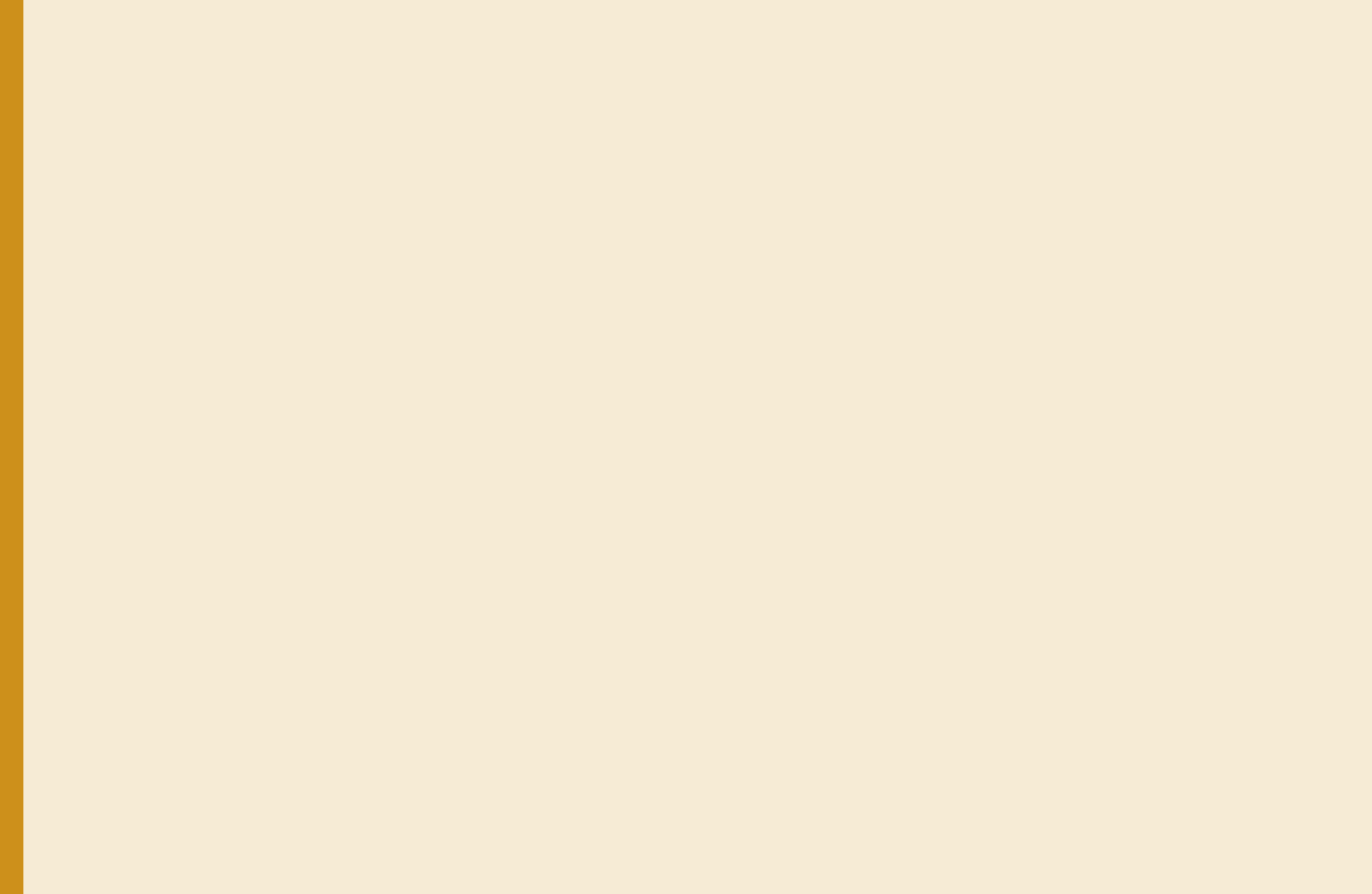




ANNUAL REPORT 2009 |



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■ A PROJECT OF
Rabbinical
College
of America
Lubavitch

We're partners with



■ MISSION STATEMENT

Based on the bedrock foundation of V'Ahavta L'Reacha Kamocha (Love your fellow as yourself), it is the Friendship Circle and Living Legacy mission to:

- Engage children and teens with special needs through a full range of social, recreational, Judaic and therapeutic experiences.
- Provide much needed respite and support to families who have children and teens with special needs.
- Motivate, inspire and enrich teenagers through sharing of themselves with others.
- Create for teenagers a sense of responsibility and connection to the Jewish community through educational and social opportunities.
- Provide children with positive interactive experiences that instill everlasting Jewish values and ideals.



■ WHO WE ARE

The Friendship Circle, through its wide array of innovative programming, promotes a greater awareness and understanding of both the unique needs and the unique gifts of people with special needs. The Friendship Circle also encourages respect and empathy for those facing difficult challenges.

Children and teens with special needs, and their families, benefit from home visits, recreational programs, life skills training, winter and summer camps and athletic programs. The Volunteer Club offers meaningful educational and social events for the teen volunteers.

At the heart of all of the Friendship Circle's programming is the belief that each and every individual can be a productive member of the community and benefit from the social support offered by one's peers. We envision a world in which people with special needs and their families experience acceptance, inclusion and friendship as valued members of society.



■ 10 YEARS OF GROWTH

The Friendship Circle began as a pilot program in October 1999 and just ten years later is a primary resource for the special needs community. Together, the Friendship Circle and its teenage volunteers have strengthened both the present and future.

2000



Friendship Circle
Founded
Friends @ Home
Holiday Programs

2002



Summer and
Winter Camps
Livingston Soccer
Club Partners for
Soccer Circle

2003

1st Annual Banquet
Parent Support Events

Respite Programs
Children's Circle
Sunday Program
Volunteer Club

2001



International
Conference
Volunteer School
Presidents
Sports Leagues
for Teens

2004



30
Programs and
services offered

140
Friends at home
visits each week

185
Events throughout
the year

285
Children and teens
with special needs served

2005

Beneficiary Agency
of UJC MetroWest
Jerry Waldor
Fellowship Award
Educational
Volunteer Seminars

2007



Friendship
Circle Walk
10,000 Children
Attend Exodus
Passover Experience

2009



Mitzvah
Volunteer
Program
Dads Events
Birthday Club

FC Teens
Chapter for
Teens with
Special Needs

2006



Birthright Trip
to Israel
Cooking Circle
Sibling Events

2008

815

Current trained teenage
volunteers/mentors

3,450

Teen volunteers
since founding

35,000

Volunteer friendship
hours annually



■ FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE JR.

Friendship Circle Junior programs serve children with special needs ages 3-12 through a variety of in-home and drop-off programs. As the original age group served by the Friendship Circle, this division offers long-running programs with a proven track record of success. Annual evaluations are followed through with necessary updates and adaptations to keep programming fresh and meet the changing needs of this population. A sampling of our programs and their results include:

Friends at Home: As the cornerstone of the Friendship Circle this is one of the most accessible of all programs with volunteers coming directly to the family's home. Meeting a variety of social needs for children with disabilities, the program is easy to adapt to

each individual. Families and volunteers often make long-term commitments to the programs, with many participating for as long as five years. One parent relates, "When we first started the visits he had no friends at all. It is really helping his self-confidence to know that he can get along and enjoy being with other kids. The boys' visits are both enjoyable and very helpful and we so greatly appreciate what you do."

The true beauty of Friends at Home lies in the connections made between the children with special needs, their families and the volunteers. "We have had three different pairs of volunteers over the years and they have all been great," says one parent. "The parents of these kids have also become our friends".



Torah Circle: The first drop-off respite program offered by the Friendship Circle offers a full range of activities and is coordinated to meet therapeutic and behavioral needs as well. One mother tells of her son's experience, "He loves this program and is eager to attend each time. We are happy he can be provided with a Jewish education and participate in Jewish programming in his community!"

The Friendship Circle has worked hard over the years to accommodate large groups of participants and to reduce waitlists, which at one time equaled as many as thirty-five families.

Allie's Camp: The summer and winter camps transform vacation time into the experience of a lifetime for children with special needs. The

fun-filled camps feature a variety of activities including swimming, games and sports, as well as exciting field trips and Jewish celebrations, all organized with the help of dedicated volunteers and friends.

"An amazing program that gives my daughter structure when she most needs it...she LOVES it and smiles whenever we talk about it!" raves one parent. Another parent adds "Too bad it's only one week!"

Allie's Camp has also had a great impact on the teenage volunteers. "Allie's Camp was one of the most instructive and life-changing experiences I have had volunteering" says one volunteer. "Spending an entire day with these kids allowed me to see how lucky I am, and at the same time inspired in me the desire to help all of the Friendship Circle kids. Thank you!"

ADDITIONAL JUNIOR PROGRAMS INCLUDE:

Holiday Programs • Soccer Circle • Cooking Circle • Sports Leagues • Birthday Club



■ FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE TEENS

As the participants in our junior division matured, it was incumbent upon us to expand our offerings to include programs for teens with special needs. In 2006 the Friendship Circle launched a series of programs to help the teens transition into adulthood. A sampling of our programs and their results include:

Torah Teens: Participants spend two and a half wonderful hours each week with Friendship Circle volunteers enjoying music, art, baking, and sports while acquiring valuable life skills training. A special Hebrew school program includes prayer and Jewish Holidays. Parents praise the wide range of activities and the dedicated volunteers. "My son can't wait 'til Sunday mornings," says one mother. Another praises her child's assigned volunteer, "We have been fortunate to always have very nice volunteers working with him. The activity schedule this year is very good



and the activities themselves line up nicely with his interests and abilities."

Friends in the Community: Teens are paired with volunteer mentors and together they visit local businesses to get on-the-job training. A job coach helps them learn the skills

necessary to fulfill their tasks. The parents have expressed their appreciation to the long-term impact that this program has, “The experience unlocked a skill that he can use in other settings.”

Sports Leagues: With the help of trained sports therapists, FC teens learn the skills necessary to participate in a variety of sports. The Friendship Circle’s team then plays pickup games against locals school teams. For many of the teens this is their first opportunity to participate in team sports.

The experience increased their confidence

ADDITIONAL TEEN PROGRAMS INCLUDE:

Teen Camp • Teen Scene Clubs • Holiday Programs • Saturday Night Socials

and opens the door to potential future activities. As one parent shares, “My son isn’t always overly enthusiastic about what he does, but I could see the pride and excitement on his face today as he played and the joy he carried off of the basketball court.”

The players were not the only ones who were moved by the experience. “Sometimes we don’t realize the gifts our children possess and watching Eric play basketball quite adeptly today was truly a thrill of a lifetime for me” shared another parent.



■ LIVING LEGACY

The Living Legacy programs have become a mainstay in the Jewish educational world by bringing fresh excitement to celebrations of Jewish learning. It allows the children to experience the beauty and joy of Shabbat and festival rituals and to gain an expressive appreciation for Jewish tradition through active personal participation. Some of our growth this year includes:

Purim Puppet Theater: The Living Legacy's exciting Puppet Theater brings Jewish history to life. Our first play presents the story of Purim. With a mix of humor and drama, the Purim Puppet Theater brings this ancient story to life in a fresh and captivating way.

A principle of one local school wrote: "Over the past few years, the Living Legacy has been an invaluable resource and program for our community. I have used their services

in all the educational institutions I have worked for. The Puppet Theater is another example of how they bring the holidays to life for the kids."



Plans are in the works to produce plays for the Puppet Theater based on other holidays and Mitzvot.

The Chanukah Wonderland: As one of Living Legacy's most popular programs, it allows children to experience the beauty and joy of Chanukah. Exciting hands-on activities include the Olive Oil Press Workshop, Arts & Crafts, Doughnut Decorating and of course, a special appearance by Judah the Macabee.

This year's Chanukah Wonderland was held at Imagine That Children's Museum, which allowed visitors a chance to enjoy the museum as well as all the Chanukah Wonderland activities. Children left with smiles on their

faces and parents requested more programs which are open to the public. One of the parents wrote, "Thank you so much for such a wonderful presentation of the Olive Press Workshop. My children thoroughly enjoyed the hands-on approach and we look forward to your next program."

Living Legacy for Seniors: The Living Legacy has been operating throughout Essex and Morris County for 14 years. Currently, our programs reach over 14,000 participants at forty-five schools annually.

We are now doing even more, reaching out to the broader Jewish community by making

these exciting, hands-on programs available to adults and seniors. Through discussions and activities, Jewish families and seniors are able to bond with one another while they learn about our rich heritage. We have been invited to run our programs in many of the senior homes in the MetroWest area, and Living Legacy has received accreditation under the Hirschhorn Foundation. We have had great feedback and many requests for future programs.

One of the seniors said, "This workshop has brought a Biblical tradition to life and is instrumental in teaching the significance of Jewish holidays."

ADDITIONAL LIVING LEGACY PROGRAMS INCLUDE:

- Holiday Series: Shofar Factory, Sukkot Shuk, Olive Press, Chanukah Wonderland, Multimedia Megillah, Matzah Bakery, Torah Factory
- Mitzvah Series: Havdallah Workshop, Kosher Workshop, Mezuzah Factory, Tallit Seminar, Tefillin Maker
- Jewish Birthday Club
- Mishmor



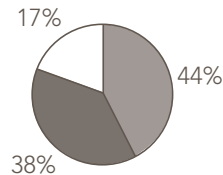
■ COMMUNAL INROADS

Bringing the Jewish community together and erasing the isolation families of children with special needs experience is at the heart of everything that the Friendship Circle does. We have continued to make significant inroads into the MetroWest community, reaching more special needs families and creating opportunities for

their inclusion in communal activities. A recent survey indicates our success. When asked about how their family has benefitted from the Friendship Circle parents praised our efforts, as seen below.

At the same time, we have been increasingly successful in making the general community more aware of this

Responses to the survey question: "My family feels more involved and accepted in the Jewish community."

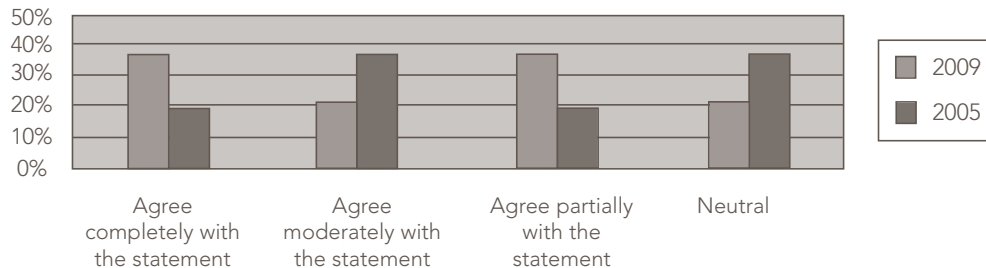


- Agree completely with the statement
- Agree moderately with the statement
- Agree partially with the statement

segment of our population and of the resources available to support them. Parents were asked about the Friendship Circle's effect on the community and their answers show that over time our efforts have had great impact. The Friendship Circle is reaching its

goal of erasing the divisions between the mainstream community and those with special needs. This is illustrated by how many parents agree with the statement "The community has become more embracing of children with special needs."

Current and past responses to the survey statement: "The community has become more embracing of children with special needs."



■ OUR VOLUNTEERS

In addition to being a source of comfort and companionship to those who are often forced to endure loneliness and rejection, the teen volunteers reap the vast rewards derived from giving of themselves.

The Friendship Circle unites the entire community. This is evident in the 815 teen volunteers who represent over 50 schools. The volunteers cross school rivalries and abandon established cliques to come together to make a difference.

OUR VOLUNTEERS ARE FROM:

Beis Chaya Mushka
 Bernards High School
 Bernardsville Middle School
 Black River Middle School
 Brooklawn Middle School
 Bruriah High School
 Central Middle School
 Cheder Lubavitch
 Columbia High School
 Cornerstone Day School
 Darrow School
 F.M. Gaudineer Middle School
 Frisch High School
 Gould School
 Governor Livingston High School
 Grover Cleveland Middle School
 Harding Township School

HB Whitehorne Middle School
 Hebrew Academy of Morris County
 Heritage Middle School
 Hunterdon Learning Center
 James Caldwell High School
 Jewish Educational Center
 Jonathan Dayton High School
 Joseph Kushner Hebrew Academy
 Kent Place School
 Liberty Middle School
 Livingston High School
 Madison High School
 Maplewood Middle School
 Mendham Twp. Middle School
 Millburn High School
 Millburn Middle School
 Montclair High School

Montclair Kimberly Academy
 Montville High School
 Morristown-Beard School
 Mount Pleasant Middle School
 Mountain Lakes High School
 Newark Academy
 Orange Middle School
 Rae Kushner Yeshiva High School
 Randolph High School
 Randolph Middle School
 Ridgedale Middle School
 Robert R. Lazar Middle School
 Shepherd High School
 Solomon Schechter High School
 Solomon Schechter Middle School
 South Orange Middle School
 Summit High School

The Pingry School
 Union County Magnet High School
 Warren Middle School

West Essex High School
 West Essex Junior High School
 West Orange High School



■ FC FUNDING

Given the current economic climate and fundraising challenges, the Friendship Circle has reexamined priorities, refined plans, and revised the budget to be able to maintain services. In order to achieve financial stability during these challenging times, administrative costs were reduced to absolute minimums to maximize the funding going directly to programming. Major fundraising events were tweaked to cut overhead and to better suit donors' attitudes.

At the same time, families of those with special needs, burdened with high cost of therapeutic treatments and schooling, continue to depend on the Friendship Circle to contain fees and keep programs accessible to all, regardless of their ability to pay. The Friendship Circle has responded with maintaining nominal fees. In a recent survey 97% of parents surveyed indicated that the program fees were manageable. Scholarships are always available for any family that needs assistance.

Responses to the question: "The current pricing structure for for Friendship Circle program is:"



■ COMMUNITY PARTNERS

In order to keep costs low, the Friendship Circle cut administrative costs, increased its efficiency, and maximized each dollar spent to enable and expand programming. Actions taken over the course of the past fiscal year reduced salary, overhead and other expenses by 25%.

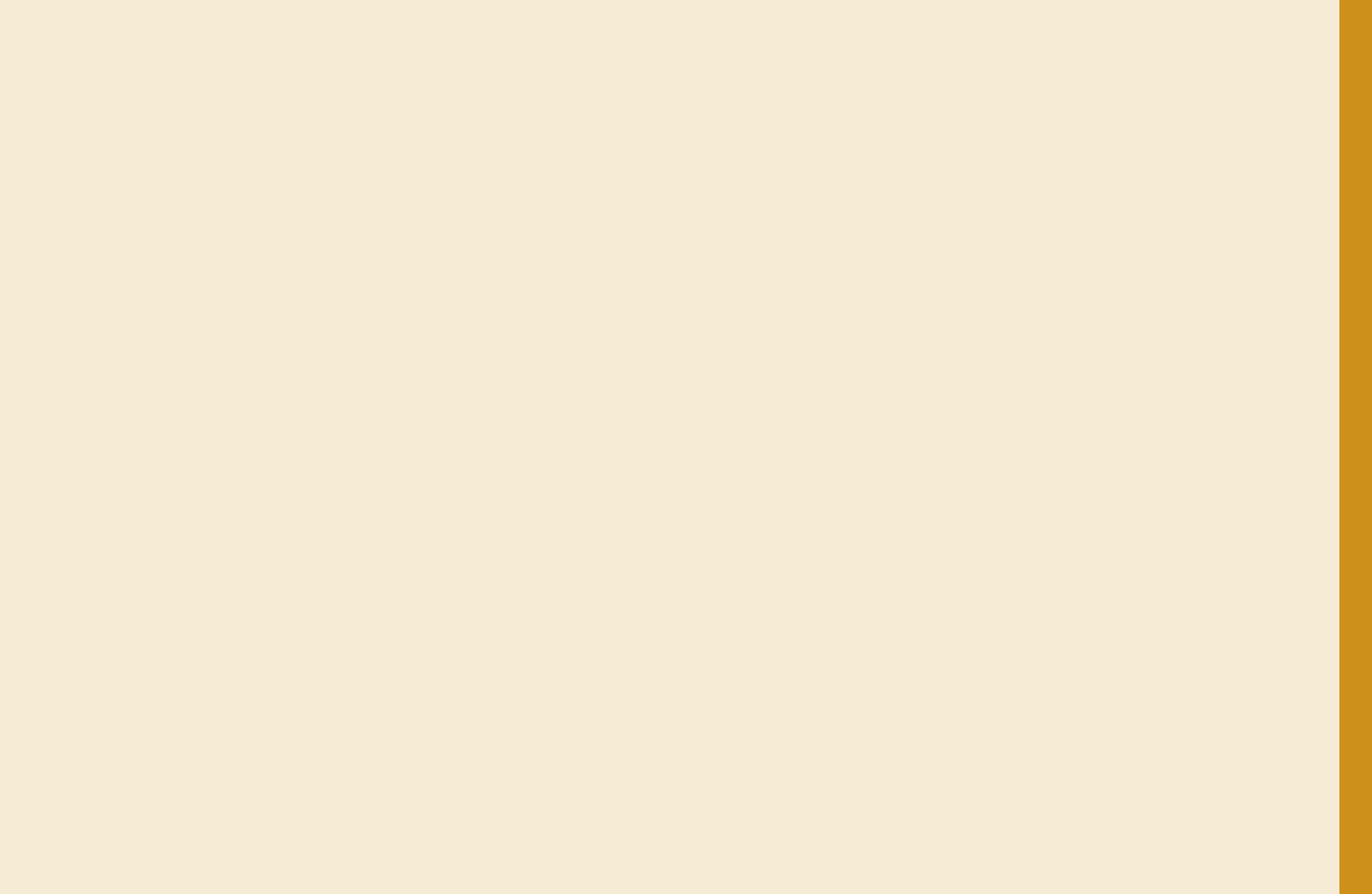
As a result the Friendship Circle has become a more financially lean, yet still high-impact community organization. The Friendship Circle is in a unique

and potentially enviable position in the non-profit community in that its fundraising base has increased during these challenging times. Understandably, donors have decreased the amounts given, resulting in a slight decrease in overall money raised. Yet, creative fundraising programs and increased effort resulted in additional donors recruited. As the economy improves, the expanded donor base will position the Friendship Circle for renewed growth.

FUNDRAISING COMPARISON FROM FISCAL YEAR 2008 TO 2009

Year	# of Donors	Total Amount
2008	1171	\$903,051
2009	1733	\$769,163
Difference from prior year	+ 562	-\$133,888
	+ 48%	-15%





THE FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE

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