

Director: Building a T.E.A.M.

Special needs ministry is no place for the Lone Ranger. In the early days of black and white TV, this mysterious cowboy rode into town wearing a mask. He fought for justice, won single-handedly and escaped on his trusty steed, Silver. And no one knew his true identity except his Native American friend, Tonto. This leadership model is too common at church.

If you're that lone cowboy on the road to creating a disability program, you're on the wrong path. Heroes in this ministry learn to work with people and not for them. In his book *Doing Church as a Team*, Wayne Cordeiro reminds us the church is not an organization but a living organism. "If I cut off my arm and planted it in dirt, that arm would not grow into a new body; it would die!" Cordeiro warns. "So it is with the Body of Christ. Each of us has an individual assignment and role, but apart from the rest of the Body, we are useless. God created us that way. That is His design, not ours."*

The first thing Jesus did after His temptation in the wilderness was to build a ministry team by calling on the first 4 of 12 men (Matthew 4:18-22). He handpicked a diverse group and lovingly molded them into a family. You can follow Jesus' model in your special needs ministry by selecting a recruiting team. Remember to include special education teachers, grandparents, business leaders and people with disabilities who share the vision.

T—Training Coordinator

Volunteers will come into this ministry with a variety of experiences. Some have taken a Spiritual Gifts Inventory and found they have strengths in this area. Others grew up with a sibling who had a disability and can help train new volunteers. The training coordinator doesn't need to know everything about every disability (no one does), but this people person should be skilled at matching volunteers with special needs children and with providing training resources.



special needs ministry by (1) writing simple prayer guides with Bible promises, (2) visiting small groups in your church once a quarter to encourage them to pray, (3) leading children in praying for adult caregivers, and (4) praying for needed volunteers as well as those currently serving.



M—Managing Coordinator

Volunteer screening is a must! This team leader will assist volunteers as they complete an application that gives permission for a background check. (A number of websites provide screening for a history of child abuse or endangerment.) This team member will keep volunteer records protected and stored in a locked cabinet. He or she may also manage weekly volunteer/teacher schedules and provide substitutes as needed.



E—Events Coordinator

Everyone wants to be part of an exciting, well-managed program. When planning a Disability Awareness Sunday, Fall Fun Fair or Parent Night Out, this team member will display happy pictures of children, parents, siblings and caregivers having fun together. He or she should be skilled in creating informative flyers, brochures and movies (video or digital) that invite people to get involved.



A—Ask in Prayer Coordinator

Jesus urged us to ask God for workers for our ministry. This prayer leader will encourage others to pray for the

The team's goal is to remind the whole congregation that recruiting is everyone's job as we "spur one another on toward love and good deeds" (Hebrews 10:24) and to correct misconceptions people have about children and adults with special needs.

*Wayne Cordeiro, *Doing Church as a Team* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2001), p. 176.