

The Pen Pal group



Two sets of pen pals
Photos by: Theresa Wonders-Tamez

By Jeffrey Johnson

The Pen Pal project was funded by a Linda Kapral grant. Catholic Charities Support Brokers applied for grant money to start the Pen Pal Project. The Pen Pal Project pairs up people with disabilities with a volunteer pen pal. Everyone is matched up by their interests.

Cheryl and Mary and Bob and Tom are two sets of Pen Pals who were interviewed about their experiences at a Meet and Greet lunch. Bob and Tom were the first pen pal match through the project. Tom indicated he had a pen pal when he was a kid. Bob and Tom found that they make good pen pals because they both like tractors and art. Cheryl and Mary found that they make good Pen Pals because they both like to make people happy.

Being a Pen Pal is a good way to meet people and get to know each other. Mary learned that Cheryl likes music by John Denver, likes baseball, and enjoys going to Badger Camp and Cheryl learned that Mary also likes John Denver music, likes flowers, and meeting new people and making new friends.

The reason Mary likes the Pen Pal Project is because she does not feel alone anymore. Cheryl and Mary enjoy getting letters in the mail from each other. Through the letters they send and the Meet and Greet lunch, Cheryl and Mary have gotten to know each other better and have become friends.

Bob and Tom have lunch together, currently about every 6-8 weeks. They talk about tractors and both like to garden. Tom is looking forward to seeing what Bob has planted.

There are currently 18 matched pen pals and their goal is to try to get 40 pen pals in their group. The hope is that more people with disabilities and volunteers will come aboard and find the happiness of finding a new friend. Currently, the Pen Pal project is only open to individuals who have Catholic Charities support brokers.