

"It takes just two to make a friendship it takes just YOU to make a difference."

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사람이 있어 행복한 COF



2009년 하반기는 좋은 사람들이 있어 COF에 게 더없이 행복했던 시간들이었습니다. 생각만 해도 너무 고마운, 생각만 해도 이쁜, 생각만 해도 신이 나는, 생각만 해도 든든한, 생각만 해도 좋은 사람들.

저는 올해 COF의 리더들을 많은 분들께 자랑하고 싶습니다. 이번 리더들은 주인의식을 가지고 있습니다. 주인의식이 있기 때문에 무엇을 하든 열심히 하고 적극적인 자세로 일을 합니다. 자신이 맡은 일을 철저히 하며, 또 무슨 일을 더해야 하는지 늘 와서 물어보곤 합니다. 10월에 있었던 특별한 행사(패션쇼, 댄스 등)도 리더들이 아이디어를 내고 구체적인 계획을 세워서 준비를 했습니다. 리더들이 이렇게 일을 진행시키지 않았다면 사실이 행사는 하지 못했을 것입니다. 같이 모여서 회의를 하는 모습이 얼마나 진지하고 적극적인지 모릅니다. 하나님께서 보내신 우리의 가장 소중한 아름다운 선물들입니다.

그리고 올해 많은 성인 봉사자가 COF에서 봉사활동을 시작하셨습니다. 신

한나양과 한수연양은 인턴으로서, 그룹 C를 맡아서 프로그램을 운영하고 또 축구를 가르치고 있습니다. 그리고 안은경 선생님이 미술지도, 손인숙 선생님이 사물놀이 지도를 시작하셨습니다. 장현우군(12학년)이 그룹 A와 B 달리기 코치로 수고하고 있고, 올 상반기부터 핸드차임 선생님이 새로 오셔서 수고하고 계십니다. 우리 아이들이 힘들게 할 때마다 나서서 해결해 주는 김성호군, 그리고 전부터 계셨던 수잔선생님까지, 장애아이를 가르치는 것이 참 어려운 일인데 포기하지 않고 사랑과 마음을 다하여서 우리 아이들을 가르치고 대하시는 분들입니다. 눈물 나도록 고마운 분들입니다. 하나님은 어디에 이 귀한 분들을 두셨다가 COF에 다 보내 주셨는지, 선생님들, 진심으로 진심으로 감사드립니다.

고등학생들로 구성된 50명이 넘는 COF 봉사자들. 9학년들이 봉사활동을 하겠다고 처음 왔을 때는 과연 저 아이들이 무엇을 할 수 있을까 할 정도로 어리게만 생각되었는데, 1년 2년이 지나면서 COF가 무엇을 하는 곳

이고 무엇을 어떻게 해야 하는지 알아가는 모습을 볼 때면 참 대견스럽습니다. 그리고 봉사자 어머니들께서 변함없이 우리 아이들의 먹거리를 챙겨주시고 갖은 일을 다 해주시니, 급하게 해결해야 되는 일이 있으면 무조건 봉사자 어머니들한테 가서 도움 요청을 하면 다 처리가 되니 COF는 정말 든든한 백을 가지고 있는 거지요.

이렇게 많은 사람들의 마음과 정성과 손길이 COF를 지탱하는 힘입니다. 그리고 무엇보다도 우리 장애인 친구들이 COF의 가장 소중한 존재들이지요. 특히 이번 학기에 새 식구가 된 다루와 준이, Hailey는 더 마음이 가는 아이들입니다. 처음에는 온데로 뛰쳐나가서 모두를 긴장시켰던 다루가 이제는 프로그램에 적응을 잘 하고 있으며, 준이는 COF 끝나고 집에 가면 COF 이야기를 많이 한다고 합니다. Hailey는 장애가 없지만 아이들과 축구도 하고 춤을 추며 함께 하는 모습이 얼마나 예쁜지 모릅니다.

이렇게 예쁜 우리 장애아들과 너무나 고맙고 소중한 많은 사람들의 힘으로 내년에는 올해 시작한 LA Fitness 운동과 사물놀이가 자리를 더 잘 잡아나가기 바랍니다. 그리고 좋은 사람들의 발걸음이 끊이지 않는, 그래서 늘 살맛나는 COF가 되기를 바랍니다.

- Mrs. Byun



Memories of 2009

Year 2009 is my personal best since I have already spent two years in Circle of Friends (COF). Many things have happened and have passed really quickly, but I can still remember most of events that occurred in COF. I showed my passion, spent my time and love, which I think still think are not enough, and I really enjoyed meeting with our buddies every Monday. I am sure that the times that I have spent in COF are the most joyful days of my 17 years of life.

At the very beginning of the year, we had a party for the first day of COF. All teachers, moms, and volunteers put effort and time to make this special party. The result was good, and thanks to that day, old and new members of COF were able to mingle together easily, and the new members were able to get used to COF better. Today, everyone here is friends with each other, and we don't consider each others strangers anymore, but as friends. So far, all the volunteers are doing a great job in being a family with each other and with the buddies, and I hope that we will all continue this success.

In public, most people think that buddies cannot be good at athletics. However,

there is a perfect example to break this stereotype. Johnny, one of the buddies, and one of my best friends in COF, really loves to play basketball. He goes to the park almost everyday to play basketball with other people, especially



the volunteers who spend time outside of COF with Johnny. I saw Johnny play, and he is very good at basketball. He made great shots, and maneuvered around the court very skillfully. He is really good at 3 point shots and that really impressed me. Furthermore, in COF we have a running team who practices every Monday for a marathon. They all love to run, and are great runners, who can run farther and longer than many other people.

Buddies are not people who are completely dependent on others to live. They have their hobbies and skills just like any other person does. By letting others know about their skills, I hope that they would be better understood to be accepted by anyone, at anyplace.

When we open our hearts to become real friends with our buddies, we will see a whole new person in them.

- Paul Chang,
DBHS 11



AN EPIPHANY

I attended the Circle of Friends for almost one year and a half. My first year as a freshman, I entered COF thinking that this would look good on my college applications. Also, I thought that I would meet someone with extreme disadvantages like Helen Keller and help them succeed through their disadvantages.

My first and only buddy in COF was Jeremy Hsu. When I first met him, I was confused and couldn't see what his disabilities were; He was extremely intelligent, could play the piano much better than most people I know, and was an amazing artist. I thought to myself then that this would be an easy first year for me. The first 6 months, I dedicated my time on Mondays to Jeremy but then I later started to question my importance in Jeremy's life. All I did was point at some notes on a music piece that I was sure

Jeremy could play by himself, and sit beside Jeremy as he made a masterpiece out of clay in art class. I couldn't find one single thing that I truly taught Jeremy how to do that he couldn't do before having me as a buddy. Then, at the end of freshmen year, I decided to join the COF leadership and went to the summer leadership training program. I was the youngest one in leadership

and therefore I inevitably had to do things that I would have never done at home. Therefore, I learned to serve others before myself.

In the leadership training program, Mrs. Kim asked the leaders what we thought was the purpose of COF. So, we confidently responded that it was to help people with disabilities in their social and intellectual lives. However, she corrected us and told us that although we help buddies in COF, the main purpose of it was for us volunteers to be aware of these kinds of people and therefore grow up to be benevolent people. That's when I realized that I wasn't the one teaching Jeremy but that Jeremy was teaching me. All I did for him was talk to him on Mondays but what he did for me was much more. He taught me a life-long lesson.

- Vincent Soh,
DBHS 10



BEST BROTHERS

The experience I had with these kids made me who I am now and determined what I wanted to become in the future. Their names were Sean and Dean. When I first met them, I couldn't ask for more. They were the cutest brothers I've ever seen in my life. Sean was the older brother, believe he's 7 years old, who was struggling with autism, Dean was the younger one, I believe is 5 years old, who always followed Sean everywhere he goes. Everywhere Sean would go, Dean would follow. Everywhere Dean would go, Sean would follow. Every time COF was having some kinds of activities, Sean would ask his younger brother, "Dean would you like to do it? If you don't want to, then we can go to the playground and play together." It was the cutest way for Sean to ask his younger brother. Like their similar names, Sean and Dean, they had similar personalities. Sean would whine if something didn't go his way, and Dean would cry often if something didn't go his way. However, they were the sweetest boys ever. I remember one day, I was very sad, because someone had stolen my wallet at school. I had literally everything in my wallet. I told little Sean about what happened at school after he had asked me "Gina, why are you so sad?" After I gave him my answer he said, "It's okay, it's okay, I will go find it for you or I will get you



a new one!" I was amazed with what came out of his mouth. He was such a smart boy, and with his words he turned my saddest day to a happiest day. Working with Sean and Dean, I don't really call it 'working with them'. I was literally having so much fun with these boys. These little boys both like taking pictures, Star Wars, cars, batman, etc., what every other little boy would like. They were not ordinary kids. They were extraordinary to me. In fact Sean and Dean are better than the other brothers I've met. Sean and Dean always had each other's back. As I was in COF with them, I wanted to somewhat change their lives a little bit. And I've

seen some improvements. Sean who always whined, I asked him all the time to not whine and just ask nicely, and few months later it worked and I was thrilled with joy. Sean and Dean both have so much potential; they are such bright kids with a bright future. Working with them not only taught them some skills at COF, but also taught me many lessons. From having experience with Sean and Dean, I would love to further work with younger kids just like them. Sean and Dean are the cutest, sweetest, and most amazing little boys I've ever met.

- Gina Yi, DBHS 12



MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

When I started COF this year, I was worried if I could handle people with disabilities.

However as I got to know my buddy, I learned many things from him and realized how special these people are. Even though they are autistic,

they have their special talents. My buddy Lawrence knows everything about football. Every time I call him he would talk about football: Who's playing, who won, which football teams are going to play next. He loves football and knows a lot about football. Lawrence isn't the only buddy in COF that has special talents and knowledge about something. Some buddies are really good at playing piano while some buddies are good at drawing. Everyone has their own special talents which made me surprised.

As I got along with my Lawrence and other buddies I realized that they are not weird, but they just can't control themselves. Some buddies we need to take care more than others, but some are just like us. As I spend time with my buddy and also other buddies every Monday, I learned how to be patient to listen to others, and realized how amazing they are.

- Gloria Kwak, DBHS 11

LEADERSHIP AND DRUMS

Before the official year of COF has started, the leaders went to leadership training for one night and two days. There were 8 leaders who went there, under the supervision of Mrs. Kim and Mr. and Mrs. Byun. The camp was very fun, both a mix of everyday leisure activities, to something hard to do at home. The theme of the camp was based on the TV show 1박2일, and as such, we played games and quizzes with high stakes on the line. We also ate Korean BBQ outside, went to the hot springs, and also horseback riding, which has its own story to tell. Despite all the fun and games, it nevertheless, was a leadership training camp, since through those games and activities, we got to know each other better, learned more things about autism, and develop some teamwork which was essential to be leaders at COF.

It was quite surprising how all the leaders got so comfortable with each other, and became close friends in just a couple of hours. The power of being forced into a cramped van and being put into a team to win your way out of doing the dishes is frightening. All jokes aside, I am really glad that we took the time to have such an event, since we all became close friends both in and out of COF. After the COF year began, all the leaders were assigned positions and jobs to do during COF hours. I was assigned to be the leader of the trashcan drumming. Although

I was the leader, I was the least experienced, since both Nicole and Harry have been doing this for two years. It took me a long time to become decent enough to play the trashcans, when a problem arose. We were planning to introduce a buddy to the drumming, but the music seemed a bit too challenging; I know it was for me. So the problem was to find easier music

playable on the trashcans, but we couldn't. This is when Mrs. Byun and Mrs. Kim decided to change things up, and start the traditional Korean drums with our buddy Jeremy.

It hasn't been long since we all started, but I can tell that we have progressed quite far already. Jeremy has already learned how to play the two pieces that we are planning to perform. I had my doubts in the beginning, but now I am confident that this program will be fun and enjoyable to all of us. We have a great teacher to teach us how to play the drums correctly, and talented drummers who can learn very quickly.

- Ho Joon Hwang, DBHS 11

Take Action

"You're alive. Do something. The directive in life, the moral imperative was so uncomplicated. It could be expressed in single words, not complete sentences."

The three words, Circle of Friends, have seemed to shine light to a worthy life experience for me. Through the laughs and cries, the tedious and merry times that I have had at COF have brought me to realize a sense of relief. Two years have gone by where I have met different kinds of people and none of that mattered because we were all apart of something that brought us together.

I enjoy COF with my buddy Jeremy; he is truly a bright young boy full of surprises. He is majorly talented with his hands, an excellent artist, never needs a single hand from me. We both cope with each other on our good and bad days. It doesn't matter how different you think you are from these our COF buddies because there resilient and amazing in their own way. They can show you the better things in life while the struggles you face taking care of them. Each one of the buddies is special beings that God has sent down to make an influential impact on us. If you're reading my article you have just become part of this chain reaction.

Everyone knows the saying "ACTIONS speak louder than WORDS." The small things in COF have come to reach out and bring people from all places together; our buddies are amazing in their skill of art and music. Their music "speaks out" to those who listen, and triggers and urges a person's mind to do something better for a change. As you read this, I'm sure you're aware of all the autistic kids around you. Take a chance to go introduce yourself and make a life-changing friendship that just might take your breath away. Worthwhile, share your experience with your friends so they can continue to share the word.

- Stella Han, DBHS 11



ALL ABOUT KIDS

My first few months here at COF have already been a great experience for me. The first day I attended COF, I was absolutely nervous and wasn't sure if I was ready to participate in this program. But already, everyone was welcoming the newcomers in. I met new people including volunteers, buddies, and teachers. They were extremely friendly and greeted us as if we were friends from long ago. We played games on the first day, which made me feel included amongst the others. I started to look forward to coming to COF and became more excited.



But the following couple of weeks were unstable and hectic for me because I did not have a permanent buddy. Things got changed around, and I had to pair up with a new buddy every time. I was worried that things would not work out, and I would have no buddy. Things finally settled down, and I eventually was paired with a buddy in Group C. I automatically enjoyed participating in Group C, because I love working with kids.

Our daily schedule starts off by eating a great meal with our fellow buddies and volunteers, conversing of how our weeks were. Afterwards, we quickly follow up into our weekly activities. Group C would go to art first, and do whatever we were assigned. It is amazing how the buddies in Group C are filled with such big imagination and creativity. After art, we go into music, where we sing songs or play games with the help of Teacher Hannah.



It's entertaining to hear everyone sing as a group, and how the buddies know most of the songs from the nursery rhymes! To make things more interesting, we add beats with instruments such as tambourines and drums. We also play games during music time, which gets the buddies hyped up. We played fun games like Musical Chairs and London Bridges. The best part is, everyone is a winner! After music, we go into soccer to get a good exercise. After running a few laps back and forth for a warm up, Teacher Kristy trains us into becoming better soccer players.

The buddies team up with each other, and we would have a different soccer activity every week. Sometimes we would practice dribbling, other times we would just play a game. Having a wonderful time in soccer exhausts us out, then it's just in time to go home. Saying good-bye to our buddies is what ends our days. Then, we cannot wait for the following week to spend time with our buddies again!

The best part of COF in my experience is that I have changed into a better person. This program has helped me gain more patience and tolerance. I do not look at people who differ amongst others in a particular way. I love helping our buddies out and having fun with them. On the playground, I think I have more fun than the buddies do while we play tag!

Thank you to the parents who take their time to prepare a delicious meal every week. Thank you to the teachers who make COF happen. And thank you to the volunteers and buddies for being there for each other! I cannot wait for the upcoming years I have left at Circle Of Friends!



- June Kim, DBHS 9

The Marathon

To me, training for the marathon has been like saving up money for something I have always wanted. Every day, I become closer to achieving my goal and I know once I reach that goal, I will feel proud and accomplished. However, reaching that goal also requires absolute focus and the need to pace myself. Benjamin Franklin once quoted, "Little strokes fell great oaks," which signifies some things may seem hard and impossible, but with small steps everything can be made possible. Analogously, in the beginning, running the marathon seemed impossible, but by training every week, I learned the marathon will be everything but an obstacle to me. By overcoming the difficult training, I learned to persevere and to build my character.

Of course there were times when I wanted to quit and have a normal day at COF just like everyone else. I once thought to myself, "Why am I tiring myself out by running when I can sit and do art like everyone else?" However, when I saw Paul sweat copiously, I realized that Paul puts in ten times more effort than me, but he never complains. From



that day on, I learned to persevere and never complained about running the marathon again. Running with Paul has taught me to enjoy the marathon and that I shouldn't complain about others not having to run it, but I should be proud and make others wish they could run the marathon too.

The marathon has also helped me develop my character because it taught me to do things because I want to do it and not because I am told to do it. To me, running the marathon is a way for me to give back to COF for all the opportunities and the wonders it showed me. My motivation for running is the hard work from all the volunteers and the parents who support and help make COF possible. Every time I pass by and see Group C working hard, I obtain the energy to run an extra lap around the parking lot. I also feel privileged to be able to run for COF and am extremely proud of it.

Through training for the marathon last year, I learned valuable lessons that schools cannot teach. This year I will use the hard work of everyone at COF as my motivation to try even harder this year.

- Taehong Min, DBHS 11

A NEW WORLD

Before the first day of COF, I felt nervous and anxious about the buddies and other members. But



when I came for the first time, I saw many of my friends that I knew from years before, and new, friendly faces that I've never seen in my life but felt as if I knew them from before. They greeted me with a welcoming smile and told me about themselves. We played games on the first day to make new friends, but in the first few rounds, I stayed in my comfort zone with my friends, but soon, I automatically paired up with new friends I have never known before. This made my first day of COF much more fun and active.

I also knew much of the volunteer parents that helped out. They smile and help out every week and I am thankful for them. They prepare delicious food for us to eat and sometimes help us out in activities. The leaders are always helpful and kind. They answer questions that I don't know and set up things so that we can easily begin the activities. They are all great people to make friends with.

The best thing in COF is the buddies. They are also kind and are always fun to talk to. I enjoy playing and talking

to them because even they have a great impact in my life. They make jokes and make us have a fun time at COF.

In hand chimes, we have fun playing the bells and socializing with our buddies and friends. It is amazing how the buddies can make such beautiful music with barely any help from us. It makes me happy as well as the other volunteers. In art, we're always curious about what we are going to make. One day we decorate pumpkins, and another day we draw elaborate drawings. The events at COF are always funny and enjoyable. The last event we had was the fashion show and dance contest. The fashion show was very amusing and well carried out. The dance contest was also funny to see everyone in good mood and dancing to various songs. I think these events make the buddies as well as the volunteers eccentric.

As a first year volunteer at COF, I felt deeply welcomed and happy. I experienced joy, surprise, love, and optimism. I really think that COF is extraordinary and hope to stay for a long time.



- Eric Song, DBHS 9

COF MEMORIES



END AND BEGINNING

별써 Circle of Friends 에 들어온 지 3년 이 다 되어갑니다, 그 동안 COF는 많이 바뀌었습니다, Buddy들도 수도 없이 들어왔고 새 volunteer들도 많이 들어왔습니다, 그리고 저 도 3년 동안 많은 변화가 생겼습니다, 머리로 길었고 친구들도 많이 사귀었고 키도 살짝 컸습니다, 그리고 저의 생각도 바뀌었습니다,

저는 사실 처음 Circle of Friends에 들어왔을 때 buddy 들은 저랑 아주 다른 사람일 줄 알았습니다, 저랑은 대화도 통하지 않고 아주 무서울 줄 알았습니다, 하지만 저는 버디들을 만난 후에 저랑 전혀 다르지 않다는 것을 알게 되었습니다, 그들도 재미있는 것을 좋아하고 얘기하는 것도 좋아했습니다, 슬픈 일이 있으면 울었고 즐거운 일이 있으면 웃었습니다, 버디랑 전화할 때 도 친구랑 전화할 때처럼 영화 얘기나 그날 뭐했는지 그런 얘기를 했습니다, 지금은 buddy라고 생각하지 않고 그냥 친구라고 생각합니다,

저는 Circle of Friends에서 친구를 사귄 것뿐만 아니라 친절한 법까지 배웠습니다, 예전에는 모르는 사람에게는 말도 걸지 못했는데 이제 저는 모르는 사람들에게도 친절하게 말을 걸 수 있게 되었습니다, 그리고 사람들은 함부로 깎아보지 않는 것도 배웠습니다, 만약에 제가 Circle of Friends에 들어오지 않았다면 이런 것을 다 배울 수 있었을까요? 저는 아주 상상치도 못한 곳에서 소중한 선물을 받았는 것 같습니다,

- Paula Kang, DBHS 12

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This newsletter was put
 together by COF members
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We're online !

Find us at:
www.ilovecof.org

COF WOULD ESPECIALLY LIKE TO THANK...

- Private donations
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- Panda Express
- Lee's Review
- Challenge SAT
- Pomona Regional Center
- Hana Christian Center
- Paul Kim
- Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church
- The teachers who inspire us
- All the mothers who support and feed us

THANK YOU FOR MAKING EVERYTHING POSSIBLE!

LOVE,

COF

