

Spring 2005

Extras



Friendship
MINISTRIES

HUGS Ministry – It'll Make You Smile!

Loneliness... Isolation... Friendlessness. One of our goals for this issue of *Extras* is to encourage us all to reflect on the reality that our friends who have disabilities often feel **deep loneliness**. At *Carroll Community Church in Sykesville, Maryland*, a ministry called HUGS, which stands for "Helping Uniquely Gifted Souls," is working to change that—and as a result they're bringing smiles to many faces.

In addition to ministering with *Hug Kids* on Sunday mornings and with teens and adults through a *Hug Givers* class, the leaders of HUGS recognized that parents and siblings of people with disabilities often feel lonely and isolated as well. To address this need, they formed *Huggable Heroes*, a **parent and sibling group** that meets once a month to provide support, encouragement, and a chance to relax and enjoy fellowship together.

While there are plenty of professional resources available to parents, Sandy McCann, HUGS co-director, tells us that HUGS discovered that many families are hungry for opportunities just to feel "normal" and to participate in activities that "normal families" may take for granted. So HUGS arranges **potluck suppers**, a **parents' night out**—where a party is provided for the children while the parents enjoy a party of their own at a nice restaurant, and they're even planning a **camping trip** this April at Codorus State Park in Pennsylvania.



the McCann family

The sibling portion of *Huggable Heroes* is led by Casey Miller, who has an adult brother who has a disability. She is able to speak with the siblings about issues that parents cannot always address, giving brothers and sisters a **safe place to share** their experiences without worrying about hurting their parents' feelings.

As *Hug Kids* learn about Jesus' love for them; as *Hug Givers* share their gifts by serving as greeters, snack providers, and get-well card writers; as *Huggable Heroes* provide encouragement through a storm or just kick back and enjoy each other's company, **friendship replaces loneliness**. And isn't that what all of us need? It'll make *you* smile.



If you would like to learn more about any aspect of HUGS Ministry, please contact Sandy McCann at jjmccann2176@hotmail.com or 410.552.0754.

Andi

"We believe everyone is created in God's image and can relate to God. We also

Expressing Faith in Jesus

Now that we have the new Bible Studies well underway, we have begun to plan supplements that will allow you to reuse the materials by combining various units that work together to explore a theme. The themes we are considering include *forgiveness, beauty, and acceptance.*

The first and the most extensive thematic supplement will be *Expressing Faith in Jesus*, which we are designing to help with **Confirmation, Baptism, or Profession of Faith.** In other words, it will be adaptable to the different ways that churches approach "expressing

faith in Jesus." The supplement will include:

- A revision of the current book *Expressing Faith in Jesus*
- A year-long planner
- A two-session take-home paper with a mentor guide
- A certificate to celebrate the day.

The **book** will be expanded to include more stories, an updated format, liturgies for the congregational service, and more. The **planner**, which will describe how to combine existing units, will be downloadable for free at www.friendship.org.

Friendship's famous artwork will make for attractive **take-home papers** and will tie in with the existing units for continuity. The **certificate** will be of keepsake quality, with space for the person's name, pastor's name, date, and church. Family and friends will be able to sign their names and greetings on it as well. We hope this will be something that reminds our friends of that momentous day.

We are planning to have *Expressing Faith in Jesus* ready in the late spring, so stay tuned!

A New Look & New Features for Our Website!

www.friendship.org is getting an overhaul, which we hope will be complete by the time you receive this newsletter. It will include:

- **A new look** with more color, more photos, and a more readable layout.
- **Streamlined organization** to help you find your way around the site more easily.
- **A Recommended Reading List** that we will be adding to as we find resources we think you'll appreciate.
- **An Idea Center** that will be updated quarterly and will include:
 - Art projects and techniques.
 - Tips to help nurture your group.
 - An opportunity to share your ideas with others.
- **And more!**

We hope the new website will be a place you will visit again and again for fresh ideas and inspiration. So pay us a virtual visit, and add www.friendship.org to your list of favorites.

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!

Ralph & Carol:

- Mid-February: northern Indiana and Chicago area. *Ralph and Carol are planning to visit a number of churches. If you'd like yours to be one of them, let us know!*
- Late February: Salt Lake City, UT

Nella, Gwen, and Ralph & Carol:

- April 30: Lives That Make a Difference conference, Sioux Falls, SD

"This Is Not Junk!"

We know that you don't think the **Friendship online newsletter** is junk, but many of your email programs do!

If you signed up but have not been receiving the newsletter, it may be that the junk-mail filter in your email account is identifying it as SPAM.

Different programs require different solutions to this problem: you may need to add friendship@friendship.org to your list of "safe senders", or you may need to select a copy of the newsletter in your junk email folder and click the "not junk" icon.

believe salvation is a gift that is not dependent on a certain level of intelligence.”

“My Friend is Low Functioning – He Can’t Read or Speak Much”



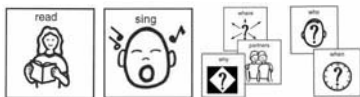
We hear this comment frequently, and we hope that we can clear up some misunderstandings. First of all, be careful about your assumptions: just because your friend can’t read or speak easily doesn’t mean he can’t understand. Our friends are often underestimated by the people they encounter. When you speak to them, remember that they likely understand more than you think they do.

It may be helpful to keep the distinction between receptive language and expressive language in mind: *receptive language* is employed when we **read** or **hear**. *Expressive language*, on the other hand, is used when we **speak** or **write**. Many of our friends hear just fine, even if they have trouble reading, speaking, and writing. Watch your friend’s eyes when you speak directly to her: her whole face will light up as a way to let you know she understands. At times you will need to rephrase your sentence or question to ensure that she understands you. (Sometimes I find that my message really is as clear as mud!)

One method for communicating with a friend who has trouble speaking is to use the Mayer-Johnson *Picture Communication Symbols* for your friend to point to. Check whether these are used at home or in the group home. Often they are placed on a person’s wheelchair tray under a Plexiglas cover that has holes over the symbols so they can be easily found. Even if you use only five or six symbols, this could open up a new avenue of communication between the two of you. It may take some time for both of you to adjust, but it is worth the effort.

So “low functioning” is not a description we should easily attach to our friends. Some of them may not read but have great social skills. Abilities are not always evenly present. But one thing is sure – they are image bearers and need our friendship as much as we need them in our lives to show us what really matters in our faith.

Check out *The Picture Communication Symbols* © 1981-2005, Mayer Johnson LLC, used here with permission, All rights reserved worldwide. Available from the publisher at: P.O. Box 1579, Solana Beach, CA 92075-7579 / tel: 800.588.4548.



New Toll-Free

Friendship has a brand new toll-free number: 888.866.8966. Commit it to memory! (Or mark it in your address book.)

Lives that Make a Difference

A conference sponsored by Hope Haven and Friendship Ministries

Mark your calendars! On Saturday, April 30, Hope Haven and Friendship Ministries will sponsor a one-day event in Sioux Falls, SD for anyone interested in disability issues.

Keynote speaker **Judy Siegle** will speak on the conference theme, “Lives that Make a Difference.” From her wheelchair, Judy has made a difference in the lives of many people – as a believer in Jesus Christ, an athlete, and an encourager of those facing the challenge of disability. *You won’t want to miss her!*

Along with Judy’s challenging words, there will be **workshops** for those involved in Friendship or other church ministry, for families with a disabled member, and for those seeking information on certain disabling conditions. A preliminary list of workshops includes:

- Recruiting Volunteers
- Music and Art Ideas
- Behavior Issues
- Expressing Faith in Jesus
- Serving Communion
- Spiritual Retreats
- Mental Illness
- Autism
- Housing
- Church Accessibility
- How to Start a Disability Ministry

For more information, write to friendship@friendship.org or call 888.866.8966.



from the director

The holidays are over, and for many of us the days are short on sunshine—especially this side of Lake Michigan where cloudy skies are the norm. For our friends this can be a time of year that keeps them indoors and isolated from others. A time of **loneliness**.

At last November's national ARC conference in Boston I heard David Pitonyak, one of the general session speakers, talk about being **connected** to the people we love. David said this connectedness is critical to our emotional and physical well-being. He illustrated this by telling of his relationship of many years with a man who has cognitive impairments. This relationship included visits even after one of them moved a distance away, phone calls with some frequency, and letters. David maintained that this relationship-building was more important than all the services and coverage that are provided.

This presentation was given to some parents and many professionals working in the disability field. Too bad David was not familiar with you mentors! In many cases you are that one person in your friend's life who is not a paid staff person. To the professionals and paid staff, people with cognitive impairments are called "client," "consumer," or "constituent." *You call them "friend." You are making a difference in their lives.*

In this New Year I want to encourage you in this relationship. Make it a resolution to invite your friend to an activity outside of the program you both participate in. Nurturing a friendship takes time.



Patrick and Tom

Additional activities will enable you to see your friend in different ways and will give you more to talk about and share.

Over the years I have seen the effect long-term relationships have had on our friends. When Pat came to Friendship it was difficult to get him to do anything. His eyes often welled up with tears, and he refused to participate when his mentor was not there. In turn, it seemed that his mentors changed every year. Finally a mentor came along who stuck with Pat. Through the years Pat has learned to trust that even though there are times his mentor cannot come to the Friendship program, he will be back. Today, 16 years later, Pat is one of the more outgoing, charming members of the program and is viewed as such by the entire congregation. He has attended the wedding of his mentor's daughter and has been to church potlucks and small group gatherings with his mentor's family, as well as to their home for dinner. What a difference a long-term relationship has made in Pat's life!

Nella Uitvlugt

Special Gifts

We are grateful for gifts received in 2004 in memory of:

- Bernard Apol
- Mary Louters
- Craig Spidell



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