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...and more!

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

CAMP FRIENDSHIP CONNECTIONS: Growing mentors and leaders at Peace Lutheran

By Pat Tietz, Friendship group leader

In 2003 Peace Lutheran Church in Gahanna, OH started Camp Friendship Connections, a summer camp for adults with intellectual disabilities. One of the volunteers at that first camp was 15-year-old Alyson, who had just finished ninth grade. She was spending a week of her summer vacation serving as “Camp Companion” for a middle-aged woman who was in a wheelchair and who had limited speech. Alyson’s job was to care for her camper and to make sure she had an outstanding experience.

Little did Alyson or anyone else know that ten years later she would have served at the camp every year and would now be Director of Camp Friendship Connections.

Almost everyone who participates in ministries with people who have intellectual disabilities will know that volunteers often feel they get more out of the experience than they give. This is also true for the sponsoring congregation as a whole. In addition to Camp Friendship, Peace Lutheran supports a twice-monthly Friendship

“How could we ever not do this?”



●● Campers enjoy their time together.

Bible study and a monthly Respite Saturday for adults with intellectual disabilities. The opportunities for service continue throughout the year.

Volunteers who serve at Camp Friendship Connections frequently become interested in being mentors or serving in another aspect of the ministry, based on friendships they develop and the growth in faith they receive. Opportunities for involvement and financial support are communicated periodically to the congregation via announcements, bulletin inserts, videos describing the ministry, and participants who share their stories.

One mark of a truly successful ministry in any congregation is when it becomes part of the “soul” of the congregation. If asked, people would say, “How could we ever *not* do this?” Volunteers become devoted such that they return year after year and invite their children and friends. The ministry provides opportunities for youth to grow into leaders. As leadership transfers from one generation to the next, these ministries become a permanent and essential part of the congregation, just as it happened for Alyson and Peace Lutheran. ■

Want to learn more about Camp Friendship Connections? Check out their video at www.peacegahanna.org/friendship-connections

'DENIM & DAISIES' RAISES FUNDS FOR FRIENDSHIP



A huge thank you to everyone who made the second Denim & Daisies fundraising event a great success! The evening started with a tour of Stonechurch Vineyards by Lambert Hunse and his daughter, Heather DeBoer. Lambert gave tips on growing grapes and making wine, while Heather shared stories about the family and the farm. Lambert also took a group into the cellar to continue the winemaking education and try some 'green' wines.

Although this was all great fun, the highlight of the evening was listening to Big Joe (of the

Friendship Club at Kitchener Community Christian Reformed Church) sing a few songs following the delicious dinner.

With just 53 people in attendance, we raised over \$18,000. God is so good! The funds will be used to promote Friendship groups in Canada. If you would still like to contribute, simply write a cheque to Friendship Ministries Canada and note that the funds are for "Denim & Daisies."

Many thanks to Hank Hunse, owner of Stonechurch Vineyards, for his generous donation of the facilities and wine. Thanks also

to Lambert and Grace Hunse for their support in putting this event together. We are especially grateful for everyone who attended. Until next year, blessings. ■

--Denim & Daisies Committee

If you have a fun idea for raising funds for Friendship Ministries, we'd love to hear it. We are eager to grow this ministry, not just in Canada but around the world...but we need your help! Together we can bring this ministry to every community!

On the

ROAD

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

NELLA

August 17: Friendship Challenge, Grand Rapids, MI

September 29: Growing Together, Raleigh, NC

October 11-15: Linking Arms, Linking Hearts, Calgary, AB

January 25-27: Breakforth, Edmonton, AB



Notas DE AMISTAD

Amistad at



CLADEV? That's an unusual sounding name, isn't it? CLADE V is the name of the Fifth Latin American Congress of Evangelization

organized for the Latin American Theological Fellowship (FTL). The event, which occurs about every eight years, was held in San Jose, Costa Rica on July 9-13.

Approximately 1,000 people including pastors, Christian leaders, and theologians attended this conference. This is the first time in 40 years of the event's existence that FTL has included disability ministry, and Amistad was invited to be part of the two disability ministry workshops!

I appreciate your prayers that many pastors receive our message and include people with disabilities in the family of God. ■



God bless you,

Elizabeth R.

Elizabeth Rodriguez
Ministerio Amistad

FRIENDSHIP FAMILY



Welcome to the family!

Join us in welcoming the following groups:

- Salvation Army of Dawson Creek, BC
- First Pentecostal Church of Ottumwa, IA
- Mountain Springs Church of Colorado Springs, CO
- Park View Christian Church of Orland Park, IL

Be in touch!

What's happening in your part of the Friendship family?
By phone: 888.866.8966, or email: friendship@friendship.org

"Being part of a Friendship Group is like getting glimpses of heaven."
--Margaret, via Facebook



Find us on Facebook

[facebook.com/FriendMin](https://www.facebook.com/FriendMin)
& while you're online, Say "HELLO" to the All-New [friendship.org!](https://www.friendship.org)

TRY THIS!



WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

When the group at **Crossroads Evangelical Free Church** in **Albert Lea, MN** is learning a new song, the group leader passes out the lyrics with key words underlined. The group reads the song together and talks about what the key words mean, as well as what the song as a whole is about. Each member then adds the sheet to their own notebook.

PUT 'EM TO WORK

Friendship group leaders report that new mentors who stick around are those who are paired up with a friend right away. If you can't make the match immediately, get creative about assigning a role in the meantime rather than considering the person a "back-up mentor."

VISIT GROUP HOMES

There are so many reasons to visit group homes where your friends live. Here is a single practical one: a Friendship group was frustrated because one of the group homes was not making it a priority to bring residents to Friendship. Friendship leaders decided to visit the group home and get to know staff a bit more, and after they did, rides to the Friendship resumed.

WARM UP THE WINTER

The Friendship group at **Crossroads Presbyterian Church** in **Mequon, WI** has a tradition of making no-sew throw blankets each Christmas for the elderly in their community. This is a great project to work on as a group, and directions can be found online or at your local fabric store.



A rollicking good time

There's no disguising the fun that was had at the first-ever Friendship Festival held by the "Friends Meeting Friends" Friendship Group in Smithers/Telkwa, BC. They played games, made crafts, photographed the fun (with flair!), and enjoyed a BBQ dinner. Most of all they relished time spent together.



FROM THE DIRECTOR

Purposeful Friendship

As I write this, I am attending the annual meeting of the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. At several sessions presenters have shared the results of research about the development of friendships for people with intellectual disabilities. As I listen, I keep thinking that the Friendship Ministries model, with one-to-one friendships at its core, is a timely answer to the challenges these researchers have described.

For 30 years (and in some groups, even longer!), Friendship mentors have made an important contribution. You are often the only person in your friend's life who is not family or paid staff. One of the presenters pointed out something we have all observed: when our friends graduate from high school they have many fewer social contacts, particularly meaningful friendships.

So kudos to our mentors!

But what sets our mentors apart? In Friendship groups, our goal is spiritual growth or discipleship. This goes well beyond thinking merely in terms of inclusion. Inclusion is a tool to help friends and mentors grow spiritually **together**. This mutuality means that when you invest purposefully in your friendship, both of you will grow.

How can you be purposeful about this relationship? Start by preparing for each session by reading the mentor section of the Leader/Mentor Guide. If you don't have one, ask your group leader. Look for the mentor helplines for additional ways to make your one-to-one time more effective. Are you aware that the questions suggested in the Leader/Mentor Guide progress from yes/no questions to more complex ones? If your friend

has difficulty answering, learn new ways to communicate. Try putting the words "yes," "no," and "maybe" on the table for your friend to point to. You might use Velcro to secure them. Think about how to make it easier for your friend to point to pictures in the Take-home Papers, and share your ideas with other mentors.

Between sessions, take time to consider how you would like to spend your one-to-one time. Singing or praying together are great options. Share something from your life and you may be surprised by your friend's response. Watch for body language to give you clues about your conversation.

Learning about your friend's life. Have you visited your friend at home or at work? Have you asked your friend if you can attend his or her planning meeting? When your friend is ill, do you visit? This may give you a chance to connect with the family of your friend. Gain their contact information so you can invite them to events. Have you alerted your congregation that prayer and cards would be appreciated? If there is a hospitalization can you encourage others from church to visit, particularly people your friend knows?

Group leaders play an important role in nurturing friendships, too. Do your mentors have the Leader/Mentor Guide so they know what to do? Are you leaving enough time for the one-to-one time? I know this can be difficult. It surely is in my program! Are you encouraging your mentors to read this newsletter? Are you and your mentors receiving the e-newsletter? Have you checked out the resources on our all-new website and encouraged your mentors to do the same?

Lastly, are you actively gaining contact information for the families of your friends? Yes, group home staff can help you connect.

Our friends deserve our best! Thanks for being such a dedicated and purposeful bunch. ■

Nella Vitellug



CHURCH PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

Heartfelt thanks to all **83** of members of our **Church Partnership Program!** And a special thanks to these new and renewing members:

Sustaining Partners

(\$250 per year):

- Friendship Bible Ministries of Willmar, MN
- Clinton CRC of Clinton, ON
- Medicine Hat CRC of Medicine Hat, AB
- Hagersville Community CRC of Hagersville, ON
- Providence CRC of Beamsville, ON
- Second CRC of Kalamazoo, MI
- First CRC of Hudsonville, MI

Growing Partners

(\$500 per year):

- Friendship Group of Beamsville, ON
- First CRC of Thunder Bay, ON
- Maranatha CRC of Woodstock, ON
- Cornerstone CRC of Chilliwack, BC

Expanding Partners

(\$1,000 per year):

- Smithers CRC of Smithers, BC
- Heritage Fellowship CRC of Brampton, ON
- Immanuel CRC of Hamilton, ON
- Aylmer CRC of Aylmer, ON
- Ebenezer CRC of Trenton, ON

To learn more about the Church Partnership Program, contact LaVonne at 888.866.8966 ext.2—3 or admin@friendship.org



WHAT? A 2K fun run/wheelchair/walk for pairs of friends and mentors -- and others interested in completing this fun and worthwhile challenge!

WHY? To raise funds and awareness for Friendship Ministries and Friendship House Partners USA, which is dedicated to spreading the vision of Friendship House to seminaries.

WHEN? Friday, August 17 at 7:00 p.m.

WHERE? Prince Conference Center at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI



FRIENDSHIP CHALLENGE

If you can't make it to Grand Rapids, maybe you'd like to map out a route where you are and join us from afar! Call us with your questions: **888.866.8966**

SIGN UP:
friendshipchallenge.westernsem.edu



We would love to hear from you:

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Special Gifts

IN HONOR OF:

- Ken & Sally Hillner's 50th Anniversary

IN MEMORY OF:

- Rochel Boeinski
- Wayne Slimmon