

**GETTING STARTED WITH YOU’VE GOT MAIL**

**1. GET READY:** Prepare people to welcome, understand and include people living with developmental and other challenges. How? Arrange SIMPLE, FUN activities to increase knowledge of/comfort with people with intellectual & physical disabilities.

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| \* watch for local exhibits or online events to include in the adult RE calendar |
| \* host watch parties featuring quality documentaries or films |
| \* host multi-gen educational activities during or after service |
| \* include a testimony in worship of someone adjacent to the congregation with personal or volunteer experience |
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| **2. REACH OUT/REACH BACK:** Build ongoing, genuine connection with an agency serving people with  intellectual and/or physical disabilities.   |  | | --- | | \* is there a natural connection within the congregation or wider network that can be more deeply  developed? | | \* include invites to attend social events together advertised on your chosen agency's website - eg: silent  auction, golf tournament, bingo or virtual events? | | \* individual or group volunteering with your chosen agency? | | \* pass along mutual benefit opportunities (choir or youth ensemble - offer to perform at your chosen  agency) | | \* invite the group you've forged a relationship with to attend your coffee house, picnic, storytelling,  drumming or other social event (understanding that our environment might be a bit overwhelming) | | \* most valuable is to have a 1:1 connection with someone with a developmental disability if your  Partner organization provides this as an opportunity.  #1 and #2 can happen in parallel with each other. Keep the energy moving by taking up the opportunities as  they come up. | |

**3. OFFER TO HOST 'YOU'VE GOT MAIL"**

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| \* Approach your partner organization with the You've Got Mail plan in the fall for their consideration as a winter  program |
| \* Designate a congregational co-ordinator as liaison with one staff at the partner organization |
| \* Invite families and adults to commit to send 2 cards or brief notes a month from mid-November to mid-March |
| \* Prepare spreadsheet of the names/addresses & interests of letter recipients matched with congregational  letter writers |
| \*Congregational Co-ordinator sends regular e-mail messages of encouragement and respond to questions of  letter writers (eg: Will they understand what I'm saying, will they like what I'm sending?) Coach: what if their  interests aren't my interests? |
| \* Schedule a zoom meeting with a few interested letter recipients and support staff for all of the letter writers  mid-way |
| \* Exit questionnaire for writers and recipients |
| \* Celebrate success! (letter writers invited to wear hats in a Sunday service to be recognized, recap in  newsletter etc ) |
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| \* A smaller congregation could write to a supportive housing group as a whole, rather than matching individuals |

**NOT SURE? CONTACT THE PROGRAM DESIGNER!**

Barb Wentworth will be happy to talk about the project with congregations considering, or in process, of launching “You’ve Got Mail”. [barbwentworth@FirstUnitarianToronto.org](mailto:barbwentworth@FirstUnitarianToronto.org)