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Friendship Circle of Houston

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Friendship Circle is a branch of Chabad Outreach of Houston, a 501(c)3 charitable organization, an affiliate of Chabad of Texas and affiliated partner of the Jewish Family Service Alexander Institute for Jewish Families with Special Needs. For more info see friendshiphouston.com

Dear Friend,

Every time my son asks for a play date, my heart breaks a little. Adi is seven years old. Although he is sometimes invited to friends' birthday parties, he is usually overlooked. My other son is often invited to someone's house to play, Adi is always left behind. We try to arrange occasional interactions for Adi with his peers, but it's asking a lot of a first grader to play with a child with **special needs** whose speech isn't always intelligible, who can't play the way other children do, who is clearly, visibly different.

The first time I heard about the Friendship Circle, I was skeptical. Teens were going to come to my house and play with my son for an hour? My son could go to activities and someone else would interact with him while I had a cup of coffee and chatted with other parents? Maybe it sounds cynical, but I've learned not to get my hopes up.

If I say that Friendship Circle has changed my life – and my family – you will think I'm exaggerating, but I assure you that I am not. For three years now, Monday afternoons are filled with anticipation in my home. From the moment Adi returns from school, he announces, "Dean's coming!" And when Dean arrives – the jubilation is tangible.

Dean is happy to do whatever Adi wants to do – watch videos of garbage trucks on YouTube, play in the park, act out episodes of Blue's Clues – whatever Adi wants, he gets, for that hour. Most exciting, of course, is that he gets a friend. He gets a play date. And it is amazing.

When we go to Friendship Circle activities throughout the year, Dean meets us there and whisks Adi away to have fun. At first, I was nervous, but I've learned to let them go -- not that Adi gives me a choice. "That's my Dean," he tells me. "Not your Dean."

People who don't know me know Adi from Friendship Circle and greet him warmly when we are out and about. Sometimes I feel like wherever I go in Houston, Friendship Circle is there, a small but shining presence that lightens my step; that makes my days easier.

I was surprised to learn recently that just to break even with their current programming, Friendship Circle of Houston needs \$80,000 annually. And they have plans for expansion – but those plans take money, of course. **When you donate to the Friendship Circle, you help support the many programs that already exist and you help build the vision that is slowly coming to life. You give Adi, and other children like him, play dates. You give respite to parents, support to siblings, and you give the world a chance to see my son's smile.**

On Sunday, March 27th, our son will walk in the **Friendship Walk** through the streets of Houston for a cause that has changed his life. On behalf of Adi and hundreds of children like him, I ask you to please use the enclosed form to join this effort to raise funds and awareness for the Friendship Circle.



With love and gratitude,

Abbi Perets

P.S. To learn more about the Friendship Walk or to sign on as a Walker, please log on to www.houstonfriendshipwalk.com