



Family Pathways

BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES ONE PERSON AT A TIME
Dear: Family

First I would like to *Thank You* for looking into Family Pathways Circle Of Friends program. This program is a peer mentoring program for teens with special needs. We pair up a teen volunteer with a special needs teen. We work on socialization skills through leisure activities but mostly we have fun. Each activity is 1.5 to 2 hours long and either after school or right after supper. Last year Circle of Friends groups had dances, watched movies, played fun games and talked. We ended the school year with 70 teens attending a "prom party".

Our teen volunteers go through training on what to expect and how to work with teens that have special needs. This training is provided by Family Pathways. We also have adult volunteers during our activity times.

Most of the activities are free or under \$10. For the activities that cost money, Circle of Friends does not cover the cost of those activities. We ask that the teen pays their own way. When those activities are coming up we will let you know about the cost in advance. It is also posted on the schedule that is included in this packet. Parents are responsible for getting and picking up their teen from the different events. If you need help with transportation you can call and we can make arrangements to get your teen to the activities.

To join Circle of Friends (COF) we want to meet the family and the teen before they start attending COF events. During this meeting we will fill out the paper work, also ask you a few questions about your teen so that we can get to know him or her. This helps us match them with the right peer mentor. We also like the teen to work on specific goals, helping them as much as possible on their socialization skills.

Please feel free to call me if you have additional questions. To begin participation in COF, staff will need to meet you and have the paperwork done. We are excited that you are looking into having your teen join COF this year.

Thank You,

Tiffany Johnson
Circle of Friends, Coordinator
1-877-321-7100 Toll free
1-320-225-0252 Phone Number
tiffany@familypathways.org

Circle of Friends Peer Buddy Program

Parents have dreams for their children, one is happiness that comes from having friends. For some students, friendships seem harder to maintain as they get into Middle School and High School. Family Pathways is helping with this through **Circle of Friends** a peer/buddy program to help students work on social skills and develop friendships.

How it works is we do group activities twice a month together with teen volunteer peer buddies. A calendar of events is given to each student stating where and what we are doing. The activities are geared for fun and social development, not competition. Activities we have done include shopping, Karaoke, tie-dyed t-shirts, movies, bowling, dances, etc., things teenagers like to do.

During the year the peer/buddies find similarities and start to develop friendships, seeing the person first and not the disability. They develop special relationships that can be a cornerstone for further friendships. One of the participants was asked to eat lunch with his "new" friends he made in Circle of Friends.

COF has given my son a sense of belonging. He has developed many friendships with kids he would have probably not met if it wasn't for this group. It is very comforting to know that there are people who take pride in helping kids with disabilities. The leadership is outstanding and helps teach the kids many valuable learning lessons. I am so happy we found this group and my son looks forward to the activities. He likes just being able to be himself. Lori-parent of Circle of Friends Participant

Most participants are in 8th-12th grades. The volunteer peer/buddies are in 9-12 grades, they get training, explaining the commitment we require and the expectations of a mentor. ***Students may begin anytime during the school year. This is a free program, however, students are expected to cover the costs of the activities. Most activities are free are under \$10.***

To get your child involved with "Circle of Friends", please fill out the information below and return it to Bonita Carlson at Family Pathways PO Box 42, Stacy, MN 55079. If you have questions, contact Bonita (651) 462-4398 or bonita@familypathways.org (toll free 1-877-321-7100).

Student Name _____ Grade _____

Address _____

Parent's Name _____

Phone Numbers Home _____ Cell _____

This is not a school district sponsored event. All costs for promoting and running this program is done by Family Pathways.