

## **Circle of Friends Makes a Difference in Small Communities Too!**

*By: Kimberly Anderson, Calaveras High Circle of Friends President*

Living in a rural community in the Sierra Foothills of California, our *Circle of Friends* members recently gave Disability Awareness Presentations for the freshman class. I did not expect the feedback we received would be so positive and uplifting.

Our presentations opened the eyes of the students and made them realize that we are all able to connect with each other, because each of us has our own disabilities in one way or another.

Surveys were completed by the freshman and one really stood out.

**“This presentation spoke to me, I’ve always been sort of a jock and a jerk, but after the [Disability Awareness] presentation, I kinda felt bad because of all the people I hurt. I feel that if I change my attitude towards other people I could find true happiness in myself and others.”**

It never stops amazing me how much of a difference *Circle of Friends* makes in the lives of the students on our campus—both in and out of the club.

Although we are a fairly new club on campus, we have grown three times our original size in the past year. We grew from a group of about twenty-five to a whopping seventy-four members and counting!

***Circle of Friends* has truly transformed the atmosphere of our campus.** It has changed the lives of both our students with social challenges, and our general education students as well.

In particular, one student with special needs in our club has progressed greatly since joining *Circle of Friends*. During our first year, she was considered non-verbal. **I got the very special privilege of witnessing her come out of her comfort zone and bloom into a very sassy young lady!** Last year, at lunch, she would not say “Hi” to us or engage in any conversation. At the beginning of this school year, she came and found where my friends and I have lunch on campus and was able to interact with us very easily. This experience has shown our club members just how much their time makes an impact.

**It is so rewarding to know what a difference *Circle of Friends* makes in so many lives.** I am looking forward to seeing our club branch out to join other chapters in our area and create an even larger circle. Simply put, *Circle of Friends* is one of the best things that has happened to our campus.