

A Caring Community For Families With Special Needs

Many phone calls are received by Church and Community Services from parents who are desperate to find resources to help their children with special needs. Sometimes they just want to talk with others who will understand and care.

Most families with children who have disabilities live with tremendous stress – financial, physical, emotional, spiritual – and rarely have an opportunity to share with their peers and enjoy some free time. DDM is responding to this need with an opportunity for respite, inspiration, and refreshment at an annual weekend retreat.

The first Special Family Retreat was held at Epworth by the Sea on St. Simons Island, GA, on July 25-27. Eighteen children and ten parents participated, and twelve of the children had special needs.

While volunteers from Duluth First Baptist, Jesup First Baptist, and Hebron Baptist of Dacula cared for the children, the parents enjoyed some time to themselves and benefitted from workshops and fellowship. Mary Frances Duren, a pioneer in special needs ministry in Georgia, led in providing a Vacation Bible School format with crafts, games, music and other fun activities.



Varion and Denny Spear of Dunwoody Church led inspirational workshops for the parents. Karen Cook of Garden Lakes Church in Rome and Dottie Adams, Family and Individual Supports Coordinator of Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities, provided information on resources to help the families.

Parents were overwhelmingly appreciative of the caring community provided by DDM at the retreat. One said that this was the “first time in five years that we have ever been anywhere.” Another commented on what a pleasure it was to be around understanding people that did not stare at her children or judge her to be a “bad parent” because of her children’s special needs. A couple noted that everyone at the retreat was very loving and helpful and that they were amazed at the resources available for their children.

The date and location of the Summer 2011 retreat has not yet been determined, and registration for this retreat will open January 1,

2011. Retreat information will be posted in the Helping Hand newsletter and on the DDM website.

The Special Family Retreat is not in the DDM budget and is funded by individuals and churches that help to sponsor the families. If you are interested in helping to provide this support, please send in donations to DDM for Special Family Retreat, 6320 Amherst Court, Norcross, GA 30092.

