LEWISVILLE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

CIRCLE OF FRIENDS

HANDBOOK
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MAKE A FRIEND . .

MAKE A
DIFFERENCE
Beatitudes for Special People

Blessed are you who take time to listen to difficult speech, for you help us to know that if we persevere we can be understood.

Blessed are you who walk with us in public places and ignore the stares of strangers, for in your friendship we feel good to be ourselves.

Blessed are you who never bid us to “hurry up” and you who do not snatch our tasks from our hands to do for us, for often we need time rather than help.

Blessed are you who stand beside us as we enter new and untried ventures, for our unsureness will be outweighed by the times when we surprise ourselves and you.

Blessed are you who ask for our help and realize our giftedness, for our greatest need is to be needed.

Blessed are you who help us with the graciousness of Christ, for often we need the help we cannot ask for.

Blessed are you who assure us that what makes us individuals is not our particular disability or difficulty, but our beautiful God given personhood which no handicapping condition can confine.

Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for your understanding and love have opened the doors for us to enjoy life to its fullest, and you helped us believe in ourselves as valued and gifted people.
LISD

Circle of Friends

Mission Statement

To enrich the lives of all students by creating lasting relationships regardless of differences, and to enhance and bring forth the community spirit for the present and for the future.

Circle of Friends is a school sponsored club composed of students who desire to initiate and develop friendships with peers who have special needs. These students look for opportunities to include their friends in activities during and after school, (including weekends), and to make a difference in their lives.

The name Circle of Friends comes from the concept that everyone has three circles of people surrounding them. Each circle represents a different type of relationship. The first and closest circle represents family members. The second/middle circle is made up of friends and peers. The third circle is made up of professionals in the community who provide services such as teachers, coaches, doctors, ministers, etc.

Young people with special needs sometimes only have two circles of people, the first and last, who touch their lives. The Circle of Friends was created to fill the gap of the second circle so that students with special needs would be surrounded with friends.
Why Circle of Friends?

Circle of Friends is an opportunity for individuals without disabilities to develop relationships with students with disabilities. This is an essential component of enriching the lives of all students.

*There is no disability that precludes relationship.*

Al Etmanski – “A Good Life”

As students with disabilities mature they face a greater risk of rejection or isolation from the community in which they live. Each person faces the same dilemma in their own lives. By fostering a *Circle of Friends*, students develop relationships and friendships that may transcend the school day and ease the student’s feelings of isolation and loneliness.

*‘Loneliness is the only real disability’*

David Pitonyak, 2002

The development and implementation of a Circle of Friends also assists in facilitating inclusive activities for students with disabilities. Evidence is clear that students with disabilities develop greater competence in cognitive, academic, language, and social development when they are surrounded by students without disabilities. The Circle of Friends allows this to happen naturally. Students are able to be integrated with less bias and fear of their differences.

*Inclusive education is a human right, its good education and it makes good social sense.*

CSIE, 1998

This Circle of Friends Handbook is provided to assist campuses in developing, implementing, and sustaining a Circle of Friends group. The pages in the Handbook are samples, suggestions, and guidelines that are meant to provide the framework for campuses. Forms, videos, and contact information for each participating campus can be accessed through the LISD website.

For guidance and/or assistance at any step of the way please contact the Special Education Department at 469.713.5203.
Each Elementary school in the LISD district offer different special education programs. Please keep in mind that the following ideas are merely suggestions and may or may not be feasible on every campus.

Remember it is in the Elementary schools that many students are exposed to children with special needs for the first time. Therefore, this is the place where an “acceptance” is first born. It is imperative that the attitude amongst all teachers is positive, warm, and accepting.

Communication between General Education teachers and Special Education teachers is very important. Coordinating schedules and communicating the “need” to have students interact with each other should be established first. You may want to ask for volunteers from Gen. Ed. Teachers at the beginning of the school year. Meet with those teachers, share your expectations with them, and come up with a plan. The importance of fun activities for the students to share is a good place to start. Keep in mind that the Kindergarten to 2nd grade students will have a different understanding and maturity level than the 3rd to 5th grade students. Therefore, the type of activities and responsibilities may differ tremendously.

- Have students who are younger help with opening doors, or carrying backpacks, or walking with a buddy to the classroom. These are simple ways to get the younger students involved. Encouraging the younger students to say a simple “hello” is a good start.
- While there are campuses that do a lot of inclusion, encourage more participation in class parties, and fun activities. Having a buddy help them get through a lunch line, or carrying their tray, or being a “buddy” during recess are some suggestions.
- One of the biggest challenges for the Functional Life Skills classrooms is the fact that many students are non-verbal and non-ambulatory. One campus involves whole grade levels to help bridge that gap. The FLS teacher invites every 3rd grade class into her classroom and introduces them to all her students. She talks to them about special needs, and while not all students can see, hear, talk or walk the same as they do, they still have feelings and can learn too…just differently. Then she invites each 3rd grade student to come into her classroom and help her students during a Circle Time or Music lesson. Every 3rd grade student is eager to help. They have a lot of fun singing songs and
playing the instruments together. By doing this, it has been
discovered that as 4th graders, these students want to come back
and help again. So the FLS teacher has established a 4th grade
program where all the 4th graders take turns volunteering their
recess time to come into the classroom and read to a buddy. The
students that keep volunteering their time and returning
throughout the year are your first Circle of Friend members.
Then as 5th graders, the volunteering of recess time continues,
and as 5th graders, there are additional rewards, such as helping
with pushing wheelchairs, bringing them in from the bus, under
supervision, and getting special treatment from their teachers.
One reward system being used is receiving special certificates at
the end of the year.

There are many ways to bring these students together for socializing
and just plain having fun. Establishing an atmosphere of friendship,
safety, and acceptance begins on the Elementary level.
MIDDLE SCHOOL
Steps to Creating/Maintaining a Circle of Friends on a Middle School Campus

1. SEEKING SPONSORS: Talk to the Principal first, and with their permission, seek a sponsor who has an interest in these students and a vision for the purpose of Circle of Friends. The sponsor should also have a good rapport with the students (a counselor, a teacher, a paraprofessional, etc.), and should be dedicated for the entire duration of the school year.

   Two or three teachers could co-sponsor:
   - a General Education teacher who has contact with the General Education and Special Education students
   - a Special Education teacher who knows Special Education students well, and could help educate the General Education students and welcome them into his/her classroom.
   - Part of the process for acquiring sponsors should include a brief summary of COF and the types of activities used in the program. This could be presented to interested staff by the special education teachers/sponsors.

2. INFORM: Once a sponsor is found, an initial letter should be sent home to inform the parents about the start up of a Circle of Friends and to invite these students to attend the meeting (sample letters are included in this handbook).

3. MEMBERSHIP: At the middle school level, membership is open to anyone who needs a friend and wants to be a friend. Students will start by coming to the meetings to find out what COF is all about and what activities they can be involved in.

4. PARTICIPATION: Here are the opportunities for members of Circle of Friends to participate in the club:

   - Visit the students in class during lunch or when there is some extra time at the end of class. (use COF pass).
• Take a Special Education student to visit your class when there is a special or appropriate activity they can participate in, or have a regular time each week that your teacher includes one of these students in the activity. (There is a form that the regular classroom teacher can sign up for this)

• Attend and participate in the club’s monthly activities or fundraisers.

• Visit students at their home, or take them to a movie, etc. with parent supervision.

• Go on a Friday with the Special Education class on a community based outing.

• Sign up as a student assistant or peer mentor in one of the special education or gym classes. At the middle school level, students may start to peer mentor or becomes aides in special education settings (classroom, gym, etc). The peer mentors can be selected/nominated by school staff or it could be opened to all interested students. The students would be required to have parent permission and support in order to participate in as a COF mentor.

• Attend COF meetings.

6. PROMOTE To advertise for members, put up signs around the school telling about the meeting; include the day, time and place. Also advertise over the announcements. Members can also share with athletic teams and classrooms about Circle of Friends. A table with COF information can be set up at open house, orientation, and even during the lunch periods. Also, an announcement can be made over the loud speaker prior to a meeting reminding anyone who may have forgotten.

7. SIGN IN At the first meeting, there should be a sign up sheet where students put their name, phone #, homeroom teacher, ID number and grade level. This information can be put in a database and updated as new members join. At the following meetings, a sign in sheet should be placed for accounting purposes. The meaning of the circle can be shared at the first meeting. Have members sign a COF pass, and you can get them laminated for the next meeting. A parent who has experienced the benefits of COF can speak at the first meeting. A video or pictures can be shared. You can highlight the upcoming activities for the year. Have an activity that the COF members can sign up for and they can also sign up to bring a food item to that activity (ex., ice cream social after school, a nacho party during the lunch periods).
8. Classroom helpers – make passes (laminated) for COF members. Send a list of members to teachers on campus and explain that the students, with teacher permission, may come to help out in the classroom *IF* they are passing and have completed their work. This needs to be approved by an administrator first and members’ parents should sign their packets. A sign in sheet must be in your room to keep track of who is coming. You might send a members list each six weeks to teachers and remove the names of “inactive” members. Some kids unfortunately will join only to get out of class or to come with a friend. This should be discussed at meetings.

9. More suggestions for starting *Circle of Friends* –

Set up a regular meeting time (ex., every other Thursday at 8:15) meetings can be held at 8:15 and 4:15 to accommodate more students if you have a large group.

At the first meeting:

- go over the meaning of the circle -
- possibly have a parent share what COF has done for their child -
- announce a planned activity, like nachos in the Special Education room during the lunch periods, or an ice cream party after school in the cafeteria. Have students sign up to bring cookies, drinks, toppings, etc. -
- fill out passes for students to visit classroom when they get finished early with work in other classes or during lunch. A sign up sheet with available times is a good idea to prevent an abundance of volunteers at once in the classroom. Make students feel welcome to visit your students in your Special Education class
- give the date of the next meeting.
Middle School Suggestions

- Plan your meetings at the best time possible to avoid other campus activities.

- It generally works best to keep Club activities during the school day. Students can get a pass to come to the meeting classroom.

- Have an after-school social hour on campus such as:
  - Ice Cream Social, Nacho Party, Movie and popcorn party, karaoke, luau, Easter egg hunt, game day, decorating cookies

- Social activities could be held before and after school. These will need to be planned in advance so parents can be informed, give permission for all participating students, and to make plans to pick up students who normally ride a bus.

- At regular school events such as dances, pep rallies, and sports arrange to have circle members escort the special needs kids and sit with them.

- Some schools have PE Buddies.

- Circle members can sign up to be Lunch Buddies.
• You could have some simple fund raisers (design and sell a special t-shirt, bake sale, car wash, carnation/valentine sale, etc).

• Members can drop by the classrooms to interact with the students there and help by playing computer games, reading, assisting with class work under the teachers direction. Also, the COF buddies could invite peers to visit the regular ed classroom for an appropriate activity (with teacher permission).

• Some may just say ‘hi’ in the halls, others can write notes of friendship and encouragement (have a mailbox), and the special needs student could be helped to write back.

• Support for COF may come from a variety of sources such as PTA, parents, or campus administration.

• Sponsors should make sure that all students have a photo release on file. You may attach it on the permission slip or use a more generic form.
Middle School Circle of Friends: First Meeting of the Year

(adapt as appropriate for each campus)

1. First Meeting Musts: pass out permissions forms, sign-up sheets, COF pass to be filled out.

2. Introduce Sponsors

3. Explain the meaning of the circle (use visual aides, i.e. COF circle, beatitudes)

4. The Circle of Friends is a club at INSERT SCHOOL NAME. We find ways to make friends with our fellow special needs students and with anyone who needs a friend.

5. We have planned activities during the school year with our friends such as a movie party, ice cream social, karaoke party, skating, bowling party, etc.

6. We also may have fundraisers to help raise money for our parties and activities such as a car wash, walk-a-thon, silent auctions, bake sales, candle sales, etc. PTA and parents can be big contributors. Make sure to use your resources. Check with your administrators regarding funding options for the COF club on your campus.

7. Give examples of other opportunities to be a friend. For example lunch buddies, pep rallies, saying hello in the halls, study buddy, or inviting a friend for a fun activity in your class.

8. Complete the Circles of Friends circle activity (see the following page).

9. Announce the next meeting or first social
**Possible Circle of Friends Activities**

1. Ice Cream Party
2. Karaoke Party
3. Easter egg hunt
4. Fly kites
5. Games, relays
6. Picnic
7. Christmas Party
8. Make crafts
9. Plant flowers and trees
10. Decorate cookies
11. Movie and popcorn
12. Luau
13. Dance
14. Banner Party- Each special needs child has a banner that is signed by the club at the end of the year
15. Valentine Party
16. Halloween party- bob for apples, costume contest, paint faces
17. Fiesta- complete with piñata and nachos
18. COF Mailbox- send a friend a letter
19. Thanksgiving Feast and a celebration of thanks
20. Cook-out
21. Sock Hop
22. Parachute party
Circle of Friends Fundraisers

The following is a list of suggested ways to raise money for COF activities. See activity page for a detailed list.

1. Bake sale
2. Craft fair
3. Car wash
4. School supply store
5. Dollar desserts
6. Valentine’s Day sales- carnations, valentines, etc.
7. Birthday locker wraps
8. Birthday cupcake deliveries
9. Walk-a-thon
10. T-shirt sale
11. Donut sale in the morning
12. Candle sales
13. Selling holiday gift items to staff- dry cookie mix, dry soup mix, cards, etc.

* Be sure to obtain permission from your principal before conducting any fundraisers.
SAMPLE PARENT LETTER FOR SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS

Date

Dear ________________________________________________,

In the next few weeks, we will be starting a program called Circle of Friends for our students who have special needs here at (INSERT SCHOOL NAME). Circle of Friends is an internationally known program that strives to provide opportunities to develop friendships with typical classmates. It is our hope that these friendships will naturally develop so children are included in every day school and neighborhood activities. We all work on accepting and celebrating each other’s differences here at SCHOOL NAME, and this is an opportunity for first hand experience!

We will meet periodically at lunch, recess or a time arranged with the classroom teacher for special activities. If your child requires the help of an aide, that help will still be available as appropriate.

We need your signature to indicate your permission for your child to participate. If you have any questions, please call me. Please return this form to school as soon as possible. Thank you so much!

Sincerely,

Teacher name

Contact phone

Student Name: _______________________________________ Grade: ____

Teacher: ______________________________________________

Yes! I give permission for my child to participate in Circle of Friends.

Parent signature: ___________________________________________ Date: ________

Home phone: _______________________________
Sample of Photo Release Form

We are very proud of our Circle of Friends program. Frequently we take pictures that are used within the classroom or for publicity purposes. Please indicate below with your signature if you give permission for your child’s photo to be taken.

Parent signature: ____________________________________________
SAMPLE PARENT LETTER FOR GENERAL ED STUDENTS

Date

Dear _________________________________________________,

Your child has volunteered to be a helping friend to a student in his/her school with a special need or disability. *Circle of Friends* is a nationally known support program where everyday kids like yours help a child with special needs at recess, lunch, going through the halls, during specials or at other times. Your child’s responsibility could include participating in activities and socials, peer tutoring, being a lunch buddy, or just being a friend, not teaching or disciplining peers.

We need your signature to indicate your permission for your child to participate. If you have any questions, please call me. Please return this form to your child’s homeroom teacher, as soon as possible. Thank you so much!

Sincerely,
Teacher Name

Contact Info

__________________________

Student Name: _________________________________________ Grade: ____

Teacher: ________________________________________________

Yes! I give permission for my child to participate in *Circle of Friends*.

Parent signature: _________________________________________ Date:

__________________________

Home phone: _______________________________

We are very proud of our Circle of Friends program. Frequently we take pictures that are used within the classroom or for publicity purposes. Please indicate below with your signature if you give permission for your child’s photo to be taken.

Parent signature: ________________________________
SAMPLE LETTER TO PROMOTE CIRCLE OF FRIENDS IN GENERAL SETTINGS

Dear Teachers,

*Circle of Friends* is a school sponsored club you are probably familiar with. The students in the club desire to initiate and develop friendships with the students in special needs classes on campus. They look for opportunities to include their challenged peers in their regular activities, such as hosting parties, visiting their class, spending time together after school, going on outings and even sometimes bringing them to class. This is where we need your help, if you are interested.

A *Circle of Friends* sponsor would like to briefly speak to one or more of your classes about occasionally including one of these students in an activity once or twice a week. Ideally, the students, rather than the teacher, should help their peer with the activity in the general ed setting. Also, it is helpful to the special education teachers if their students go to your class approximately the same time and day(s) each week. This way they can make their plans accordingly.

If this is something you might like to try, please return the bottom portion of this form to __________________________________________. This can be a rewarding experience that makes a difference in the lives of everyone involved!

I, ____________________________________________, would be interested in having the *Circle of Friends* sponsor speak to my _____ period class.
HIGH SCHOOL
SPONSORS

Like any school-sponsored club, there must be a teacher or other school employee who will serve as the sponsor for Circle of Friends. It is important that the sponsor has an interest in the special needs population and a vision for the purpose of Circle of Friends. The person serving as sponsor will have an important roll, as he/she acts as liaison for the students, the parents, the general education students, the school, and the community. Since this can become such a big responsibility, it is helpful if two or more teachers/staff co-sponsor the club. The sponsors can be special education teachers who know and work with the special needs students. They can help educate the general ed. students (Circle of Friends) about the special ed. population, and they can create opportunities for them to interact by daily welcoming the Circle of Friends into his/her classroom. It can also be helpful to have a general ed. teacher as a co-sponsor, one who has a good rapport with the general ed. students. But whoever agrees to sponsor the club must be willing to take on the responsibilities necessary to get it started and to keep it running as smoothly as possible.

SET UP FIRST MEETING

Decide on a date and time for the meetings. Plan a time that the majority of the students will be able to attend. For example, it might be on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of each month. Check with the other major clubs on campus (Student Council, NHS, etc.) to be sure you are not competing with the days/times of their meetings. At high school most club meetings are held before or after school. It could also be held before and after school on the meeting day to accommodate more students.

ADVERTISE

There are several ways to let students know about the Circle of Friends meetings. You can put up signs around school, including the day, time and place. Advertise on the daily announcements and on the classroom TV. Email the staff, including coaches, to share with their students about the upcoming meeting. A table with information about the club could be set up during the lunch periods. Notes can be sent home with the parents of the special needs students incase any of your students may want to stay for the meeting. It may be difficult for the FLS students to attend a meeting, but the ALS students may enjoy being included. Just before each meeting you could have someone announce over the loud speaker that the Circle of Friends meeting is being held in
room _____. Be creative in trying to inform as many general ed. students as possible about the meeting.

DECIDE ON A FIRST ACTIVITY

To help get the club off to a good start, plan an activity that is simple, but at a time and place that as many students as possible can participate. You could plan a nacho party in the special ed. classroom during the lunch periods. Or you could have an ice cream party after school in the cafeteria. Have the COF’s sign up to bring chips, drinks, toppings, etc. You can also have the special ed. students bring food items for the party. For example, send a note home to the parents asking for boys to bring soft drinks, and girls to bring chips. This way everyone, COF’s and the special ed. students, have a responsibility, and you will be sure to have enough food.

ITEMS TO GATHER FOR THE FIRST MEETING

At the first meeting there should be a sign up sheet with a place for each student’s name, phone number, email address, ID number, and grade. This information can be put into a database and updated as new members join. A copy of this can be set out at each meeting so members can highlight their name, showing who attended, and new members can add their name and information to the bottom of the sheet. A sign up sheet for the first activity can be set out or passed around so students can indicate what they will bring to the party/activity. Circle of Friends passes can be given to the COF’s at the first meeting (see in Forms section). These passes can be used to visit the special ed. students in class during lunch or at the end of a class with the permission of the COF’s teachers. An agenda of the meeting, including information that will be shared and the date of the next meeting, can be set out for members to pick up. A monthly calendar with COF activities can also be available for each member.

FIRST MEETING

At the first meeting the sponsor (if there are no officers) can lead the meeting. Below is a sample of what can be shared at the first meeting:

1. Welcome everyone
2. Share the meaning of the Circles and the purpose of COF.
3. Tell about the activities coming up and encourage everyone to sign up for them.
4. Invite the COF’s to visit the sp.ed. students in their classrooms and at lunch. Give everyone a COF pass.
5. Have a parent or a COF from a campus that has an active Circle of Friends speak briefly about what it means to them.
6. Show the COF video on the LISD website.
7. Tell the date and time of the next meeting.
FUTURE MEETINGS

At future meetings the same general format from the first meeting can be used, with the exception of the meaning of the circles. As the club grows, there may be several activities to share at each meeting, in addition to opportunities for fundraisers. There can be two parts to each meeting: 1) Share with the COF’s the opportunities to interact with the special needs students and provide sign up sheets for them to make the commitments. 2) Educate them with a speaker (special ed teacher, speech therapist, OT, etc.), read a success story (there are some in the back of this book) or have different parents/COF’s share personal experiences. As the year progresses videos/pictures of the activities can be shown at the meetings. Also, as the COF’s get to know the special needs students, encourage them to look for opportunities to befriend them after school and on the week-ends.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership in Circle of Friends is open to anyone who needs a friend and who desires to be a friend. There is no price on friendship. Therefore, it is not a good idea to award students points for participating in activities, (this is done in Student Council and NHS). We don’t pay someone to be our friend. Students may start out attending the meetings to find out what Circle of Friends is all about and what activities they can be involved in. Do not exclude anyone who wants to be a member, and do not put a deadline on joining COF’s (for example, someone may have just heard about COF’s and wants to join at the last meeting of the year.) There are so many different ways to be involved in COF, and with a high school student’s busy schedule, he/she will participate in the activities that best fits the individual lifestyle. Some will attend all of the meetings. Some will not be able to make the meetings, but will visit the special needs students regularly in their classrooms. Others will attend the fundraiser and parties. The members of Circle of Friends will be a diversified group. There will be honor students, athletes, cheerleaders, etc. But some of the most faithful and involved members can be those students who have learning disabilities, and/or who are in some kind of special education class themselves. Do not limit who can join the club- it is a win-win situation for everyone involved.

ACTIVITIES

It is a good idea to plan at least one main club activity each month. Each campus COF will find the activities that work best for their club, their students and their location. Below are some suggested activities that have worked at other schools:

- Ice cream social- get ice-cream donated/ students bring toppings
- Movie in classroom or large room – serve pop-corn
• Nacho party in classroom during the lunches- purchase nacho cheese/ students bring drinks and chips
• Karaoke party with food
• Decorate a trailer for the homecoming parade and have special needs students and COF’s ride in it for the parade.
• Have the special ed. buses that take the students home drop them off at the bowling alley, movie theater, putt-putt, skating rink, restaurants etc. The COF’s who drive can meet them there. COF’s who do not drive may be able to ride on the special ed. buses with the students. Be sure the parents understand that they are responsible for transportation after the activity.
• Have a scavenger hunt in teams around the school (after school hours) and end with food.
• A spring picnic on the football field during the lunch periods. Special ed. classes can make hot dogs and sandwiches. Students can bring cokes, chips, desserts. music, kites, relays, or sports can be some of the ideas for activities.
• A swimming party on an evening during the summer at a neighborhood pool and club house. Have everyone bring $5 for pizza and drinks, or everyone can bring a snack food. Invite the parents, also, for more supervision and for everyone to get to know each other better.

FUNDRAISERS

There has to be a way to raise money for the club. It is best if there is a booster club, that way money can be kept in a bank account and the parent members of the booster club have easy access to the money. It is also helpful if the parents of the Circle of Friends are the officers of the booster club. The parents of the special needs students often have so many more responsibilities taking care of their children and do not always have the extra time to commit to a booster club. If there is no booster club, then the money will have to be turned into the school bookkeeper. Be sure to visit with the bookkeeper so you understand the guidelines/ paperwork, etc. required for raising money, turning it in, and spending it. You must get permission from your building principal for each fundraiser.

Below are some fundraising ideas:
• Silent auctions using hotel stays, items donated, services donated – can set up a table in the faculty lounge and have teachers bid during the day (See form)
• Dance-a-thon or Walk-a-thon- Students get people to pledge money for the event and collect up front. This is a fun activity for everyone to participate in. (See form)
• Items to sell from magazines/ fliers- be sure the company is a vendor with the school district. If not, the paperwork can be faxed from the business office to the company, signed, and faxed back.
• Circle of Friends T-shirt sales- Do this at the beginning of every school year. Use the COF logo or a design for your campus. Sell the t-shirts for twice the price you pay for them (If you pay $6, charge $12). Send home order forms to all your students, all of the COF’s, and set up a table during the lunch periods to take orders. Staff may also want to order t-shirts. (See form)
- Car washes- These are easy fundraisers and can be done a couple of times during the school year and once during the summer. Tom Thumb, Albertsons, and other stores will let you hook up a hose to their water faucet. You will need three hoses and a splitter. Bring buckets for the soapy water, car soap, sponges and towels. You can also ask the students to bring towels. Have a clear container, can or money box for donations. Have COF’s make signs to hang up and to hold up. Bring a large water jug with ice water and cups or an ice chest with bottled water and drinks. Remember the sun screen! This is a good activity for everyone to participate in- COF’s as well as the special needs students.

- Garage sale on the school grounds. Try to have it on a Saturday when other activities are going on at the school for more visibility. You could also have silent auction items and baked item to sale on tables near the garage sale items.

OFFICERS

After the club has had a year to get established, it would be good to have officers. They can be elected by the Circle of Friends at a meeting near the end of the year for the following year. Each campus can decide on the officers that are needed for their COF’s club. Here are some suggestions for officers: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Publicist, Social Committee Chairman, Special Olympics Liaison. (See specific responsibilities for each officer in the Forms section).

The expectations for officers are much more stringent than those for just members. Officers have to attend planning meetings as well as general meeting. Each of them has specific responsibilities for that particular office. They are the most visible members of the club and need to be good role models for the special needs students as well as the COF’s. Because of the commitment to COF’s they cannot be so involved in other clubs that it takes away from their responsibilities as officers. It is recommended that they not serve as an officer in another mayor club if they are an officer in COF’s. (See the Forms section for Officer Application packet).

GRAND BALL

This is the most important event of the year for some of the high school Circle of Friends groups. Much of the fundraising during the year goes towards decorations, food, a DJ, etc. for this event. The Ball can be held at the school in the cafeteria. The money normally paid towards the use of a facility would instead pay for elaborate decorations. The Ball could also be held at Hotels or any place that has a large enough room to accommodate 300 people, or the number expected at the Ball.

If asked, many businesses in the community will donate items/services for the Ball. Flower shops have donated corsages and boutonnières; bridal shops have donated formals or tux rentals; funeral homes have provided limousine rides to the Ball for the special needs students; restaurants have catered with no cost; DJ’s and photographers have provided their services with little or no fee.
If the Grand Ball is held at a Hotel or a location other than the school, there is going to be a cost for each person. Some of the locations will work with you and cut the price per person by at least 5 or 6 dollars. If you have to pay $20 or more per person, you could sell $10 tickets to the special needs students and their escorts, and everyone else pays $20. At most of the COF high school Balls the parents, special ed. staff, administration, and extra COF’s attend, in addition to the special needs students and their escorts. There can easily be over 300 people.

Planning for the Ball is like planning for a wedding. Try to set the date and location at the beginning of the school year, if not sooner. For example, if the Ball is in March, you should have the date and location settled no later than September. The school calendar gets full and so do reservations for the Hotel Ball rooms and other places.

After the location is settled, look for a DJ, a photographer (or you can have someone who has a good digital camera take the pictures and give them to you to develop). Decide on a theme so you (or a committee) can start working on decorations. After you know the theme you will need invitations. You can get COF’s to help make them and address them. Be sure to send them out a month before the Ball. You could give people two weeks to RSVP, then contact those you haven’t heard from. Many times people wait until the last minute to RSVP (or fail to). For most places you will need to give a final count of people attending a week in advance. Decide how the students will arrive (limo?) and get that set up. You may want programs with the names of the students and escorts listed, as well as other pertinent information. COF’s can also work on those. You can also set up days/times to work on decorations.

In selecting escorts for the Ball, be sure to find COF’s who are dependable, know your students, and who have spent time with them. You will want to let the escorts know who they are escorting at least a month in advance, if not earlier. Have a meeting with them to let them know the details, your expectations, and encourage them to contact the parents of the student each one will be escorting.

The day before the Ball you should have a practice with all of the escorts and the students. If the Ball will be in your cafeteria, then you can practice there. If it will be at another location, you could set up a gym or large room to look like the Ball room, and practice there. Be sure to practice the presentation of each couple in the correct order, and practice the first dance. Tell the escorts the time they will need to arrive at the Ball. You want to be sure they are there before the limos arrive with the special needs students. You can also have each escort practice meeting his/her date at the limo and walking him/her in. Be sure they know what time to be lined up with their date for the presentation. (See in the Forms section responsibilities of an escort).

LIMO ESCORTS

If you have limos pick up the special needs students, someone will need to go with the driver to walk up to the doors and get the students. It would also be helpful if each limo escort is given the routes/ addresses of the students being picked up in that limo ahead of time. Spouses of staff, coaches, bus drivers who know the students, or old COF’s who have graduated are all examples of people who could ride in the limos with the drivers.
PEER ASSISTANTS

Circle of Friends can be very helpful as peer assistants in the classroom. This has to be arranged with the counselor’s office. The peer assistant has the opportunity to develop a closer friendship with the special needs students, and learns many classroom skills from the teacher. The special needs students have a general ed. student in the classroom who is a positive role model and who initiates communication. This peer can also help when there is not enough staff to work with all of the students, and can also take a student to a general education classroom for inclusion. Because of this-hands on experience, many peer assistants decide to go into Special Education or a related field.

CBI TRIPS

Community Based Instruction trips provide great opportunities to include Circle of Friends. There can be a sign up sheet at the meetings for CBI trips that are coming up. If there is room for 10 COFs on the trip, then there will be 10 spaces. Because they are missing a general education class, each COF’s should sign up for only one or two trips per semester. This will give more COF’s an opportunity to participate in the trips and to get to know the students. It is good to pair the students up with a COF and to give each COF written instructions on the following:

1) The objectives that particular student is working on at the CBI location
2) The food or drinks he/she can order (allergies?)
3) Cell phone number of teacher incase the student and the COF get separated from the group.

Each COF going on a CBI trip will need a permission form signed by a parent and turned into attendance. You will also need to fill out an activity form with names, grades and ID numbers of the COF’s participating. The principal has to sign it, then you need to email the teachers of the classes that the students will miss and give a copy of the form to attendance. (See forms in Form section)

FRIENDSHIPS OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL

It is very important that our students not only develop friendships at school, but also outside of school. As a sponsor we need to encourage this by suggesting ways to get together and by emphasizing the importance of spending time together outside of school. Many times the parents will ask for phone numbers of Circle of Friends who are willing to stay with their child while they go on a date, tutor their child, or give them a ride home after school. When you get to know dependable COF’s, you can ask them if it is okay to give their phone number to your student’s parents. Very often what may have started out as a COF helping the parents actually develops into a friendship between the special needs student and the COF. The parents know the COF well now, and allow their child
to ride in the car, go to movies, restaurants and school functions. They have the COF
over for dinner, swimming, etc. These experiences need to be shared at the meetings to
encourage and motivate others to get to know these friends outside of school.
HIGH SCHOOL FORMS
Circle of Friends
Make a Friend...Make a Difference

Name:__________________________________________

I.D. #:__________  Grade:_______________________

Home Phone:__________________________________

E-Mail:_______________________________________

Circle of Friends
Make a Friend...Make a Difference

Name:__________________________________________

I.D. #:__________  Grade:_______________________

Home Phone:__________________________________

E-Mail:_______________________________________
Teachers,

*Circle of Friends* is a school sponsored club you are probably familiar with. The students in the club desire to initiate and develop friendship with the students in the developmental class. They look for opportunities to include their developmentally challenged peers in their regular activities, such as hosting parties, visiting their class, spending time together after school, going on outings and even sometimes bringing them to class. This is where we need you help, if you are interested.

The President of *Circle of Friends* would like to briefly speak to one or more of your classes about occasionally including one of these students in an activity once or twice a week. It seems to work best if the students, rather than the teacher, help the student with the activity. Also, it is helpful to the developmental teachers if their students go to your class approximately the same time and day(s) each week. This way they can make their plans.

If this is something you might like to try, please return the bottom portion of this form to ________________________________. This can be a rewarding experience that makes a difference in the lives of everyone involved!

\[ \checkmark \quad \checkmark \]

I, ________________________________, would be interested in having the President of *Circle of Friends* speak to my _____ period class about one of the students in the developmental class visiting my class once or twice a week.
CIRCLE OF FRIENDS AGENDA
APRIL 24, 2008

- April 25th is HAT DAY if you bring a dollar to donate to Megan's Crossing! Tell all your friends! If you don't like hats, donate anyway! 😊

- The Special Olympics pep rally scheduled for April 25th has been postponed until May.

- We will have a car wash on May 17th!

- May 26th will be the big dance in the back of the cafeteria with LHS and MHS to present Megan's Crossing with what funds we will have raised!

- The GRADUATION PARTY 😊 will be on May 29th during 3rd period!

- There is still room to sign up for the Salernos CBI trip on May 9th!

- OFFICER ELECTIONS! SPEECH SPEECH SPEECH!

- Next meeting is May 15th, and our last meeting this year 😊 will be May 22!
CIRCLE OF FRIENDS AGENDA
MAY 22, 2008

😊 SEND OFF! TODAY AT 1:30 FOR THE SPECIAL OLYMPIANS! COME TO WHERE THE BUS LINE IS OUTSIDE OF THE CAFETERIA IF YOU CAN!

😊 GRADUATION PARTY! MAY 29TH DURING 3RD PERIOD! STOP BY DURING LUNCH TO CELEBRATE OUR GRADUATES! 😊

😊 PARENTS NIGHT OUT SHEET! PUT YOUR NAME AND NUMBER ON THE SHEET AND IF THE PARENTS WANT A DATE NIGHT, OR A RIDE HOME FROM SCHOOL, OR A TUTOR THEY CAN USE THIS LIST!

😊 SUMMER CAR WASH! JULY 26?! SUMMER POOL PARTY! AUGUST 6?! IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE CALLED WITH DETAILS ABOUT SUMMER ACTIVITIES SIGN UP!

😊 DON'T FORGET ABOUT THE KIDS OVER SUMMER! THEY LOVE DOING STUFF SO GIVE THEM A CALL, EVEN IF IT'S JUST TO TALK ON THE PHONE! 😊

😊 OUR NEXT MEETING IS NEXT YEAR! HAVE A GREAT SUMMER! 😊
Circle of Friends Agenda
January 10, 2008

* CBI Trips: Jan. 25th → Bowling and Cici’s
  Feb. 8th → Golden Corral
  Feb. 22nd → Aloha Adventure Park

* Cheerleading will be Jan. 22nd in room 1230

* Special Olympics → Basketball games on Thursday at
  Garden Ridge Elementary (7:00 p.m.)

* The Dance-a-thon will be Feb. 5th from 4:30-6 in the
  back of the cafeteria

* Fellowship of Friends will meet every Sunday at 11:00
  a.m/ at Valley Creek Church

* The Grand Ball is going to be March 1st. The theme is
  Silver and Gold: A Celebration of Friends. We are in the
  process of picking escorts for the kids. Tickets will be
  $20 and everyone is invited.

* Kriss Russell, a speech therapist, is here to talk about
  her job working with special needs students at the
  afternoon meeting

* Our next meeting will be Jan. 24th before and after
  school.
October 2005

FMHS Circle of Friends

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<td>7 *Officers Meeting 8:15</td>
<td>8 *4:05 Grand Ball Meeting</td>
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<td>10 *COF Meeting 8:15 &amp; 4:15 *Special Olympics Basketball 7:00 at Garden Ridge</td>
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<td>13 *Fellowship of Friends at Valley Creek 11:00</td>
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<td>15 *Cheerleading 4:15</td>
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<td>17 *Early Release *Special Olympics Basketball 7:00 at Garden Ridge</td>
<td>18 *No School III</td>
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<td>20 *Fellowship of Friends at Valley Creek 11:00</td>
<td>21 *Martin Luther King Jr. Day *No School III</td>
<td>22 *Officers Meeting 8:15 *Silent Auction in Teacher's Lounge *Cheerleading 4:15</td>
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<td>24 *COF Meeting 8:15 &amp; 4:15 *Special Olympics Basketball 7:00 at Garden Ridge</td>
<td>25 Bowling /Cici's Trip</td>
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**Circle of Friends**

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<td><em>Walk for Epilepsy at the Dallas Zoo 10:00</em></td>
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**Circle of Friends**

*Make a Friend, Make a Difference*
T-Shirt Order Form
Circle of Friends

Order a T-shirt to wear on Spirit Day or to Circle of Friends events. This year's shirt will be navy with white lettering and will be racetrack themed in accordance with the Grande Ball, which will be held at Texas Motor Speedway.

Orders and money must be turned in by September 21st to Mrs. Thetford's room in 1230. Please make checks payable to FMHS Circle of Friends. The cost is $10.00. Be sure to turn in your money with the order form.

Name:

Quantity:

Size(s):

XXL and XXXL – add $1.50
Let's show our support for
Circle of Friends-
Order a yard sign for $25.00

Name ______________________

Phone Number ______________

What name do you want on the sign? (only
first, first and last)

Please include $25 cash or a check made out
to Bradbury Signs.
### Silent Auction Form

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<th>Item #:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Name of Item:</td>
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<td>Donated By:</td>
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<td>Name</td>
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**Circle of Friends**  **Flower Mound High School**

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Page 46
Come to the
Circle of Friends
Dance-A-Thon

Tuesday Feb 5, 2008
4:15 - 6:00 pm
In the back of the cafeteria

Come to room 1230 and pick up a pledge sheet or pledge $10 yourself

come and dance
EVERYONE'S INVITED!
Circle of Friends
Dance-A-Thon

We will be having a Dance-A-Thon in the back cafeteria on February 5 from 4:15 to 6:00. Participants will need to either:

Collect money from family and friends to sponsor them to dance (i.e. $5 for every 30 minutes you dance). There is an attached form that you will use to record your sponsors information and an envelope to collect your money. ALL MONEY WILL BE COLLECTED ON FEBRUARY 5TH. Please put your name on your envelope

OR

You can donate $10 yourself

There will be a Silent Auction for hotel stays and a raffle for other fun prizes. Raffle tickets will be $1.

There will be food and drinks so come and dance away!
### Circle of Friends Dance-A-Thon
February 5, 2008

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<th>Name of Contributor</th>
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Circle of Friends

Walk-a-thon Directions

The walk-a-thon will take place on the FMHS track on October 7 from 10:00-12:00. Participants will need to collect money from friends and family to sponsor them to walk. PLEASE MAKE SURE PEOPLE GIVE YOU A FLAT RATE FOR THE ENTIRE TIME. There is an attached form for you to document your sponsors’ information (name and amount donated). You will need to turn in your money by October 7 (the day of the walk-a-thon).

If you cannot attend the walk-a-thon, you can still participate by getting sponsors for some of the special needs students. They will walk for you if you cannot be there.

We will also have a garage sale and silent auction at the same time, so feel free to encourage sponsors to stop by.
## Circle of Friends Walkathon

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Circle of Friends Officer Responsibilities

President:
- Develops agenda for COF meetings
- Supervises the functioning of elected COF officers & committees
- Presides over COF and officer meetings
- Attends at least 85% of all functions
- Works with sponsors to plan and coordinate COF activities

Vice-President:
- Presides over COF meetings when President cannot attend
- Keeps a scrap book of all the activities for the year
- Works with sponsors to plan and coordinate COF activities
- Attends at least 85% of all functions
- Makes weekly announcements

Secretary:
- Keeps the agenda of each meeting in a notebook
- Prepares and maintains a data base of active members
- Works with sponsors to plan and coordinate COF activities
- Attends at least 85% of all functions

Treasurer:
- Coordinates all fund raising activities
- Enlists members to help with fund raisers (sign up sheets)
- Works with sponsors to plan and coordinate COF activities
- Attends at least 85% of all functions

Publicist:
- Develops a monthly COF newsletter or calendar
- Acts as liaison between school paper, newspaper and COF
- Works with sponsors to plan and coordinate COF activities
- Attends at least 85% of all functions

Social Committee Chairman:
- With social committee, plans one COF activity each month
- Enlists members to participate in activities (sign up sheets)
- Works with sponsors to plan and coordinate COF activities
- Attends at least 85% of all functions

Special Olympics Liaison:
- Acts as liaison between Special Olympics coaches and COF
- Enlists members to help with Special Olympics events
- Works with sponsors to plan and coordinate COF activities
- Attends at least 85% of all functions
Things to Consider Before Submitting an Application

1. Because you are a leader in Circle of Friends, you are also a leader in the school. Be a leader that Circle of Friends can be proud of.

2. Take your position as an officer seriously. If you do not have time to carry through with the responsibilities of an office, you do not need to be an officer.

3. Apply for an officer position that you are comfortable with and have the ability to execute the required responsibilities (ex. do not apply for President if you are not comfortable speaking in front of a group, or publicist if you are not able to write).

4. As an officer, you set the mode for the rest of the Circle of Friends. Be sure you are running for an office for the right reasons. The purpose of our club is to provide friends for our special needs students. In the Developmental classrooms you should be spending time with the special needs students, instead of only visiting with Circle of Friends or staff. At parties and other activities you should help the special needs students, instead of only hanging out with Circle of Friends. You set the pattern for the club—whatever you do, the other Circle of Friends will follow.
FLOWER MOUND HIGH SCHOOL CIRCLE OF FRIENDS
OFFICER APPLICATION

Candidate Requirements:

Circle of Friends Officers must be clear of disciplinary infractions.

Circle of Friends Officers must maintain an average of 70 in all classes.

Circle of Friends Officers must be able to attend COF meetings on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays each month and officer meetings on Monday morning before the Thursday COF meetings.

Circle of Friends Officers must have been an active member of Circle of Friends for the 2006 – 2007 school year.

Circle of Friends Officers must have the skills required for that particular office and the time and commitment to perform those skills/duties.

Circle of Friends Officers must have a love for the special needs population and time to spend with these peers outside of school.

Circle of Friends Officers should not be overly involved in other clubs/activities. Serving as an officer in Circle of Friends is a huge commitment.

Important Dates:

Thursday, April 12 - pick up officer applications

Thursday, April 19 - officer applications due in room 1230 no later than 4:15.

Thursday, April 26 - one or two minute speeches given by candidates at 8:15 and 4:15 meetings. It is recommended that you speak at both meetings. Voting will began after the morning meeting and will end at 4:30.

Friday, April 27 - Circle of Friends officers for 2007-2008 will be shared during the morning announcements
CIRCLE OF FRIENDS OFFICER APPLICATION

Name ___________________________   ID# ______________

I am running for the office of ___________________________

Class Schedule:

<table>
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<th>Course</th>
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<td>Spring Semester 2008</td>
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I understand this is an application to run for Circle of Friend Officer. I understand that Circle of Friend Sponsors will verify that I was passing all my classes at the last 3-week grading period, that they will verify that I have not had any serious disciplinary infractions, and that I have been an active member of Circle of Friends for the 2007-2008 school year. If I fail to meet any of these requirements, I will not appear on the ballot.

I understand the requirements of the office that I am running for. I understand that as an officer I am at all times a representative of Flower Mound High School and will be required to exhibit leadership in all areas of my life. I am willing to give the time necessary to attend all Circle of Friend activities and perform the duties required of me by my specific office.

Signature of Candidate ___________________________ Date ____________

I understand that my child ___________________________, is seeking the above listed Circle of Friend office. My child and I understand the rules and responsibilities of being a Circle of Friend Officer. I am aware of the dates for turning in the forms for my child’s name to be placed on the ballot.

Parent/Guardian signature ___________________________
CANDIDATE PROFILE

1. What is your prior involvement in FMHS’s Circle of Friends? (at school, away from school)

2. What do you feel has been your major accomplishment as a member of FMHS’s Circle of Friends.

3. Please list the other school and community activities you are involved in.

4. Write a short paragraph of why and what you plan to accomplish if elected to the Circle of Friends office you are seeking.
SAMPLE
RESPONSIBILITIES OF AN Escort

1. Make a commitment to attend the Circle of Friends Grand Ball.

2. Contact the student you will escort and his/her parents by phone.

3. Get your tickets to the ball as soon as you know for sure you can be an escort. You may also have tickets for two guests (parents, friends)

4. Dress for the ball is Sunday dress or formal. Boys do not have to wear a tux, but can if they want to. A sports coat or suite will be fine. Girls can wear a formal or a very dressy dress.

5. There will be a mandatory practice on the Friday before the ball. You will be excused from class.

6. You need to arrive for the ball at 5:30. The limos may start arriving by 6:00 and we need to be ready.

7. Corsages and boutonnières will be on a table near the front door of school. Get yours and pin it on.

8. We should all be waiting in front of school by 6:00.

9. When your student arrives, you need to greet him/her at the limo and walk arm in arm under the saber arch.

10. Take your student to get his/her corsage or boutonnière and then go to the photographer to get your picture taken.

11. You will also have time to meet your student’s parents, visit with them and get LOTS of pictures taken by them. Remember that this is the only prom this student will attend, so pictures are very important to the families.

12. You and your student must be lined up in order by 6:55.

13. After you are presented you will have the first dance. After the first dance, you will line up with your student in the serving line. There will be a special place for the students and escorts to sit for dinner, unless there is a special reason that you and the student should sit with his/her parents. Either way, be sure to sit with your student – this is your date for the evening!
14. After dinner the dancing will start. Really encourage your student to dance. Also encourage your student’s parents to dance. Stay with your student and be sure he/she is having a good time.

15. After the ball, we will take down all of the decorations. We need everyone’s help. We will also need help on the decorating nights. The big decorating night will be the Friday before the ball. Pizza will be served that night.

Thanks for your willingness to be an escort. You are making a huge difference in the lives of these students!
SAMPLE
RESPONSIBILITIES OF A LIMO RIDER

1. Make a commitment to attend the Circle of Friends Grand Ball.

2. Get your tickets to the ball as soon as you know for sure you can be a limo escort. You may also have an extra ticket for a friend.

3. Dress for the ball is Sunday attire or formal.

4. There will be mandatory practice the Friday before the ball. You will be excused from class.

5. On the day of the ball, you need to be at school by 5:00. The limo will be leaving by 5:15.

6. Your responsibilities in the limo are to go up to the door to get each student, escort the student to the limo and help them get in, keep the students quiet in the limo and help them get out at the school. As soon as each student gets out of the limo, that student’s escort will meet him/her and walk under the saber arch. When every student in your limo has been greeted by their escort, you can walk under the arch.

7. After the ball, we will take down all of the decorations. We need everyone’s help. We will also need help on the decorating nights. The big decorating night will be the Friday before the ball. Pizza will be served that night.

Thanks for your willingness to be a limo rider. You are making a huge difference in the lives of these students!
Responsibilities of an Escort

1. Make a commitment to attend the Circle of Friends Grand Ball on March 17 at Texas Motor Speedway. The theme is "A Black and White Affair".

2. Purchase your ticket to the Ball as soon as you know for sure you can be an escort. Tickets are $10.00 for escorts/$20 for other COF's and parents.

3. It is very important that you contact the student that you will be escorting and his/her parents by phone. Call him/her within the next two weeks. You can also stop by the Developmental or Bridging classrooms to visit.

4. Dress for the Ball is Sunday attire or formal. Girls may want to wear black or white dresses/formals. Boys should wear a suit, tux or dress slacks with tie and jacket.

5. There will be a mandatory practice on Friday, March 16 during 1st period at Texas Motor Speedway. We will ride buses to the practice.

6. On the day of the Ball, you need to be at Texas Motor Speedway by 5:30. The limos my start to arrive by 6:00, so we need to be lined up outside, ready to greet the kids as they arrive.

7. Each escort and special needs student will be given a corsage/boutonnière. As soon as you arrive at 5:30, find the flower table and put on your corsage or boutonniere. When the peer you are escorting arrives, help him/her put on a corsage/boutonniere.
8. Take your “date” to the photographer to have your pictures made. You do not have to pay for this picture.

9. You will line up with your “date” at 6:45. At 7:00 you will be presented.

10. After the first dance, take your “date” through the buffet line and sit together during dinner. There will be a special section for escorts and students to sit for dinner.

11. Be sure to stay with your “date”- do not leave him/her alone. Remember…..this is your date for the evening.

12. When the Ball is over, please help take down decorations. The decorations will be minimal this year, so with everyone helping, we should be able to finish up quickly.

Thank you for your willingness to be an escort. You make a huge difference in the lives of these students!
You have been selected to be an escort for

to the Circle of Friends Grand Ball on March 17. This is a very
important event for our students and our families. Please let us
know immediately if you will not be able to escort this student.

We appreciate your commitment to Circle of Friends.

Your sponsors,

K. Thetford, S Goodman and D. Buckels
Dear Friend,

Circle of Friends is a school sponsored club at Flower Mound High School composed of students who desire to initiate and develop friendships with peers who have special needs. These students look for opportunities to include their friends in the classroom and in other activities. There are over 200 students involved in this club. Attitudes of students and teachers have changed because of Circle of Friends. Rather that being ostracized for hanging out with someone who is “a little different”, it is now ‘the cool thing to do’ at FMHS. The club slogan states, “Make a Friend …..Make a Difference.” These students are truly making a difference at FMHS.

The Circle of Friends mission statement is, “To enrich the lives of all students by creating lasting relationships, regardless of differences and to enhance and bring forth the community spirit for the present and the future.” With this in mind, the Circle of Friends, in conjunction with the FMHS Special Education program, will host the 7th annual Circle of Friends Grand Ball. This event will take place Saturday, March 17, 2006, in the Texas Motor Speedway Grand Ball Room from 7:00 p.m. to 11 p.m.

In the past years, the communities of Flower Mound and Lewisville have generously supported this activity. Due to their donations, our students were provided with dinner, elaborate decorations, corsages, boutonnieres, pictures, and limousine rides.

Once again our committee is in full swing and asking you to assist us in making the Circle of Friends Grand Ball a night to remember by becoming a monetary sponsor. Remember, any donation is greatly appreciated and is tax deductible. If you would like to be a part of this important endeavor, please contact:

Karan Thetford, Sherry Goodman, or Dedrick Buckels at Flower Mound High School - 972-539-6634 ext. 1241

We would love to have you as part of our team. Thank you for your interest in Circle of Friends.

Sincerely,

The Circle of Friends
Flower Mound High School
FLOWER MOUND HIGH SCHOOL

SCHOOL SPONSORED ACTIVITY ABSENCE FORM

The students named on this list will be representing Flower Mound High School. They are not to be counted absent in your grade book or on your absence forms (code ss-school sponsored). They are to be allowed to make up any work done in the class(es) they miss for this activity. No student representing FMHS is permitted to miss more than ten (10) days of school for school sponsored activities unless for district, regional, state, or national competition. Each sponsor/coach is responsible for the completion of this form WITH NAMES AND I.D. NUMBERS.

Give the original and a copy of this form to Michele Durham in Suite B and deliver a copy to Ramona Vaughn and to each of the other six Attendance Clerks.

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<tr>
<th>Name of Group</th>
<th>Sponsor/Coach</th>
<th>Date(s) of Absences</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Period(s) Involved</td>
<td>Administrator’s Approval</td>
<td>Destination</td>
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<td>Departure Time</td>
<td>Type of Activity</td>
<td>Return Time</td>
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Revised 8-13-07

*ALL TRIPS MUST BE APPROVED BY MR. PAUL MOON*
Lewisville Independent School District
School Related Absences
Parent/Guardian Permission Form

I am aware that __________________________ will be leaving __________________________

(Name of Student)  (Name of School)
on __________________________ to participate in a school approved/related activity involving:

____ Athletics  ____ Band/Choral

____ Speech/Debate  ____ UIL Events/Competition (other than athletics/band)

____ Field Trips  ____ Vocational Contest

____ Other __________________________
(Please List/Describe)

The Location/Destination of this Trip/Activity is __________________________

I release __________________________ and the Lewisville I.S.D. from any liability

(Name of School)

should an accident occur during this trip.

__________________________  __________________________
(Signature of Parent/Guardian, Emancipated Minor of 18 years)  (Date Signed)

__________________________
(Telephone Number of Parent/Guardian)

If this permission form is not received by the school by the day of an event, the student will not be allowed to leave
school to attend.

It is a Texas Education Association rule and a Lewisville Independent School
District policy that this form be completed for all situations where a child
Leaves a school during the school day to attend a school-related activity.
FLOWER MOUND HIGH SCHOOL
Single Event Parent Permission Slip

I am aware that ____________________, ID#_____________ will be leaving
Flower Mound High School on _____________ to participate in a school
approved activity. This activity involves:

_____Speech/Debate
_____Band/Choral
_____Field Trips
_____UIL Events/Competition
_____Vocational Contest
_____Other________________________

(The Description)

The location/Destination of this Trip/Activity is________________________

Time of School related absence: All day_______
   Morning_______
   Afternoon_______
   Other_________

I release Flower Mound High School and the Lewisville I.S.D. from any liability
should an accident occur during this trip. If this form is not received by the day of
the event, the student will not be allowed to leave school to attend.

________________________  _____________  _____________
(Signature of Parent/Guardian)  (Date)  (Phone)

*ALL TRIPS MUST BE APPROVED BY MR. PAUL MOON
Revised 8-13-07
a success.

making our Valentine's
generaldity and efforts in
wish to thank you for your
Circle of Friends members.

...think you're doing your
work and projects.
comes from unconditional love, encourage...
wind... the understand and strengthen that
children were created to fly. They need...
Children are not so different from kids...

Thank you
BENEFITS
Benefits

Circle of Friends benefits everyone involved. The students with special needs are no longer stuck in a self-contained classroom all day with only staff and non-verbal peers. They have friends who visit them in class, friends who call them by name as they walk down the hall, and activities they can talk about and look forward to where they will interact with many friends/peers. Their life takes on meaning and, socially, it begins to look like that of a general ed. student.

The general ed. students also benefit from Circle of Friends. They develop confidence and self esteem as they reach out to these special peers, realizing that they are helping to improve their quality of life and are making a difference. They become more patient and creative as they learn to deal with individual needs and differences. Because of their experiences, many Circle of Friends decide to go into Special Education or a related field after graduation. They learn so much from these special individuals and often develop lasting friendships.

Circle of Friends has a very positive effect on the parents of the students with special needs. Like all parents, they dream that their child will have friends, be included, and live a happy life. Through the Circle of Friends club, their dreams become a reality. For the first time in their child’s life peers are calling on the phone, coming to their house, going to the same after school activities and actually interacting with their child!

With out a doubt, Circle of Friends changes the lives of everyone involved in a positive way!
SUCCESS STORIES
To the Circle of Friends Members:

I wish I had the chance to meet and thank each one of you in person, but I don’t. I am very thankful to have met a few of you on my visits to Todd’s classroom. I just wanted to write a note to each of you to tell you how much your friendship has meant to Todd. You probably take for granted the fact that most kids have lots of friends. And most do. Between school, sports, church, and all of the other activities you stay busy with, it is natural to make a lot of friends. Todd hasn’t had all those chances like a lot of you have. His “circle” of friends used to just include his mom, dad, sisters, other relatives, and very few others. Getting to hang out with you all, go on field trips with you, attend class with you, talk with you on the phone, receive notes from you, etc., has given him a chance to be a regular middle school kid, not that “handicapped kid”. Sometime Todd may not be able to tell you how much you have added to his life so I am writing this note to tell you for him. I hope your parents realize what a wonderful job they have done in raising you to be able to reach out to kids like Todd and truly make a difference. I am so proud of the students at Briarhill and so thrilled that Todd will get to spend one more year there. I know that as some of you go on to Marcus you will continue your attitudes of accepting teenagers that are different from yourselves. Thank you for not only all that you have meant to Todd, but for giving me hope about his future knowing that there are going to be adults like you out there with caring and accepting hearts.

Tricia Bradley

Todd’s Mom
Linda Epps
610 Sugarloaf Ct.
Highland Village, TX 77057

March 4, 1999

To whom it may concern:

My son, Ryan Epps, is in a developmental class at Briarhill Middle School. He has autism and displays the classical behaviors. He prefers to be alone, doesn't communicate with anyone unless he has to, talks to himself most of the time, and sometimes his conduct just looks odd. These are not the type of behaviors that attract friends and are often the reason that others tease or ignore him. When people do not understand the reasons for the conduct, they sometimes fear which translates into prejudice. Most children do not naturally seek out children like Ryan. Inclusion opens the door for them to interact. Once they realize that Ryan is more than just his behaviors, they enjoy being with him and everyone benefits. While socializing is hard for him, just being with a group of his peers causes him to act differently. He wants to do what they do so he learns to be quiet in a class. He likes it when they talk to him so he will try to engage them in his form of communication. He observes others in the cafeteria and sees the importance at meals. I wish I could say that he has picked up manners from the other students, but I've seen the middle school cafeteria at lunch time! That will come as all the students learn to act more appropriately. He watches them in the gym and learns that team activities are fun.

Just as important as the immediate benefits of being with his peers are the long term rewards. These children will be the voters when he is grown. They will decide whether a group home should be in their neighborhood or whether to hire him. They will decide whether to accommodate him in their churches and stores. Dispelling fears while they are young will do much to make Ryan's life better when he is an adult. The only way for them to feel comfortable around him is for them to get to know him. This is not accomplished when he is in his own "special" class all day.

Finally, the students realize that Ryan is a person, with the same feelings that they all have. Once a child told Ryan a joke. It was a sixth grade, bathroom humor, dumb joke, but he told it to Ryan as he would have to his friend. Both he and I were so amazed and thrilled when Ryan laughed, just as his friend would laugh. He exclaimed, "Ryan gets the joke!" several times and Ryan just kept laughing. Of course he got the joke, inside he is a regular kid.

Sincerely,

Linda Epps
My daughter, Jessica, is in the AVLS class at Arbor Creek Middle School.

As a parent it is fair to say that we always dream of seeing our children grow up happy, healthy and successful. We take for granted the idea that our kids will have friends, participate in school dances and other functions and overall just fit in with the rest of the kids. As a parent of a child with special needs, you realize early on that although your dreams do not change for your child .... your expectations regarding their life outside of your home does change. You no longer take for granted the idea of your child having friends and you hope that they will be able to attend the school dances or other school functions and be able to comfortably fit in with the other kids. As your child with special needs gets older you see less and less opportunity for them to fit in and participate in things that so many other students and parents take for granted.

Many children with special needs have so many challenges in their lives and thus spend so much of their time outside of school attending different therapy and doctor appointments and/or tutoring sessions. So much of their time is spent with adults .... their parents and those we as parents pay to help them such as tutors, speech pathologists, etc. Because of this there is very little time left to foster friendships. With each passing year it becomes more difficult for a child with special needs to fit comfortably in many social circles and to be genuinely accepted by all.

The idea of Circle of Friends (COF) is such a positive one. The fact that it can be rewarding to all parties involved is even better. Circle of Friends allows children with special needs to develop friendships and fit in with their typical peers and the typical children are equally rewarded by gaining new perspectives about people with disabilities in addition to making a big difference in the lives of these children with special needs and their families.

As a parent it has been wonderful to be involved with the Circle of Friends program that started this past year at Arbor Creek Middle school. It has been fun watching the comfort level increase between the kids with each COF event. As a parent I have been amazed and am so proud of every student involved with Circle of Friends. The level of maturity, the nurturing and guidance the typical kids provide to the kids with special needs has been nothing short of impressive. On the flip side, it has been wonderful to watch our kids with special needs step outside of their comfort zone and begin to actively participate in these activities and laugh and have fun with the typical kids. Truly amazing.

We had a Circle of Friends dance at the end of the school year last year and it brought to fruition something I had begun to doubt would ever happen .... my daughter attended her first school dance ..... with friends. I can't wait to see what next year brings us.

Mrs. Jennifer Burleson
April 20, 2008

RE: Circle of Friends

Every year our daughter Molly is just so motivated by the incredible Circle of Friends volunteers. This year, with her best friend Amber having moved away, we were so concerned that she would not have that special someone with whom she could connect.

But it wasn’t long after the school year began that Molly continually mentioned a girl named Cara, which was unusual as she normally only tells us about the boys she meets. Once we met Cara we also fell in love with her. Her ability to relate to Molly was amazing. Cara’s theatre and musical experience is what drew Molly to her – but her kindness and compassion with Molly is what really shines when they are together.

A friend of Molly and Cara is Katie Woodward. She is also very special to us. She and Cara have invited Molly to their homes for “girl’s night out”, taken her to dinner, made friendship bracelets together, and spent time with her at school to make her feel like “one of the girls”.

We are so blessed to have known these two wonderful girls this year. We will keep them both in our thoughts and prayers as they move on to college. They will always be a part of our hearts.

There have been so many kids over the past few years that have been there for Molly and that we have come to cherish. We want them all to know how special they are. Kelly Quinn, Alex Owens, Jenna Cooksey and Amanda Liggit have gone out of their way to attend Molly’s birthday parties, dance with her at school parties and have made her feel so special. We love them all and wish them success as they go off to college as well.

Shannon and Sherrie Hawk
Parents of Molly Hawk
Special Education/Circle of Friends

I really believe that the success of special education program is dictated by the leadership of the school. From the principals and assistant principals’, the attitudes and philosophy spreads to every person in the school environment. I am sure in many cases a school would much rather be recognized for their “gifted and talented” program, however special education success stories touch so many people it is impossible to ignore.

My recollection of special education when I was in school was shamefully limited to seeing the students on occasion in the cafeteria. I am embarrassed to admit that our response to their presence often included staring, laughing, and often aggressive gestures. I am confident that it was a lack of understanding (ignorance), compassion, and good citizenship coming from all levels that further isolated these students into their own very lonely world.

Circle of Friends has changed my son Kyle’s life as well as our family in so many ways it is difficult to even begin to describe.

My hope when Kyle was young was for an education plan as inclusive with regular education students as possible. I came to the difficult realization that cognitively that was not possible. The gap was just too wide.

COF has brought an entirely new meaning of inclusion into our lives I never dreamed possible. Kyle has become a true member of the FMHS community. He has so many friends that look out for him, that enjoy spending time with him, and make him feel like a real friend.

There are so many examples of caring and generosity. One of the most recent was Mrs. Thetford called me to tell me they had a brief scare that Kyle had wandered away. The panic was short lived by all as she told me another student had seen him alone in the hallway and was alerted by the fact that he would not be alone. She escorted him back to the classroom to a huge collective relief as the student was just following their instincts.

One afternoon I walked into the classroom for a meeting and saw Kyle on the floor having a seizure. He had two students at his side rubbing his back and reassuring him he would be fine like it was something they felt so comfortable with.

I could go on and on with events they share with the kids. Halloween parties, Christmas parties, ice cream socials, cheerleading, movie parties, dances, fund raising events, the list of generosity goes on and on. That is besides the every day. Gym class (P.E. buddies), lunch mates, classroom helpers. Again, countless everyday activities with the kids taking time from their own busy high school schedules. Of course the Grand Ball. An event you have to see to believe.

As with so many of Kyle’s struggles with appropriate behaviors and boundaries in school or social settings. How could he be expected to understand what is appropriate with
peers/friends. He has never had them. I have seen so many times the students explaining to them what is “cool”, and what is “not cool”. Or having a tantrum for some unknown reason. They just do what they do and calmly, patiently work him through it.

His relationships at school have transcended the school walls to include outside activities.

Church was not possible for our family because Kyle could not sit through a service. With the “special Needs Ministry” which so many of our students are involved in, they take a piece of the message and make it into something the students can understand.

Having students call Kyle just to say “hi”, or to ask to come over and visit, or go to the movie was a real surprise. No one had ever taken the time, and I couldn’t begin to describe what it means to students and parents.

COF has given Kyle not only so much happiness, but a level of independence and confidence I never dreamed possible for Kyle. And for parents a true joy to see the happiness that a friendship can bring. Also a piece of mind knowing that while he is out of our care as parents, he is an environment of compassion, understanding and commitment to help make them the best they can possibly be.

My hope is that when Kyle graduates and moves on we can continue to find people in our community that can view these special people as having a place, and see that they too have something to share.

Thank you to Karen Thetford, Flower Mound High School, and all of the Circle of Friends for everything you do!

Teri Pansing
Mother: Kyle Dzemske
My Twin Brother

A significant experience in my life is having a twin brother with autism. Since I was born, I have always had a twin that looks just like me. My brother, Jon, has filled my life with challenges and blessings that I would never had experienced if he never existed.

As Jon and I grew up, I learned that living with a disabled brother was harder than I thought. When Jon reached puberty, he began to get mood swings and he started to whine a lot. At first I abhorred having to listen to his temper tantrums when I was trying to do my homework. I could not even have friends over sometimes for fear that it would freak someone out to come to my house and see my teenage brother having a temper tantrum like a little kid. As time went by though, I began to see that Jon’s annoying habits were blessings in disguise. The temper tantrums that had bugged me so always had a reason behind them if I only chose to discover that reason. As I began to try to understand why Jon had so many temper tantrums, I realized that he had temper tantrums in order to express himself. With his autism, Jon could not express himself very well. He could only say a few words. Everyone needs to communicate with others. For example, some inhumane studies that the Nazis did with babies showed that babies that were never talked to or played with died, simply because they had no social contact. Since Jon could not talk, he expressed himself like all toddlers do, he whined to communicate or socialize with others. What I once thought was just an annoying thing that I had to deal with, Jon’s temper tantrums, became a life lesson that taught me that things are never as straight forward as they seem. I began to see life in a new light once I realized that even something as random as a sudden temper tantrum always had a reasonable reason behind it.

In high school I decided that I should help Jon out at school, so I joined Circle of Friends. Circle of Friends is a group of people who are dedicated in helping disabled students learn, be friends with them, and help them be a part of the community. I was surprised at how many caring students joined Circle of Friends in order to help others. I was really surprised to find out that half of them thought I was Jon. People started saying “Hi Jon,” to me. When I started talking, everyone realized their mistake. At first I was insulted that people thought that I was my disabled brother. All my life, I have taken as many advanced courses as I could, and I have done well in them, so to be thought of as someone who could not even take regular classes insulted me. Then I realized how wrong I was. Twins like Jon and I look exactly the same, so all that was happening was that people simply saw someone that looked like Jon and assumed that they saw Jon. Another thing that hit me was everyone who knew Jon seemed to really like him. Jon actually was a popular kid and it was an honor to be mistaken for him. Being mistaken for Jon became a blessing that humbled me and let me see a glimpse of how well everyone treated Jon.

Jon is a significant part of my life. From our births to today, I have learned many lessons from Jon. At first I did not understand why God would make one twin disabled and the other not disabled, but now I understand that the more I struggle with Jon the more my eyes are opened. God gave me Jon to teach me from the day I was born to the day I die. Like the meaning of his name, Jon is truly a gift from God.
As the 2006-2007 Circle of Friends Vice-President I want to thank everyone from the bottom of my heart. I had so much fun these past 4 years. I started working with children with special needs ever since I was little and have enjoyed every single minute. Me and Billy went to the same day care when were younger. We lost contact through the years because our lives became busy and hectic. Then when I went to McKamy Middle School we came in contact again. I was so excited when I got to high school because I knew that I might have the opportunity to escort Billy to the COF Grande ball. I was lucky enough to be a limo escort my sophomore year and escort Billy my Junior and Senior year. I am so glad that I got to have this opportunity. I am so glad to also have been 1 of 3 Circle of Friends $500 scholarship recipients. That means so much to me and will be put to great use when I attend Texas Woman’s University in Denton starting in the Fall. Circle of Friends has always had a special place in my heart. It will be hard for me to leave after being a Circle of Friends member for 14 years. I will still be in the area so I can come back and visit every once in a while. Each and every one of you has made a handprint on my heart and that is why I am going to become a speech pathologist or occupational therapist. I will never forget baking brownies every Thursday or shopping @ Wal-Mart on Mondays. Jared saying “Are you ready for the Break down?? Jaguars ready hit, clap, break, break” during P.E. Kyle’s great stories and always giving a thumbs up to everything. But Abby is where the true friend always was for me in and throughout high school. She was always there to just listen to whatever I had to say. If you ever heard someone coming down the hall singing little bunny fu fu that would have been me and Abby. I was so honored when I was asked to walk Abby across the stage at graduation that I jumped at the moment. I will never forget feeling how proud and honored I was to help Abby cross that stage and receive her diploma. That was only the beginning of where me and Abby’s journey would begin. After High School me and Abby would be going to Champion Services in Grapevine together. I will always remember making homecoming mums, going to the movies, the Halloween party at Sneaky Pete’s, cooking Thanksgiving dinner together, COF movie nights, the Friday Field trips, adaptive P.E. class, being Mrs. Thetford’s 3rd period aid, cooking every Thursday, the annual Christmas party, the walk-a-thons and garage sales, but most of all hanging out with all of my friends on the weekends and going to church on Sunday at Valley Creek. I will never forget going to Billy’s birthday party at El Chico’s and spending New Years eve at Billy’s House. We rang in the New Year of 2007 by watching a marathon of America’s Funniest Home videos. We had so much fun and laughed the night away. I also had the great opportunity of getting a close family friend of mine, Mayor Jody Smith, involved in Flower Mound HS circle of friends. I asked her as a friend if she would like to come to my last Circle of Friends ball and she said yes but let me do something more than just show up. She wandered why I did not get her involved sooner but I told and promised her that I would make sure that me and her both would continue coming to the Circle of Friends Grande Balls even after I graduate. So I thought about it and asked Mrs. Thetford if Mayor Smith could declare a day in the city of Flower Mound Circle of Friends day. She loved the idea and so April 4, 2007 was declared Circle of Friends day in the town of Flower Mound. This was a day that I will never forget and will always cherish in the years to come. Circle of Friends has taught me so
much; given me a lot of knowledge and a life filled with long term friendships. I will never forget you guys and I hope that y'all will never forget me. I hope that we can keep up this new tradition that I had a part in creating. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or need some help. Thanks again for everything.

Your Circle of Friend,
Kelly Krause
As I walked toward the principal’s office, I dreaded the waiting phone call. I took the receiver and heard Cheryl, Kim’s friend, say “We lost her.” A lump forming in my throat, I thought about Kim and our first encounter. Two years ago this 17 year old girl with Down Syndrome pushed her wheelchair into my classroom and stated in her raspy voice, “I’m Kim, I want to walk!” Her aide rushed through the door shouting, “Kim, you must ride to school in your chair. The doctor told you to rest your heart!” Kim knew about her heart, but she wanted to walk. Her strong will carried over into my classroom, challenging my patience and my authority. When I worked with other students, she burped and hit the table. Slowly her behavior improved as she trusted me enough to share me with the other students. She began to read, to follow recipes, and to fill out job applications. Kim clapped her hands with excitement when I told her about a job at the hospital. She could put labels on items without overworking her heart. Kim beamed when the nurse said, “You can start next Monday.”

Next Monday . . . Kim would not be there. Why did Kim’s life end so abruptly? As I looked at her progress, I knew I had so much more to teach her. Was Kim put on earth for me to teach? Or was she here to teach me? What about my other students? I often wonder if these special kids represent the ‘strangers’ in Hebrews 13: “Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by doing so some people have entertained angels without knowing it.” Was Kim an angel in disguise, sent to teach me a valuable lesson? I learned patience through dealing with Kim’s difficult behavior. Today I have more patience with my students and with my own children. I learned perseverance by watching Kim struggle with her name on a job application. She was determined to get that job and, however difficult, would not give up. Kim taught me to love the simple things in life and to look at the world through the eyes of a child. As I walked back to class, I joyfully visualized Kim walking beside her creator with a new strong heart and a peaceful smile on her face.
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT
Circle brings hope, friendship to lives of disabled students

By DAVID A. SMITH
Staff writer

In its eighth year in the Lewisville ISD, Circle of Friends continues to gather momentum and warm hearts. Its mission: "To enrich the lives of all students by creating lasting relationships, regardless of differences. To enhance and bring forth the community spirit for the present and for the future." The club slogan: "Make a friend ... make a difference."

The circle was founded to encourage high school students to initiate and develop friendships with physically and mentally challenged students. Through such normal activities as bringing them to class, spending time together after school, talking on the phone and writing notes, the circle brings these all-too-often unnoticed students into the mainstream of student life.

Circle sponsor Karan Thetford said she is especially impressed by the sincerity of the organization's students.

"I am always touched by the love, care and compassion that Circle of Friends members show their peers," Thetford said. "Their kindness does not go unnoticed. They are

Turn to CIRCLE, Page 7A
Submitted photo

Flower Mound High School students, from left, Kara VanKee, Kyle Dzenske and Hallie Hurst, at the recent Circle of Friends skating party at the Lewisville Interskate Roller Rink.

Circle

From 1A showing others ... how to reach out to people who are physically and mentally challenged. They are such a blessing in their lives and in mine.

During the past year, the number of members in the circle at Flower Mound High School has more than doubled. With more than 75 students now involved, the amount of time the average member spends with challenged students is increasing as well. Social activities fill the circle calendar.

"We now have one in-school activity and one out-of-school activity a month," said circle social committee chair man Allison Weier.

Among the favorite activities on the circle roster this year was a party Oct. 30 at Lewisville's Interskate Roller Rink. The party not only gave the challenged students of COF a night out, but it was also the first party attended by both the Lewisville and FMHS circle organizations.

Senior Hollie Hurst, president of the FMHS circle, first became involved with the club as a sophomore. She said that she plans to pursue degrees in special education and occupational therapy at Texas Woman's University and that her involvement in the circle has only strengthened her resolve.

"These kids wake up every day and live their lives to the fullest, regardless of their disability. I wish there was some way to repay them for all they have done for me. The friendships that I have made in Circle of Friends will last a lifetime," Hurst said.

Sherry Goodman, an FMHS developmental teacher and circle sponsor, said the club has done wonders for the students involved. She describes the look of joy on her students' faces when a circle member stops to talk to them in the hallway as "a truly wonderful moment."

"I have had many parents over the last few years tell me that they didn't know their child could become so animated. I wish each school could have this program," Goodman said.

Contact staff writer David A. Smith at 972-436-8014, Ext. 123, or at dianthony@hotmail.com.
Circle of Friends helps special-needs students thrive

By MICHELLE ADAMS
Special to the Leader

The Circle of Friends has been helping special-needs students throughout the Lewisville ISD.

The LISD club was initiated in 1993 in hopes to fill the gap that is commonly missing in a special-needs student's life.

It was determined that a typical student had three groups of people who touched their lives: family, friends, and people who are paid for their services. Special-needs students do not always get the benefit of all three groups. Circle of Friends was created in an attempt to give challenged students the opportunity to experience more social activities among their peers and allow both groups to experience some of the same activities and events.

The Flower Mound High School program has been met with lots of enthusiasm across the district. Two of its sponsors, Karen Thetford and Sherri Goodman, said the community is very good at helping the club with its fundraisers. However, the FMHS division is asking for any donations from residents and/or businesses to provide prizes for the upcoming drawings.

The Circle of Friends is responsible for fundraisers to help pay for special events, field trips, and parties given to the students throughout the school year. The Valentine's Ball to be held in the FMHS cafeteria is coming up fast. A recent event was the Shannon Ardoin tree-planting ceremony on Oct. 24, which memorialized Ardoin and her struggle with her physical challenges.

The club raises funds by selling doughnuts on campus and has had fundraisers such as car washes and root beer float stands.

For information, call 972-539-1564 ext. 1230/1240 or drop by Room 1230 at FMHS.
FMHS Circle of Friends Touches Some Special Hearts

BY MIKE FICKLING

The Flower Mound chapter of Circle of Friends is comprised of 85 students and sponsors who make a special effort to reach out to initiate friendships with developmentally challenged students. They look for opportunities to include their peers through activities such as hosting parties, visiting their classes, spending time together after school and on weekends, going on outings and escorting them to class.

The club meets on alternate Thursdays, and it is the goal of every member to do the “little things” that help these special needs students feel accepted and loved. The interaction includes playing games, reading books, calling their friend at home on weekends, and even offering to spend time with them on special evenings to allow the parents a rare night out. As a result, a new sense of compassion and enthusiasm started to spread throughout the entire student body.

For the second year, the Circle of Friends sponsored a prom for their fellow students who are physically and/or mentally challenged. The Valentine Ball was held on February 16 and included 200 students, family members and friends.

This year’s ball has been months in the planning. Tonya Massengale took the job of decorating the “ballroom” and did a wonderful job of transforming a school cafeteria into a

Make A Difference...Make A Friend

Members of the club were dressed in their finest formal gowns and tuxedos as part of the Royal Court, and served as escorts for the guests of honor. As each of the special guests arrived in their limo, they were greeted at the door, presented with a corsage, and escorted to their tables as their name was announced to the crowd of friends and families.

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FMHS Circle of Friends...

continued from page 1

“I have never been a part of anything so touching in my life,” said Kathy Duke, who volunteered as a member of the Flower Mound Rotary Club. “Those special kids were truly overjoyed by the kindness of the Circle of Friends, who treated them like royalty. There wasn’t a dry eye in the place when their names were announced and they couldn’t contain their happiness. I was so proud to be a part of this evening.”

The entire crowd then joined the guests of honor in a meal of rotisserie chicken, new potatoes, green beans, salad and dinner rolls. compliments of LISD Trustee Mike McDaniel and catered by the Golden Corral in The Colony.

After dinner, those in attendance were entertained by DJ Scott Young, and took to the dance floor to just have some fun and enjoy themselves. The 2002 FMHS Circle of Friends Valentine Ball was a huge success and gave some very special students a night to remember.
FMHS Circle of Friends Scare-up Fun

Staff Report

Sneaky Pete's on Lake Lewisville hosted its annual Halloween party for the Circle of Friends of Flower Mound High School on Tuesday, Oct. 30.

Thirty-five special needs students and 50 of their general education peers attended, dressed in costumes. Others at the party included parents, teachers and staff at the high school.

The party was held in the elaborately decorated Monterrey Room, with chicken strips, pizza and other favorite foods served courtesy of Sneaky Pete's.

Rudy Duron, disc jockey and owner of Duron Duron DJ, donated his services for the party, and the Circle of Friends crowded the dance floor with 90 minutes of dancing, laughter and fun. David Simmons, vice president of Sneaky Pete's, coordinated the Halloween Party putting smiles on the faces of all who attended. The owners of Sneaky Pete's have been continual supporters of the FMHS Circle of Friends.

Six years ago, Flower Mound graduate Britt Adams, granddaughter of co-owners Bill and Barbara Adams, joined Circle of Friends. She had the idea that Sneaky Pete's could host a party for her special friends. The Adams and co-owner Nick Mehmet have continued each year to host a Halloween party for the special students and their peers.

Costumes and good food were all the FMHS Circle of Friends club members needed to complete the fun afternoon with their special needs fellow students.
Mystery Santa Vists FMHS

By Lyn Pry
STAFF WRITER

The 6th Annual Circle of Friends Christmas Party at Flower Mound High School had a big problem this year... no Santa!

Of course, the official Santa is hard at work up there at the North Pole, but there was panic in the Special Education Department at the high school.

For the past five years, faculty member Phil Jacobsen has sat in the big Santa chair overseeing the party festivities held for the special needs students from Central Elementary School. Just a few weeks ago, however, Jacobsen had knee surgery, and not just anybody can fill his boots— or Santa suit.

The party is sponsored by the 200 member Circle of Friends (COF) Club and the FMHS Special Education Department, which counts 34 developmental and bridging students this year. The COF students select a Central Elementary child from an angel tree and provide each special needs youngster with a toy and two clothing items. The party food is provided by the FMHS P.E. Buddies, a group of 30-35 students who sign-up to be paired with one of the students in the second period, special needs physical education class under the direction of Coach Mike Chiaverini and Melanie Pabalate.

Again this year, Assistant Principal Sonya Lail was set to don her Mrs. Claus attire and read The Night Before Christmas and Head Counselor Phyllis Hamilton had her elf hat and shoes all ready... but a special person to fill Jacobsen’s Santa suit was nowhere to be found.

FMHS Principal Paul Moon solved the problem with a quick phone call. The saying goes, “If you want something done, ask a busy person—they’ll make it happen.” The person on the receiving end of the call for assistance is one of the busiest people in North Texas, Fred Placke. Of course, the fact that he’s President of the LISD Board of Trustees (among many other organizations that serve children and their welfare), an active and involved parent—and just the right size to wear the Santa suit—helped Moon know who would answer his request with a “Sure.”

It was difficult to tell who had more fun at the party—the Central Elementary students, their parents, the COF and P.E. Buddies students, the FMHS staff and faculty, or Placke.

lpry@alliancnews.net
972-724-9280
FMHS Circle of Friends President Alex Owens, back left, and her elves, Tim Hicks, Amanda Liggitt and Emily Krause the COF secretary, watch over the special needs Central Elementary students Miguel, Christian, Ivon and Fernando.
Luck can lead us to good company

Sometimes luck can simply mean being in the right place at the right time.

Take the Thursday before Easter, for instance. I was at Flower Mound High School to take pictures of two senior swimmers signing letters of intent to swim on college teams and to take a picture of this week’s Spotlight personality, art teacher Melinda Marino. Walking out the door, I was greeted with the unmistakable sound of The Beach Boys from the football stadium. Since football season is long gone and one of the essential traits inherent in a journalist is curiosity, I followed the music.

Well, what a sight! Lined up on the sideline of the football field were more than 50 students and faculty members waiting to charge the field, which was covered by hundreds of bright, plastic eggs. I got to the field just as the “go” was sounded and the stampede was on.

The FMHS Circle of Friends Club was throwing an Easter Egg hunt for the special needs students at Flower Mound High School, and even some of the former students had returned for the fun. The controlled pandemonium on the field was followed by a hot dog buffet accompanied by a soundtrack of the Village People, Creedence Clearwater Revival and the Doobie Brothers sprinkled liberally among selections from current hit tunes.

Everyone had a great time.

The FMHS Circle of Friends Club boasts more than 200 student members who attend and sponsor events like the egg hunt, the recent formal prom and more common field trips such as bowling or visits to places around the area for the special needs students. It’s a mentoring program based on respect and friendship, and it benefits everyone involved.

Thanks for the hot dog lunch and a really great time. I was lucky to be there.

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For more photos of the FMHS egg hunt, see LUCK, Pages 12 & 13.