



All Things Ignatian



Hand-In-Hand



“When the heart is touched by direct experience, the mind may be challenged to change.”

~ Rev. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J. (2000)

Mission

According to St. Ignatius of Loyola, Creighton University’s spiritual tradition thrives because we seek to “find God in all.” As “men and women for and with others” we strive to welcome and serve those with special needs and different abilities and gifts, and invite them to join us for a day of hospitality, community, and creativity. In order to nurture relationships with adults with disabilities, we host “Hand-In-Hand,” an annual event of companionship, listening, and joy. Creighton students partner with persons with mental and physical disabilities in this event that incorporates games, music, crafts and other fun activities. Through this event, we hope to incarnate our mission to live our lives “ad majorem Dei gloriam,” for the “greater glory of God.”



Its beginnings...

In the spring of 2007 two Campus Ministry staff members along with three CU undergraduates traveled to Philadelphia to experience St. Joseph University’s 31st annual Hand-In-Hand event involving over two thousand individuals. The CU delegation came back on fire ready to spear head Creighton’s first annual Hand-In-Hand event in the spring of 2008. Since then this event has touched many individuals throughout the Creighton and Omaha communities.

Hand-In-Hand is a festival designed to bridge the gap between adults with disabilities in the Omaha area and CU students. While providing a day of recreation for adults with disabilities, the festival helps to enrich the educational experience of CU student volunteers. Thanks to Ollie Webb Center of Omaha, student volunteers receive training to help their special guest enjoy the festival as fully as possible.



Karaoke, a favorite among the guests and partners alike!

The unique community service event is organized and conducted by CU students, supported by Creighton Campus Ministry Staff. This group works to create a festival atmosphere, plan the entertainment, recruit student organizations for game booths, and obtain funds, prizes, and food. It involves between one hundred to two-hundred CU students each year. During the festival, adults with mental and/or physical disabilities from the Omaha area are partnered with CU student partners. Together they share an afternoon filled with activities, including game booths, bingo, dancing, karaoke, and the ministry of presence.



Experiences

“I have been able to observe this event grow from first being a partner, then a CORE team member, and now a co-coordinator. It is truly amazing to see campus involvement evolve into such a wonderful collaboration between students and Omaha community members.” Anna Lewandowski

“Hand in Hand has widened my view of what ‘friendship’ really means. Friendship should not be limited to your peers that you bump into in the day to day, but rather reaching out to those who come from a different lifestyle. These partners reflect love in their smiles, excitement in their faces, trust in their hearts, and friendship in their hands.” ~ Julie Thomson

“Hand-in-Hand has made me realize that simple joys in life are the most rewarding. They are the moments that we live for, the moments that keep us human, and the moments that make us realize that we are here for a greater cause.” ~Michelle Skaff



“This experience has further solidified my desire to help others as a future occupational therapist.” ~ Christie Robb, OTS '12

“As a student volunteer from the first year of the event to becoming co-director, I have experienced an amazing bond of friendship among students and our guests. To be a part of planning the event that touches the lives of students and amazing guests keeps me coming back each year as Hand-in-Hand grows and reaches out to more individuals.” ~ Martha Earney

And still growing...

The first year we invited thirty guests. It grew to fifty-five last year and still more wanted to come. Having outgrown Lower St John’s space the event will be held in the Skutt Student Center Ballroom this year allowing for 100 guests!! Our hope is to involve more student organizations each year such as athletic groups, Greek students, academic organizations and others who would like to offer their own activity during the event! Another goal is to offer opportunities that would increase the awareness of adults with disabilities. We do hope to continue to open our doors and hearts to as many adults of this special population as possible, touching the lives of all who are involved.

