Friendship Program Guide
A Resource for Leaders
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Grand Rapids, Michigan
Friendship Ministries is a not-for-profit 501 (c)(3) organization that promotes the spiritual development of youth and adults who have intellectual disabilities and encourages churches to include them in their fellowship.

To learn more, call us at 888-866-8966, e-mail us at friendship@friendship.org, or visit www.friendship.org.

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Friendship Ministries was initiated in the early 1980s when Jack and Dottie Wiersma, parents of Sherman, who has Down syndrome, came to CRC Publications (now Faith Alive Christian Resources) asking for help. Their single request for a program to teach people with intellectual disabilities has grown into a ministry that has worked with more than sixty denominations in North and South America, Africa, Asia, Australia, and Europe. The ministry has also expanded into Latin America through the work of Ministerio Amistad—that’s Friendship Ministries in Spanish.

Yet Friendship's greatest impact still remains one-on-one relationships. Jim and Kevin (pictured on the cover) are just one of many examples.

Kevin began helping out at his church’s Friendship program when he was in grade school. Kevin’s profound communication disorder (apraxia) didn’t bother Jim, then a young adult with Down syndrome. Jim gave Kevin unconditional acceptance and love as Kevin learned to accept his own disability.

When Kevin was in junior high, he became Jim’s Friendship mentor. Kevin’s own faith grew as he told Jim about Jesus’ love. In return, Jim taught Kevin that God’s love is for everyone. Friendship and their one-on-one relationship have made a difference in both Kevin’s and Jim’s life.

Welcome!
Whether you are a new leader or one who has experienced the joy of Friendship for many years, we welcome you with love that is as unconditional as Jim’s. We hope this program guide will make your leadership role easier as we focus on these key responsibilities:

- sharing God's love (mission and goals)
- appreciating each person
- getting organized
- choosing materials
- defining volunteer roles
- recruiting friends and mentors
- training mentors
- tending to details
- building community: helping friends to become active members of the community and to share their gifts
**A Promise to Experience**

Ralph and Carol Honderd are the proud parents of Karyn, who has intellectual disabilities. Karyn was already a young adult when a Friendship program came to the Honderds’ church. Ralph admits he was skeptical. His view now? “The Friendship program has helped transform our congregation.” Karyn now actively participates in the program through singing and even sharing at talent night. He describes changes in programs, worship, and individuals. “The Friendship program is nothing less than a channel of grace. Get into this program, and you’ll see God at work—I promise you.”

Our goal is to help you and your friends with intellectual disabilities grow together in love for each other and service to God. Our prayer is that you will see God at work in your community. And as God works through you, your friends, and your mentors, let us know about your concerns as well as your victories. You can contact us at

Friendship Ministries
2215 29th St. SE, Suite B6
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www.friendship.org
888-866-8966
Since the early 1980s, Friendship Ministries has been sharing God’s love with people who have intellectual disabilities and helping them become active members of God’s family. Support for this interdenominational ministry comes from individuals, businesses, and churches.

Leader Tip
It will be important for your local Friendship ministry to define its mission and goals. In this section, we share the overall mission, principles, and goals for the larger program as a guide to help you in that process.

Reaching Out
Friendship Ministries enables churches to minister with people who have intellectual disabilities, their families, and their communities. It is guided by these core truths:

- **Equality.** Everyone is created in God’s image. Each of us is created uniquely, equally suited for God’s particular purposes, and enabled by grace to enjoy redemption, worship, and a lifetime of service.

- **Interdependence.** We all have qualities that enable us to serve each other; we do that best in community as partners, bonded together with God and each other to renew the world.

- **Compassion.** We experience mutual compassion as we share our joys and burdens in the church, a worldwide, interdependent community.

- **Hospitality.** Instead of trying to make others be like us, we welcome and capitalize on “different-ness.” We overcome our fear of strangers and celebrate communion in the midst of difference.

Setting Goals
Friendship Ministries enables friends to

- experience the joy of knowing they are valued by God and by God’s people.

- grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ, claiming him as their Savior and Lord.
• grow in their relationship with Christ’s church, making a public profession of their faith and participating in the church’s life and work.

• be truly accepted and loved by the Christian community.

• use their gifts to serve others.

**Growing Together**

Probably the most unique aspect of Friendship Ministries is our emphasis on friendship and mutuality. We struggle with our terminology, not wanting to use teacher and student, because that implies a one-way relationship. We prefer to simply use one word—*friends*—but that doesn’t always work because we sometimes need to differentiate between the one with recognized intellectual disabilities and the one without. So we use the words *friend* and *mentor*. We always focus on growing together in our love for God and for each other.

**Leader Tip**

We need to say a word here about *inclusion*. The premise of Friendship Ministries is that inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities in the regular programs of the church is the ideal situation. A few adjustments may have to be made, but generally, inclusion of children with intellectual disabilities in the regular Sunday school programs works very well. That goes for worship too: relationships are formed when friends of all ages are invited to sit with families in the congregation as they worship. And friends can share their gifts in worship by being invited to sing, or read, or usher, as they are able.

Realistically, inclusion in educational programs often begins to fall apart around the time of adolescence, when social situations begin to vary dramatically. It’s at this age that we recommend Friendship groups for people who have intellectual disabilities. Friendship groups provide a context where friends can grow spiritually and where meaningful relationships are formed. These relationships help foster full inclusion in the life of the church—on Sunday mornings and beyond.

Friendship Ministries also offers consultation on an individualized planning process to include people with disabilities in the church.
Friends are real people who happen to have a disability. They may live with their families, in a group home with supportive care, or independently in their own home. They may attend school, or they may work in supportive settings or at a job site. Friendship groups typically include youth in their teen years and adults of all ages.

Each friend is a one-of-a-kind person created in God’s image. Friends are people like you and me with likes and dislikes, joys and sorrows. And, like you and me, friends have spiritual gifts to share with the body of Christ.

**Qualifications for Mentors**
The number one qualification for mentors is that they have a love for people with intellectual disabilities and a desire to share God’s love with them. Mentors come from all kinds of backgrounds and have a variety of gifts that God uses in amazing ways. While getting to know your friends is often the best source of information about them, here are some general tips that mentors may find helpful in working with friends.

**Respect Friends as Individuals**
Friendship Ministries emphasizes friendship and mutuality—we’re learning and growing together. To show respect,

- affirm your friend as an individual whose opinions, desires, and feelings are worthwhile.
- treat adults like adults by addressing them as adults and by selecting activities that relate to an adult’s world of work and leisure.

### Leader Tip
These unique life situations are reflected in Friendship program materials (see overview, pp. 13-16). They are designed to include youth and adults with a wide range of intellectual disabilities. Special attention is given to involve friends who may be

- nonreaders.
- nonverbal.
- hearing impaired.
- visually impaired.
- physically challenged.
• give help only when asked; do not assume that help is needed or desired.

• allow time for your friend to make his or her own decisions.

• accept your friend’s work, showing that you believe your friend is capable.

• be sensitive to special needs such as medical issues and dietary needs that require attention during your friend’s time at Friendship.

**Enable Friends to Learn the Way They Learn Best**

Although learning may be a challenge for most of your friends, they may surprise you with their enthusiasm and understanding. It will help to remember the following points:

• *Friends are concrete learners.* What they experience is what they know. For example, if a drama involves the death of someone in the Bible story, some friends may think that the actor died. It’s important to say that the actor is pretending.

• *Friends may have a short attention span.* You can draw attention to one thing at a time by pointing, covering part of a page in a take-home paper, reviewing only the key ideas in a Bible story, and so on.

• *Friends can learn new information.* Repetition is important; drill and practice facts and routines as you review Bible stories and lesson truths together.

• *Friends may have difficulty transferring what they learn in one setting to another.* You can help friends by teaching

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**Respect Is Two-Sided!**

Respect is two-sided; it’s all about mutuality. Kevin and Jim learned this together—and they’ve taught their church family how to live it out. Nearly every Sunday for three years, Jim greeted Kevin with a huge smile and followed him down the aisle to sit with Kevin’s family. People in the balcony smiled—often through their tears—as Kevin, tall and strapping, stooped down to nudge Jim to sing the hymn. When Jim sang from his heart, the people at his church knew Jim belonged to them and to God!
skills in the actual environments in which they will be used. For example, if your Friendship group will sing for a worship service, practice in the sanctuary.

- **Friends may be reluctant to participate in large group or small group activities.** Be ready to encourage and to walk alongside, but learn also to be quiet in each other’s presence. To increase participation, model appropriate behavior, sing facing your friend so that he or she can catch the words, help your friend come up with prayer requests, volunteer to play a part in a drama with your friend, show how to do an activity or make a craft, and so on.

- **Friends can do many things but may need adaptations for some activities.** Adapting activities to meet your friend’s specific needs is crucial. If your friend cannot read the Bible, read to him or her and highlight key words. If a take-home paper for adults is too difficult, use the one designed for youth. If a group activity is too noisy, work one-on-one off to one side of the larger group. If your friend is nonverbal, use simple signs or pictures to tell the story or sing songs.

- **Friends may communicate in various ways.** Never assume that a friend who is nonverbal is low-functioning or cannot understand you. A friend who doesn’t use verbal expression may actually understand everything you are saying but not be able to let you know this. You’ll want to work closely with group leaders, family members, and caregivers to determine how best to communicate with your friend.
**Group and One-on-One Relationships Build Community**
Groups vary widely in how they operate, depending on factors such as the size of the group, the church, the community, and the personalities of those involved. Groups may include as few as three friends or as many as fifty or more. Some groups are organized by a single church; others are a cooperative ministry between several churches within a community or the same denomination. Some groups include friends from neighboring communities. Your group may reflect a combination of several of these characteristics.

**Group Session**
The Friendship program model used in all the program materials (see pp. 13-16) includes a group session that brings together all the friends and mentors in one place. During the group session the group leader, either alone or with the assistance of other volunteers, leads the worship and prayer time and presents the Bible story.

**One-on-One Time**
Following the group session, friends and mentors meet in small groups. Ideally, this is one-on-one time, with each friend meeting with a mentor who will help him or her respond to the Bible story at the friend’s own ability level and together apply the truths to the individual’s life situations. Through these relationships, friends and mentors alike experience God’s love in a very concrete way.

**Leader Tip**
We’ve included more information about the roles of the group leader and mentor on page 17 and a description of the steps in a session plan on page 16.

**When Should We Meet?**
Typically, Friendship groups meet on a weekday evening or during church education time. We suggest you avoid holding your Friendship group during the worship service, so that friends can worship with the rest of the congregation. When you meet will impact the amount of time you have, your space needs, the number of volunteers available, the kinds of activities you plan, and so on.
Here’s a suggested schedule for a 60- to 90-minute session:

5-10 minutes  Arrival, conversation, getting settled, announcements

25-30 minutes  Group session for youth and adults: Steps 1-4* (welcome, worship and prayer time, Bible story)

20-30 minutes  One-on-one mentoring session: Steps 5-6 (review and response activities)

10-15 minutes  Social time with refreshments and fellowship**

*Some groups do the group session one week, followed by a brief review and the mentoring session the following week.

**Sometimes the entire group comes back together for a craft activity, service project, or other group activities toward the end of the session.

Many groups take time off during the summer, although they may schedule a summer picnic or other special outing to keep in touch. The break avoids volunteer burnout and gives leaders time to plan for the next year. Some groups also take off during Christmas and spring break.
Friendship program materials fall into four general categories:

- Friendship Bible Studies
- Friendship Life Studies
- *Living God’s Way* and *Psalms*
- Must-Have Friendship Resources

Each of these is explained briefly below.

**Friendship Bible Studies Present God’s Word**

Friendship Bible Studies help friends and mentors grow in their understanding of God’s Word. The nineteen units (each with four sessions and a review session) are grouped into three major sections:

- **God, Our Father (Old Testament).** Seven units tell the story of God’s creation, God’s covenant relationship with his people, and God’s promise to send a Savior. God loves and cares for us too.
- **Jesus, Our Savior (New Testament).** Six units are devoted to the stories about Jesus’ life from his birth to his resurrection as told in the four gospels. God’s promise to send a Savior was fulfilled; and that good news is still offered to us.
- **The Spirit, Our Helper (New Testament).** Six units highlight the work of the Holy Spirit in the early church as told in the book of Acts. Jesus’ promise to send a helper is also evident in the work of the Spirit in our lives today.

**When Ordering Friendship Bible Studies . . .**

Each of the nineteen units of Friendship Bible Studies includes

- *Leader/Mentor Guide* with four session plans, a review session, songs, signing, patterns, and other reproducible resources (litanies, responsive readings, and more) for both the group and one-on-one time.
- *Group Leader’s Packet* with visual aids for the group session.
- *Youth Take-home papers,* a set of four take-home papers with two activity sheets.
- *Adult Take-home papers,* a set of four take-home papers with two activity sheets.

**Leader Tip**

For a more detailed overview of these Friendship program materials, download our curriculum overview at www.friendship.org/support or call 888-866-8966 for a printed copy.

**Leader Tip**

We recommend that you use the units in sequence, beginning with the Old Testament stories. Allowing time for Christmas and Easter celebrations and other special activities, the Friendship Bible Studies offer enough material for about three years. You may want to fit in a Friendship Life Studies course every so often to add variety and to address particular issues your friends might be facing.
You’ll want to order one Leader/Mentor Guide for each group leader and each mentor. Order a guide for the worship leader and storyteller too, if these are separate roles.

Each group leader will need one Group Leader’s Packet for each unit. If your group is large, you may need an extra packet so that everyone can see the visuals easily. If mentors would like to have their own set of story visuals, posters, and so on for the group or one-on-one mentoring session, you’ll want to order one packet for each mentor too. (This is a good idea especially for mentors of friends with visual impairments and those who have difficulty focusing on the story.)

You’ll need a set of take-home papers with accompanying activity sheets for each youth or adult friend. Some mentors may want to have their own set as well.

**Friendship Life Studies Focus on Tough Issues**
These courses each have four sessions plus a review session. They focus on issues your adult friends face in their daily lives and encourage your friends to apply truths from stories in God’s Word to these situations. Together, friends and mentors are challenged to use their gifts to love and serve God and others at home, at work, and in their faith community.

Depending on the topic, some of these courses may be adapted for older youth.

**When Ordering Friendship Life Studies . . .**
Each of these courses includes

- Leader/Mentor Guide with four session plans, a review session, songs, signing, patterns, and other reproducible resources (litanies, responsive readings, and more) for both the group session and the one-on-one time with mentors and friends.
- Friendship Magazine, a sixteen-page magazine used for all four sessions.

You’ll want to order one Leader/Mentor Guide for each group leader and each mentor. Order a guide for the worship leader and storyteller too, if these are separate roles. Order one magazine for each friend (and for mentors if they wish to have their own copy).
**Living God’s Way**

These thirteen sessions use Bible stories and activities to explore what it means to live gratefully within God’s guidelines. An Overview session introduces the two most important commandments on which the other commandments depend: “Love God” and “Love Others.” Ten sessions, one for each commandment, follow. Review and Celebration sessions wrap up this practical study of living the Christian life.

Each group leader and mentor will need the *Leader/Mentor Guide* (thirteen session plans with ideas for large group and one-on-one time, plus songs, patterns, and reproducible resources).

Each friend will need a copy of the *take-home papers*, used during the one-on-one time to review material from the large group time and apply it to everyday life.

**Psalms**

This ten-session study of some of the most familiar and beloved psalms explores such human experiences as awe, depression, waiting, and trust. The sessions emphasize both expressing our emotions to God and learning to rely on God no matter what we are experiencing.

This study is scheduled to be available in the summer of 2010.

**Must-Have Friendship Resources**

**Christmas Book**

This resource contains two session plans—one based on the Christmas story in Luke and one on the story of the wise men—plus a collection of songs, dramas, ideas for worship, craft activities, service projects, patterns, and other resources for the Advent season. There are enough ideas to allow you to use this book year after year. All the materials can be photocopied so you’ll only need one book for the group leader.

**Easter Book**

This resource also contains two session plans—one about Palm Sunday and the other about Good Friday and Easter—plus a collection of songs, dramas, ideas for worship, craft activities, service projects, patterns, and more for the season of Lent. Like the Christmas book, there are enough ideas to

**Leader Tip**

Session 7 in *Living God’s Way* explores “Respecting the Gift of Sexuality.” While this may not be suited for younger members, Friendship leaders are using this unit effectively with their teenage and adult friends. For additional insights on the topic of sexuality, we recommend *Caring Relationships: Helping People with Mental Impairments Understand God’s Gift of Sexuality* by Ronald C. Vredeveld and *Sexuality: Your Sons and Daughters with Intellectual Disabilities* by Karen Melbert Schwier and Dave Hingsburger, both available through Friendship Ministries (888-866-8966 or www.friendship.org).
allow you to use this book year after year, and all the materials can be photocopied so you’ll only need one book for the group leader.

**Overview of the Bible Study Session Plan**

Each session plan in the Friendship Bible Study program materials follows a format similar to the one illustrated here. The first four steps are the responsibility of the group leader (who may be assisted by a song leader and storyteller). The last two steps are for mentors to use during one-on-one time with their friends.

- **Step 1: Greeting God and Each Other.** Includes activities to welcome the group and suggestions for worship, including ideas for group and individual prayer.

- **Step 2: Preparing to Listen to God’s Story.** Describes ways to set the stage for friends and mentors to focus on the Bible story.

- **Step 3: Listening to God’s Story.** Offers ideas for presenting the Bible story through narration, interactive drama, pantomime, puppets, and other techniques.

- **Step 4: Reflecting on God’s Story.** Includes ideas for summarizing the facts of the Bible story and ways to help group members think about what the story means to them.

- **Step 5: Living into God’s Story.** Describes activities that mentors and friends can use to review and read the Bible story and recite the memory verse.

- **Step 6: Growing from God’s Story.** Challenges mentors and friends to respond to the key truth emphasized throughout the session and offers suggestions for a closing prayer time.

**Note:** The take-home paper is designed to be used with steps 5 and 6.
The number of volunteers you’ll need to run a Friendship program will depend largely on the number of friends in your group. So although we describe five different roles, the group leader and the one-on-one mentors are key positions every Friendship program needs to fill.

**Group Leaders Are a “Must Have”**
The group leader is responsible for the Friendship group sessions—and for the tasks of directing the program if a program doesn’t have a director. During the session, this person will

- welcome friends and mentors.
- lead the worship time, including prayer time.
- set the stage for listening to the Bible story.
- tell the Bible story.
- reinforce the biblical truth of the story.

To prevent burnout, some groups have coleaders. One might be responsible for the administrative details (registration, scheduling, record-keeping) while the other leads the group session.

In addition, the group leader (or coleader) maintains the vital connection between the program and friends’ family members/caregivers, keeping them informed of what friends are doing at Friendship, discussing concerns or finding out additional information about dietary restrictions and the like, and letting families know of any volunteer opportunities that arise.

More than anything else, the group leader creates a sense of community—a place where friends are included as a vital part of a group who are growing in their faith journey together.

**Mentors Are the Heart of the Program**
Mentors are the key to the success of your Friendship ministry. Ideally, you will have one mentor for every friend, but don’t let the lack of enough mentors keep you from starting a program. Following the group session time, mentors will

- review the Bible story with their friend.
- adapt the materials to the individual ability level of their friend.
- apply the biblical truth to their own lives, together with their friend.

**Leader Tip**
The group leader’s tasks are described in steps 1-4 in the program materials (see Overview of the Bible Study Session Plan, p. 16). Depending on a person’s gifts, some group leaders prefer to do all these tasks, while others recruit someone with musical gifts to lead the worship time and someone else to tell the story. For example, a drama team might be recruited on occasion, or someone with a flair for first-person storytelling might play the part of a biblical character for several sessions.

**Leader Tip**
The mentors’ tasks are described in steps 5-6 in the curriculum materials (see Overview of the Bible Study Session Plan, p. 16).

It’s especially during the one-on-one time that lasting relationships are formed as friends and mentors grow together in their love for God and for each other.
Leaders Rely on a Network of Helpers
Have a job that needs doing in order to keep your program running smoothly? Ask someone to

- bake cookies or serve snacks for fellowship time.
- prepare art projects or craft materials.
- connect with caregivers/families.
- write a newsletter.
- set up chairs, equipment, and supplies.
- send a note of encouragement to friends and mentors.
- set up a display about your Friendship program.
- make a bulletin board of Friendship snapshots.
- clean up after meetings and special events.
- drive the church bus or provide transportation for one or two students. (Be sure to check state/provincial regulations regarding liability and use of personal vehicles.)

Jobs that don’t require direct involvement with friends offer an entry point for volunteers who are nervous about serving in Friendship ministry.

Some Groups Have a Friendship Program Director
Larger programs will likely have a program director. He or she is responsible for the overall operation of the program. (In smaller programs, this task is usually assumed by the group leader.) The director will

- serve as a liaison to the congregation.
- seek out youth and adults with intellectual disabilities who can benefit from the program.
- recruit and train volunteers.
- manage the program’s income and expenses.
- handle details (schedule, space, curriculum, supplies).
- promote the program.
- evaluate the program and revise goals.

Some Groups Form a Local Friendship Committee
A local Friendship committee can serve as an advocate for the ministry. This group can help set goals, develop policies, set budget priorities, and promote the program. The committee also functions as a sounding board for the program director or group leader. This group could also help coordinate the efforts of several local churches who want to work together to provide a Friendship program.

Leader Tip
When you delegate, you use other people’s spiritual gifts and give them a connection to your program. Remember also to ask your friends to help in every way they can. And don’t forget to include family members and caregivers. Often they will accompany friends to the group meetings and can be a valuable source of information about what to do about special dietary needs, troubling events, and so on. Some of these family members and caregivers may hear the gospel for the first time through your ministry! Others may form their own informal support group through their Friendship contacts.
Although your group likely formed with a core group of friends who expressed a need for your program, others in your community could benefit from this fellowship too. You’ll want to contact

- families in your church who might be interested.
- other churches in your community.
- group homes and assisted living facilities.
- social service providers in your community.
- Special Olympics programs.
- school counselors or others in charge of high school transition events.
- other agencies that advocate for people with intellectual disabilities, such as regional chapters of the Arc, AAIDD (American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities), Councils on Developmental Disabilities, and others.

**Volunteers Get Hooked!**

Friendship is a mutually rewarding experience. Once you have a pool of volunteers, you’ll find that they often stay with the program long term.

Jessie Schut, an experienced Friendship leader, calls recruiting “an intentional, ongoing experience.” She offers the following advice:

- Communicate clearly and regularly with your congregation. Let them know what’s going on in the group. Tell stories of events, relationships, and how you’ve been blessed by the program.
- Communicate clearly and regularly with current volunteers. Thank your volunteers often. A pat on the back goes a long way toward keeping them.
- Keep an active list of potential volunteers based on your own observations, suggestions from current volunteers, and ideas from church leadership.
- Invite potential volunteers to participate in the program in other ways (by offering prayer support, substituting, or contributing specialized skills to just one part of the program).
- Pray continually about your program and potential needs.
- Plan as far ahead as possible.

As you integrate your friends into congregational worship and fellowship, it will become easier to recruit volunteers. Even a brief verbal “testimony” from a friend or mentor about how your program has made a difference can have an impact. We’ve included more on this in the section “Building Community” (p. 26).

Once you have a team of volunteers in place, you’ll want to give careful consideration to how you pair them with your friends. Here are some suggestions:

- If possible, pair by gender. Avoid placing a high school girl with a man. Pairing older women with young men is more acceptable.
- Pair mentors who have special skills with those with specific needs. For example, pair a mentor who can sign with a friend who is nonverbal or hearing impaired.
- Pair a mentor who is willing to plan ahead with someone who is visually impaired. Often these friends will need enlarged visuals, three-dimensional objects they can feel, texture added to visuals, and so on.

Observe the interaction between friends and mentors for several weeks, especially during the one-on-one time, and don’t hesitate to make changes if necessary. Just as in other settings, some relationships simply don’t click.

**Leader Tip**
Prepare a list of all mentors along with their phone numbers, and be sure to include names of people who are willing to serve as substitutes for you and your mentors. Distribute this list to mentors, and encourage them to find their own substitutes. (You’ll probably want to know when a substitution is being made so that you can help your friend make the transition.)
You Don’t Need a Degree— Just a Loving Heart!
A degree isn’t the ticket to success as a Friendship mentor. The number-one qualification for mentors is that they have a love for people with intellectual disabilities and a desire to share God’s love with others.

Mentors—including teenagers, seniors, and everyone in between—come from all kinds of backgrounds and have a variety of gifts that God uses in amazing ways.

Your friends themselves are often the best source of training for mentors. Writing in Focus on the Family, author Anita Donihue highlights seven things people who have intellectual disabilities want mentors to know and do (see sidebar, p. 22).

Mentors Appreciate Support
Mentors learn by doing, but they also benefit from the support you offer. Here are some resources you’ll find helpful for training:

What Friendship Mentors Need to Know. Great for brand-new mentors or seasoned veterans, this guide provides teaching tips and addresses common areas of concern, from dealing with inappropriate behaviors to building relationships beyond the Friendship program. Download this resource for free at www.friendship.org/support or call 888-866-8966 to request a printed copy.

Friendship Extras! This newsletter is published four times a year. You’ll find helpful information about a variety of topics, dates for conferences, training options, and the like. We will gladly send a copy to each mentor whose name you provide. (If you’re not receiving the newsletter, contact Friendship Ministries at 888-866-8966 or friendship@friendship.org.)

Friendship staff members are available to consult with you. Contact us at 888-866-8966 or friendship@friendship.org. We can also connect you with Friendship groups in your area if you would like to see a program in action.

Mentors Benefit from Ongoing Training
In addition to using the resources described above, consider attending a Friendship webinar (check our www.friendship.org for more information or to register) or a workshop in

Leader Tip
Confidentiality can become an issue when reaching out for support services. Respect that what friends and mentors tell you is private, but be wise enough to know when a situation is beyond what you can do as a friend and leader.
Seven Things I Want You to Know and Do

1. **Accept me for who I am.** Don’t be afraid to get to know me. I may be slow physically or mentally, but I’m good company when you give me a chance. Take time to enjoy me. I like being invited to go places and do things with friends, but I don’t get invited very often.

2. **Sometimes I need a friend.** I need a friend who can help me break down the barriers that isolate me from the rest of the world. I can’t get places without help. For instance, when I have trouble reading, you could sit by me and read the lesson in Sunday school or sing the hymn in church so I can hear the words.

3. **Talk to me as you would any other person.** Don’t speak to me in baby talk. I’m not an infant or a pet. At times, I may have difficulty and my speech may sound different, but I try to say the words right. Sometimes I talk by signing with my hands. When you talk, just slow down a bit.

4. **Let me try to do my best.** I may take longer and need your patience, but I might surprise you with what I can do. Don’t do things for me. Ask me if I want help. I’m proud of my work, even if it isn’t perfect. And please, don’t go back and redo it.

5. **Don’t feel sorry for me.** I enjoy life and can make yours a little brighter, but only if you let me. If we respect each other, we can learn from each other.

6. **Be patient when I mess up.** I sometimes say and do things that aren’t appropriate. By carefully explaining things to me, you can help me learn proper social skills. Be understanding when things don’t go well.

7. **Know that I love God—and God loves me.** I know the Lord doesn’t love me more than others, but I also know he keeps me close to his heart. God placed me on earth for a reason. He knows all my imperfections, and best of all, he loves me just the way I am.

—Anita Donihue, *Focus on the Family*, August 1996. Used by permission of Anita Donihue. For permission to copy this page for local Friendship program use, contact Anita Donihue at adonihue@Q.com.
We’ve already talked about a number of important tasks the director (or group leader) needs to do: defining the mission and goals, organizing the program, choosing materials, defining volunteer roles, recruiting friends and mentors, and training mentors. Along with these tasks, the person in charge will need to

- consider space needs.
- solicit funding.
- purchase supplies.
- promote the program.

All of these tasks involve numerous details that overlap; each is important to the smooth functioning of the program.

“Give Us Space!”
That’s probably the cry of every program director. Friendship programs need space for the large group session and space for mentors to meet one-on-one with their friends. Special considerations include

- **accessibility.** Can all of your friends easily get to the place where you meet? Does the space allow for easy movement from one activity to the next? Can visuals, storytellers, and so on be located where everyone can see and hear?
- **adaptability.** Can you sit, worship, dance, and use art materials all in the same place? Must you set up and take down each week? Is the one-on-one setting somewhat private so as to avoid distraction?

**Donations Welcome!**
It’s best to prepare a budget of estimated expenses when you request funding for your program. (We’ve included a sample budget worksheet on p. 32 that can be photocopied.) Here’s a list of some expenses to include:

- facility rental (if not provided by the church)
- program materials—leader/mentor guides, leader resources, and take-home papers/magazines
- Bibles (see Leader Tip, p. 24)
- training materials
- supplies (scissors, glue, markers, cardstock, nametags, and so on)
- photocopying
- postage, letterhead
- phone calls
Funding can come from a variety of sources. Some churches make it part of their budget, with a specific line item for Friendship; others have designated offerings. A particular organization may offer to purchase Bibles or provide snacks. Businesses may be willing to contribute supplies. Donors may give a lump sum of money; friends and families may give memorial gifts for the ministry. (You’ll want to work with your church treasurer to determine how these charitable gifts can be tax deductible.)

Yes, Friendship Needs a Supply Cupboard
Even though most directors cringe at the mention of supply cupboards, every program needs a place to keep things. (Ordering, organizing, and distributing supplies might be a job you could delegate.) Here are a few tips to consider:

- Use stick-on nametags unless you’re sure that the reusable nametags with plastic holders, pins, or necklaces will not present a safety hazard.
- Select construction paper that is labeled “Safe for Photocopiers” or use 24 lb. paper instead. It’s available in a variety of colors from school and office supply stores.
- Use cardstock when photocopying patterns for story figures, memory verse cards, greeting cards, and the like. It’s also available in a variety of colors from school and office supply stores.
- Use rolls of newsprint or white paper, available at print shops, for murals, posters, and the like.
- Ask people to donate large unused pieces of fabric; they can be draped for simple costumes and tied with rope or belts.
- Collect old greeting cards, bits of trim, scraps of felt, and so on for art activities and craft projects.
- Invite senior members and teens to help you prepare story visuals, cut out patterns, assemble craft supplies, and so on. You might want to do this once a year or on a monthly basis rather than every week.
- Take photos of friends and mentors early in the season and have several copies made to use for attendance records, crafts, bulletin boards, and so on.
- Develop a file system for saving story visuals, patterns, and other materials to be reused.

Leader Tip
We suggest using the New International Reader’s Version (NIrV) Bible. Written at the third-grade reading level in clear print, it’s the version used in Friendship Bible Studies and most of the Friendship Life Studies. When selecting a Bible, look for larger fonts. If the cover indicates that it is intended for children, consider adding a book cover. For nonreaders, consider audio versions.

Add the expense of purchasing Bibles to your budget—or invite an organization in your church to make this their project.
Promote! Promote! Promote!

“No one would argue that your program proclaims the most important message in the world: Jesus saves! Still, you’ll need to tell others in your church family how you do that and draw them into the ‘esprit de corps’ that builds community within your church and the larger community” (Jessie Schut, *Sunday School That Really Works*, Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2001).

Jessie Schut knows from personal experience that this same advice holds true for your Friendship program. We’ve adapted some of her promotional ideas for Friendship. To give your program a boost,

- **choose a catchy name.** We suggest that Friendship be part of your local program name, but you may prefer another name that conveys that same concept. Choose a name that’s easy for your friends to say and sign and that is appropriate for your adult friends.
- **choose a slogan** such as “Sharing God’s Love” to reinforce the name of your program and tell others what the purpose is. Keep it short and simple—like a cheer that your friends can understand and say.
- **design a logo.** A simple shape like the heart used by Friendship Ministries will give your program identity. Local Friendship programs are encouraged to use this heart; it is not copyrighted or trademarked (find it online at www.friendship.org/logo.asp). Select the heart or an original design to use on letterhead, T-shirts, tote bags, and other promotional items. (T-shirts and other items with the Friendship logo are available for sale at www.fathaliveresources.org/Disability-Ministry/Friendship-Accessories.) Create something that your friends and mentors will be proud to use!
- **make an annual report** to your church council or board or to the entire congregation.
- **focus on goals and accomplishments** rather than numbers; include a video clip of a Friendship session and a friend’s or mentor’s testimony of the importance of this ministry. (Or, if you prefer more interaction, host an open house with friends and mentors presenting a brief overview of an actual session.)
- **stay in touch with families and caregivers.** Invite them to special events, ask them to volunteer as helpers for one session, and keep them informed.

**Leader Tip**

Remember to get written permission from a parent or guardian if you plan to include a personal story or picture of a friend in any promotional material. Some may prefer that you not use a friend’s name.
While some of your friends may experience Christian community only within the Friendship program, it's our desire that each one be a part of a larger church community where he or she can give and receive spiritual gifts. We call this *mutuality*—everyone benefits from each other's gifts.

**Friends Are Eager to Use Their Gifts**

While developing the Friendship Life Studies course *We All Have Gifts* (Faith Alive, 2000), author Jessie Schut and a team of Friendship staff devised a gifts inventory that identifies nine spiritual gifts that people who have intellectual disabilities are often eager to share. We've included a small sampling of ways your friends can use these gifts to serve in the community of believers on pages 28-29. (You may wish to copy this list to share with your church council or board, worship committee, and so on.)

**Friends Grow When Others Share Their Gifts**

Learning about God's love is an important part of Friendship ministry, but experiencing God's love in Friendship and in the church is even more important. We've already suggested ways you as the program director or group leader can recruit volunteers for your program (see pp. 19-20), but your congregation can share their gifts with your friends in other ways too—especially their gifts of welcoming, helping/serving, praying, and caring/encouraging. Challenge your church family to

- invite a friend to sit with their family every Sunday during worship.
- visit friends at their group homes or their workplace. (You’ll want to first make sure this meets with the supervisor's approval and doesn’t interfere with work goals.)
- take friends out for lunch during their noon break or for coffee or ice cream.
- invite friends to their home for a holiday celebration or family event.
- invite friends to join them in activities like hiking or bowling or invite them to their children’s sporting events.
- attend or coach their Special Olympic events.
- share a DVD and popcorn on a regular basis.
- study the Bible with friends who are ready for a more in-depth study.

While it was easy to see that Jim had won the hearts of Kevin and his family. They knew others would be richer for knowing Jim too. When Kevin asked his friend Grant if Jim could sit with his family in church, everyone grew. Kevin’s mom says, “Jim charmed the socks off Grant’s family.” The very first Sunday he and Grant’s younger brother talked and laughed together over punch. Soon Jim became a regular fan at Grant’s basketball games. The friendship was mutual!
• create an ongoing spot on appropriate committees for friends who have gifts that match the task of the committee.
• invite friends to join a group service project.
• provide respite care for families of younger children with disabilities.
• send cards on birthdays and holidays and notes of encouragement to every friend in your group. (Friends seldom get mail—not even junk mail!)
• send postcard greetings from a family vacation spot.
• regularly visit friends in the hospital and at their home.
• provide transportation to church, work, doctor’s appointments, and the like.
• form a support team for friends who are considering marriage, and commit to supporting this couple for the long haul.
• become prayer partners for friends and mentors.

The Faith Community Experiences Oneness and Peace
When God’s people—regardless of their abilities or other differences—serve God together, everyone receives a blessing and God is honored.

As God’s creations, we are fashioned uniquely, each blessed with individuality of body, mind, and spirit to serve freely the One who has given us life.

Each of us has abilities; each seeks fulfillment and wholeness. Each of us has disabilities; each knows loneliness and incompleteness.

Seeking shelter from the insecurity we all share, claiming our promised place in God’s household of faith, we are included by invitation, acceptance, and love.

In grateful response, we . . .

Worship and serve God, the source of hope and joy. Celebrate and serve one another, rejoicing in our diversity. Transform and serve the world until we become a community which reflects God’s oneness and peace.

—adapted from That All May Worship: An Interfaith Welcome to People with Disabilities, © 1992, 2000, National Organization on Disability. All rights reserved. Used by permission.
Youth and adults who have intellectual disabilities can use the nine spiritual gifts identified in this list in a multitude of ways. Here are just a few examples.

**Understanding**  
* I can help others figure things out.

Friends with the gift of understanding can

- give input to building and worship committees about meeting the needs of people with disabilities.
- supervise parking.
- assist counselors in girls’ or boys’ clubs.

**Telling**  
* I can tell others about Jesus.

Friends with the gift of telling can

- serve as a church school helper.
- play a regular role in storytelling in Friendship or for other groups.
- share their testimony with the congregation.

**Caring/Encouraging**  
* I can show Jesus’ love to others.

Friends with the gift of caring/encouraging can

- participate in a phone ministry to sick and shut-in members of the church.
- help in the church nursery.
- visit or send cards to elderly or sick members of the congregation.

**Giving**  
* I can share what I have with others.

Friends with the gift of giving can

- participate in a food or clothing drive.
- work at a food pantry.
- collect money for Friendship Ministries or other causes.
Creating

*I can make or do beautiful things.*

Friends with the gift of creating can

- make hand-stitched or woodworking crafts for bazaars, ministry causes, or sick and elderly members of the church.
- participate in liturgical dance or drama for worship services.
- sing or play a musical instrument for worship and fellowship events.

Leading

*I can share what I know how to do.*

Friends with the gift of leading can

- direct a project with a small group of Friendship students or young children.
- lead in prayer or sign for worship services.
- act out, tell, or read a Bible story for church school or worship.

Helping/Serving

*I can help people.*

Friends with the gift of helping can

- prepare and serve coffee and snacks during the fellowship hour.
- fold bulletins, stuff envelopes and mailboxes.
- assist the custodian with cleaning, picking up litter, and so on.
**Praying**
*I can spend time talking to God.*

Friends with the gift of praying can

- be a part of a prayer chain or prayer group.
- serve as a prayer partner for program leaders.
- offer to pray when the congregation gathers for worship and fellowship.

**Welcoming**
*I can welcome friends and strangers.*

Friends with the gift of welcoming can

- serve as a greeter at Friendship classes and for worship services.
- serve on a committee to welcome new members.
- help host special events that the congregation celebrates.
**Friendship Registration Form**
We recommend that you keep information about your friend on file for emergencies. Feel free to adapt this sample registration form to meet your group’s needs.

**Personal Data**
Name ___________________________ Birth Date ___________________________
Address ___________________________ Phone ___________________________
Address is ____ family home ____ group home ____ other (check one)
Parent(s)/Legal Guardian(s) ___________________________
Address ___________________________ Phone ___________________________
Other Phone Numbers in Case of Emergency ___________________________
Alternative Contact Person ___________________________
Phone Number for Alternative Contact Person ___________________________

**Security Measures**
Names of persons who may bring or pick up this friend: ___________________________
Names of persons who may not have access to this friend: ___________________________
*Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) will notify the Friendship director in writing if and when these security measures change.

**Other Information**
Allergies or Physical Limitations: ___________________________
Special Instructions for Handling Allergies or Physical Limitations: ___________________________
Dietary Restrictions: ___________________________
Behavioral Concerns: ___________________________
Special Interests (favorite activities, places, and so on): ___________________________
Using last year's budget and expense records from the current year, estimate the amount to be budgeted for the next year for each item listed in the column on the left.

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<th>Item</th>
<th>Last Year's Budget</th>
<th>Actually Spent</th>
<th>Proposed Budget</th>
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<td>Leader/Mentor Guides</td>
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<td>Group Leader Packets (visuals)</td>
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<td>Leader’s Guides</td>
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<td>Friendship Magazine</td>
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<td>Training materials (list)</td>
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