

***Nonprofit Chamber of Service
Nonprofit of the Week***

This series has been established with the intent of increasing awareness of the many causes and efforts taken on by our nonprofit brethren. If your nonprofit has a particular event taking place during the course of a week, an anniversary for example, please make this known and we will do all possible to accommodate a spotlight that coincides. On behalf of our membership, we wish to say “thank you” for taking a few moments from your busy schedule to learn a bit more about our community of nonprofits.

Families Together, Inc. was originally founded in 1982 by Chris Curry, KU special education professor, as an opportunity for families to come together and meet other families who were navigating the special education and disability services maze.

The Federal Government authorized Parent Training and Information centers, through Special Education Law, to be established in each state to provide training and information to the parents of infants, toddlers, children and youth who have disabilities. In 1986, **Families Together** became the center serving Kansas families. This agency is dedicated to a society that includes and values all people; and encourages, educates, and empowers families that include a child/youth with disabilities.

On December 3rd, those who attend the Families Together, Inc. Statewide Inclusion Conference, “Our Combined Voices”, will have the opportunity to learn how they can better make a difference in the lives of children with disabilities. The all-day conference will be held at Hyatt Regency in Wichita and will include two keynote presentations in addition to various breakout sessions. Stephanie Smith Lee will speak on *Promoting Inclusive Education, High Expectations, and Improved Outcomes for All Students*. Joe and Brett Porting will present *Including Brett: An Exceptional Journey*. Valuable insight into a student’s perspective of their own inclusive education will be shared as Brett (a fourteen year old with Down Syndrome) and his dad share the strategies used to make inclusion successful for Brett.

In addition to sponsoring two statewide conferences each year and an array of ongoing services, Families Together also sponsors Family Enrichment Weekends, which include a hotel stay and dinner in a first class dining room for the entire family at no expense to the family. Families are joined by trained volunteers who care for the children while parents attend a variety of workshops ranging from Individualized Education Plans to learning sensory activities for their children and young adults.

About 18 years ago, Connie Zienkewicz, mother of Julie, an 18 month with severe disabilities attended such a weekend. Now, almost 20, Julie is enrolled in a Hip Hop class at WSU and Connie is the Executive Director of Families Together. Connie can truly appreciate the training Families Together provides parents.

For information on the upcoming Families Together, Inc. Statewide Inclusion Conference, their Family Enrichment weekends, or any of their other services, please check out their website at www.familiestogetherinc.org or call them at 316-945-7747.