



1—Project Name: Special Friends Retreat

2—If this grant is being requested on behalf of an external organization, what is that organization's name and connection with Texas Baptists? N/A

3—Please request the minimum amount needed—with a maximum of \$20,000 possible—in order to accomplish the project's goals.

\$17,000.00 (*budget attached*)

4—Overview: Give a one paragraph description of the project.

Our Special Friends Retreat is an annual event for individuals aged 12 and older with cognitive or intellectual disabilities. This ministry not only provides spiritual refreshment for our campers but also their caregivers and parents. We currently host four retreats (West Texas, Kingwood, DFW and Longview). The one-day retreat was added in East Texas during 2024. The purpose of each retreat is to provide support and encouragement for all who attend and to share the love of Jesus.

5—STRATEGIC: How will this project make Texas Baptists stronger?

One of the most neglected populations in our communities are those individuals with special needs. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that 20% of Americans between the ages of 16-64 suffer from some type of disability or impairment (physical, mental or emotional). As Christ followers, we believe that we are an example to the world when we minister to those who cannot advocate for themselves. We are truly loving the least of these and placing value on all lives with events such as our Special Friends Retreat. This is a unique opportunity where campers can assemble together, meet new friends, and worship Jesus. There is no greater expression of God's love than this. Our hope is to help equip and empower churches to serve families with special needs and to provide respite for parents and caregivers.

6—SIGNIFICANT: What is the anticipated long-term impact of this project?

This ministry has been sustained for 39 years (including 2025) and continues to be a highlight for our campers, volunteers and caregivers. In 2026, we will celebrate our 40th anniversary! For many of our campers, this is the only opportunity they have to enjoy a camp experience. It is a place where all feel welcomed, loved, encouraged and supported. We have a multitude of leaders, across the state, who look forward to this event and selflessly give of their time each year. This is truly a rich experience for all who participate.

7—SUSTAINABLE: How will the grant help this project become self-supporting?

Our Special Friends Retreat is one of the most meaningful weekends for Texas Baptists. The needs of our campers, and their families, are placed at the center of all that we do. We desire for each person to learn about God in a personal way. We provide multiple opportunities to learn through Bible study, worship, crafts and our much anticipated talent show. Efforts have been made throughout the years to ensure that the cost for camp continues to be low and affordable for all. It is through the gracious support of TBMF that makes this possible for campers and their families.

8—INNOVATIVE: How will this project break new ground?

There is no other retreat like our Special Friends Retreat. This retreat meets a unique need for our campers as well as support for parents and our churches. Parents can enjoy a time of respite, knowing that their children are well cared for, while ministry leaders can stay involved and create a wonderful camp experience for our campers. Special Friends has also highlighted the need for churches to begin or grow a special needs ministry within their own congregations. God is truly glorified through the efforts of this ministry.

9—INVOLVING: How will the churches served by Texas Baptists be included in this project?

The collective effort of leaders across the state of Texas is amazing. Between all camps we have hosted in the past, we typically have 400-475 campers, parents and caregivers with approximately 17+ churches and group homes participating. We added a 3rd retreat in 2023, in the Houston area, at Kingwood First Baptist Church. For 2024, we added a 4th retreat in East Texas (Mobberly Baptist Church). With the shift toward a one-day event, we have the potential of hosting other retreats across the state as we have opportunity to partner with new churches.

How many churches will be involved? West Texas - 4+ churches & group homes; Mt. Lebanon - 8; Houston - 3; East Texas - 2+ churches & group homes

10—INTERESTING: How will this project produce helpful stories and encourage donor engagement for future ministry support?

This ministry not only ministers to our campers, but it also inspires leaders to engage churches in year-long ministry to families with special needs. Many churches have called and asked for information on how to begin a special needs ministry, and it has been incredible to see how the Special Friends Retreat provides a blueprint for possibilities. Lives have been transformed as a result of this camp, not only for the campers themselves, but also those who volunteer to serve. Many have said this ministry is such a blessing to them and have pledged never to miss.

In 2023, we invited students from Howard Payne University to attend at the Mt. Lebanon retreat for course credit. Students will join us again in 2025. They all had such a rich experience and some have returned as volunteers. Also, our childhood ministry certification class learned about special needs ministry through their courses, and one of them has joined our team permanently.

11—Has this project received previous TBMF grants? If YES, list years and amounts.

TBMF has contributed funds for Special Friends since its inception.

12—Is this request for an ongoing project with a new name? If YES, what was the former name of the project?

N/A

Budget for Special Friends Retreat 2026

Four camps of 475 campers, parents, and caregivers and 70 faculty

Income:

Campers, Parents, Teachers		Total
475 @ \$50 (ave.)	\$23,750	\$23,750
Cooperative Program	\$ 7,012	\$ 7,012
Possible MHD	\$30,000 (This is the amount requested for 2026. We will not know until early 2026 if we receive the full amount. This would affect the amount we request from the Missions Foundation Grant.)	\$30,000
Possible Missions Foundation Grant	\$17,000	\$17,000
	Grand Total	\$77,762

Expenses:

Camp Coordinators	2 @ \$500	\$ 1,000
Travel for BGCT and Staff (5)	West Texas --\$2,250 Mount Lebanon --\$1,000 Houston - \$1,000 East Texas - \$1,000	\$ 5,250
Camp Pastors	3 @ \$750	\$ 2,250
MinistrySafe/Background Checks	70 @ \$36	\$2,520
Camp Worship Leaders	3 @ \$750	\$ 2,250
Craft Coordinator	1 @ \$300	\$ 300
Nurse and Travel	3 @ \$700	\$ 2,100
Security Officers	2 @ \$600	\$ 1,200
Entertainment	1 @ \$500	\$ 500
Copies of Bible Studies	\$ 650	\$ 650
Bible Study Leaders, travel expenses (\$316.31), plus \$100 honorariums	70 @ \$416.31	\$29,142
Mt. Lebanon Meals Snacks Lodging	350 @ \$70	\$24,500
Plains Baptist Encampment Meals Snacks	74 @ 25	\$1,850
Houston Meals, Snacks (no lodging)	50 @ \$25	\$1,250
Mobberly Meals, Snacks, T-shirts (no lodging)	120 @ \$25	\$3,000
	Grand Total	\$77,762

Timeline:

Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Total
\$0	\$1,262	\$6,000	\$4,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$2,500	\$6,000	\$13,000	\$26,000	\$5,000	\$4,000	77,762