

Highland Friendship Club: Making life better for individuals with disabilities

More than nice—it's needed



Two moms of children with cognitive disabilities established Highland Friendship Club (HFC) in 2002 after seeing the lack of opportunities for loved ones like theirs to have fun and make friends. HFC's mission is to serve individuals with disabilities ages teen through adulthood by providing a range of opportunities to develop lifelong skills, friendships, and connections within their community. HFC operates in St. Paul and offers more than 400 diverse classes a year, including programs in the topics of the arts, health and wellness, active living, interpersonal relationships, and life skills like cooking.

The need

Recent findings from the statewide Olmstead Quality of Life Survey of people with disabilities in certain settings show the need for the opportunities Highland Friendship Club provides to make friends.

For example, survey participants reported the majority of their close relationships are with relatives (52%), followed by paid staff (26%)—among whom turnover is high.

Friends (including housemates, schoolmates, and neighbors) made up just 22% of relationships.

HFC is person-centered

100% agreed, "staff helped me feel comfortable."

96% agreed, "HFC staff listened to me."

90% agreed, "HFC staff helped me."

Participants made friends



9 out of 10 participants learned how to make friends.



HFC fills the gap

HFC programming provides opportunities to make friends, learn about topics like health and wellness, and build confidence and skills.

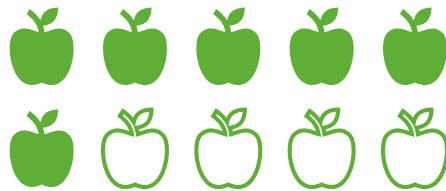
When asked what they would be doing if they didn't come to HFC, participants said they would probably be at home watching TV or playing video games, or simply "looking for things to do."

HFC programming provides participants with new activities and opportunities to make connections.

Report prepared by:
The Improve Group

Participants learned new things and use what they learned

6 out of 10 participants learned to make healthy choices.



5 out of 10 said they are making healthier choices.

96% of participants use what they learned at HFC at home, work, school, or in other places.



Participants had fun: 100% enjoyed their programs and would recommend them to others.

Participants were proud of themselves and gained confidence

66% said they had more self-confidence. When asked what they were proudest of themselves for during the program, participants said:

"Taking risks by trying."

"Being myself and dancing."

7 out of 10 participants said they feel like a better artist now.

When asked what they would do with an extra week of the Kairos program, participants said:

"Laugh and smile."

"Dance and connect with friends for an extra week!"



Special thanks to our partners Upstream Arts and Kairos Alive!

For more information on HFC, call 651-340-0711 or email info@highlandfriendshipclub.org.

Facebook: facebook.com/highlandfriendshipclub, Instagram: @highlandfriendshipclub, and Twitter: @HFCUpdates.

The information for this report was gathered through surveys of 61 participants in three HFC programs in 2017 and 2018.