates in his section of the sanctuary. In fact, Tim's parents say that if Tim has to miss a service, he is concerned about who will take care of these responsibilities. The congregation recently decided to recognize Tim's more than ten years of service by installing him as an Associate Deacon. During the installation, I asked Tim whether God had called him to this task, and whether he promised to continue to do his work faithfully in service to Jesus his Lord. Tim responded, "I do."

What can I do?

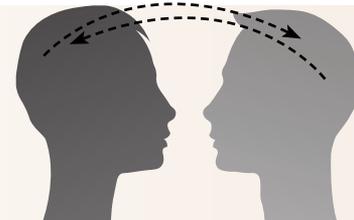
As you think about the giftedness of the people in your life, here is a list of spiritual gifts to keep in mind:

- Understanding
- Telling
- Caring/Encouraging
- Giving
- Creating
- Leading
- Helping/Serving
- Praying
- Welcoming

--from the Life Study *We All Have Gifts* ■

COME LEARN FACE-TO-FACE

Want to learn more about disability ministry in general or Friendship in particular? Each of these three conferences will include sessions led by people involved in Friendship groups:



► Saturday, August 22:

One Body Together in Christ, Rock Valley, IA

Sponsored by Hope Haven and CRC Disability Concerns. For more info, visit www.hopehaven.org or call Pastor Bill Van Dyken at 712.476.3136.

► Saturday, October 24:

Living Stones

Sponsored by LDM Inc., Friendship Ministries, and Bethesda Lutheran Homes & Services. For more info, contact LDM staff at info@LDMinc.org or 877.642.9902.

► Saturday, September 26:

One Body Together in Christ, Zeeland, MI

Sponsored by CLC Network with support from Friendship Ministries, CRC Disability Concerns, and Hope Network. For more info, visit www.clcnetwork.org or call Friendship at 888.866.8966.

Other events where you can meet Friendship/Amistad folks:

- August 18-20: Conference for Sunday School Teachers, Bogota, Colombia
- September 12: ACTION for Lutheran Social Services, Ludington, MI
- October 17: Through the Roof, Lancaster, PA
- October 22-26: Expocristiana, Mexico DF, Mexico
- November 7: Circle of Support, Woodbridge, VA

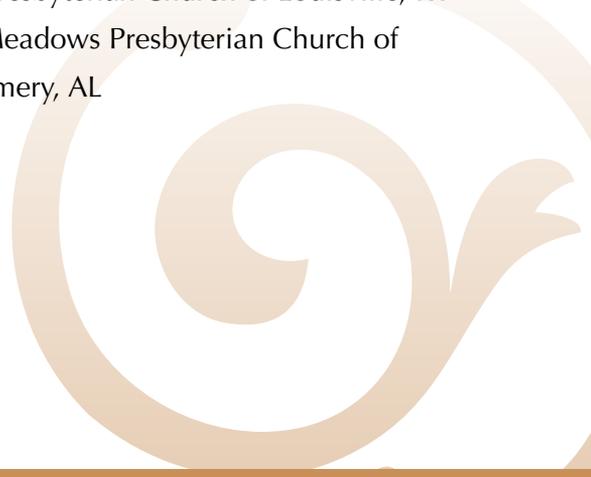


FRIENDSHIP FAMILY

NEWS

Welcome to the family!
Join us in welcoming the following groups:

- Bethel Baptist Church of Greeley, CO
- Brandywine Community Church of Greenfield, IN
- Calvary Chapel of Oxnard, CA
- Central Christian Church of Marshalltown, IA
- Church of the Ascension of Pittsburgh, PA
- First Assembly of God of Booneville, AR
- First Baptist Church of North Platte, NE
- First United Methodist of Niceville, FL
- Friendship Group of Gatineau, QC
- North Arundel Church of Glen Burnie, MD
- North Oak Community Church of Hays, KS
- Peace Lutheran Church of New Lenox, IL
- Pine Island Presbyterian of Kalamazoo, MI
- Romney Assembly of God of Romney, WV
- Sharon Woods Baptist Church of Columbus, OH
- Southbridge Full Gospel Center of Southbridge, MA
- Trinity Presbyterian Church of Louisville, KY
- Young Meadows Presbyterian Church of Montgomery, AL



Let us know what's happening in your part of the Friendship family! Contact Gwen at 888.866.8966 ext. 2--4 or genzinkg@friendship.org



MINISTERIO
Amistad

Notas DE AMISTAD

*Dios es Maravilloso
God Is Marvelous*

Yes, we know that God is marvelous, but I affirm it again. We have a new *Amistad* group in Switzerland -- yes, Switzerland! -- in a town called Solothurn, where there is a Hispanic community that includes a Spanish-speaking church. This community has families that have members with intellectual disabilities who need to learn about God's love in their own language. I am very grateful to God for letting us take his Word through the *Amistad* program to places that we never imagined, and to people we may never know.

I am also very grateful to all of you who support us in this ministry. Please continue supporting this marvelous labor with your prayers and donations. You are so important to this ministry! ■

*May God bless you all, and
thank you so much for your support.*



Elizabeth R.

Elizabeth Rodriguez
Ministerio Amistad

WHAT MENTORS CAN LEARN FROM CAREGIVERS

by Kevin Uitvlugt



Free webinar on autism and children's ministry

August 20, 2009 at 3:00 p.m. (EST)

Can't make it to a Friendship conference? Join us for a free 60-minute web seminar led by Nella Uitvlugt, Executive Director of Friendship Ministries. Together we'll discover ideas for sharing God's love with children who have Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD).

We'll explore:

- The differences among children with ASD
- Strategies for including kids with ASD in children's ministry
- Developing a spiritual formation plan for children with intellectual disabilities.

To sign up, follow the link on our homepage, www.friendship.org. You'll receive instructions about how to log in on your computer for the visual component of the webinar, as well as how to call in via phone for the audio component. ■

Don't have web access?

You can still listen in on your phone! Give LaVonne a call for instructions: 888.866.8966 ext. 2--3.

I can honestly say that Friendship Ministries has changed my life for the better, not only because of the friends I have made, but also because of the impact it has had on those friends. I've seen this impact both as a Friendship mentor and as a group home caregiver who brought residents to a Friendship group. I believe that part of the job of a Friendship mentor is to ensure that friends are able to participate fully in the group. In order to help you encourage your friends to participate, I want to suggest that you take a moment to talk to their caregivers. They may be able to offer you insights into your friends' talents and concerns that will help you serve your friends.

Throughout my time as a caregiver in a group home, I was surprised by my friends' talents. One could sing "Jesus Loves Me." Another liked to conduct when others group sang. Because I was aware of these gifts, I was able to encourage these individuals to use them at Friendship. Many talents are things only a parent or caregiver would know about. It was only after months of working with a friend at the group home that I learned he could recite the Lord's Prayer. If you have a chance to talk to parents or caregivers, you will likely be surprised by the skills your friend has. Once you discover a gift, ask your friend to share it. While it is important not to push too hard if your friend does not want to participate, oftentimes people are waiting for the chance and only need encouragement. It may take weeks of asking, but one day your friend is likely to surprise you!

I spent a whole year trying to get one resident to attend a Friendship group. Each time I asked, he declined. Finally, one day he surprised me by deciding to come along. After that, every time he saw me he excitedly asked if we were going to "that thing" tonight. Most days I had to break the news that since it was not Thursday, we would not be going. That wouldn't stop him from asking the same question the next day. This would continue all week until finally on Thursday, I was able to tell him that we would in fact be going to "that thing" tonight.

There is another area where caregivers can serve as a useful source of knowledge: prayer requests. There were numerous times when my friends from the group home had requests they wanted to share but were unable to explain. I could see frustration building on the faces of both friend and mentor as they tried to communicate. As a caregiver I was often able to help explain. At other times I knew as a caregiver that one of the residents had a particular issue they were concerned about. If you find out about such issues, you can encourage your friend to share a prayer request. Ultimately it is up to your friend to decide whether or not to share, but it never hurts to ask.

Caregivers can serve as a valuable resource as you work to serve your friend. I encourage you to utilize that resource. Not every caregiver will volunteer information, but hopefully if you ask they will be willing to provide it. Your friend will be better served because you took the time to ask. ■



Kevin and Bobby at Friendship group



FROM THE DIRECTOR

TALENT NIGHT

Have you ever thought about what talents your friends have that they have not told you about? While organizing a talent night this year for the Friendship group at my church, we learned a lot of surprising things about our friends. We hadn't had a talent night in many years, and quite a few of the friends had come and gone during that time. I wonder what we missed from some of those who never participated in a talent night?

The talent was at times touching, endearing, funny, silly, and inspiring. All of it showed aspects of our friends that we could rejoice in. It was fascinating to hear from some of the 130 people who attended what they felt about the evening's events. One mentor's favorite part was the reading of Psalm 23 by Crystal, who has difficulty gaining enough breath to speak. Her poignant reading touched this mentor's heart.

A parent loved the fact that her son could participate by banging on a hand held drum while a "High School Musical" CD played. He would play for a while in front, then walk down the aisle to his parents, and they would send him back up front again. In their words it was the perfect opportunity for him to lead. (Plus he looked so cool in his sunglasses!)

For me, hearing Matt play his two-fingered version of chopsticks with his mom was a highlight. I never would have guessed he could do that. We found this out simply by talking to his mom about talent night.

Most of the audience laughed till their sides ached when Bill danced. He was incredibly flexible, and a

better dancer than most of us. His big grin was fabulous to see. The more we laughed and applauded the better he danced.

David surprised us all with his envelope card trick. He told us it was done using "a system of deduction." Amazingly he ended the trick by opening an envelope and pulling out a paper on which he had written John 3:16 -21. This was one of those inspiring moments of testimony. David says that coming to Friendship has changed him.

Watching a caregiver move Julie's arms to help her wave a ribbon stick to the music of Michael W. Smith's "Friends" was beautiful, demonstrating again the care of someone who knows Julie well.

Many of the mentors did not know until talent night that Karyn actually does speak! With her father she presented the poem "Over in the Meadow Where the Green Grass Grows." Karyn gave the names and sound effects of the animals. This was an opportunity for the mentors to see her in a new light.

Yup, I got teary-eyed, laughed until it hurt, and went away with memories that will be with me a long time. Our friends have so much to offer, if only we tap into it. Now for me the question becomes what can I do to nurture these newfound talents and use them to enhance our church family? Can we offer more liturgical opportunities on Sunday? If you have innovative ideas about using the gifts and talents of your friends, please pass your ideas along! ■

Nella Vitale



SO MANY FRIENDSHIP GROUPS AND CHURCHES TO THANK

We at Friendship Ministries want to say a great big **thank you** to the Friendship groups that have supported our mission with donations recently.

Two gifts particularly stand out in our minds. One morning a few weeks ago, two members of the **Westend Christian Reformed Church Friendship Group** in **Grand Rapids, MI** paid our offices a surprise visit and brought along a gift: a large jar full of rolled coins and bills that their group had been collecting through the year. Their goal was to help Friendship start another group like theirs.

A couple of days later, we received a check from the Friendship group at **Trinity United Methodist Church** in **Erie, PA**. Group leader Diana Englund included a letter, explaining that they had been collecting coins for Friendship since January. She added, "Appropriately, our last session of the season happened to be 'We Give' from 'The Spirit Makes Us One' [Unit 4 of *The Spirit, Our Helper*]... We thank you for all that Friendship Ministries does for us and all of our *friends* in other churches."

We would also like to thank the following Friendship groups for their recent financial support:

- Friendship Club, Palmerston Christian Reformed Church of Palmerston, ON
- Friendship Group of Beamsville, ON
- Friendship Group of Peterborough, ON
- Goderich Friendship Group of Goderich, ON
- Grimsby Friendship Club of Grimsby, ON
- Trinity Christian Reformed Church Friendship Class of Abbotsford, BC
- York Christian Reformed Church Friendship Club of Caledonia, ON

Even more thanks are due! We are grateful that there are now ten churches participating in our Church Partnership program, which began this year. Church Partners have donated \$1,000.00 or more and are eligible for a discount on Friendship materials. A big thank you to our newest Church Partners:

- Brookfield Christian Reformed Church of Brookfield, WI
- Emmanuel Christian Reformed Church of Calgary, AB
- Madison Square Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, MI
- Sussex Christian Reformed Church of Sussex, NJ
- Trinity Christian Reformed Church of Rock Valley, IA ■



Have you thought about asking your friends and mentors to contribute to Friendship Ministries?

Would you like to learn more about the Church Partnership Program? Contact Nella at friendship@friendship.org or 888.866.8966 (ext.2—1).

Did you know that you can make donations to Friendship online? Please visit www.friendship.org/give.



Friendship
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