

ב"ה

FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE OF THE WEST SIDE



VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT
FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE AND THE *"FRIENDS @ HOME"*
PROGRAM

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Who is the Friendship Circle for?

A: The Friendship Circle is for anyone who needs a friend. Children with special needs and their families form a significant part of our organization, as do adults with special needs who could use friendship and some support. Brought together by friendship and trust, children with special needs and our teenage volunteers form a warm and welcoming community.

Q: What does the Friendship Circle do?

A: The Friendship Circle organizes many programs for children with special needs and their volunteers. The Friendship Circle's mission is to integrate children with special needs into a warm and accepting community, and to provide social, therapeutic and respite programs for them and their families.

Q: What do Friendship Circle volunteers do?

A: Two Friendship Circle volunteers will visit the home of a child with special needs or as we like to say "Your Special Friend". Your mission: Become his or her **BEST FRIEND!** These children have parents, siblings, school teachers and doctors just like you do. All they're missing is a true friend. See below for "All about Friends@Home."

Q: How old must I be to volunteer?

A: You must be at least twelve years old to volunteer. After that, there is no limit on your age!

Q: How often must I volunteer?

A: You must volunteer once a week to be part of the Friendship Circle Volunteer Club. Volunteering is a commitment for the full

duration of the school year. Make sure you are ready for this year-long commitment before you sign up. If for some reason you need to cancel a Friends @ Home visit, you must notify us at least 24 hours in advance!

When you commit to volunteering, expect it to take at least an hour of your time each week – in addition to travel time.

Q: How do I become a Friendship Circle Volunteer?

A: There are a few steps:

- **First**, call the Friendship Circle or e-mail your local Friendship Circle Coordinator to request a New Volunteer Form.
- **Then**, set up a meeting with our Volunteer Coordinator to discuss which programs would suit you and your schedule best. At the meeting, you'll have a chance to discuss all of your questions and concerns.
- **Next**, fill out all the appropriate paper work
- **After that**, you will be partnered with another volunteer and matched with your special friend
- **Lastly**, complete our Volunteer Training Program that occurs periodically throughout the year

Congratulations!

You're now an official Friendship Circle Volunteer!

ALL ABOUT "FRIENDS@HOME"

The Process:

- The Volunteer Coordinator gives you the name and contact information of the family of the child you will volunteer for, and tells you a little about them.
- The Volunteer Coordinator calls the family and arranges a time for a weekly visit that is good for both you and the family.
- The Parents of your special friend will contact you to discuss their child's favorite activities in preparation for your first visit.
- The Volunteer Coordinator will accompany you the first time you visit your special friend at home. The coordinator will introduce you to each other and make sure you are comfortable before leaving you to get to know each other.

Q: How long must I wait before I can start volunteering at Friends@Home?

A: Once you apply for the Friends@Home program, and have discussed all the details with the Volunteer Coordinator, it may take time until you are setup to visit the home of a child with special needs. The time it takes reflects the availability, scheduling and personality match of both you and the child.

To ensure your Friends@Home arrangement happens more quickly:

- 👉 Provide a few days of the week that you are able to volunteer
- 👉 Make sure you are able to drive yourself there and back, or that you have a ride
- 👉 If you would like to volunteer together with a friend, make sure you have compatible schedules.

Q: How do I know what activities to do with my special friend in the *Friends@Home Program*?

A: The Volunteer Coordinator will tell you about your special friend and his or her parents will be available to guide you as well. You can always ask questions or bring up your concerns. Very often, parents will suggest activities and games that their child enjoys and point you in the right direction by explaining their child's likes and dislikes.

Q: Am I going to be left alone with my special friend when I visit his or her home as part of the Friends@Home program?

A: When you visit your child in his or her home as part of the Friends@Home program, you are not expected to be left alone with full responsibility for your special friend. The parents or guardian will be on hand to help with bathroom issues, and will be on top of any major health or safety risks. However, you must ensure that the activities and things that you do with your special friend are safe and appropriate. Turn to the parents immediately if you are worried about the safety or health of your special friend.

Q: Where can I get ideas for games and activities to do with my special friend?

A: Here's a bunch of suggestions!

- 👉 Ask your special friend's parent for their child's favorite activities and ideas

- 👉 Visit www.fcvolunteer.com and check out our activity section
- 👉 Surf the Web or ask friends for ideas of activities, recipes, and crafts
- 👉 Bring your favorite games or books from your house
- 👉 Find out your friend's favorite music, games, authors and pastimes, to give you an idea of what he/she likes to do

~OR~

- 👉 Ask your special friend, "What should we do today?"
- 👉 If you're still unsure, call us and we'll help you out!

Q: What if I am late or must cancel a Friends@Home appointment?

A: Simple: Don't be late! And don't cancel your appointment! Always remember that your visit may very well be the highlight of your special friend's week. Canceling an appointment or arriving late causes your special friend and his or her parents more disappointment and stress than you may realize. Please remain committed and visit your friend consistently. In an emergency, when it is necessary to cancel or come late due to matters out of your control, you ***MUST contact us or the family 24 hours PRIOR to your scheduled visiting time!*** The Friendship Circle expects volunteers to take responsibility in protecting the feelings of their special friends and their families by doing their utmost to remain consistent and reliable in their volunteering.

Q: How do I keep in touch with the Friendship Circle once I begin volunteering as part of the Friends@Home program?

A: Progress reports are the best way to keep in contact with us

once you begin volunteering. They will be emailed to you on a weekly basis, following each visit. These tell us that you are consistent, and allow you to bring up any of your questions or comments.

*In addition, feel free to call us at any time with any concerns you might have, or just to chat.

Q: Who can I talk to if I have a question or concern regarding my Friends@Home setup?

A: If you have concerns about your setup, are having scheduling conflicts or feel uncomfortable in your special friend's home, do not hesitate to call us. We can help you by rescheduling, giving you tips and guidance on how to deal with your special friend, or point you in the direction of some great resources. The Friendship Circle can also communicate with the family of your special friend to help make your volunteering experience more enjoyable.

Q: What if a Friends@Home setup does not work out?

A: Usually, a volunteer and his/her special friend develop a wonderful friendship built on trust and care, but occasionally, a setup may not work out for various reasons. If this is the case, we will help you communicate with the family of your special friend and can set you up at the home of another child with special needs or a different Friendship Circle program which may be more successful for you.

VOLUNTEER COMMUNICATION

Q: What are progress reports, and why are they so important?

A: Progress reports are a short form that you can fill out online after each time you volunteer. The Volunteer Coordinator keeps track of them to ensure that your volunteering experience is a good one.

Sending in postcards/activity reports is important because:

- It allows us to ensure the consistency of your volunteering.
- It helps our staff keep in touch with you, so that we can help out if necessary and rearrange things if you are unhappy.
- It's the only way we can keep a record of your hours for community service and recommendation letters.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Q: What is the confidentiality policy of the Friendship Circle?

A: The Friendship Circle protects the confidentiality of all volunteers and families who take part in our program. All medical and personal information disclosed to Friendship Circle staff is used only to protect your health and safety and remain classified. Any information you know or learn about your special friend, other special children, or volunteers of the Friendship Circle, is confidential – and must remain so. It is inappropriate and hurtful to discuss anything about your special friend with others, even if it may seem innocent or is said without meaning any harm.

Children with special needs have the right to take part in Friendship Circle programs with complete privacy, and to be treated with dignity and respect

COMMUNITY SERVICE HOURS

Q: Can I volunteer for the Friendship Circle to help complete my community service hours?

A: Yes! Hours spent volunteering at the Friendship Circle count as community service hours. Please note that your community service hours are

recorded according to the number of reports you send in. This is the ONLY way we track your attendance and volunteer hours. If you need the Friendship Circle staff to fill out any forms, contracts, reports, etc. please ensure you provide your Volunteer Coordinator with the vital information at least **two weeks** before the letter is due. This allows us sufficient time to complete it and get it to you or your supervisor in time.

Q: Does the Friendship Circle write recommendation letters for college or job applications?

A: We often write recommendation letters, please give us a two week notice so that we can complete it in time.

VOLUNTEER COMMITMENT

Q: Why all the stress on “commitment”?

A: When you choose to become a Friendship Circle volunteer, you choose to carry a lot of responsibility. This commitment and devotion is the greatest gift anyone can give your special friend, and builds a relationship of trust and sincerity.

The biggest disappointment for anyone – especially a child with special needs – is to lose a friend. It takes them a long time to get over those feelings, and makes it much more difficult for them to trust the sincerity of other friends in the future.

For this reason, we are very adamant about our expectations of our volunteers and we ask that you not let down your special friend; even though we know it can be difficult. That’s why we urge you to sign up for programs you think you’ll be able to stay committed to, and will not require too many disruptions over the course of the year.

The hundreds of capable, devoted and extremely reliable volunteers worldwide show us that it is possible, and we are very proud of them! Join them!

FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE'S CODE OF CONDUCT

I will promote the creation of a friendship community based on mutual respect and a sense of personal well-being. I will treat others with honor and respect because we are all created in the image of G-d.

As a volunteer of Friendship Circle:

- * I understand that parents are relying on the Friendship Circle to match their child with a responsible teenager. I agree to utilize my best judgment and sense of responsibility when spending time with the child I am matched with.
- * I understand that the use of a cell phone during a Friends@Home visit does not promote a healthy friendship and should only be used in case of emergency.
- * In the event that I am unable to volunteer during my scheduled visit, I will try to find another day to substitute and I will notify the parents of my special friend, and my Friends@Home coordinator at least 24 hours in advance.
- * I agree to respect the privacy of all participants of the Friendship Circle and to keep personal information confidential.
- * I understand that once I commit to attend an event, the Friendship Circle staff and special friends are relying on me to be there. I agree to attend and give it my best effort. In the event that I cannot attend, I agree to give notice to Friendship Circle staff, at least 48 hours in advance.
- * If someone gets hurt or some other detrimental incident occurs

while I am volunteering, it is my responsibility to immediately report the occurrence to Friendship Circle Staff.

- * I agree to represent the Friendship Circle to the best of my abilities.
- * I have carefully read agree to abide and be bound by all additional rules and policies in the Friendship Circle Handbooks and any additional rules pertinent to specific events.

