

A HEARTBEAT for *Special Needs Ministry*

by Kelly Cahoon, Children's Ministry Director, Deep Creek Baptist Church,
Chesapeake/Portsmouth, VA



DC Kids Champions Club

This special needs ministry started in October of 2015 and is dedicated to providing hope to students with special needs and to their families.

does a church begin creating a special needs ministry? If you don't already have such a ministry in your church, this is a wonderful time to consider one for your community. I'm sure you are asking yourself questions like, *What could this look like in my church? How do I even begin?* If you are asking these questions, maybe God is stirring something in you to start a special needs ministry. Maybe you are the leader who will help your church become a special needs church. I once asked those questions, and God called me to be that leader.

Looking Back I Stand Amazed

At **Deep Creek Baptist Church (DC Church)**, our special needs ministry has grown from one self-contained room and a buddy system into its own little wing, where kids with all abilities can learn about Jesus. My first day as children's director at DC Church, I saw a little boy with cerebral palsy sitting in his sister's connect group while she took care of him. It was then that I knew I had to do something—I found my "heartbeat" for special needs ministry. When God called me to create this ministry, He was five steps in front of me, paving the way for sharing the vision with our senior pastor, recruiting volunteers, preparing training, and providing the finances and spaces needed. He had a great plan, and He continues to provide. In each step of this journey, I look back and stand amazed.

Today, it is beautiful to see families walk into our church and say they found us online or heard about us through a friend, all because they were looking for a special needs church. My heart just explodes when I hear them say this! When they say they feel blessed because they are able to come to a church that is prepared, accepting, and welcoming towards their family, I genuinely feel like our church is receiving the blessing. To deeply know these families (their hopes, dreams, and fears), to see the smiles on the faces of all of their beautiful children, to hear their screams of joy on Sunday, and to witness people getting saved and baptized—all because we have become a special needs church—I know that serving special needs families is the true blessing!

We Show Them Christ

It took work to get where we are here at DC Church, but what we do on Sunday is simple—we love special needs families where they are in life, and we show them Christ in us. Sometimes, they are broken because they have never felt accepted in churches, oftentimes they are carrying heavy burdens, and many times they haven't yet found the love of Christ. What an incredible mission we have as the Church to tell *everyone* about the Good News of Jesus! Is it time your church found your heartbeat for families with special needs?

Any church, no matter how big or small, can be a welcoming place for families with special needs or medically fragile children. It all starts with a simple hello and a heartfelt desire to understand each individual. Connecting to the heart of the family is truly important because hearing their stories and sharing in their struggles helps them succeed in finding a place to belong in the church. Becoming a special needs church ultimately starts when we humble ourselves and simply follow what Paul wrote, "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience" (Colossians 3:12, NIV).

We can start by living out these words and teaching others to do the same, but how

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CHAMPIONS**

For more information about this special needs ministry, go online to godeepcreek.com/championsclub.html.
