

❖ What is Friendship Circle?

The Friendship Circle is a non-profit organization that addresses the challenges facing the families of children with special needs in an innovative way.

The program begins with the pairing of local teenagers with children for weekly “Friends at Home” visits, but hardly ends there. Through a full range of activities and events, the Circle creates its own special environment of friendship and love.

The Friendship Circle is non-sectarian and non-denominational. Programs are offered free of charge to qualifying families.

At the heart of all of the Friendship Circle’s programming is the belief that each and every individual can be a productive member of the community and benefit from the social support offered by one’s peers. Friendship, acceptance and a chance to participate in socially accepted bonding opportunities are critical to achieving this type of inclusive society.

The Friendship Circle aims to provide children and teenagers with special needs and their families with many of the social and recreational opportunities that are currently available to the general community. These experiences are essential building blocks for an individual to acquire confidence and self esteem and to ultimately lead a productive adult lifestyle.

We envision a world in which people with special needs and their families experience acceptance, inclusion and friendship as contributing members of society.

The Friendship Circle aims to create an environment for teens that will nurture and inspire them with meaning, purpose, and self-value; a sense of connection to and responsibility for the greater community through innovative and stimulating programs. We see this as essential to developing and producing the members and leaders of our community.

The Friendship Circle’s wide array of innovative programming promotes a greater awareness and understanding of both the unique needs and gifts of those with special needs, and encourages respect and empathy for those facing difficult challenges.

❖ Why is our program unique?

While many organizations address the issues of children with special needs, most are focused on goal-oriented therapeutic care. The Friendship Circle brings another dimension in that it offers unconditional love. By having this love flow from the youthful spirit of well-guided teenagers, its effectiveness has proven to be remarkable. These volunteers have been able to reach the children in ways that professionals, or even family members, have not.

Furthermore, the program has had a profound effect on the teenagers themselves, instilling within them the values of giving and gratitude.

❖ The Friendship Circle touches so many...

‡**The child with special needs** looks forward to weekly visits from his or her teenage friends, as well as the special events they get to attend together throughout the year.

‡**The teenage volunteer** learns the value of giving, and cherishes the experience of making a difference in a child's life. Without exception, the teenager gives of his or her time *lovingly*, never grudgingly.

‡**The child's family** gets desperately needed respite from the constant strain and drain, and the pleasure of seeing their child become part of the community. They also get to share and interact with others facing circumstances and challenges similar to their own.

‡**The staff** is a team of leaders and professionals for whom the Friendship Circle is a labor of love. Be it through working with the children, teenagers and parents; or planning the various activities; these dedicated men and women are the driving force behind the program.

" The true beauty of the Circle is how we all link together
to form a seamless circle of friendship."

❖ How can you help complete the circle?

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‡Do you know a teenager who would like to be a volunteer?

‡Are you willing to drive a volunteer to his or her destination?

‡Do you know of a family that can use extra help in their home with children who have special needs?

Then let us know!