

**To: Director of ARC of Sedgwick County**

**I feel that I am in a unique situation when expressing my opinion of the Friendship Club that was the gift opened to us by Mrs. Valarie Wall. As the Social Worker for our High school I have been directly involved with referring and witnessing the transformation that having Friendship Club blossom and the miraculous results to those students involved. The other side of this story was that my son had the fantastic opportunity and privilege of being a buddy. His buddy was his friend. His buddy came to his football and basketball games and cheered wildly for him. He came to realize how mutual the friendship was and how important not only was he to his buddy but his buddy was to him. He carried away from his time in the Friendship Club that differences are not really so big as previously believed and understanding and caring minimizes those differences. I have not seen a situation where the benefits of involvement in Friendship Club have not been as mutually beneficial for the Regular Education students and for the Special Education students. The umbrella of Friendship Club widens to include much of the entire student population as the blanket of understanding widens due to those who know others involved in Friendship Club activities and learn from those involved. The idea of Friendship Clubs or Circle of Friends is a concept that should be in every school and encouraged at all levels of education. There is not a school that would not benefit from the inclusion of this program.**

**Thank you,**