

FAMILY RETREATS

Joni and Friends International Disability Center *Family Retreats* are a week of Christ-centered ministry that provides a unique service to families struggling with the daily stresses of caring for a disabled family member. It is a time to embrace the needs of the entire family, offering a full range of activities in an encouraging and supportive environment where families affected by disability feel welcomed, understood and accepted. It is also a great opportunity for networking and building relationships with others who know both the joys and relentless demands of life with a disability.

Family Retreats take families affected by disability who are often tired and discouraged, and points them toward Christ, the only true source of strength and joy. Joni and Friends *Family Retreats* help to strengthen family bonds, educate the family about coping with disability-related issues and provide hope. Many have testified that *Family Retreats* have provided the strength to literally hold their family together.

The day to day realities of caring for a family member with mental and/or physical challenges can be overwhelming. Statistics indicate that families with a disabled member have extraordinarily high rates of estranged relationships, stress, financial burdens, and despair. Families affected by disability often face social isolation, which compounds their practical, emotional and spiritual needs. Through *Family Retreats*, Joni and Friends addresses the particular needs of families who live with these daily struggles.

Joni and Friends has been hosting *Family Retreats* since 1991, and in 2009, provided 20 retreats in the U.S., running April through August. Joni and Friends is now also hosting *International Family Retreats*, with six being held this year in locations such as Ghana, Ukraine, El Salvador, Romania and Hungary.

