

outings



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BUILDING A DEEPER RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR FRIEND

A Mentor Shares What Works

by Marie DeVries



Marie and Connie enjoy their deepening friendship. ❖❖

• **Visit** Anna. This could mean so much to her, especially if she lives in a group home or seldom has visitors. Seeing her home setting will help you understand where she is coming from and what life is like for her outside of Friendship group. A visit will also let her know that she is an important part of your life.

• **Call** David. If he lives far away or if you are unable to visit, surprise him with a phone call every now and then. See how his week is going, ask if there's anything in particular you can pray for, and tell him you're looking forward to seeing him at the next Friendship meeting.

• **Invite** Melody over to your house for dinner. If your friend is able to visit you, bring her into your life and introduce her to your family. Then watch how she becomes a

blessing to them. Or take her out for dinner, to a movie, or anything else she might enjoy doing.

• **Send** Ben a card. Remember his birthday, or write him a note just to let him know you are thinking about him. If your friend isn't able to read or doesn't have someone to read letters for him, haul out your colored pencils and try corresponding through pictures.

• **Interview** Paula. If Friendship group is the only place that works to meet your friend, ask her to bring favorite pictures or items from home, and you do the same. During one-on-one time, ask each other questions, tell stories, and give your testimonies. If your friend is nonverbal, invite a family member or caregiver to sit with you and to share what they know about your friend.

• **Pray** with Ryan. Praying together has a way of deepening our relationships with each other even as it draws us closer to God. If your friend is uncomfortable praying at first, come up with a prayer script to pray together. If your friend is nonverbal, find other ways to pray together, including sign language, gestures, or perhaps a prayer song.

• **Remember**, if you are unsure how to build a deeper relationship with your friend, ask family members or caregivers for ideas. They know your friend better than you do, and with their help you and your friend can build a lasting relationship.



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About the Author, Marie, and Her Friend, Connie

Connie has been part of a Friendship group for about ten years. Singing is her favorite part of the meetings, and "Jesus Loves Me" is her favorite song. She also enjoys being an angel in the Christmas pageant. Connie has learned that God helps people and that God helps her. She has also learned that she can help people: by pushing wheelchairs, by making cards for those who are sick, and by praying regularly for her nieces and nephews, aunts and uncles, and others.

Connie is very outgoing and has made many new friends in her Friendship group.

One of these friends is Marie. Marie joined the group almost five years ago when she was a new member of the church. The Friendship group welcomed her with open arms, and she has loved Friendship ever since. She is especially thankful for her relationship with Connie, whom she describes as a "faithful and loyal friend."

Through Friendship, Marie also discovered something about herself: the passion God has given her for working with people who have cognitive impairments. She is currently pursuing a degree in Special Education and has spent summers working in group homes. ■

Head of Friendship Ministries Appointed to Leadership Roles in Two National Organizations



You probably know her simply as "Nella," but now Friendship's Executive Director, Nella Uitvlugt, is also President-Elect of the Religion and Spirituality Division of AAIDD (the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities). Her term as President will begin sometime in the next two years and will last for two years.

Nella looks forward to the challenge! She hopes not only to increase membership but also to nurture the work member organizations do. By strengthening the connections between member organizations and encouraging them to share resources, Nella hopes to enable everyone to work together toward common goals.

Nella was also recently appointed to the Leadership Team of the National Council of Churches' Committee on Disabilities. In this position she plans to work toward similar goals, such as developing partnerships with organizations like the AAIDD. ■

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



Nella

February 13-16: Association of Presbyterian Church Educators, San Diego, CA

Tony & Diana

November 3: Circle of Support, Arc of Greater Prince William, Woodbridge, VA

Ralph & Carol

November 19-December 31: OH, WV, VA, NC, SC, GA, FL

Elizabeth (*Amistad*)

October 17-21: Expocristiana, Mexico DF



FRIENDSHIP FAMILY



Welcome to the family
Join us in welcoming
the following groups:

- First Evangelical Lutheran Church of Oswego, NY
- Kankakee First Church of the Nazarene of Kankakee, IL
- Mars Hill Bible Church of Grandville, MI
- Noel Memorial United Methodist of Shreveport, LA
- Our Savior Lutheran Church of Delano, CA
- Palm Harbor United Methodist Church of Palm Harbor, FL
- St. Paul's Catholic Church and Woodlawn Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, MI
- Woodlands Church of Plover, WI

FRONT PAGE NEWS!

Congratulations to the Friendship Club of **Zion Lutheran Church of Milaca, MN** for being featured on the front page of their local paper, the *Mille Lacs County Times*. Perhaps someone who reads about their group may be inspired to join--or to start a new group! ■

Know of a group that's not on this list? Has your group or someone in it received an award? Or appeared in your local newspaper?

If so, let us know! Contact Renee at 888.866.8966 (ext. 3) or bustr@friendship.org



Notas DE AMISTAD

Amistad Groups Spread in Peru and Colombia through Grassroots Efforts

Thanks to two dedicated leaders who can't keep good news to themselves, several new *Amistad* groups started this summer in **Sullana, Peru** and **Bogotá, Colombia**.

In Sullana, Peru, the leader of an *Amistad* group that formed in September 2006 shared the *Amistad* ministry model and materials with three nearby churches, each of which started a group of its own! The churches are:

- Jesus Christ Lord of Lords Evangelical Baptist Church
- Followers of Christ Evangelical Baptist Church
- Faithful and True Jesus Christ Evangelical Baptist Church

In Bogotá, Colombia, the story takes a different twist. The director of the *Amistad* ministry at El Renuevo Church is also a teacher. She was inspired to take *Amistad* outside the walls of her church to her students at school!

Each of these new groups is located in a poor area, where necessities like wheelchairs can be difficult to find. These groups express their gratitude for the *Amistad* materials provided to them through the support of our generous donors -- thank you! ■

The light of Christ is spread through a new *Amistad* group in Colombia



TRY THIS!



AWARENESS CARNIVAL

The group at **St. Theresa's** in **Federal Way, WA** held a Disability Awareness Carnival, spreading both awareness and smiles! They invited local organizations to come and advertise their services alongside booths with games, prizes, and treats. Their local Knights of Columbus provided all the food, so the event was not too costly for the group.

CHRISTMAS GIVING

Rather than make ornaments as they usually do at their Christmas Potluck, the group at **Ann Arbor Christian Reformed Church** in **Ann Arbor, MI** decided to make gift packages for the children of Emaus Christian School in Esteli, Nicaragua. The church's youth group had visited the school and noticed that students lacked basic supplies. So the youth group got together with the Friendship group to bless the students with gifts of notebooks, colored pencils, soccer balls, and more! ■

RESIDENTS MOVE INTO FRIENDSHIP HOUSE AT WESTERN SEMINARY

Will This Unique Model Spread to Other Campuses?

A year ago we told you about the groundbreaking for Friendship House at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, MI, a new kind of housing where adults with cognitive impairments and seminary students live together in the heart of campus.

We are happy to report that the first residents of Friendship House have moved in! When we first told you about Friendship House, we introduced you to Rob Sterken. We thought you might like to hear how the move is going for Rob. Here's what his mom told us:

"Rob spent the summer at camp until it was time to come home and get organized for the move. He was generally pumped to move and to be independent. Shopping for the essentials was not interesting to him. He said 'Mom you just do it.' Rob was more worried about the keys, who would help with grocery shopping, and getting his basketball clothes to Hope College—where he works with the basketball team—before the season begins.

Bob (Rob's dad) brought him to Friendship House, got the keys, and met Katie, the resident advisor. It was a 'man move-in,' just the necessities: sheets, towels, a computer, and a TV.

When Bob met Dave, one of the new roommates, he described Rob as a good roommate who would tune in to the rules of the apartment. Dave's response was 'We need to know Rob's rules as well.' It was a good start to a new relationship and independent living.

Since the move Rob has talked with his siblings who live out of state. They report that he sounds like he is on cloud nine and says 'I'm not even homesick.'

Rob and all the residents are hooked up to the Internet now and are anxiously waiting to get the cable hooked up. The big screen TV in the lounge is ready for football Saturdays and watching movies with new friends in the House."

Sounds like a great start for this new adventure! Perhaps other seminaries will be inspired to replicate the Friendship House model on their campuses. **If you're connected with a seminary, spread the word!** ■



Share Your Ideas! Each Friendship group is unique and has creative ideas to share. Send yours to Renee at buistr@friendship.org or call 888.866.8966 ext. 2 -- 3 (mail works, too—see the back page for details).



FROM THE DIRECTOR

A CURE FOR SWEATY PALMS

Back in February I received an e-mail from Pam Sells, who had been asked to lead the Friendship group in her church. This was a scary prospect, and she needed encouragement. Well, that's what we're here for! Listen in on a few of her emails as she grew into her new role:

February 20

"I just read the article where you mentioned starting out with sweaty palms. Well in two weeks I start leading our Friendship group. When asked, I immediately planned to say no, but I felt a nagging tug at my heart and agreed to pray about it. I prayed for two weeks wanting to say no, but feeling compelled by the Lord to say yes. The Lord won, but I haven't a clue what I am doing. Basically, I am scared to death and could really relate to your statement about sweaty palms. I do not even know why I am writing you other than the fact that your statement seemed to connect with how I am feeling right now. Feeling like I'm jumping off a cliff in faith, Pam"

March 14

"Thank you for your encouragement. I have taught two Sundays now. I have been praying that the Lord would give me a real love for my students, and of course he has. I have also been praying that he would help me to be able to communicate with them, and he has. It is a challenge, but a real blessing. --Pam"



Learn how to create this banner at www.friendship.org

June 10

"Doing great. The Lord called me into this, and he gave me a love for these guys. We have built up a relationship and love for one another. One of the parents told me that their son never wanted to go to church before, but now he wants to come. I know that this is the Holy Spirit working. Thank you for your help. When I wrote that first letter I felt so isolated and scared. The Lord provided you as a lifeline, and you really helped me feel connected. Love, Your sis in Christ, Pam"

August 29

Pam wrote to say she and her husband were coming to Grand Rapids for the September 8 conference. When they came to my workshop, they encouraged me: I got a huge hug from both of them--a great way to start a presentation!

Do you ever need encouragement? We can help!

- Want to meet with other leaders in your area? We have the list.
- Need new ideas for prayer time? Ask us.
- Have an overabundance of friends? We will help you encourage another church to begin a program.
- Ask us for the Curriculum Overview so you can see all the lessons available.
- Check out www.friendship.org for downloadable materials for training mentors, tips to nurture your group, and more!
- If you are nearby our office and want to borrow materials, we lend them out!
- Sign up for our online newsletter if you haven't already.

Do you realize that hearing from you encourages us? Your stories inspire us and keep us going! We also need to hear from you to make sure we have your contact information, number of friends, and number of mentors. So be in touch! ■

Nella Vitellug



Challenge: 40 New Friendship Groups in 2008

We at Friendship Ministries have set a goal: to help start at least 40 new Friendship groups in 2008.

We'll be busy working to make this happen: talking with families, visiting churches, spreading the word at conferences, connecting people together.

But did you know that **you** are also a critical part of the team? We rely on people like you, who have already caught the Friendship vision, to spread the word to the people and churches around you.

Are there friends at a group home in your neighborhood who need a church to include them? Is there a church down the street that would reach out if they only knew how? If so, tell them about Friendship Ministries! And be sure to be in touch with us so we can help.

To learn about how *Amistad* leaders are spreading the word, read "Notas de Amistad" on p. 3. ■

THANKS FOR LEARNING WITH US

A big **thank-you** to everyone who attended the "One Body Together in Christ" conference on September 8. It was invigorating for us to meet about 170 of you and to spend the day learning together.

Keynote speaker Sondra Williams shared with us her feelings of being *exiled* from church until she found a church that would fully embrace her. Let's keep up the important work of sharing God's love! ■

FOR PROCRASTINATORS:
The Christmas Book

FOR ADVANCE
PLANNERS:
The Easter Book



Still wondering what to do for Advent and Christmas? Or are you counting how many fronds you'll need for Palm Sunday while others sing "Away in a Manger"?



Either way, Friendship has what you need! *The Christmas Book* and *The Easter Book* are full of songs, dramas, craft activities, patterns, service projects, and more. **With so many ideas, these are resources you'll use year after year!**

Plus, the materials in these resources can be photocopied, so you'll need only one copy of each book for the group leader. ■



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