

9-18-06

As I write this letter, my son is sleeping. He is 15 years old, has Down syndrome, and recently had to undergo emergency surgery for a ruptured appendix. He had no idea what was going on, and was terrified to be in the hospital. That fear, however, was eased through the many thoughtful gestures of his buddies in Friendship Club. The kids, in both regular and special education, decorated cards for him. They made giant banners, and even put one in the school lunchroom for other kids to sign. I taped all of the cards and banners to the walls of the hospital room; they covered every inch. He enjoyed looking at them, and loved reading all of their names and messages. He knew that these were his friends. He had buddies visit him in the hospital, even though it was school homecoming. Knowing he had so many people who cared about him and missed him was very comforting – to both him and me.

He has always loved the fun activities he has done in Friendship Club. This experience was at a whole different level. The compassion shown by the kids was amazing. It also became clear that the effects of Friendship Club go far beyond its membership. All of the students see the great friendships that form because of the club, and they are inspired to develop friendships of their own. In a way, everyone at the High School is an honorary member of Friendship Club. This is especially amazing to me because when I grew up, kids like him weren't allowed to go to school. Even the thought of allowing them going to school didn't exist. Times have changed. Thank God.