

End of Season Summer BBQ Respite

Our final Special Needs Respite of the season in June was a joyful day filled with fellowship, laughter, gratitude, and God's abundant blessings. Together we celebrated the beginning of summer with a fun-filled picnic featuring a summer scavenger hunt, decorated beach pails, and sandal keychains. One of the favorite activities was gathering with our colorful parachute and beach balls, which each participant signed as a special keepsake to remember our wonderful season together.

We also took time to celebrate and honor our graduating seniors and to express our heartfelt appreciation to all our teen and adult volunteers. Their generous gift of time, compassion, and service has been a true reflection of Christ's love, and we are deeply grateful for each one of them.

Before sharing our delicious barbecue meal, we gathered in prayer, giving thanks to God for the many blessings of our respite family. A special thank you goes to Chef Ethne and Kathy, who lovingly grilled hamburgers and hot dogs for everyone to enjoy.

A bittersweet highlight of the day was welcoming Father Collins for his final respite before beginning his new pastoral assignment. Our participants, teen and adult volunteers, and committee members created a beautiful garden artwork in his honor. Each flower petal was made from the thumbprint of someone whose life he has touched, surrounding the message:

"Thank you for helping us grow." It was a heartfelt expression of our love and gratitude for his faithful leadership.

Over the past several years, Father Collins has been an instrumental part of our Special Needs Respite Ministry. His kindness, encouragement, unwavering support, and commitment to building an inclusive faith community have been a tremendous blessing to all of us. While we will miss him dearly, we pray that God continues to bless him abundantly as he begins this new chapter of ministry. May the Lord guide his steps, strengthen him in his vocation, and reward him for the countless lives he has touched.

As we conclude another wonderful respite season, our hearts are filled with thanksgiving for the friendships we have built, the memories we have shared, and the many ways we have witnessed God's love through one another. We look forward with hope and excitement to gathering again next season, trusting that God will continue to bless our respite family.

