

Friendship Circle Summary Report

Information about the Applicant

Since 2004, Friendship Circle (FC) has been fulfilling our mission of creating friendships in the lives of individuals with special needs and those facing isolation. With a team of volunteers, Friendship Circle provides a variety of social, educational and vocational experiences with the goal of creating an inclusive community where all individuals are valued regardless of the challenges they face. In 2019 we moved to our current location and opened the Friendship Cafe & Bakery along with an art studio and sensory room. We offer a large amount of programming for our community. Our six - 12 month Employment Training Program (ETP) follows a customized curriculum designed to address a vocational education gap that occurs for high school graduates with disabilities. Some ETP graduates work at Friendship Circle, some seek employment at one of our Partners in Inclusive Employment (our partnership with the Down Syndrome Association of Wisconsin), and some continue in our Transitional Training program to avoid regression while they await employment. U-Matter empowers teens and adults to help their peers who are struggling and to teach skills for offering support. We cultivate an environment of safety that helps shatter the stigmas surrounding mental-health challenges and creates an atmosphere of inclusion. Under the U-Matter umbrella, we offer weekly grief support groups, parents of special needs children support groups, safeTALK suicide prevention trainings, teen support groups led by a FC teen committee and case management assistance. Friends at Home is a weekly program where two teen volunteers visit a special friend in the comfort of their home in order to create friendships while strengthening social skills, self esteem and providing respite to families. Other programs include but are not limited to: Adult Adaptive Softball League, Art Nights, Sunshine Club, and community space for groups and events. We are a place of refuge and respite for families as well as a source of information. We partner with other organizations as much as possible to provide opportunities and information to people with disabilities and their caregivers so they can achieve their full potential, take advantage of programming and benefits and be prepared for their future.

Statement of Need

One thing we regularly hear from the families caring for children and adults with special needs as well as the various therapists and organizations that serve them, is that it is very difficult and overwhelming to seek out information. There is a strong need for the distribution of information in an organized, comprehensive format. The Circle Magazine not only fills this need, it is also a vehicle to make people aware of changes in services and policies affecting those with special needs. In addition, the magazine raises awareness about all of the organizations who serve the special needs population and highlights the experiences of families dealing with similar situations. Oftentimes, families with members with special needs feel isolated and alone. They struggle in silence. This magazine connects people to each other, specialists, organizations, services, and ideas to help. The Circle Magazine is a valuable tool to help navigate through a lot of information and to direct people to those who can offer assistance. Funding is not readily available for The Circle Magazine. To produce the magazine quarterly, we request sponsorship and sell advertising space. The support of the Wispact Foundation is being requested to sponsor the Spring issue of the Circle Magazine.

Project Goals and Expected Benefits

The goals of the project are to: assist people caring for children and adults with special needs; provide timely information in a comprehensive format; highlight organizations, businesses and individuals making a difference; and create a sense of community. The Wispact Foundation priority areas are both education and expansion of current services in place. Besides assisting those caring for children and

adults with special needs, there are many benefits to the advertisers and sponsors of the magazine. Current magazine distribution is 4,000 - 5,000 and continues to grow as advertisers share mailing lists. Magazines are also placed in community centers, all ADRC county offices and all advertisers offices. With a magazine sponsorship, Wispact would receive a full page ad and cover exposure. Being featured in the current issue would raise awareness for Wispact's services and allow Wispact to serve more people.

Project Implementation Plan

To date, we published a pilot issue of The Circle Magazine to gauge response. It was so well received that we are currently producing a second test issue to ensure that we have worked through any possible obstacles. The second issue will go into distribution in September, 2022. We feel confident that we can now request sponsorship and move forward with the founding issue of the magazine.

The Circle Magazine Issue #4: March/Spring 12/22 - 2/23 Advertising Sales

- To be completed by the Friendship Circle's Marketing and Design Associate and Executive Director.

12/22 - 2/23 Stories/Editing

- To be completed by freelance journalists. 12/22 - 2/23 Layout
- To be completed by the Friendship Circle's Marketing and Design Associate. 2/23 Printing
- To be completed by M13 Graphics. 3/23 Distribution
- To be completed by USPS, partnering agencies, advertisers, local community offices.

3/23 Online Version of Magazine available.

Evaluation Plan

We are committed to providing the highest quality magazine for the community. We will continue to take a deep dive into the resources needed and available for those with special needs and their families. To evaluate the success of the magazine, we will rely on the feedback of our sponsors and advertisers, especially those who place ads in multiple issues. We will also track our distribution, mailing list and requests for additional copies. In each issue, we will also welcome feedback from our readers and try to meet their needs.

Budget

Budget Summary

Income	
Magazine Sponsor	\$10,000
Advertising Sales	<u>\$5,000</u>
Total Income	\$15,000
Expenses	
Printing & Postage	\$6,500
Design	\$2,500
Editorial	\$2,500
Photography	\$1,000
Sales, Development & Marketing	<u>\$2,500</u>
Total Expenses	<u>\$15,000</u>
Net Income	\$0

Staff Recommendation

The grant can be recommended for approval in the amount of \$10,000.00. The proceeds will provide for the resource magazine that directly benefits the disabled individuals assisted by Friendship Circle. The need aligns with the initiatives of the foundation.