

Who is a “definitely-abled” event participant?

For years now we have been using the term “definitely-abled” to welcome our event participants whose lives are characterized by a set of either physical or cognitive circumstances that are *more specifically defined* (hence the term “definitely”) than the general population and may require a more carefully designed way of participating in our events than the majority of our youth, and whose gifts and presence we have wanted to make sure we did not lose or exclude. We have been enormously enriched by our definitely-abled youth over the years, and this is a commitment of our church that we desire to honor as much as possible.

We used to use terms such as “disabled” or “handicapped” to describe our youth with such special needs and gifts, but we realized over time that these were phrases that by their very nature suggested that their presence was less valued than others. We invite such participants, along with congregational leaders and caregivers, to decide for themselves whether any given youth event is an appropriate place for them to participate. Alas, not all of our events or facilities are yet able to accommodate every special need, but each year the skills our leaders bring to the leadership of our events become more attuned to including our definitely-abled members.

For a young person who functions best when accompanied by a caregiver, the event cost for that caregiver is the same as it is for a small group leader - \$25 (that will raise to \$35 starting in fall of 2012). That includes Seventh Day, for which all other participants pay the same fee.

Questions or special requests regarding our events can be directed to Synodical Youth Director Dave Delaney at the Synod Office – 540-389-1000 / delaney@vasynod.org.