



# Social Connections

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# Mission Statement

“Life is relationships; the rest is just details.”  
-Gary Smalley



Individuals who have a disability face unique challenges to attaining and sustaining the most common, yet precious gift of humanity: friendship.

It is our Mission to increase society's awareness that friendship is crucial to everyone and disabilities do not preclude friendships... every individual can and should have friends.

# Connections



We are passing around a ball of twine.  
Please pass it from one to another across each row and back down the next row.

When we are all connected:  
By our twine  
By our commitment to leadership  
By our involvement in the community of all those with differing abilities

Soon we will go our separate ways:  
Untie the knot between you and the person to your right  
You will be holding a single piece of twine  
Roll it up  
Place it where it will help you remember our connection  
Use it to make new connections every day

In scouting we do a demonstration involving a single strand of thread  
When anyone pulls on it...it breaks  
But  
When a few strands are wound together  
It takes a lot more pull to break...a strand may break...but the rope will hold  
So will our strength be found in our connections  
Keep getting connected! The more strands the better

# Roots of Exclusion



- **Compensatory Training- Residential School Setting**
  - “educational boarding schools- created to provide functional training”  
...the era of optimism
  - “established separation from family & non-handicapped peers”
- **Shelter from Society at Large**
  - The notion that disabled individuals needed protection, “shelter from unbearable stress & persecution lurking in communities”
  - “...with few exceptions, so few that they may be disregarded in establishing a policy, all the pupils of the school, from the lowest to the highest grade ought to be permanently retained in the safe, kindly maternal care of the state.” (Johnson 1883)
- **Viewed as Menace to Society**
  - The notion of the “dumbing down of society”
  - “...we have recognized a higher type of defective...he is a burden....a menace to society & civilization...he is responsible to a degree for many if not all, of our social problems” (Goddard 1915)

# The Importance of Friendship

“The need to belong must be met before one can gain a sense of self worth and achievement.” -Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs-



## Friendships:

- Basic Human Right
- Self Esteem
- Fulfilled life
- Safety and security
- Sharing of experiences

## Lack of Friendships:

- Isolation
- Emptiness
- Lack of self-worth
- Depression
- Suicide

# Friendship Barriers & Assumptions

“If I'm going to sing like someone else, then I don't need to sing at all.” – *Billy Holiday*



- **Attitudinal**
  - Discrimination disguised as compassion & benevolence
  - Perception of disability defined as deficiency
  - Culture of Tolerance vs. Acceptance
- **Access**
  - Transportation
  - Financial
  - Accessibility
  - Support person's availability
- **Communication**
  - Availability of Augmentative Communication
  - Assumptions about ability & understanding based on different communication method
  - Pull Outs in school – the beginning of “them & us” culture?
- **Culture**
  - Imagine living in a foreign culture

# Strategies



- **Educate about The Least Dangerous Assumption**
  - assuming competence
- **Difference not Deficiency**
  - “Different not less “ (Grandin)
  - ...”disability is an integral part of the human condition, it is neither better nor worse, it just is.” (Tashie)
  - Individuals who are disabled bring diversity and make valuable contributions to society
- **Membership in Organizations & Opportunities for Shared Recreation Activities**
  - Join, join, join!!!
- **Facilitated Social Networks**
- **Right Idea Clubs**
- **Schools**
  - Provide meaningful inclusion
  - Imbed the History & Contributions into school curriculum
  - High expectations
  - Promote classrooms that truly value diversity
  - Include Social Objectives in IEPs
  - Intentionally nurture development of relationships
- **Explore: Parent/School/Community Partnerships**
- **Provide & Support Augmentative Communication Needs**

# Shared Recreation Activities

“How does anyone make friends?”

-Bob English



- Neighborhood yards, play areas, and parks
- Community education and recreation programs for youth and adults
- Community sports leagues
- Faith communities
- Interest clubs (such as gardening, bridge, birding, book, and dancing clubs)
- Youth organizations (such as Scouting, Campfire, 4-H, church youth groups)
- Recreation and fitness center activities and programs
- Cultural and ethnic centers
- Community arts and theatre organizations
- School carnivals and family nights
- Open gym and swim times for the community at local schools and colleges
- Extracurricular activities in K-12 schools
- Early childhood play groups
- Community volunteer organizations
- Youth drop-in centers
- Neighborhood coffeehouses and bars
- Workplace sports teams and informal interest groups
- Nature centers





# Get Connected!

Public Service Campaign

# What is a Public Service Campaign?



- Used to inform or educate the public about an issue
- Used to influence attitudes
- Helps to overcome misconceptions and prejudices
- Creates public interest

# Campaign Objectives



- Educate the public that friendship is important for all individuals
- Educate the public about the connection between friendship and school performance
- Educate the public about the connection between friendship and health and happiness
- Advocate for wider access to friendship for all individuals
- Engage citizens to speak develop friendships outside of the traditional paradigm

# Our Mission



“To form a connection between communities, schools and families that will encourage open communication providing growth, development and teamwork to achieve social opportunities and inclusion of all.”

# Sources



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