

# FRIENDSHIP NEWSLETTER

**tips & tools to include our friends**

FOURTH QUARTER 2015



A Publication of Friendship Ministries

# FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## Courage is Universal

This past June, I had the unique opportunity of visiting the beautiful island country of Cuba. Friendship Ministries has partnered with a number of groups in Cuba for about 10 years and my church, Plymouth Heights Christian Reformed Church, has had some close ties with one particular Friendship group.

While I learned many things in Cuba, one lesson stands out that seems so very ordained and Spirit-led. The lesson came from a gentleman named Guillé (pronounced “ghee-yay,” short for Guillermo). Guillé lives near the church in Jaguey Grandé, a small town about 2 hours south of Havana. Guillé is well known in the neighborhood and has been serving the community for years. He has cerebral palsy, was orphaned from his alcoholic mother, and now lives on his own. Each day, Guillé rides his tri-wheeled bike through the neighborhood and to the church to collect trash. What he does with the trash I never learned. But without exception, each day Guillé arrived at the church with a broad smile on his face, chatted with whoever was around, received a bit of food from the cook, collected his trash, and went on his way.

What struck me the most about Guillé was not his ability to do his job so well, and not how independent he was, but how he expressed joy and courage in what seemed to be every aspect of his life—his job, his conversations, his independence, and his trash. Although life has been—and continues to be, difficult for him, Guillé professes his faith with his words, actions, work, and attitude. What a blessing it is to witness a son of God who clearly knows what his purpose in life is and who courageously faces each day anew to serve God with grace and a smile!

As I think about Guillé and Friendship Ministries’ new curriculum unit on Courage, with its study of Joshua, Caleb, and Moses, it leads me to think again how often God not only teaches us about courage, faith, and joy from the past, but also from those around us today.

Seeing Guillé and others who serve God so graciously each day encourages and inspires us to remember that our strength comes each day from a God who loves us, and who fulfills His promises to use us in whatever capacity, job, or task he has given us.

May we all be like Joshua, Caleb, Moses, and Guillé as we seek to follow God with courage and serve Him with joy.

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9

Blessings,



**Tom VanWingerden**  
Executive Director, Friendship Ministries  
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# CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS WITH YOUR FRIENDSHIP GROUP

## Friendship Christmas Book

Do you sometimes feel overwhelmed with planning for the Christmas season with your Friendship group? Are you wondering what to do with this very special time of year?

Friendship Ministries' *The Christmas Book* is an excellent resource not only for session plans for group meetings, but also for ideas that include activities, dramas, service projects, and celebrations.

For many programs, fitting in four weeks of Christmas activities just doesn't work. One simple way to celebrate Christmas is to do the entire advent wreath worship idea from pages 37-38 in one session at your Christmas party. Have mentors and friends work together, supporting each other. For example, one friend and mentor may read the scripture; another couple might be the candle lighters. Then everybody sings the Christmas carol. Putting the song on Powerpoint helps everyone to remember the words. Where possible, use songs that your group knows without rehearsal.

## Traditions

Christmas is a time for traditions. One wise leader said that doing the same thing each year gives a sense of tradition that our friends value. She said that they learn to do it better each year. So don't feel that you always need a new idea.

This is true of many activities in Friendship—our friends really like to know that prayer time is the same each week, and that there is always a pizza night each year. They often think in terms of events more than they think in terms of time on a clock.

## Tips & Ideas

Have you invited family members to a Christmas Party? Don't have addresses? Bring invitations that friends decorate and ask the group home staff to put family addresses on them. Don't forget to include a stamp!

At the Christmas party, go around and ask for e-mail addresses. This will allow you to stay in touch with families throughout the year.

If you have a Christmas tradition that is treasured and unique—we encourage you to share it with others on our Facebook page. You might start the same tradition in another group!

However you and your group celebrate Christmas this year, we hope it is filled with God's love and brings all of you joy.



# CANADIAN CORNER

## Hello Friendship Supporters

Many groups are gearing up for another year of ministry with people living with Intellectual Disabilities... always an exciting time, and likely a bit stressful too. The staff at Friendship will hold you all in prayer through this year. Here at the Canadian branch of Friendship Ministries, we are excited for another year of growth, learning, and sharing God's love with our Canadian Friends.

This year, I had the privilege of participating in the chapel services at a Family Camp hosted by Elim Lodge, Christian Horizons, and Joni and Friends. What a treat to see happy campers, happy parents, and happy siblings. They were enjoying tubing, crafts, some water play, and just taking a break from regular routine. And some folks got to hear about Friendship ministries for the first time! Many thanks to Elim Lodge for hosting this terrific group of people.

As I sit here writing this piece while waiting in an airport for my connecting flight to San Francisco, I'm reminded how amazing technology is. I'm headed to a conference to learn more about the technology that Friendship uses to continue our mission will help us spread the news about Friendship Ministries. It's these types of technological advances that will get the word out about Friendship Ministries and start more and more Friendship groups throughout the country and the world. God is good.

### Heather DeBoer

Friendship Ministries – Canada  
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# NOTAS DE AMISTAD

We have accomplished so much in 2015 at Ministerio Amistad. I give thanks to God for the opportunity to share our achievements with our Friendship Ministries' brothers and sisters.

- We were able to start 13 Amistad groups in eight countries.
- We were able to include *El autismo y tu iglesia* as a text book for classes of inclusion in two important theological seminaries.
- We have received wonderful testimonies from several groups.
- We were able to attend Christian education events.
- We were able to give free Amistad materials to five churches in Cuba.
- We have included more free resources on our website.

These are great accomplishments for Ministerio Amistad, but we still need to do more. There are many needs in Latin America, so we request your prayers and your donations to keep going in this beautiful work to "share God's love with people who have intellectual disability, and to enable them to become an active part of God's family."

May God bless you,



**Elizabeth Rodriguez**  
Ministerio Amistad  
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# WELCOME TO FRIENDSHIP MINISTRIES

Join us in welcoming the following groups:

Bethany United Methodist Church of Liberty Township, OH  
Brookdale Reformed Church of Lebanon, NJ  
First Baptist Church of Salisbury, NC  
Friendship Group of Tampa, FL  
Friendship Group of Twin Falls, ID  
Holy Fire Ministry of Hudson, FL  
Hope Evangelical Free Church of Mason, OH  
Lakeside Church of Folsom, CA  
Palmyra Grace Brethren Church of Palmyra, PA  
The Gate Church of Victorville, CA  
Trailview Alliance Church of Swift Current, SK  
Whites Chapel United Methodist Church of Southlake, TX

## CHURCH PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

Heartfelt thanks to these new and renewing members of our Church Partnership Program

### *Sustaining*

Maitland River Community Church of Wingham, ON  
Medicine Hat CRC of Medicine Hat, AB  
Racine CRC of Racine, WI  
Trinity CRC of St. Catharines, ON

### *Growing*

Barrhaven Fellowship CRC of Nepean, ON  
Calvin CRC of Millgrove, ON  
Fellowship CRC of St Thomas, ON  
First CRC of Kingston, ON  
First CRC of Sioux Center, IA  
Hope CRC of Brantford, ON  
Rehoboth Fellowship CRC of Etobicoke, ON  
Wallaceburg CRC of Wallaceburg, ON  
Westwood CRC of Kalamazoo, MI

### *Expanding*

Clearview CRC of Oakville, ON  
Fellowship CRC of Brighton, ON  
First CRC of Hamilton, ON  
Palmerston CRC of Palmerston, ON  
Peace Reformed Church of Middleville, MI  
Providence CRC of Beamsville, ON  
River Park CRC of Calgary, AB

### *Global Outreach*

Community CRC of Kitchener, ON  
First CRC of Hanford, CA  
Immanuel CRC of Caledon, ON  
Plymouth Heights CRC of Grand Rapids, MI

# WHERE WE'LL BE THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

For more information about our upcoming events or appearances, please visit our Events Calendar at [www.friendship.org](http://www.friendship.org).

## Denim & Daisies

October 17, 2015, *Oakville, Ontario*

Dinner, desert, and a concert by Momentum Choir at Kings Christian Collegiate in Oakville.

**Doors open 4:30PM | Dinner at 5:30PM**

RSVP at [www.friendship.org](http://www.friendship.org)

## Day of Encouragement

Oct 17, 2015, *Hamilton District Christian High, Hamilton, Ontario*

The Christian Reformed Church Diaconal Ministries hosts its annual day of training for anyone in leadership in the church. Join Tom VanWingerden during the lunch break to hear about our new curriculum that is in the process of being developed.

## Friendship Festival

Oct 24, 2015, *Clearview Church, Oakville, Ontario*

Join us at ClearView Church for lunch, music from Peter Slofstra, and a few surprise activities from 10:00am to 2:00pm. For registration information, please visit [www.weloveourfriends.com](http://www.weloveourfriends.com).

## Thanksgiving Feast

Nov 26, 2015, *Railside Golf Club, Grand Rapids, MI*

Friendship Ministries and Railside Golf Club are excited to host our fourth annual Thanksgiving Feast this year. Please email [Gwen@bultemagroup.com](mailto:Gwen@bultemagroup.com) for more information or to reserve your spot.

## SHARE YOUR SELFIE!

Got a great Friendship selfie? Share it with us on Facebook or Twitter, and we'll enter you into a drawing for a free t-shirt!



## 2016 FRIENDSHIP GOLF OUTING

**Our 2015 golf outing was a success, raising more than \$15,000.00 for Friendship Ministries.**

Mark your calendar for our second annual golf outing on August 8th, 2016, at Railside Golf Club in Byron Center, MI. To learn more or to become a sponsor, please contact Tom Van Wingerden at [tomvw@friendship.org](mailto:tomvw@friendship.org).



# WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU

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## SUPPORT FRIENDSHIP MINISTRIES

**Your financial gifts enable us to carry out  
the work of this ministry**

**Mail a check to:**  
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2215 29th Street SE, Ste. B6  
Grand Rapids, MI 49508

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[www.friendship.org/give](http://www.friendship.org/give)

**Mail a cheque to:**  
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PO Box 1636 Stn LCD 1  
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## IN MEMORIAM

**Jerry Lee Bouwkamp  
Joyce B. Enck  
George Hoekstra  
Nella Uitvlugt**



**HAVE YOU READ OUR BLOG?  
THE TIPS & TOOLS CONTINUE EVERY WEEK ONLINE AT:**

**[Friendship.org/blog](http://Friendship.org/blog)**



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