

## Words of Wisdom For Gaining and Keeping Church Support:

Quotes from those who have been there!

Raising awareness at our church is also key in recruiting volunteers. We hand out brochures, recruit Sunday school classes, put ads in our weekly church letter and bulletin, and we set up a Special Needs booth on our church Plaza several times a year where people can learn more about our ministry.

"I put up a Christmas Tree in our church narthex with angels with our wish list of supplies to get our ministry started. Within three hours of our Christmas Tree being on display, all of our angels were picked up by church members and items were placed under the tree within two weeks. Some of the items on the angels included Tricycles, Bubbles, Crayons, Books, Playdough, Balls, and Gift Cards to Wal-Mart and Toys R Us."

We bought bright red T-Shirts with our logo for our volunteers and staff members. This visibility made a huge difference in our visibility. Our number of volunteers and donations went up tenfold.

"Once a month, we take the children in our Special Needs Sunday School in for the Children's Message during the worship service that meets at the same time. We also take them into the beginning of the alternative worship service for the music" This gives the children an opportunity to participate in the big worship setting as well as keeping the congregation aware of the ministry.



## Awareness in the Church

Keeping your ministry “in front” of your congregation is critically important for ongoing growth and success. Through using all available channels of communication, you can ensure that visitors are aware of your church’s commitment to serving individuals and families with hidden disabilities, recruit volunteers, and equip your members to “spread the word” about your ministry to families in your community with need. This section of the Toolkit will assist you in developing a plan to educate your church on the impact and importance of your ministry. Later in the Toolkit, strategies for marketing your ministry outside the walls of your church will be outlined.

Three key strategies for enhancing congregational awareness will be discussed here. These strategies include:

- Designating a “Special Needs Sunday” in which the work of your ministry is highlighted during worship and the focus of the preaching.
- Using your church bulletin, other publications and other promotional materials to heighten awareness of your ministry.
- Using pulpit time to “tell the stories” of God at work in the lives of those served by your ministry.

### **SPECIAL NEEDS SUNDAY**

One strategy for enhancing awareness of your ministry is to periodically ask your Senior Pastor to designate Sundays in which the needs of children and families experiencing hidden disabilities will receive special attention.

Participants in such worship often describe the experience of God’s presence in moving and powerful ways. Music, testimonies, prayer and teaching all reflect God’s love for those with disabilities, both visible and hidden.

#### Some helpful hints for churches considering such worship:

*Successful worship experiences need to be carefully planned well in advance. An event like this provides an excellent opportunity to invite families to your church who could benefit from your ministry. Other ministry leaders in your church can be enlisted to promote the worship services to families likely to experience special blessing. Reminders delivered during church announcements are useful in mobilizing your membership to invite friends and neighbors. You want time to recruit and train adequate volunteers to ensure worship is a positive experience for all visitors and newcomers.*

*The Senior Pastor of your church needs to assume a lead role in planning as well as participating in this worship. The participation of the Senior Pastor conveys to the congregation the priority and importance of your ministry outreach.*

*An emphasis of the worship experience needs to be disability awareness. In the case of families experiencing hidden disabilities, the need for increased awareness is especially acute.*

*Testimonies from families served by your ministry are especially powerful. The format for presenting such testimonies will vary from church to church. Some churches successfully use an interview format in which a pastor “directs” specific questions to an individual, family or panel. Some areas to focus on in testimonies are:*

- A. *How has their child's disability affected their perceptions of God's love and their relationship with Jesus?*
- B. *How did the ministry of your church help them to come to faith in Christ, or grow in their faith ?*
- C. *How has your church's ministry helped to equip them to be able to minister to others?*

Look periodically through our website for additional articles or materials helpful in planning worship experiences calling awareness to the needs of children with hidden disabilities and their families.

### **BULLETINS AND OTHER PUBLISHED MATERIALS**

Your church bulletin and other resources published by your church afford opportunities to keep your ministry on the "radar screen" of your congregation. The bulletin may be used as a way of making newcomers aware of your ministry, as well as alerting your membership to ministry activities and needs for volunteers.

If your church publishes a newspaper or newsletter, you may consider interviews or articles with families positively impacted by your ministry. Presenting your ministry in these ways helps reinforce that successful ministry to families of children with hidden disabilities comes about when a church provides services to individuals and families in response to the guidance and direction of God to meet specific needs. "Success stories," encapsulating how God is at work through your church's ministry, help in recruiting new volunteers and serving as a source of encouragement to your ministry's team.

Church publications are helpful in calling attention to support groups associated with your ministry, along with special events you might sponsor. Book studies that highlight issues of faith or spiritual development relevant to those with disabilities may also be publicized through your church.

Many churches with ministries to children with hidden disabilities produce an information packet or brochures describing the services they provide. Having such information prominently displayed in areas of the church populated by guests or newcomers (including welcome tables or centers) enhances the likelihood they will inquire about your ministry.

Keep in mind that any item that appears regularly in the same place and format becomes invisible. Try to change either the look or location of information presented in church publications, including regular updates or newsletters produced by your ministry.

### **PULPIT TIME: TELLING THE STORIES**

Earlier in this section, we discussed the importance of having your Senior Pastor involved in the establishment of your ministry. Your pastor can also play a critical role through references to your ministry during announcements, as well as in sermons, highlighting the church's opportunities in the area of disability ministry.

One church served by Key Ministry has begun to incorporate interviews with individuals and families positively impacted by the ministry of the church into Sunday morning worship. These interviews, similar to testimonies described in the section of the Toolkit dedicated to Special Needs Sunday, help the congregation to better understand the needs of families of children with hidden disabilities, and demonstrate tangible ways they can demonstrate God's love to families in their sphere of influence.

**This information is part of the Toolkit  
offered by Key Ministry Foundation at <http://www.keyministry.org/>**

