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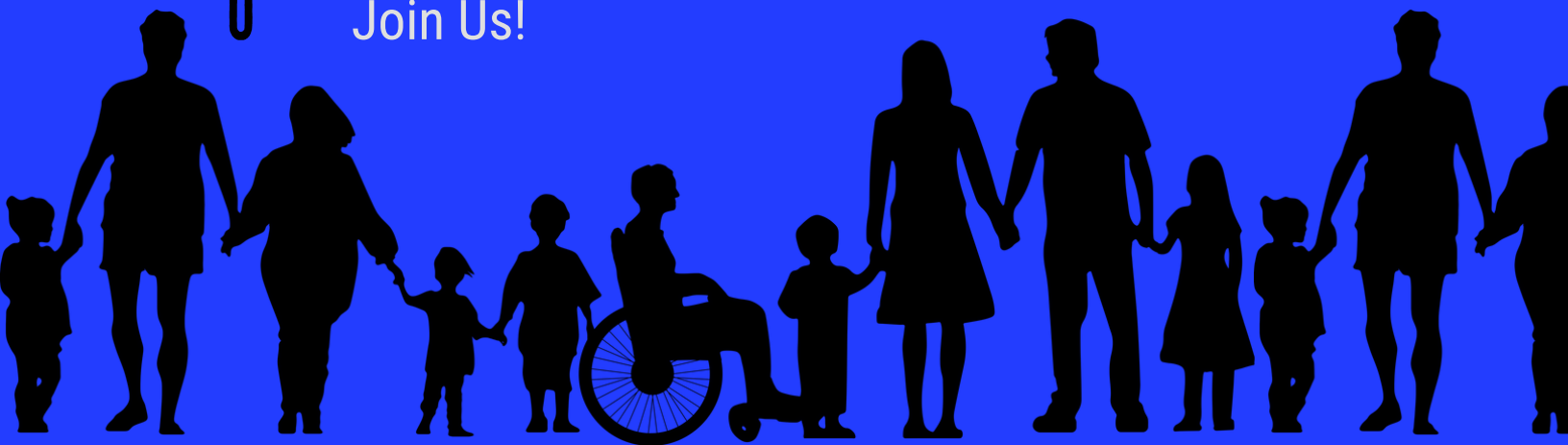
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INTRODUCTION

The Circle: Building Community, One Day at a Time

The transition after high school can be challenging for many adults, but for those with special needs, it often marks a significant decrease in structured activities and social engagement. Caregivers frequently struggle to find affordable and meaningful opportunities for their loved ones to connect with others, build friendships, and simply enjoy life. This lack of accessible programming can lead to isolation, decreased well-being, and increased burden on families.

Many churches share a deep desire to serve their communities and extend their outreach to those in need. They possess a valuable resource: a network of caring volunteers eager to make a difference. "The Circle" program was born from a parent's personal experience with this challenge and a vision to bridge this gap, connecting the needs of adults with special needs with the compassion and resources of our local churches.

The Circle offers a unique solution by sharing the collective power with our faith community. Instead of placing the burden of full program development on any single entity, The Circle invites participating churches to contribute in a manageable and impactful way. Each church is simply asked to choose one day of the week and one activity category to host. This allows churches to focus their efforts, utilize their existing volunteer base, and provide a consistent and reliable schedule of activities for participants, in partnership with the caregivers who will accompany their loved ones.

By partnering with the Special Needs Collaborative, participating churches will receive support and resources to ensure the success of their chosen activity. The Special Needs Collaborative will provide guidance, training, and connections to a wider network of families seeking enriching opportunities for their loved ones with special needs. This collaborative approach will not only expand the reach of each church's ministry but also create a stronger, more inclusive community for all.

The Circle offers a win-win for everyone involved. Adults with special needs gain access to vital social connections, engaging activities, and a sense of belonging. Caregivers receive much-needed respite and peace of mind, knowing their loved ones are thriving in a supportive environment. And churches have the opportunity to live out their faith by extending compassion and support to a deserving population within their community. By joining The Circle, your church can be a beacon of hope, fostering a community where everyone belongs and has the chance to flourish. Together, we can build a more inclusive and compassionate community for all.

We believe that by working together, we can create a circle of support, friendship, and opportunity for adults with special needs. **We invite you to join The Circle and be a part of this transformative initiative.**



OUR STORY SO FAR

OUR MISSION

The Special Needs Collaborative of Mercer County, WV, was born from a shared passion: a vision of a brighter future for individuals with disabilities and their families. We recognized a critical need—not just for support within families, but for collaboration across organizations and our entire community. Too often, individuals with special needs face barriers to full inclusion and lack access to the resources and opportunities they deserve. The Special Needs Collaborative exists to change that.

Our mission is clear: we empower individuals with unique abilities and their families to flourish. We champion family support, raise community awareness, advocate for accessibility and inclusion, and work tirelessly to create fulfilling adult life options. We are a "hub" of support, connecting families with vital resources and information. Our membership comprises individuals from various organizations and family members of people with disabilities, uniting diverse perspectives with a shared goal.

At the heart of our work is a culture of teamwork, optimism, and open-mindedness. We celebrate the unique strengths of everyone we serve, understanding that we are all working toward the same objective: empowerment and progress for those living with disabilities. We believe that by working together, we can eliminate barriers and foster a world where everyone truly thrives.

OUR PURPOSE

Initiatives like The Circle are essential to our cause. They embody our mission by directly addressing a critical need: meaningful engagement opportunities for adults with special needs. The Circle exemplifies the power of community collaboration, bringing together churches, volunteers, and families to create a supportive network where individuals can connect, learn, and grow. By partnering with faith communities, we can expand our reach and create lasting, positive change. The Circle is more than just a program; it's a testament to our commitment to building a more inclusive and compassionate community for all.



**BECAUSE
EVERY STRENGTH COUNTS
AND EVERY VOICE MATTERS**

ENGAGEMENT CATEGORIES

Participating churches will choose one of the following five engagement categories to host consistently each week, providing a predictable and enriching experience for adults with special needs. This means that if a church chooses "Arts & Crafts" and Monday, they will host an Arts & Crafts activity every Monday. These categories are designed to offer a variety of activities to suit diverse interests and abilities, fostering social connection, skill development, and fun. We encourage churches to consider their available resources, volunteer expertise, and the preferences of their local community when making their selection.

1

Arts & Crafts

This category encompasses a wide range of creative activities, from painting and drawing to sculpting, jewelry making, and other hands-on projects. An Arts & Crafts session could involve guided instruction in a specific technique, open studio time for individual expression, or collaborative projects that foster teamwork and social interaction. The goal is to provide a space for artistic exploration and self-expression in a relaxed and supportive atmosphere.

2

Physical Fitness

Promoting health and well-being is the focus of this category. Activities could include adapted exercise classes, yoga, dance, walking groups, or even organized games that encourage movement and participation. The Physical Fitness sessions are designed to be inclusive and adaptable to different abilities, emphasizing fun and enjoyment rather than intense workouts.

3

Cafe

This category provides a relaxed and social setting for participants to connect over refreshments and conversation. A Café session could involve light snacks and drinks, board games, storytelling, or simply a chance to chat and build friendships in a welcoming environment. The emphasis is on fostering social interaction and creating a sense of community.

4

Music

From sing-alongs and instrument playing to listening to live music or even exploring music technology, this category celebrates the power of music. A Music session could feature a local musician sharing their talents, a karaoke session, a drumming circle, or simply a time to enjoy favorite songs together. The focus is on creating a joyful and engaging musical experience for all participants, regardless of their musical background.

5

Games & learning

This category combines fun and intellectual stimulation through activities like board games, puzzles, trivia, book clubs, or even educational presentations on topics of interest. A Games & Learning session could involve a friendly competition, a collaborative puzzle-solving activity, or a guest speaker sharing their expertise. The goal is to engage participants' minds while fostering social interaction and a love of learning.

PARTICIPANT CENTERED

Imagine a week filled with connection, creativity, and fun – that's The Circle. Participants are at the heart of it all, surrounded by a supportive community and engaging activities.

Here's how it works:

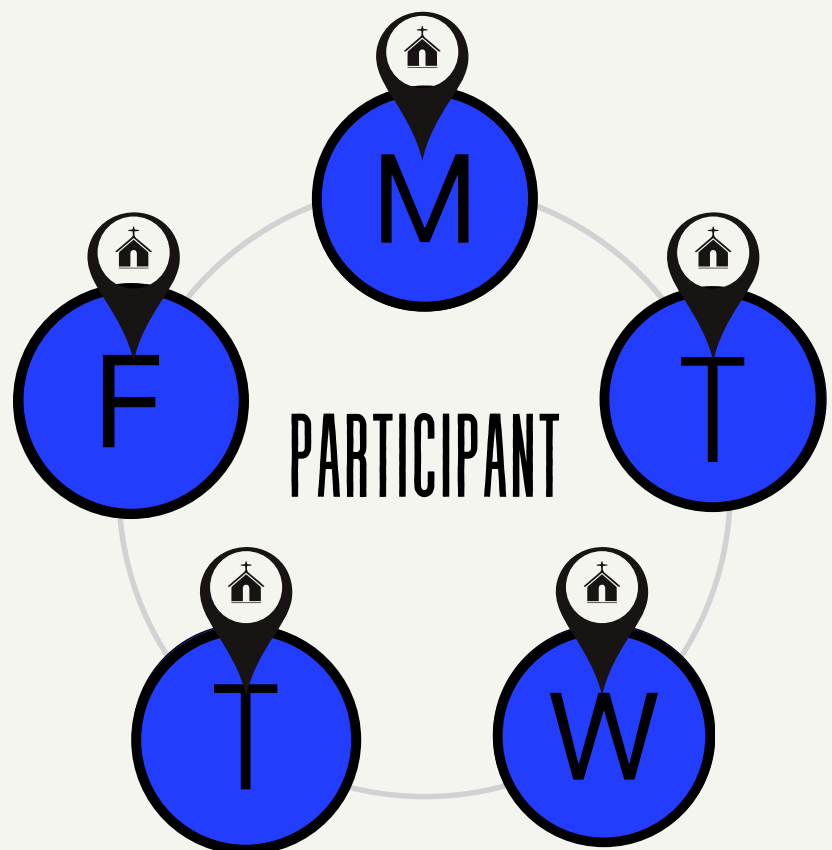
Each day offers a new opportunity.

Monday might be Arts & Crafts at First Church, where participants explore their creative side through painting, knitting, or jewelry making. Tuesday could be Music day at another church, filled with sing-alongs, instruments, or live music.

Wednesday brings Physical Fitness – gentle exercises, yoga, or dance, promoting well-being at everyone's pace.

Thursday is Café day: relaxed social connection over refreshments, games, and conversation. Finally, Friday might be Games & Learning, with board games, puzzles, or a guest speaker.

These enriching experiences are free, thanks to participating churches and The Special Needs Collaborative. Participants and caregivers choose the days and activities they enjoy, creating a personalized schedule of engagement. The Circle provides consistent, reliable, and accessible opportunities for connection, growth, and joy, enriching lives all around.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR CHURCHES



We're excited you're considering joining The Circle! Here are some frequently asked questions to help you learn more about participating:

Q: How does my church get involved?

A: Your church simply chooses one day of the week and one of the five engagement categories (Arts & Crafts, Music, Physical Fitness, Café, or Games & Learning) to host consistently each week. For example, your church could choose to host a Music session every Tuesday.

Q: What are the responsibilities of my church?

A: Your church is responsible for providing the space, volunteers, and basic materials needed for the chosen activity. The Special Needs Collaborative will provide support, resources, and training to help you facilitate the sessions effectively. Caregivers will remain with their loved ones during the activities.

Q: What kind of support will The Special Needs Collaborative provide?

A: The Special Needs Collaborative will offer guidance on activity planning, volunteer training, connections to families in the area, participant registration, and access to additional resources as needed. We are here to support your church in creating a positive and meaningful experience for participants.

Q: Do we need to have experience working with individuals with special needs?

A: While prior experience is helpful, it's not required. The Special Needs Collaborative will provide training and resources to equip your volunteers with the necessary skills and understanding to create an inclusive and welcoming environment. Enthusiasm and a desire to serve are the most important qualities!

Q: What is the time commitment?

A: The core commitment is hosting a two to three hour activity session on the same day each week. Please note that some additional time may be needed for activity preparation, setup, and cleanup.

Q: What about liability?

A: It is required that every participant in The Circle have their own personal insurance coverage. Participants will remain with their caregivers, who are responsible for their care. We encourage participating churches to also check with their insurance provider to ensure they have appropriate coverage for hosting these types of community events.

Q: How do we sign up?

A: We'd love to schedule a meeting to discuss your church's participation in more detail. Please contact [Your Contact Information] to arrange a time that works for you.

JOIN US!

The Special Needs Collaborative

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Thank you for your interest in partnering with The Circle! We believe that together, we can create a more inclusive and supportive community for adults with special needs and their caregivers. Here's how your church can join this important initiative:

Ready to partner with The Circle and build a more inclusive community? Here's how:

1. **Learn & Discuss:** Explore the program proposal and FAQ. Discuss participation with your church leadership and potential volunteers.
2. **Connect with Us:** Contact [Your Contact Information] to schedule a meeting. We'll answer your questions and discuss how your church can best participate.
3. **Choose & Commit:** Select your engagement category and day. We'll then finalize our partnership with a simple agreement.
4. **Prepare & Train:** Participate in volunteer training provided by The Special Needs Collaborative. We'll also assist with activity planning and resource gathering.
5. **Launch & Welcome:** Prepare to welcome registered participants to The Circle! The Special Needs Collaborative will coordinate participant registration and placement within the program, ensuring a smooth and enriching experience for everyone. We'll support you in launching your chosen activity within the larger program schedule.

We're excited to partner with you! Contact us to get started.

WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST IN THE CIRCLE