



בס"ד



Friendship
Circle



**2021/22
IMPACT
REPORT**

FOUNDERS' MESSAGE

As you browse this impact report, I hope that you will learn about the qualities that make Friendship Circle a leader in building connected and inclusive communities. In the following pages we hope to share a multi-dimensional view of our activities and impacts through the lens of our participants, volunteers and donors. We appreciate your time to get to know us better!

We connect at the soul level.

You will find that our team won't spend much time on labels and titles. Our work is inspired by an ancient tradition that believes in a soul, a spirit that defines our humanity. In society we are too often confronted by labels that define us, such as a diagnosis of Down Syndrome or Autism. We strive to accept and believe in souls.

We take action for a better future.

You share the vision for true inclusion and we know that this looks different for everyone. Our mandate is to take practical action today towards true inclusion tomorrow, because right now, individuals and families experiencing disability need activities and support. This is why we design our programs to empower and uplift providing support in a way that doesn't perpetuate stereotypes - because we believe in a better future.

We are building community.

You belong to a school, to a community or to a sports group and know the value of those connections. Our aim is to increase community connection by inspiring the next generation to take responsibility for creating a better future. As you browse through this publication you will likely recognise some faces because in order to be part of the community we need to be in the community.

I hope that this impact report gives you a few more reasons to join us on our mission, support our efforts and increase inclusion. Whether you are a donor, a parent, a volunteer or an individual with disability, or a potential inclusion partner - we look forward to finding new ways to work together to bring a better future forward by even a moment.

Rabbi Sender and Chana Kavka

Co-Founders





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WHY FRIENDSHIP?

People with disabilities have so much to contribute, however are too often isolated from the community and lack opportunities to create meaningful friendships, be included, and contribute because they are defined by what they can't do. That often leaves them lonely and without a close network or community.

At Friendship Circle, we believe in the power of friendship to create a community where everyone is celebrated and accepted for who they are. We bring people with and without disabilities together to develop friendships through the backdrop of fun programs, weekend activities, school holiday camps, getaways and vocational opportunities.

When we bring people with and without disabilities together we focus on their abilities and uniqueness, fostering an environment of joy, meaning, and connection. Volunteers learn to appreciate differences, see the world with new perspectives, and incorporate inclusion, disability awareness and social action in their everyday lives and careers.



**FRIENDSHIP
CHANGES
EVERYTHING.**

FRIENDS

OUR PROGRAMS

Friendship Circle programs are unique because they have a lasting impact on both people with and without disabilities. The main goal of each program is bringing people together in a social and inclusive environment where each person can be the best version of themselves.

We offer programs for three age groups: Juniors (5-12), Teens (13-18) and Young Adults (18 and over). Each aims to meet different social goals, depending on the participants' life stages. Junior programs are often sensory-based and focus on fine and gross motor skills along with developing social skills. The Teen program is based around strengthening the participants' confidence while socialising with their peers, often in unstructured settings, and Young Adults is all about community connection, which can be challenging after finishing school.

Young Adult leaders and teenage volunteers are provided with a variety of workshops that not only upskill them for Friendship Circle programs but also provide them with tools to build a society that is truly inclusive of everyone. At Friendship Circle, volunteers are immersed in a community of those striving for change. Through being involved in our regular programs, workshops, and the Leadership Program, volunteers learn the skills necessary to lead the world towards inclusion, develop an understanding of how to approach sensitive topics and engage in meaningful discussions about disability. Volunteers at Friendship Circle learn to shape a world where people of all abilities are included as contributing members of society.

The consistency and frequency of our programs allow families and volunteers to be involved in Friendship Circle regularly - creating sustainable, meaningful and lasting friendships.



DAY CAMP

WEEKEND GETAWAYS

SUNDAY SOCIAL HANGOUTS

CLUBS

FRIENDS AT HOMES

FRIENDSHIP BAKERY

MUMS' AND DADS' NIGHTS



“On the Getaway I can connect with people of all abilities in a way that is truly unique and meaningful. I have made memories and built relationships I will cherish for a lifetime.”

Abby Hewins, Volunteer



“It was great to connect with friends and the Melbourne Jewish community. My favourite memory was Shabbat lunch, having the group all together enjoying themselves.” Tahli Hind, Participant

ADULT GETAWAYS

The Young Adult Getaways are a fairly new addition to the range of Friendship Circle programs, with our first trip happening in February 2020. After the huge success of the Junior and Teen Getaways, it was a no-brainer to create a weekend away for the Young Adults (aged 18 to 30), and Melbourne is the perfect destination. It gives the group an opportunity to explore a new city, develop new skills, create incredible shared memories, and connect with Melbourne’s Jewish community. Each Getaway is coordinated by a dedicated committee, and filled with amazing activities, such as an amazing race through the city, yoga, swimming, cooking and baking, Shabbat dinner with host families, and so much more.

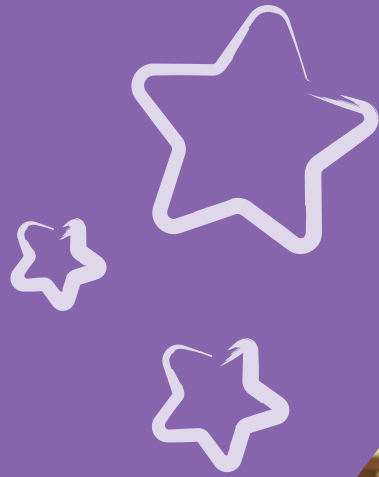
This year’s getaway saw a group of just under 40 young adults with and without disabilities from Sydney head down to Melbourne on a cold Autumn Friday morning. As we headed through security and onto the plane, there was nothing but excitement and a buzz in the air.

We arrived in Melbourne and got straight into our packed schedule – lunch in the city, a competitive session of bowling

(I was seriously shown up by my buddy, Tahli), and then onto a very special Kabbalat Shabbat. In addition to welcoming Shabbat by lighting candles together and a lot of inspired dancing in Shul, I will never forget the chorus of ‘Shabbos boys! Shabbos boys!’ from the two Mikeys as we split off into smaller groups for Shabbat dinner. Each of our groups were hosted by families from the Melbourne community, who were all incredibly warm and welcoming. The next day, we were back together for a big and vibrant group Shabbat lunch at the Werdiger family and then a smaller Seudat Shlishit. We ended the day with a night out at a local bar and even squeezed in a spontaneous house party hosted by the family of our group’s wellbeing officer.

On Sunday, we were treated to a delicious chocolate making class before heading back to the airport to fly home. This was my first Friendship Circle Getaway (and hopefully not the last!). I am so glad I went on the Getaway. In addition to leaving with special memories, I’m grateful to have returned home with a whole lot of new friends.

Olivia Templeman, Volunteer



“I love everything about going to Melbourne, but my favourite memory is going to the Shabbos dinner at the Rabbi's house. What happens in Melbourne stays in Melbourne.”

Mikey Sarif, Participant



DAY CAMPS

Day Camps are a big school holiday highlight amongst our Junior and Teen participants and Jewish teen volunteers (ages 13-18). Run four times a year, Day Camp offers them an opportunity to hang out, make memories, and build friendships while enjoying fun activities. Facilitated by young adult leaders, Day Camp showcases what Friendship Circle is truly about and celebrates ability by creating an energetic and exciting atmosphere. Everyone leaves Camp with big smiles on their faces as they are eager and excited for the next day.

Your typical day at Camp will start with teen volunteers and participants being welcomed by the leaders and burning off some energy with dancing and ruach. There is always such a buzz in the air! We then split into our Junior and Teen groups, and depending on the day we either do fun activities, such as yoga, slime making or scrapbooking, have someone come in to facilitate an incursion (sensory workshops and the reptile show are always a big hit!), or go on an excursion, like swimming, kayaking, bowling, or visiting a play centre. For me, swimming is my favourite. It is amazing to walk around the centre with everyone in their red Friendship Circle rashies having a ball!

I'm so glad that I have had the opportunity to be a leader on several Day Camps. Seeing the pure joy and excitement everyone has is the most rewarding and amazing experience. I am already counting down the days till the next one!

Gabriel Fittinghoff, Volunteer



The impact of Friendship Circle cannot be quantified in a number or sum. The pandemic changed the world and particularly for those young people with disabilities, COVID brought about more than the usual challenges. Every day for almost 12 months Friendship Circle offered virtual companionship to Jeremy. Our home is still adorned with the artwork he did with many of the young volunteers during lockdown.

Jeremy started connecting with Friendship Circle when he was nine years old, through a connection we had in the Jewish community. He is now almost 16.

We have so much to be grateful for. The compassion, love and bonds are lifelong and many of the volunteers are not much older than Jeremy.

Thank you for everything you have done to support our family, and most importantly championing the disability sector.

Aileen Liu, Parent



FRIENDS

“Well, it was very fun and I adored my buddies. Planet Mino made me feel happy and tired. Tony (the magician), was absolutely hilarious! His tricks shocked me well and I loved Day Camp! I want to do it again!” Indiana Diamond, Participant

SUNDAY CIRCLE

Sunday Circle is a program that helps build relationships and connections between participants with and without disabilities. Offered 4-5 Sundays per term, every hangout is a new experience that is always full of fun and excitement. We dance, make music, do yoga or arts and crafts, or have people come in to do magic or for reptile shows. I never know what to expect but I know it'll be something that both me and my buddy will enjoy doing together. Through Sunday Circle I have developed my communication and social skills and gained lots of experience in being flexible and sensitive to each individual person's needs.

Sunday Circle has given me so many amazing memories, friends, and lessons. One particularly memorable Sunday Circle, I arrived in the morning and felt the buzz around, knowing that the leaders had planned some really fun activities. I was buddied with Sammy, we always have the best time together! We wandered around the room to decide what we wanted to do, and the simplest activity caught Sammy's attention: his eyes lit up as we walked past a pile of cardboard boxes. "Let's make a car!" he shouted and ran over to the pile. All our creativity came out that morning as we both started building Sammy's dream car. On went the wheels, the steering wheel, the number plate, and the headlights. Soon, we had created a car with Sammy's name written across the front of it. It wasn't any car, it was Sammy's very own car! The best part was to see his huge smile as he quickly hopped into the car, waiting to "drive" it. The joy and excitement on Sammy's face that day was contagious, and I left with a big smile on my face too.

Nicola Lonstein, Volunteer



Like the neurotypical community has its youth movements and sporting clubs, Friendship Circle is all that and more for those who are neurodiverse. Specifically for our son Aiden, it has become his ecosystem within the Sydney Jewish community.

It's allowed him to foster deep and personal friendships and access experiences that have turned into lifetime memories.

Friendship Circle allows Aiden and hundreds of other neurotypical and neurodiverse people from our community to be the best version of themselves.

Mark Spiro, Parent



“FC means everything. I like going on the Day Camps and Getaways and I like hanging out with my buddies and enjoy meeting new people. My best activity was probably making green slime!” David Teichtahi, Participant



FRIENDSHIP BAKERY

Having evolved from a small operation baking and packing Challah in a shared factory in Mascot, Friendship Bakery opened its doors to the public in Vaucluse in 2021. Five days a week, young people with a disability have the opportunity to learn baking and hospitality skills, preparing them for paid employment.

This year, I started volunteering at Friendship Bakery on a weekly basis. My role as a volunteer means that I help out around the Bakery wherever I am needed most. I have been very privileged to have spent most of my time behind the scenes baking and cooking with our incredible participants! Our days can see us bake anything from Challah to cakes and sweet treats, our famous seed biscuits and the delicious quiches that are on offer daily in the cafe.

During my time as a volunteer, I have witnessed the incredible impact that the Bakery has had on the participants, both from a skill and confidence perspective. With the support of a daily schedule, each participant is now able to independently review and then undertake the various tasks that they have been assigned for the day, and to lead their mentor or volunteer through each process. Observing the participants' sense of achievement in taking ownership of baking goods from start to finish is incredible. The smile on each of their faces, or a cheer of 'We did it!' and a high five is the highlight of the day, not to mention the chat and fun we have while working. I have recently witnessed two of our participants graduate from the program having obtained jobs of their own. The skills of following instructions, taking initiative and working confidently as part of a broader team are something that we work on daily at the Bakery and without a doubt provide an opportunity for our participants to graduate feeling prepared and excited about their new roles.

Lauren Einfeld, Volunteer



My son Lloyd has thrived in his role at Friendship Bakery.

In its nurturing environment Lloyd's confidence and self-esteem have blossomed. He has developed extensive practical kitchen skills in the preparation of the wonderful array of baked goods as well as gaining experience in customer service. And I believe Lloyd makes an excellent hot chocolate!

Above all else, Lloyd loves feeling part of the community.

Anna Weiss, Parent



“I like working at the Friendship Bakery because it helps to give me skills and understanding of how a bakery works. Everyone is very friendly. I really enjoy making coffees and making people smile.”



Lloyd Weiss, Participant

LOOKING FORWARD

The need for social and community programs is increasing. In fact, the more we work in the disability space the more we sense the gap that exists for people with disabilities and the more motivated we are to fill these gaps with Friendship Circle activities.

In 2022 we introduced a new user-friendly website and a new part-time Family Experience Champion role with a view to making Friendship Circle more accessible. Our inbox began filling with requests and in just 6 months we met 25 new families wanting to learn more about our programs. Today, many of our programs have a waitlist and we need your help to build our capacity to fill this increasing need.

Our key goals are to continue building the most amazing team of passionate humans, to invest in their skills and development, and to provide the resources required for them to do their best work.

Humans are the most essential part of our programs. Business gurus tell us that we need to invest in our humans because “culture eats strategy for breakfast” and the last few years have demonstrated how critical people are to navigating a crisis.

With your support, we will continue to leverage the values of our community and tap into the creativity of our team to grow the human connections and deepen the relationship with the community that we work in, and create a space in our community where people of all abilities can be their best.

Thank you for investing in us!



FUNDRAISING

The 2021/22 Financial Year has been a transformational year for Friendship Circle. This was evident through our families, volunteers and donors coming out in full force amidst global challenges, allowing Friendship Circle to touch more lives than ever before with their incredible generosity. At our 2021 Friendship Walk alone, 936 donors raised a record \$250,000.

Much like our participants and volunteers are our life blood, our donors are our oxygen that let us breathe in order to fulfil our purpose. It is the only way we can keep breaking barriers and making this world a more inclusive place. This year, the commitment we had from our donors was unbelievable, showing the level of care that our community has for us, just as we have for them.

Every year we look to beat our previous year's impact, which usually requires further community support. With this in mind, we have made a conscious effort to expand our community and donor base. Our focus has been to build a donor base that can see and feel the positive impact we make in their lives and that of others. As part of this, we have brought onboard two new corporate partners that believe in our mission and purpose, Tamim Asset Management and Aspen Pharmacare. Engaging corporate sponsors has the twofold benefit of providing funding for our activities while also increasing our reach in the community and beyond. The 2021 Friendship Walk

was supported by 10 corporate sponsors, and in the case of SupaCenta Moore Park they have been by our side since our very first Walk in 2009, an incredible show of support for Friendship Circle and our mission to increase disability awareness and inclusion.

Lastly, we have also seen an incredible effort from Corporate Australia in becoming a key part of the not-for-profit space with many companies matching charitable donations made by their employees. Donation matching is done differently across employers, sometimes being a 1:1, 2:1 or capped donation match. Whatever it may be at your workplace, check your employer's policy and help us extend our impact even further!

We couldn't do it without you, so from the bottom of our hearts, we thank YOU for your generosity.

Patrick Cemal, Volunteer



2021 Friendship Walk Corporate Sponsors

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FRIENDS

THANK YOU

Despite the pandemic, in 2021/22 we were able to run 4 Day Camps and 3 Getaways in addition to our Sunday social programs home visits, and the Bakery, and supported 100 families through our in-person and virtual programs, activity and gift packs, phone calls, the Friendship Walk, and more. While there were many challenges throughout the year, it was still a time of phenomenal growth for Friendship Circle.

With so many charities and causes to get behind, we thank you for choosing us. Supporting our families transports the saying “It takes a village to raise a child” to the next level. Every child needs a space to be welcomed and supported, a place that they can call home, a place where they can be themselves without judgement, a place where they belong. Friendship Circle is that place.

But who is Friendship Circle? Friendship Circle is YOU, the volunteer, the participant, the family, the donor, the supporter. Each one of you plays an integral part in the making of the village. Without one part, the circle would not be closed, and Friendship Circle would not be such a success.

So we want to say a big thank you to every single one of you, for coming to our programs with a big smile on your face, for enabling your teenager to volunteer at Friendship Circle, for talking to your friends and family about our programs and initiatives, for supporting the Friendship Walk, for donating and fundraising throughout the year, and for spreading our message and changing the world bit by bit, so we can achieve a more inclusive future together!



FRIENDSHIP
TOGETHER



Friendship
Circle

of Sydney, Australia

www.sydneyfc.org.au