

ABOUT FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE OF MIAMI

July 2018

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

What does the Friendship Circle (FC) do?

The Friendship Circle of Miami is a one of a kind, non-profit, community based organization that builds lasting friendships and cultivates life skills for special needs children, teens and young adults. First established in 2003, the Friendship Circle has been providing services to a growing number of children in need, introducing new, exciting programs and forging partnerships with Miami's community of physicians, therapists and specialty programs.

What Makes the Friendship Circle of Miami's Mission so unique?

The Friendship Circle fills a gap that **no other organization** in Miami addresses to date, blending diverse friendships through one-on-one relationship building and mentoring. We recruit, teach and empower teenage volunteers to mentor our special needs children by building their leadership skills, and by fostering the values of altruism, and volunteerism. At the same time, our programs engage young people with and without special needs to learn, celebrate, and play side by side as friends and mentors.

What programs does the FC Miami provide to children?

The Friendship Circle currently consists of 21 different programs that fulfill the mission of the organization – providing social interaction, recreational opportunities, life skills training, community outreach, and family involvement. We aim to fill service gaps, not to duplicate efforts. To that end, we maintain positive relationships and partnerships with organizations serving the growing number of children with special needs throughout Miami, each with its own niche and several expressing enthusiasm over conducting parts of their programming at the FC campus. A variety of programs run every day after school and on Sundays, plus Winter and Summer Camps.

How does the Friendship Circle program benefit its participants?

Our participating children are paired with an exceptional team of teen mentors, a majority enrolled in 7th through 12th grade from several Miami schools, along with mentors from the University of Miami and Florida International University. The Friendship Circle -

- a) offers friendship and acceptance to children, teens and adults with special needs, regardless of their personal level of ability,
- b) provides respite, comfort and renewed strength to their families,
- c) empowers teenagers by enabling them to volunteer directly with our children.

What children and ages do we gear toward?

The program has two primary target populations: children with any special need ("disability") and teenage volunteers. Until 2013, we primarily served children ages 5-18, occasionally accepting children as young as three into some programs. But now responding to the needs of our community we have grown to serve young adults – even those over age 18. The program's Jewish roots emphasizes service to the entire community, **and the children served are typical of Miami's wide and rich variety of religious and ethnic backgrounds.**

How many special needs kids do we currently serve?

We currently serve over 140 children, teens, and young adults with special needs. Since inception, we have provided support to over 600 special needs children, most of whom are served for many years. Approximately 89% of these children fall within the autism spectrum. Our new Friendship Campus will allow us to at least quadruple the number of children served and ensure that all of our participants benefit from the Friendship Circle's full range of social, recreational, and educational services.

How many Volunteers does the Friendship Circle have and how many has it had since inception?

The FC Miami has over 150 teenage volunteers serving as mentors and friends, often for many years, to our special needs children. These young volunteers provide more than 20,000 hours of service to our special needs children yearly. Since its inception, over 1000 volunteers have served our children.

What is the Friends @ home program?

This particularly powerful program ensures that children and teens with special needs are visited in the privacy and comfort of their own home. Pairs of teenage volunteers visit the homes of children and teens with special needs on a weekly/bi-weekly basis. They form a close relationship with the children, while affording the parents a much-needed break and feeling of support.

What are some popular programs?

The Friendship Circle currently offers 21 programs. Children's Circle, Teen Scene, and Tween Scene are Sunday morning drop-off programs. Children ages 4-8, tweens ages 9-13, and teens ages 14-19, and their teenage volunteers build confidence and friendship by sharing in a variety of age-appropriate activities, such as music therapy, rhythm, drama, yoga and creative movement, dance, baking, karate, gymnastics, arts and crafts, and more. Sessions are led by trained specialists and physical & occupational therapists, with Friendship Circle's teen volunteers on-hand to assist each child one-on-one.

Is the need for our services increasing?

The most recent data (2014/15) reveals that the number of youth ages 3-21 receiving special education services nationally was 6.6 million, or 13 percent of all public school students. Among these children, 35% had specific learning disabilities. In Miami-Dade, that translates into 46,291 children requiring special education. Autism in particular is a growing challenge. One in 59 children are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders. This represents a 15% increase from the two prior years and an outstanding 150% increase since 2000. By expanding our services and facilities, we are answering the need for more services dedicated to this growing audience.

What is the size and scope of the original FC facility?

The original facility is composed of a main house and an adjacent in-law quarters with approximately 3,000 square feet of total space. For almost 15 years, the program has provided support in these original facilities. This space has been reconfigured and remodeled to the maximum extent possible. But it is now absolutely inadequate for the number of programs provided, and for the ever-increasing number of children and families served.

How will FC benefit from a new facility?

We have outgrown our present campus and with the number of special needs children, teens and young adults having grown by **150%** since **2000**. Autism spectrum diagnosis having risen **15%** in the past two years alone. Our community is in monumental need of a new facility to serve the number of children and families seeking assistance.

Our new **Friendship Circle Campus** will offer **20,000** square-feet of space which will serve as a community center, social meeting place, therapeutic center and a hub for our network of families, individuals with special needs, volunteers, professional staff, and supporters. It will comprise two main buildings, respite gardens, and ample parking. Amenities will include engaging activity rooms, lounges, preschool classrooms, and a number of custom rooms designed to meet the particular needs of their occupants. Having therapies available onsite will reduce the travel time and stress endured by families contending with traffic and logistics to fulfill the requirements of their special needs child. Housed in one location, socialization, therapy and a connected community will give these children a semblance of normalcy and more enjoyable experience for all. Our new program will allow us to more than quadruple our current participant enrollment and allow us to offer a wider range of programs and activities.

Is the Friendship Circle part of a National or International group?

The Friendship Circle of Miami is an independent chapter of Friendship Circle International, which has more than 80 regional chapters worldwide serving children with special needs. The FC of Miami receives no funding from the International office.

What benefit is there to being part of an International Organization?

The local Friendship Circle benefits from the experience, guidance and organizational templates developed over the years by the International office, and offered by the international office at no cost to the Miami chapter.

What is the Friendship Circle of Miami's budget?

Our budget for 2018/19 has projected expenses of \$414,500. Administrative costs are \$34,500, or only 8% of the total. Revenue is projected to be \$330,000 from grants and donations, with \$90,000 coming from program fees (earned revenue).

How does the Friendship Circle pay for its expenses?

The FC of Miami is a separate 501 c3 non-profit organization that receives no financial operating support from any agency. Operating expenses are approved through the annual board budgeting process. All operating funds are based on financial contributions from individuals, corporations and grants, supplemented with earned revenue (fees) consisting of approximately 21% of the total budget. Sources of revenue include the annual Walkathon, individual and corporate donations, and grants.

What is the current fundraising goal of the Friendship Circle of Miami?

The FC of Miami has raised **3** million dollars to date and seeks generous funding partners to help **us** foster inspired services for this unique and ever growing population of children. We seek to:

- raise \$6 million in the next five years to create the new Friendship Circle Campus
- increase the number of programs to 30
- recruit over 1000 volunteers yearly
- partner with other organizations in order to serve over 2000 children yearly.

Who guides the Friendship Circle of Miami?

Our small, passionate, committed staff is led by key personnel Rabbi Yossef Harlig and Nechama Harlig. Together, they have shaped The Friendship Circle as Directors since it's small pilot program began in 2003. During this time, the Harlig's have purchased the current location, drawn plans for the new campus, applied for and won zoning approval and are a third of the way towards achieving their fundraising goal of 9 million dollars.

The Friendship Circle also maintains a pool of instructors and therapists as well as an Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapist. The FC Miami is also guided by its Board of Directors, composed of both prominent medical and therapeutic professionals, along with community leaders who provide their leadership, knowledge, and support to achieve program goals.

What is the Friendship Circle's relationship to the Chabad of Kendall?

The Friendship Circle is a separate 501c3 non profit, raising funds from the local community to operate its programs and growth. The Chabad's supporters have been instrumental in providing the guidance, funding and operational framework which allows for the FC'S operations. The Friendship Circle provides services to families and children of all denominations, and 80% of the children we serve are non-secular, drawing from all race and religion in our community.

Friendship Circle Growth Timeline

- 2003 – Friendship Circle Miami Established
- 2003 – Friends @ Home Program Established
- 2004 – Purchased Second Property, South of Main Property
- 2006 – Children's, Tween and Teen Scene Program Established
- 2008 – Sports Circle Program Established
- 2009 – Walking4Friendship Walk-A-Thon Established
- 2010 – Evening of Tribute Program Established
- 2010 – Winter Camp Program Established
- 2011 – Cooking Circle Established
- 2011 – Summer Circle Established
- 2012 – No School Fun Days Established
- 2012 – Electric Guitar Circle Established
- 2013 – Young Adult Program Established
- 2013 – Dance / Hip Hop Program Established
- 2014 – Art Circle Established
- 2015 – Equestrian Circle Established
- 2015 – Friendship Circle Band Established
- 2015 – Morning of Talent Program Established
- 2015 – Drama Circle Program Established
- 2016 – Acquired Friendship Circle Bus