

SPRED

Special Religious Development

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Office of Catholic Education

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What is SPRED? SPRED is a special religious development program in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, which assists parishes in their effort to welcome children and adults with developmental disabilities or learning problems. It is specifically designed to meet the spiritual needs of persons with special needs. SPRED began in the Archdiocese of Chicago in the 1960's and now exists worldwide. In 1997 SPRED was introduced into the Archdiocese of Indianapolis through the efforts of Debbie Armenta, the first SPRED Coordinator. Ten parishes with 14 groups are currently participating in SPRED throughout the Archdiocese and over 75 friends participating in the program.

What is a SPRED Community? SPRED invites and trains up to eight volunteers from a parish to prepare a special place; a small community of faith specifically formed to welcome persons with developmental disabilities. Within these communities of faith, participants discover: friendship in one-on-one relationships, a place where they belong, their own giftedness and dignity. SPRED faith communities welcome persons with disabilities according to chronological age:

Children ages 6 – 10

Young adults 18 – 21

Youth ages 11 – 17

Adults ages 22 and older

The goal of a SPRED community is to welcome all participants to develop or deepen the awareness of God in their lives; of themselves as persons of dignity who are loved by God; and of themselves as an integral part of the parish community and the entire Church. This is accomplished through one-on-one relationships within a small community of faith. SPRED faith communities prepare beautiful, welcoming environments that invite persons of all abilities into a deeper awareness and experience of God through a process that emphasizes a sacred place, relationships, and the sharing of life experiences. Included in the SPRED sessions is a proclamation of the Word of God in scripture and sacred music.

What is the time commitment? Groups generally follow the traditional school calendar from late September through April and work from printed manuals to guide the process. Volunteers participate in SPRED sessions once a week for 24 weeks during the year. Twelve of those sessions include our friends with disabilities, on the alternate weeks the catechists meet to prepare the lessons. The sessions last about 2 hours with one hour being quiet reflective time. The calendar is designed by the group leader to respond to the schedules of the volunteers and friends.

Who can be a volunteer? Anyone who is 21 years or older and is willing to share faith and friendship with others from the parish. No prior experience with persons with disabilities is needed, only a willingness to accept and be accepted in a faith sharing group. Ongoing training is offered through the SPRED office.

To begin a SPRED community, a representative from the parish need only contact the SPRED office at (317) 236-1448 or via e-mail at kfavata@archindy.org. In order to start a SPRED group, permission from the pastor is required and one individual from the parish willing to serve as a chairperson for the parish – to serve as the SPRED representative in the parish.