2024

BESTBUDDIES® ANNUAL REPORT

Gisselle, **Lily** and **Caroline**, Eunie's Buddies

BEST BUDDIES®

MISSION PILLARS

One-To-One Friendships	Integrated Employment	Leadership Development	Inclusive Living	Family Support

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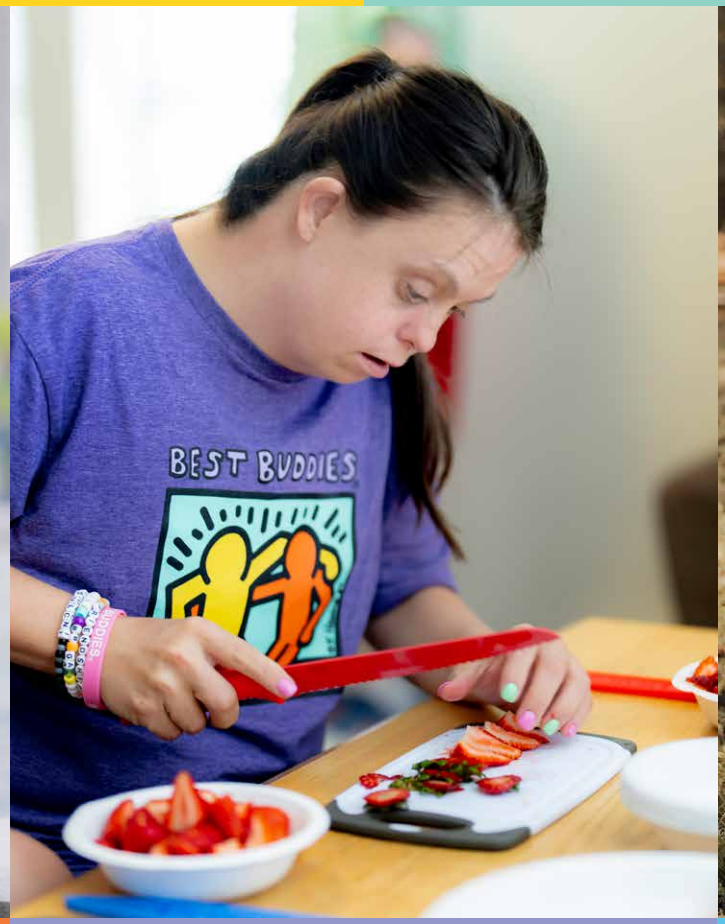
BEST BUDDIES

BEST BUDDIES


BEST BUDDIES

Anthony K. Shriver, and Best Buddies participant Matt Davies at the *2024 Best Buddies Challenge: Hyannis Port, presented by Shaw's and Star Market Foundation and the TJX Companies, Inc.*

Message From Our Chairman

Dear Best Buddies Family,

As we reflect on 2024, I am filled with immense pride and gratitude for the incredible progress we've made together in building a more inclusive world for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). This year marked a major turning point for our organization, as we deepened our impact, expanded our reach, and launched powerful new initiatives that will transform the lives of countless individuals and families for years to come.

One of the most significant and impactful initiatives of 2024 was the introduction of Best Buddies Family Support, our fifth mission pillar. This program is designed to provide families raising children with IDD access to mentors and meaningful connections, critical resources, and a strong community of support. To officially announce this launch, I had the honor of joining Best Buddies Global Ambassador and Today Show host Savannah Guthrie for a live interview on NBC in May. Together, we introduced the world to Eunie's Buddies, our new initiative supporting families and caregivers and I could not be prouder of what this represents for the future of inclusion.

This year also brought extraordinary momentum from our corporate partners, whose generosity and commitment to our mission elevated our work on every level. Best Buddies and the global iconic brand The Coca-Cola Company entered a five-year partnership, with the company becoming the "Official Beverage Partner" of Best Buddies through its BODYARMOR and Coca-Cola brands. Their $1 million grant will allow us to grow our supported employment program and place participants with IDD in meaningful jobs.

Our partnership with Jersey Mike's Subs also reached new heights. In just two days, their nationwide campaign raised $5.3 million to benefit Best Buddies! Their continued investment in inclusive hiring supports our work toward an ambitious goal: 3,000 job placements for individuals with IDD over the next 5 to 7 years.

Thanks to your support, 2024 has proven what is possible when community, commitment, and compassion come together. We are not only changing lives, we are building a sustainable movement of inclusion that empowers people with IDD to thrive.

To our participants, families, staff, donors, and volunteers: thank you for your belief in this mission and for walking alongside us. We know there is still more work to do but with your continued support, we are rising to meet the moment.

Together, we are shaping a world where everyone is seen, valued, and included.

In Friendship,

Anthony K. Shriver, Founder, Chairman & CEO, Best Buddies International

Why We Matter

Society has made undeniable progress in improving the lives of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Yet, we still have a long way to go. Many people with IDD remain unemployed and do not experience the simple joys of genuine friendships and a significant portion of the IDD community still faces access barriers, pervasive social isolation, and discrimination.

This is where Best Buddies International plays a vital role as a model of inclusion and catalyst for change. Best Buddies is the world's largest organization committed to ending the social, physical and economic isolation that 200 million individuals with IDD often experience. For those within the IDD community, Best Buddies represents a pathway to forging lifelong friendships, securing gainful employment, achieving independent living and gaining the skills and confidence to advocate for themselves.

An estimated 84%* of adults (18+) with IDD do not have a paid job in the community. This is where the Best Buddies' Jobs program steps in. The Best Buddies Jobs program has participants employed full time who each have the potential to earn a total income upwards of $1mm over 30 years and contribute $250k in taxes back into the economy, rather than costing the government approximately $750k each in Federal SSI and Medicaid support during that time period.

This is just one of the countless ways Best Buddies improves the lives of individuals with IDD while simultaneously improving whole-of-society outcomes. Through the cultivation of meaningful one-on-one friendships, the pursuit of integrated employment, the provision of inclusive living arrangements and the nurturing of leadership skills, Best Buddies is fostering a world that is full of opportunity for individuals with IDD.

For more information, please visit **BESTBUDDIES.ORG**

Together, we can build a world where everyone belongs.

Livi and **William**, winners of the *2024 Best Buddies Champion of The Year Gala: Central Texas*

From left: **Brent**, **Kai**, **Garrett**, and **Mitch**

A Parent's Perspective

Mitch Holeve is a mentor in our new Eunie's Buddies program which offers families the support and resources needed to navigate the journey of raising a child with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Recently, Mitch was paired with Brent, a new dad just starting out on this journey. The two fathers and their sons, Garrett and Kai, had the chance to meet in person at MOD Pizza, where Garrett works in a job he proudly secured through the Best Buddies Jobs program.

"Supporting new fathers has been one of the most rewarding and humbling experiences I've had. I know from experience that the early days can be overwhelming and filled with uncertainty, questions, and emotions that you really did not expect. I also know that no dad should have to go through that journey alone, like I did 35 years ago with my son Garrett. Supporting new dads is not about me having the right answers; it's about offering empathy, encouragement, and connection during a time that can be a bit tough, and they may feel alone.

Every father deserves to feel supported, and every child deserves to have a father who feels supported—so that dad can do a great job.

As a father, having three grown sons has brought me the most joy. It is wonderful to see each one become his own man and contribute to society in a meaningful way. Watching them grow and enjoy their lives has been incredibly fulfilling.

In my view, individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities bring their unique abilities and personalities to the world, each in their own way.

Becoming a mentor in the Eunie's Buddies program brings immense joy by allowing me to support another parent. I hope to share our family's unique and everyday experiences of raising Garrett. By sharing these experiences, we hope others will gain a little knowledge and a lot of optimism for their child's future. We also want them to know that their path, compared to ours, offers plenty of support and opportunities for their child to learn and grow."

– Mitch Holeve, Eunie's Buddies Mentor

2024 Highlights

Launches

- In 2024, Best Buddies launches its fifth mission pillar BESTBUDDIES® Family Support, to offer families access to individual connections and community resources that assist them on their journey of raising a child with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- On May 21, Anthony K. Shriver, Founder, Chairman, and CEO of Best Buddies International, appeared on NBC's Today Show in New York City for an exclusive interview with Best Buddies Global Ambassador and Today Show host Savannah Guthrie. They discussed the impact of Best Buddies' mission to foster inclusion for the IDD community and officially announced the launch of Eunie's Buddies, the organization's new initiative supporting families raising children with intellectual and developmental disabilities

New Partnerships

- **The Coca-Cola Company** amplified their BODYARMOR hydration sponsorship with a more comprehensive 5-year partnership that encompassed soft drinks and made them the "Official Beverage Partner" of Best Buddies. Coca-Cola soft drink products and branding were featured across Best Buddies Challenges, Breakaway Camps, and the Miami Gala. Additionally, they announced a $1MM grant to expand Best Buddies' supported employment program, providing job opportunities for participants with IDD during FIFA World Cup activations.
- **Jersey Mike's Subs** launched a 2-day campaign donating 20% of nationwide sales to Best Buddies, raising $5.3MM overall. In its second year of partnership, the brand continued to advance inclusive hiring initiatives through the Best Buddies Jobs program, aiming for 3,000 placements in 5-7 years.
- **Miracle Recreation** committed to developing Best Buddies commercial playgrounds and Buddy Benches, designed to provide a new standard of best-in-class inclusive and accessible playground equipment for all ages and abilities.
- **Shutterfly** partnered with Best Buddies to highlight the magic of the Friendship Walk through a national photo scavenger hunt, encouraging participants to capture authentic moments of connection. Winning photos and Leadership Conference videos were shared on social media on July 30 to celebrate International Friendship Day
- **Sky Zone** welcomed Best Buddies as a national "Do-Good Partner", committing to host a series of private "Friendship Tuesday" events exclusively for program participants at 6 trampoline park locations annually. BOGO coupons were also furnished for national Best Buddies distribution, so that program participants across the country could enjoy their local park with peers at their convenience.

Jonathan and **Veronica** with son **Benjamin**, Eunie's Buddies program participants

Kiontis Gallion, Best Buddies Global Ambassador

Desmond and **Mario**, Friendship Program buddy pair, enjoying Jersey Mike's Subs

Best Buddies participants **Lena**, **Charlie**, **Isla** and **Mia**

Milestones

1987 - 1996

- In 1987, Anthony Kennedy Shriver launches BEST**BUDDIES**® Colleges by founding the first Best Buddies chapter at Georgetown University.
- In 1988,w the iconic Best Buddies logo was donated to Best Buddies by legendary pop-artist, Keith Haring.
- On January 19, 1989, Best Buddies is incorporated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, becoming America's first national, unified, social and recreational program for people with IDD.
- In 1992, Best Buddies Global Headquarters office moves to Miami, FL.
- In 1993, Best Buddies launches BEST**BUDDIES**® Citizens to pair adults with IDD in one-to-one friendships with their working peers who do not have disabilities.
- In 1994, Best Buddies launches BEST**BUDDIES**® Jobs, a supported employment program targeting high-paying, corporate jobs for people with IDD.
- In 1995, Best Buddies launches BEST**BUDDIES**® High Schools to pair special education students in one-to-one friendships with high school volunteers.
- In 1996, Best Buddies launches BEST**BUDDIES**® Middle Schools to pair students with IDD in one-to-one friendships with middle school volunteers.

1999 - 2011

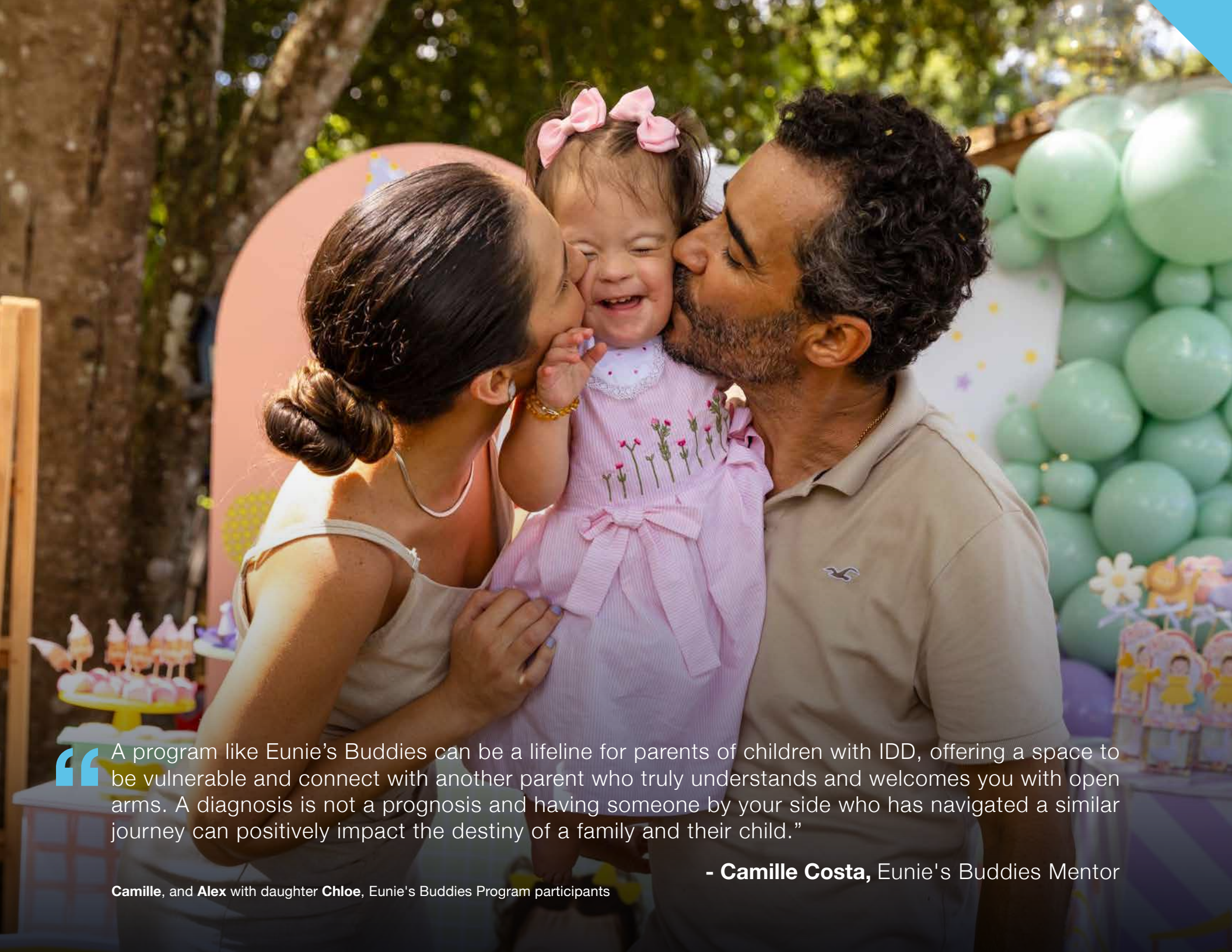
- In 1998, Best Buddies hosts the first *Best Buddies Miami Gala.*
- In 1999, Best Buddies launches e-**BUDDIES**®, a cutting-edge online friendship program.
- In 2000, Best Buddies holds the inaugural *Best Buddies Challenge: Hyannis Port*, a 100-mile bike ride from Boston to Hyannis Port.
- In 2003, Best Buddies has participants in all 50 states on the US.
- In 2004, Best Buddies launches the nationally televised inaugural *Volvo Best Buddies Challenge: Hearst Castle*, a 100-mile bike ride along the Pacific Coast Highway.
- In 2009, Best Buddies launches *Best Buddies Friendship Walk.*
- In 2010, Best Buddies has programs in 50 countries around the world.
- In 2011, Best Buddies launches BEST**BUDDIES**® Ambassadors to teach participants with IDD communication and self-advocacy skills.

2012 - 2019

- In 2012, Best Buddies launches BEST**BUDDIES**® Promoters, the first Best Buddies program open to elementary schools; the inaugural of the *Best Buddies Challenge: Miami* takes place and the first *Best Buddies Champion of The Year Gala* is hosted.
- In 2014, Best Buddies celebrates its 25th anniversary and also celebrates 25 years of the *Best Buddies Leadership Conference*.
- in 2017, Best Buddies holds the first *Best Buddies Breakaway Camp: Malibu* and hosts the inaugural *Best Buddies' Celebrating Mothers* in Malibu, CA, with Global Ambassador Cindy Crawford and her daughter, Kaia Gerber.
- In 2019, Best Buddies launches its fourth mission pillar, BEST**BUDDIES**® Inclusive Living, to provide individuals with and without IDD an opportunity to live independently in a dynamic environment where they can learn, grow and thrive.

2020 - Current

- In 2020, Best Buddies introduces BEST**BUDDIES**® Ventures, with the first launch being BEST**BUDDIES**® X Rosetta Bakery in Miami, FL, creates jobs for individuals with IDD and operates as a profit center via a bakery and coffee shop partnership.
- In 2020, Best Buddies launches BEST**BUDDIES**® Transitions to help prepare young adults with IDD for independence and inclusion in their communities as they move from school into adulthood.
- In 2022, Best Buddies launches BEST**BUDDIES**® Elementary Schools to teach inclusion to a younger age group to create a lasting effect on societal norms for the next generation.In 2023, as part of the organization's 2030 Initiative to impact 4 million people globally, Best Buddies continues to partner with Global Ambassadors such as Tom Brady and Cindy Crawford to further expand its mission of inclusion and the 5-star BEST**BUDDIES**® X Rosetta Bakery.
- In 2024, Best Buddies launches its fifth mission pillar BEST**BUDDIES**® Family Support, to offer families access to individual connections and community resources that assist them on their journey of raising a child with intellectual and developmental disabilities.



> A program like Eunie's Buddies can be a lifeline for parents of children with IDD, offering a space to be vulnerable and connect with another parent who truly understands and welcomes you with open arms. A diagnosis is not a prognosis and having someone by your side who has navigated a similar journey can positively impact the destiny of a family and their child."

- Camille Costa, Eunie's Buddies Mentor

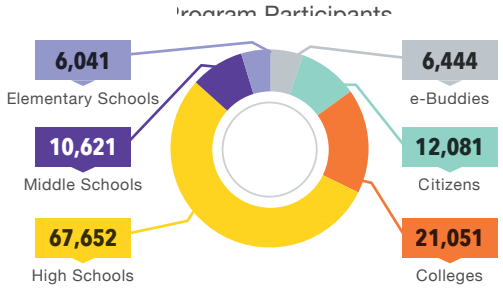
Camille, and **Alex** with daughter **Chloe**, Eunie's Buddies Program participants

Our Impact

3,738 Chapters | **147,663*** Participants | **1,476,630** Impacted | **50** States | **43** Countries

One-To-One Friendship

- **130** Elementary School Chapters
- **1,675** igh School
- **513** Middle School Chapters
- **483** College Chapters



Integrated Employment

- **2,279** Participants Employed

Average Total Participant Stats

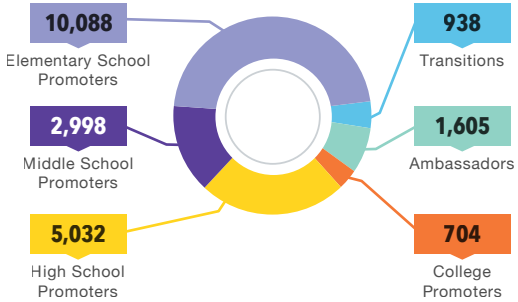
44,486	2,179,818	$6,875,146	$34,375,729
Weekly Hrs. Worked	Yearly Hrs. Worked	Yearly Taxes Paid	Yearly Wages Earned

Avg. hrs worked per week 19.52, Avg. hrly wage $15.77 (in the U.S.).

Leadership Development

- **455** Elementary Schools Promoters Chapters
- **172** Middle School Promoters Chapters
- **271** High School Promoters Chapters
- **39** College Promoters Chapters

Program Participants



Inclusive Living

- **10** Living Residences
- **71** Living Participants

Family Support

- **58** Eunie's Buddies Participants

*All program stats are as of 12/31/2024, and reflect the most recent Best Buddies program year (July 1, 2024 – June 30,2025).

Matilde and **Antonio**, Friendship program participants
Best Buddies Portugal

We are BEST**BUDDIES**®

Best Buddies is the largest organization dedicated to ending the social, physical, and economic isolation of the 200 million people worldwide with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Our programs empower people with IDD to form meaningful friendships with their peers, secure jobs, improve communication and advocacy skills, and live independently, while also offering support for their families.

Mission

Best Buddies International is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to establishing a global volunteer movement that creates opportunities for one-to-one friendships, integrated employment, leadership development, inclusive living, and family support for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

Who We Serve

Best Buddies serves individuals with IDD and their families. The IDD community includes, but is not limited to, people with Down syndrome, autism, Fragile X, Williams syndrome, and other undiagnosed disabilities.

Programs

Best Buddies programs sit on the five key mission pillars below:

- One-to-One Friendships
- Integrated Employment
- Leadership Development
- Inclusive Living
- Family Support

One-To-One Friendships

Builds friendships between people with and without IDD, offering social mentoring while improving the quality of life and level of inclusion for a population that is often isolated and excluded.

BEST**BUDDIES**® Elementary Schools, Middle Schools, High Schools, Colleges, & Citizens

Creates an inclusive community for students and adults with IDD, helping them become socially integrated with their peers at every age.

e-**BUDDIES**®

Provides opportunities for participants with and without IDD to form virtual one-to-one friendships, create connections in the e-Buddies social platform, and attend social events online.

Integrated Employment

Secures jobs for people with IDD, empowering them to earn an income, pay taxes, and independently support themselves through their professional accomplishments.

BEST**BUDDIES**® Jobs

Matches skilled, qualified individuals with IDD with businesses seeking enthusiastic and dedicated employees. Through the Jobs program, Best Buddies develops partnerships with employers, assists with the hiring process and provides ongoing support to the employee and employer.

Leadership Development

Educates and empowers people with and without IDD to become leaders, public speakers, and advocates.

BEST**BUDDIES**® Ambassadors

Offers people with and without IDD the opportunity to gain the public speaking skills, self-esteem, and confidence needed to successfully advocate for themselves, their peers, and Best Buddies in communities and workplaces.

BEST**BUDDIES**® Promoters

Empowers youth to become advocates for people with IDD and helps chapters organize special events that promote inclusion and bring awareness to the disability rights movement.

BEST**BUDDIES**® Transitions

Offers a combination of classroom-based training, experiential learning, and corporate mentorship to help students with IDD explore post-secondary options, prepare for independent living, and identify career ambitions.

Inclusive Living

Provides an integrated experience in which people with and without IDD are active, contributing citizens – living independently in a dynamic environment where they can learn, grow, and thrive.

BEST**BUDDIES**® Living

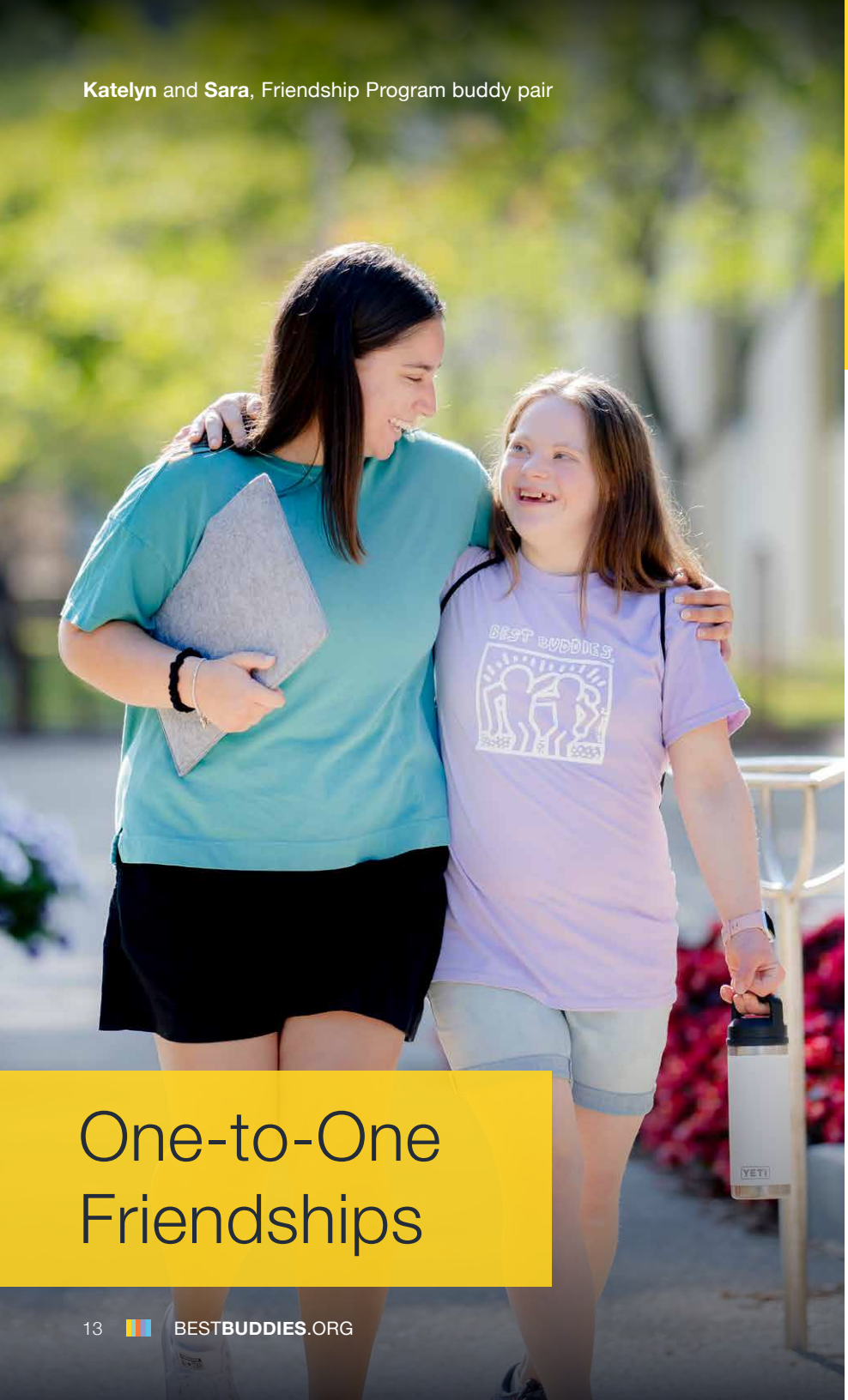
Offers individuals with and without IDD an opportunity to live together in a vibrant, educational community that supports all residents in advancing their employment, financial literacy, continued education, and life skills as they work to achieve their personal goals.

Family Support

Provides families access to individual connections and community resources that assist them on their journey of supporting a family member with IDD.

Eunie's **BUDDIES**®

Connects families who are expecting or have a young child with IDD to experienced parents of a child with IDD, encouraging a genuine relationship rooted in mentorship, resource-sharing, and guidance.



Katelyn and **Sara**, Friendship Program buddy pair

One-to-One Friendships

Without love, support, and friends, life may feel isolating – this is a reality people with IDD have faced throughout history. Best Buddies offers people with IDD the chance to have a friend, gain self-confidence and self-esteem and share interests, experiences, and activities that many other individuals enjoy.

BEST**BUDDIES**® Elementary Schools, Middle Schools, High Schools & Colleges

Best Buddies offers students with IDD the opportunity to have a friend and enjoy common interests, experiences, and social activities in the Middle School, High School, and College programs. Each friendship pair commits to speaking and spending time together every week throughout the year. These programs create lasting friendships and help facilitate an environment of inclusion throughout the school and in the community.

BEST**BUDDIES**® Citizens

For people with IDD, the absence of meaningful friendships extends into adulthood. Best Buddies Citizens pairs adults with IDD in one-to-one friendships with adults without IDD in corporate and civic communities. Citizen buddy pairs commit to a one-year friendship in which they will talk once a week and see each other twice a month. These relationships commonly grow into friendships that last a lifetime.

e-**BUDDIES**®

This program creates social inclusion and friendships for people with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in a virtual space. Technology is an integral part of society and by participating in e-Buddies, participants can develop the skills needed to communicate across a variety of platforms.

Emma and **Harrell**, Friendship Program buddy pair

Emma & Harrell

One-To-One Friendships

Souhegan High School, Amherst, NH

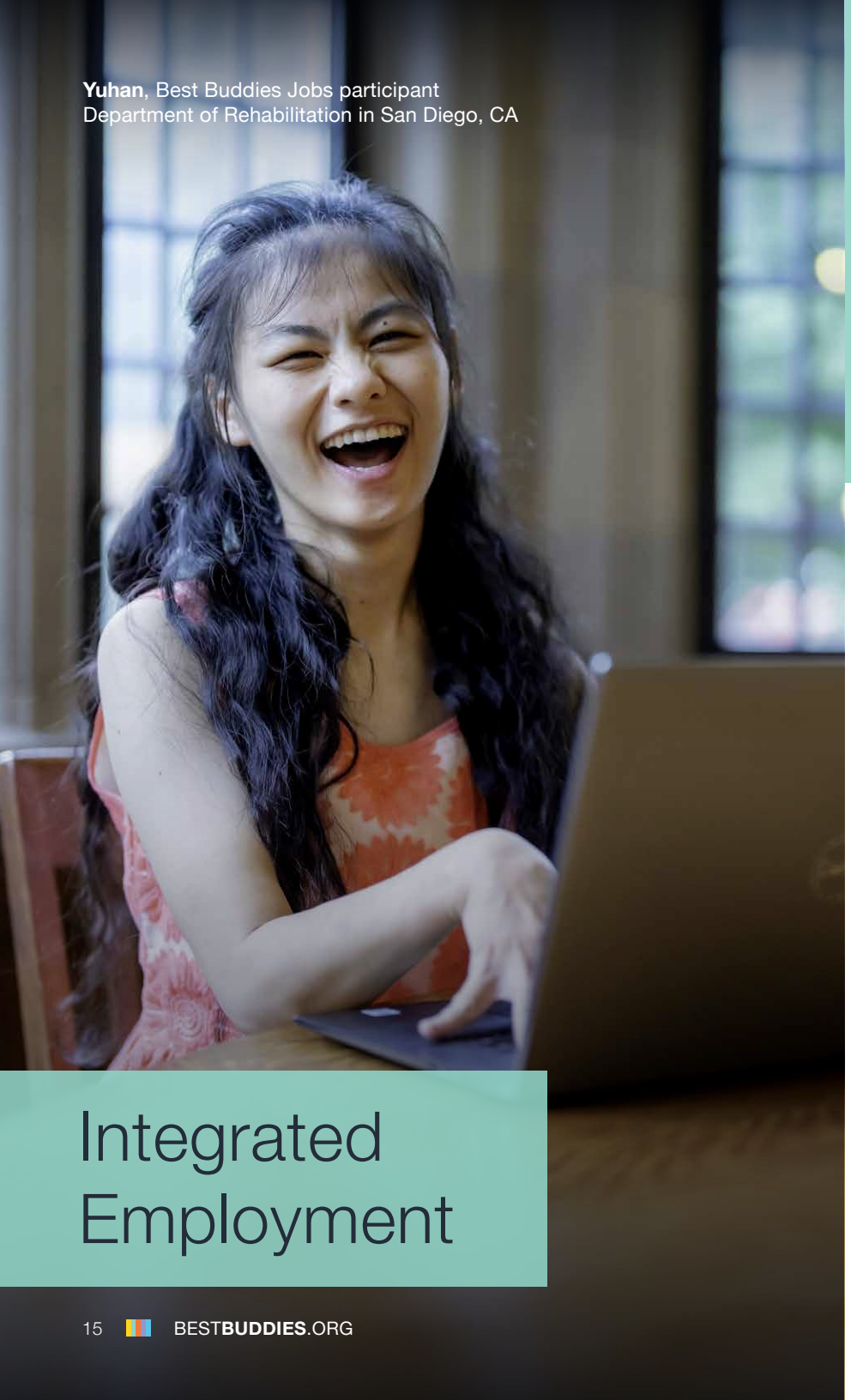
For the past three years, the halls of Souhegan High School have been brightened by the presence of one extraordinary friendship. Emma and Harrell, now seniors, met when they were first-year Sabres at the school in Amherst and were matched in the Best Buddies program. Being matched in a one-to-one friendship has enhanced the high school experience for both Emma and Harrell. Emma explains that while many high schoolers worry about the opinions of their peers and whether they are "popular," she feels that the bond she has with Harrell is more than enough to make her feel like she belongs.

Harrell lists off some fun things he and Emma have done together, including foosball, Candyland, popcorn with movies, petting horses, and bracelet making. His learning specialist, Katie, describes that Harrell's communication skills and confidence have both blossomed as a result of being part of Best Buddies and having a friend like Emma to bond with. He is more apt to seek out close friendships now that he has experienced such a meaningful one with Emma for the past three years.

Emma and Harrell have had a lasting impact on their school's chapter, constantly bringing their energy and positivity to meetings, from dance parties to unified basketball games. Emma tells Harrell, "You're the reason I'm sad to leave high school!" Harrell reinforces those feelings calling Emma his best friend and encouraging individuals in New Hampshire and beyond to "join Best Buddies!"

"I love our friendship because I know Harrell will always be there." - Emma

"I love our friendship because I know Harrell will always be there." **- Emma**



Yuhan, Best Buddies Jobs participant
Department of Rehabilitation in San Diego, CA

Integrated Employment

Best Buddies Jobs assists participants in finding meaningful employment, earning a competitive income, receiving benefits, and working alongside others in the community. The program offers people with IDD the opportunity to become financially independent, removing the need for government assistance or parental support. A focus on competitive, professional opportunities is what sets the Best Buddies Jobs program apart from other employment services.

BESTBUDDIES® Jobs

Best Buddies Jobs furthers the integration of people with IDD into the community through supported employment. The focus is on facilitating competitive, integrated job placements that allow participants to earn an income, pay taxes, and work in an environment alongside their peers in the community, leading to full inclusion and independence. Coaching is provided in essential job interviewing skills, and once employment is secured, there is assistance with on-the-job training.

The Jobs program prides itself on developing employment opportunities in professional environments and focuses on white-collar jobs such as receptionists, mail room assistants, file clerks, office assistants, front desk assistants, and retail associates. Employers range from some of the top law firms and talent agencies to well-known retail businesses and luxury hotels.

Jeet, Best Buddies Jobs participant
Ally Financial

Jeet

Integrated Employment

Ally Financial

Chicago, IL

Jeet Dave was diagnosed with Autism during his school years and was placed under a partial IEP program. Before becoming involved with Best Buddies, he began pursuing an associate degree in Accounting at Oakton Community College with support from the IEP program. During this time, he experienced feelings of insecurity and concern about securing a job in accounting. It was around this period that he was introduced to Best Buddies through Ms. Eileen Morrison.

In his final year of college, Jeet started working with Best Buddies to find a job in accounting. Initially, Best Buddies connected him with a position as a merchandise associate at a large retailer. He continued working with the organization to achieve his long-term goal of securing an accounting role. Simultaneously, he found an office assistant job at the office of a family friend. Recognizing the importance of stability, he decided to pursue a full-time office position that could support his disabilities and offer future career growth.

"Best Buddies worked hard to find me a job and provided accommodations throughout the hiring process in support of my disabilities," said Jeet. "My life improved, not only economically but mentally and socially."

Ultimately, Jeet was hired at Ally Financial with the assistance of Best Buddies and over two years of office work experience.

"The part I love most about my job is that my colleagues are very nice, friendly, and cooperative," said Jeet. "I feel secure and safe in my work environment and, my job gives me opportunities to be social and continue advancing my professional skills."

With a stable job and a steady income, Jeet has taken on personal financial responsibilities, including credit card payments and other necessary expenses. Looking ahead, he envisions getting married and starting a family.

> "I feel secure and safe in my work environment and, my job gives me opportunities to be social and continue advancing my professional skills." **- Jeet**

Key Jobs Program Stats

2,878
Total Participants

1,285
Employed

1,185
International Participants

1,693
U.S Participants

20
States with active Jobs Programs

88.05%
12 Month Retention Rate

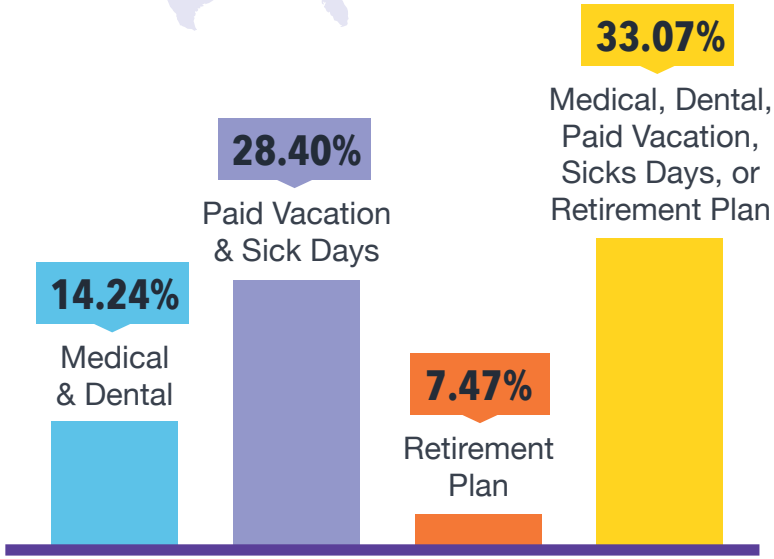
94.81%
90 Day Retention Rate

19.59
Average Hours Worked Weekly

1,018.47
Average Hours Worked Yearly

$17,100.56
Average Total Yearly Wages Earned

$3,420.11
Average Total Yearly Taxes Paid



Receiving Benefits**

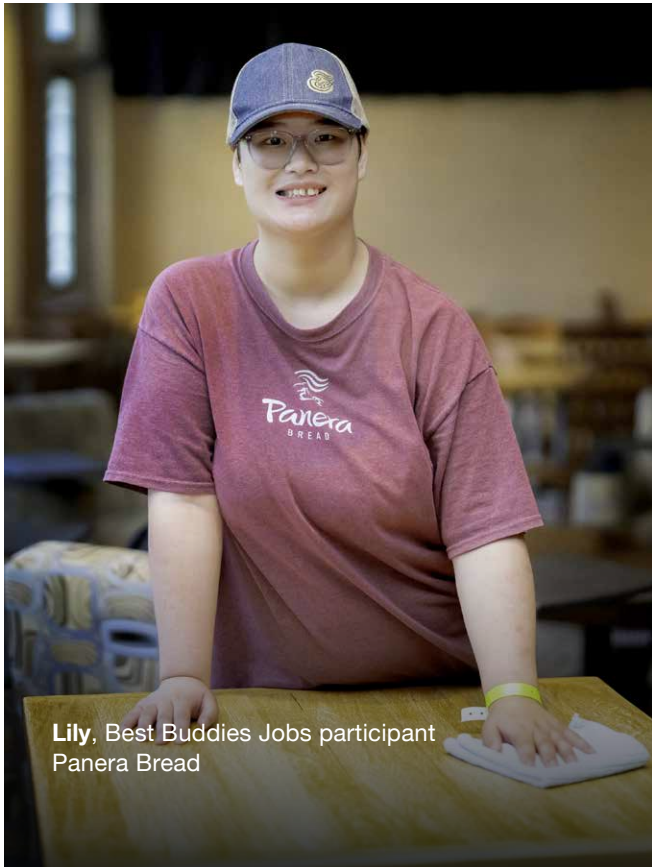
Top 4 Jobs Participants Highest Salaries With Benefits

Salary	$71,780.80	$71,011.20	$69,992	$68,432
Name/ State	Andrew K. Los Angeles, CA	Nicole K. Los Angeles, CA	Nathaniel M. San Francisco, CA	Miguel H. Miami, FL
Benefits	Holiday Pay, Medical Care	Vacation Pay, Medical Care, Sick Leave, Sick Pay	Vacation Pay, Holiday Pay, Medical Care, Dental Care, Vision Care, Sick Pay	Vacation Pay, Holiday Pay, Medical Care, Retirement Plans, Dental Care, Vision Care, Sick Pay

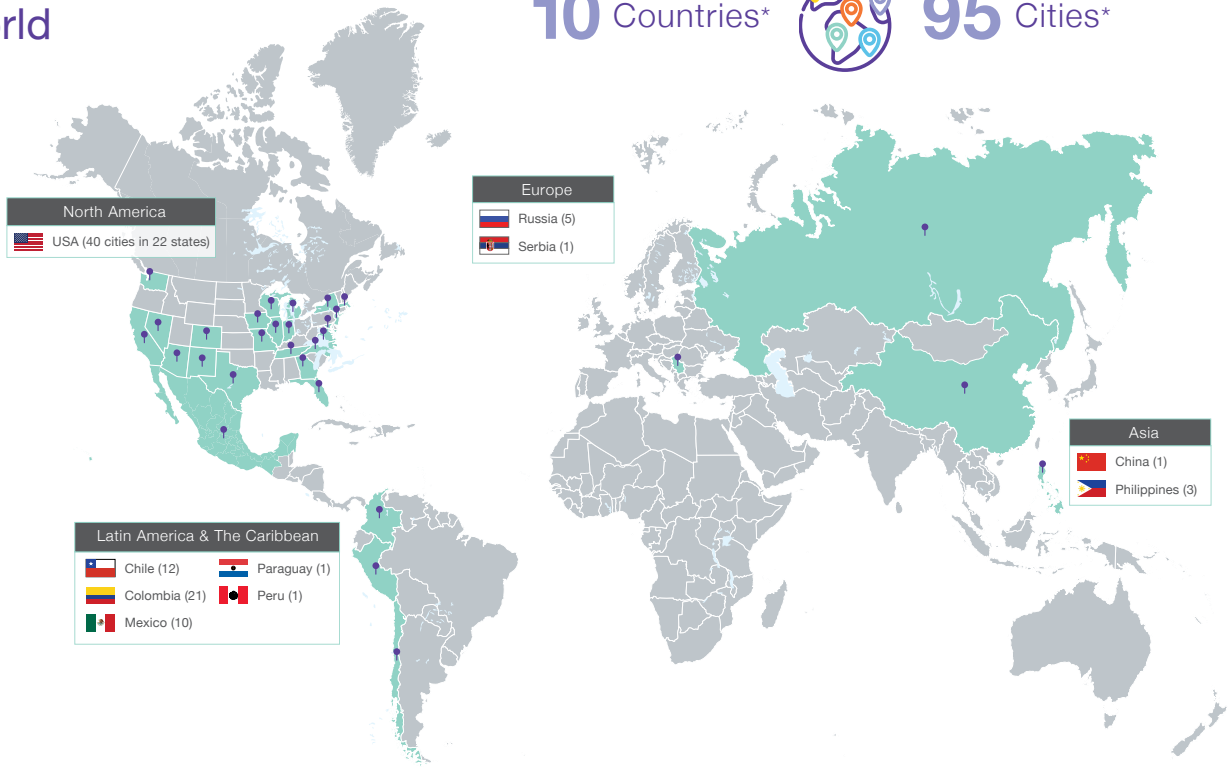
Top 4 Jobs Participants Highest Hourly Rates

Best Buddies Jobs Around The World

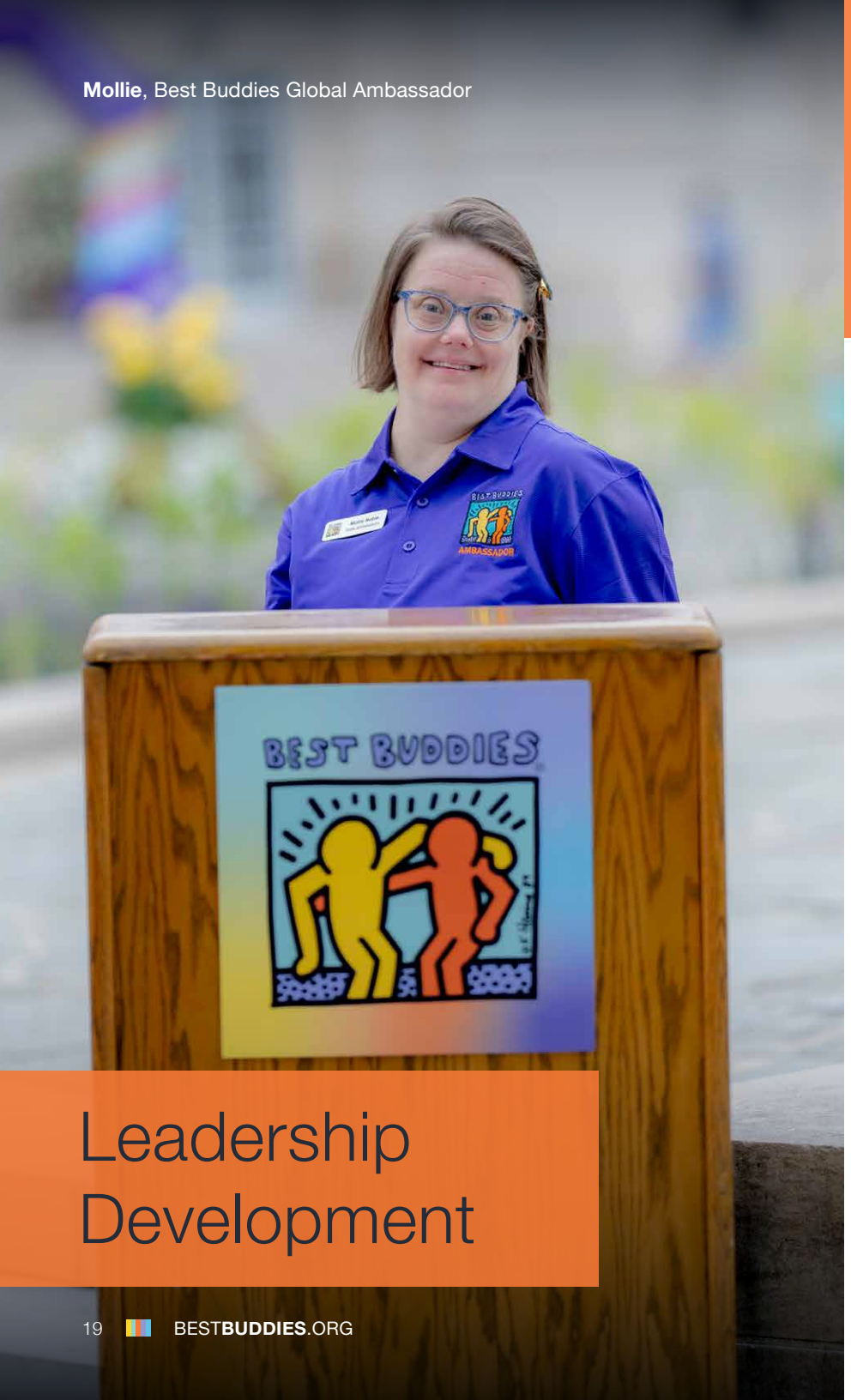
10 Countries* **95** Cities*



Lily, Best Buddies Jobs participant
Panera Bread



** Global jobs stats are calculated based on total jobs participants and U.S. Average hours and wages.*
*** Represents benefits received by US BB Job participants.*
**** All Jobs Program stats are as of 12/31/2024*



Mollie, Best Buddies Global Ambassador

Leadership Development

Best Buddies educates and empowers people with and without IDD to become leaders, public speakers and change agents. Through the Ambassadors and Promoters programs, participants inspire their communities to build a more inclusive world for people with IDD.

BEST**BUDDIES**® Ambassadors

Best Buddies Ambassadors is a program that provides training for participants with and without IDD in speech writing, public speaking, and self-advocacy. Ambassadors develop the skills to share their life stories, promote Best Buddies programs, network, and, most importantly, advocate.

Ambassadors participate in trainings focused on the art of public speaking and advocacy. Once trained, they share their stories and become more involved and empowered as citizens. Ambassadors are encouraged to speak about opportunities for people with IDD, present at recruitment fairs and Best Buddies events, and develop partnerships in the community.

BEST**BUDDIES**® Promoters

Best Buddies Promoters empowers youth to become advocates for people with IDD by organizing and attending special events that promote inclusion. Students attending a school without a special education program can join a Promoters chapter to develop connections with people with IDD or can start one by contacting their local Best Buddies state office.

Each Promoters chapter is led by a chapter president from the student body and a faculty advisor and is assigned a Best Buddies staff person who offers regular support and guidance. Once formed, Promoters chapters host events, activities, and fundraisers where they advocate for people with IDD, and promote the Best Buddies mission.

Kiontis, Best Buddies Global Ambassador

Kiontis

Leadership Development

Global Ambassador

My name is Kiontis Gallion, also known as Kid Autistic, and I am proud to call the great state of Wisconsin my home. My journey began at West Allis Central High School, where I faced many challenges—loneliness, bullying, and a search for belonging. For a long time, I struggled to see my own worth.

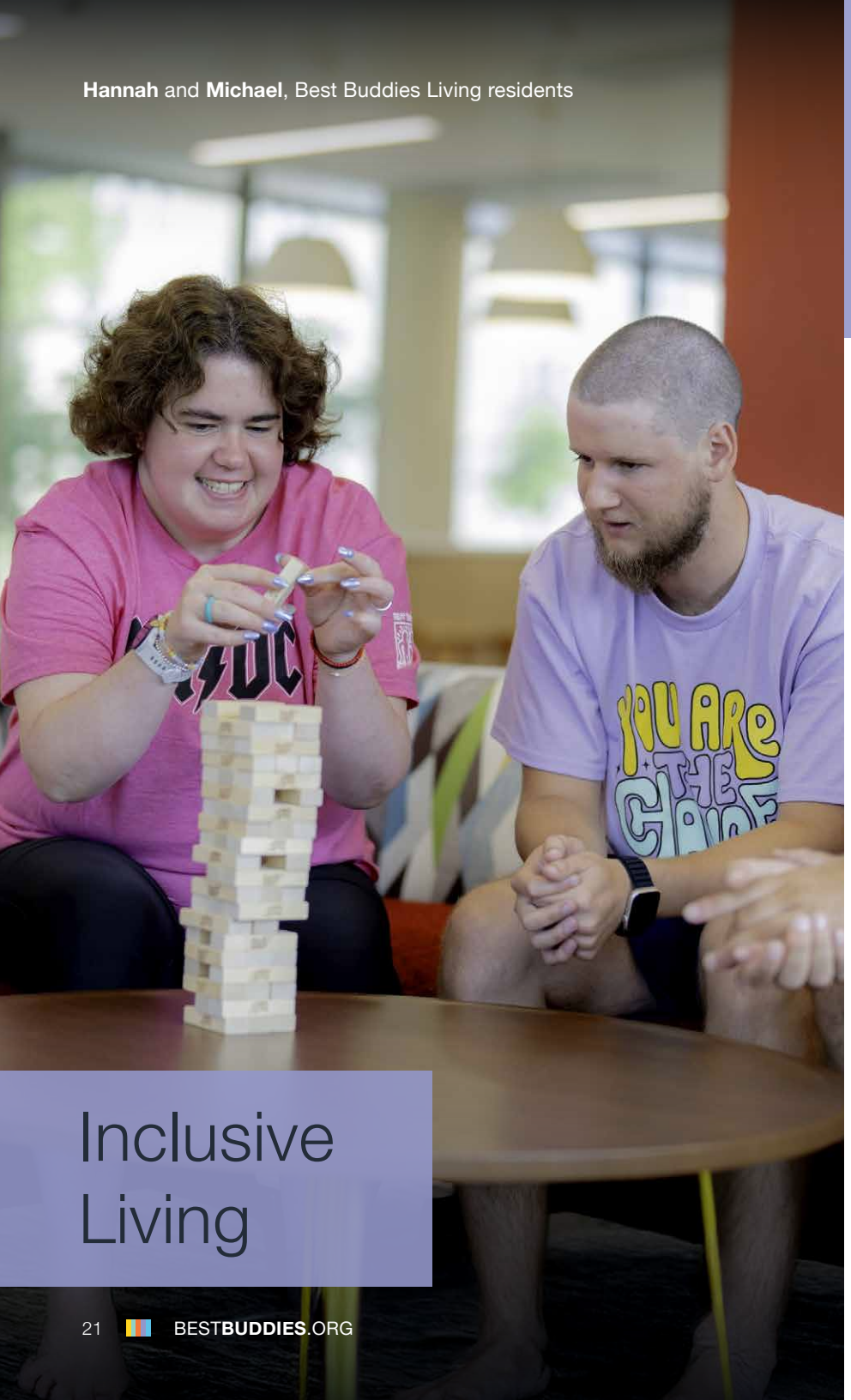
But then, something remarkable happened. A teacher saw in me what I couldn't yet see in myself—my potential to help others. She encouraged me to step outside my comfort zone and join Best Buddies, an organization dedicated to fostering inclusion and friendship. That decision changed everything. The unexpected happened: I became the chapter president. This role gave me a sense of purpose, expanded my circle of friends, and helped me realize something profound—my autism is not a disability but a special ability.

At the end of the day, real change begins with our mindset. As Michael Jackson once said, "If you want to make the world a better place, take a look at yourself and make that change." Change is not about waiting for the perfect moment—it's about taking action now.

Anthony Shiver reminds us that we are not defined by limitations but by our strengths. Every person in this world has a unique gift, a talent meant to be shared. We don't need magic to make a difference; we only need the courage to be ourselves. So why wait to be a leader? Why wait to step into your greatness? No matter how many obstacles stand in your way, know what you want and go after it. We are the world. We are the children. We are the ones who can make a brighter day, so let's start giving.

Never give up on your dreams just because someone says you can't achieve them. You have an incredible gift—let it shine. Stars don't shine because they seek attention; they shine because that's simply what they are meant to do. The same is true for you. You have the power to use your voice, to inspire, to motivate, and to create change. The more you believe in your dreams, the more they will become reality. Because bold is beautiful—and bold is you. You are a champion in your own domain, capable of making a lasting impact in this world.

> "We don't need magic to change the world, just us. Why wait to change? Why wait to be a leader? I don't care if the whole world is against or teasing you; know what you want and go get it." **- Kiontis**



Hannah and **Michael**, Best Buddies Living residents

Inclusive Living

Supporting and empowering individuals with IDD to live as integrated, contributing members in the larger community is the next frontier in the movement to create a more inclusive society. Best Buddies Living fosters a dynamic environment where people with IDD can learn, grow and thrive.

BEST**BUDDIES**® Living

The Best Buddies Living program encourages people with and without IDD to live together in a vibrant community that focuses on supporting residents in accomplishing their life goals and dreams.

The Best Buddies Living program supports inclusion by:

• Developing programs that foster an opportunity for residents to experience living with friends and colleagues. Programs include weekly shared meals, fitness classes, cultural events, holiday parties, social activities, and sports.

• Offering an environment that encourages the development of independent living skills, life-changing relationships, and educational pursuits in connection with a college or university. Through an affiliation with a nearby school, all residents can immerse themselves in campus life, attending sporting events and enjoying fitness and dining facilities alongside their student peers.

• Matching people with and without IDD in a residential experience, and providing a supportive environment that encourages full-time or part-time employment.

Yvenie, Best Buddies Living resident

> “Best Buddies gave me a stable place to live and helped me get back on my feet. This is the first time I’ve ever had my own room.” **- Yvenie**

Yvenie

Inclusive Living

Best Buddies Living Resident

Los Angeles, CA

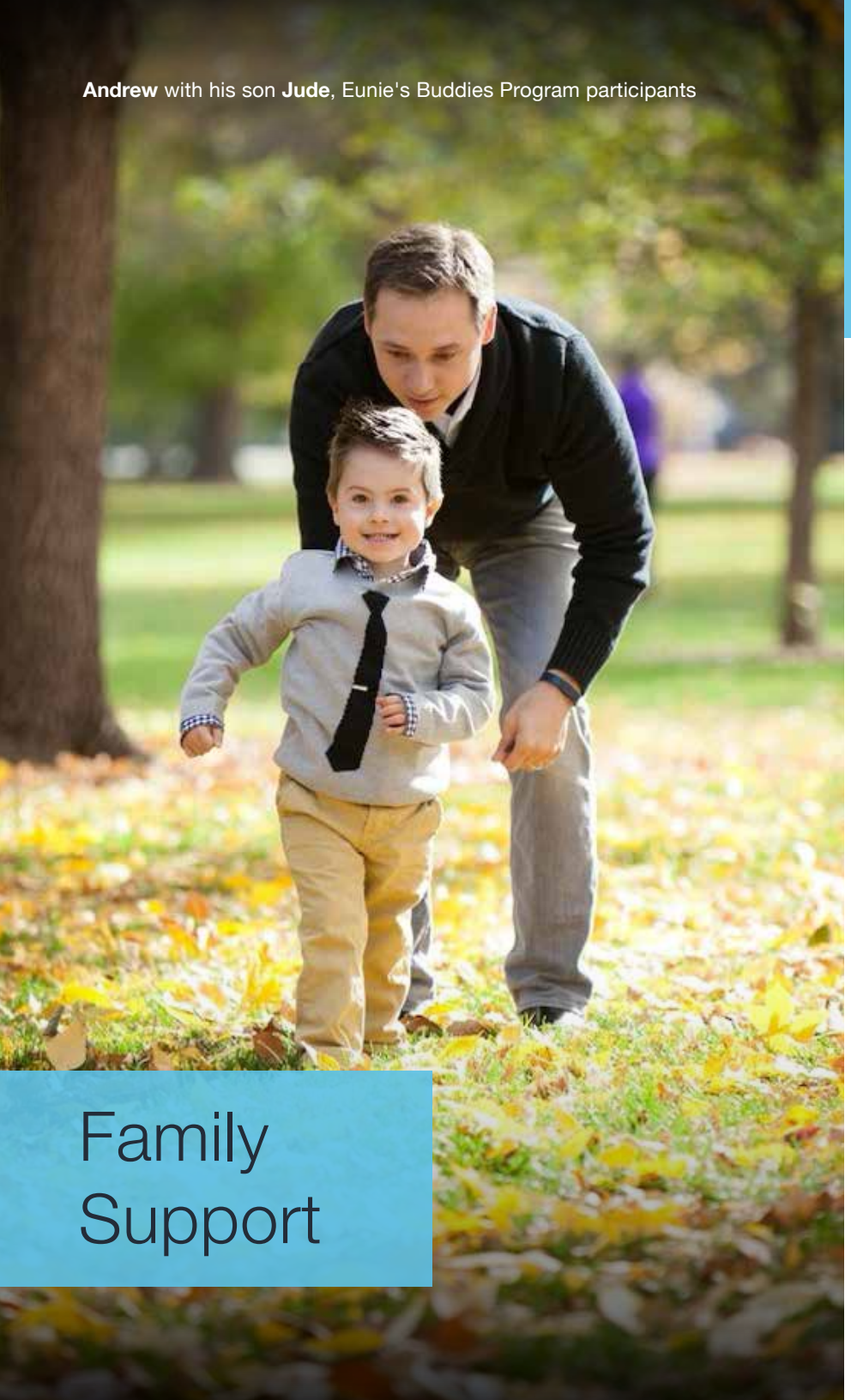
For Yvenie Joseph, becoming a resident of Best Buddies Living in Los Angeles has been truly life-changing. Before joining the program in January 2024, she faced immense challenges—moving from place to place without family support, struggling with her mental health, and ultimately living in a homeless shelter. She longed for stability, independence, and a place to call home. Best Buddies Living provided her with exactly that and more. Now, for the first time in her life, she has her own room, a steady job, and a supportive community that empowers her to thrive.

“I joined the program in January, and before Best Buddies, my life was a rollercoaster,” Yvenie shares. “I was living in a homeless shelter, struggling with my mental health, and constantly moving with no family support.”

“Best Buddies gave me a stable place to live and helped me get back on my feet. This is the first time I’ve ever had my own room. Now, I have a stable job and understand the responsibilities of being an adult. I’ve learned how to be responsible and make sure my bills are paid. I’ve learned how to budget and save money.”

One of Yvenie’s favorite aspects of Best Buddies Living is the weekly group dinners, where residents come together to share meals and connect. “There are so many different personalities, and at first, I was nervous to talk. But over time, I’ve learned to embrace everyone,” she says. “I also feel a sense of peace at home with my roommates. The weekly meetings and group dinners encourage personal growth and provide a strong support system.”

For others with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), Yvenie hopes to inspire confidence and self-acceptance. “I want people with IDD to surround themselves with those who understand their disabilities. You shouldn’t feel bad because of your disability—you can still achieve all your goals and dreams.”



Andrew with his son **Jude**, Eunie's Buddies Program participants

Family Support

Best Buddies Family Support offers families the support and resources needed to navigate the journey of raising a child with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

Eunie's **BUDDIES**®

Eunie's Buddies serves as the pioneering program within the Family Support initiative. It is named affectionately in honor of Eunice Kennedy Shriver, founder of Special Olympics and a true hero who advocated tirelessly for positive change in the lives of individuals with IDD.

Eunie's Buddies pairs experienced parents of a child with an IDD with new parents who are expecting, have just welcomed a baby, or are raising a child up to the age of eight years old who has been recently diagnosed with an IDD. This pairing creates a mentor–mentee connection and friendship. Eunie's Buddies provides a framework offering parents and caregivers encouragement, emotional support, and valuable resources. Participation in Eunie's Buddies helps families pave the way for a child with IDD to have an education, gainful employment, and a fulfilled life.

Mentee **Tata** with Mentor **Nikki**,
Eunie's Buddies Program participants

Tata & Nikki

Family Support

Eunie's Buddies Mentee and Mentor

Miami, FL

"I joined the Eunie's Buddies program while searching for more support, especially from people who just get it. My mentor Tata and I were matched almost immediately, and I still remember our first phone call —it lasted almost two hours! Although she's in Florida and I'm in Washington State, with a three-hour time difference, we hit it off right away.

Since joining Eunie's Buddies, life has felt less lonely. It has been more supportive, more loving, and more positive. Even my perspective has started to shift, and honestly, it's all because of this incredible woman who is so uplifting and full of positivity!

Taking the first step is always the scariest, but Eunie's Buddies has got you. You can feel confident knowing they will match you with someone who truly has your best interests at heart without you having to over-explain why your journey is more challenging. You can do this." – **Nikki Rhoades**, Mentee, Eunie's Buddies

"Eunie's Buddies has had a profoundly positive impact on me, allowing me to share, relate, and connect with another mother going through the same experience. It provides a sense of companionship and reinforces the idea that it truly takes a village to raise a child.

My first connection with Nikki was an instant connection and it felt as if we were speaking the same language, understanding each other's emotions without explanation. In many ways, our children are the true mentors, and we, as parents, are the mentees, learning and supporting each other along the way.

Eunie's Buddies has created a space where families of children with different abilities can come together to form the village we all need. A village of connection, support, understanding, and shared experiences. It's a learning journey, and the best part is, we don't have to do it alone." **- Tata Yanguas**, Mentor, Eunie's Buddies

> "Eunie's Buddies has had a profoundly positive impact on me, allowing me to share, relate, and connect with another mother going through the same experience." **- Tata**

International Programs

In 2024, the newly formed International Programs and Incubator Teams set out to strengthen global Best Buddies operations through expanded funding opportunities, strategic guidance, social media support, and training. Their primary goal was to deepen the impact of country programs by aligning efforts and resources, especially in areas of employment programming, operational development, and donor engagement.

Over the year, the team made significant strides. On the funding front, they secured major U.S. State Department grants—$100,000 for Korea and $250,000 for Russia—and began cultivating direct relationships with the State Department beyond the formal application process. Corporate partnerships with JLL and Colgate-Palmolive remained strong, while new global funding conversations were initiated with the MAPFRE Foundation. Expansion plans for the Middle East were solidified with new funding secured to launch Best Buddies UAE in 2025.

Strategically, the team developed a revised Intellectual Property (IP) Strategic Plan to guide countries by development stage, and created a business plan template to help countries explore launching Best Buddies Jobs. Operationally, they introduced new IP systems, enhanced alignment through quarterly team meetings, and worked closely with the Incubator Team to support growing programs. They also contributed to key events, including the Best Buddies Board of Directors meeting in Madrid and thought leadership engagements with IAAPA and Colgate.

In 2024, the Jobs program continued to operate actively in Brazil, Chile, and Colombia.

Looking ahead, 2025 will mark a new chapter as the International Programs and Incubator Teams merge to form the International Programs and Development (IPD) Department. This unified team of seven will begin the year by auditing all 45 country programs to assess needs and priorities. They will also conduct a benchmarking study with peer nonprofits to shape strategy and best practices. Key goals for 2025 include improving data systems, launching an online training platform (BUDs), expanding funding streams, enhancing compliance and reporting, and increasing international representation at the annual Best Buddies Leadership Conference.

Best Buddies International program participants with **Anthony K. Shriver** at the *2024 Best Buddies Leadership Conference*

Best Buddies Jobs participant from Best Buddies Colombia

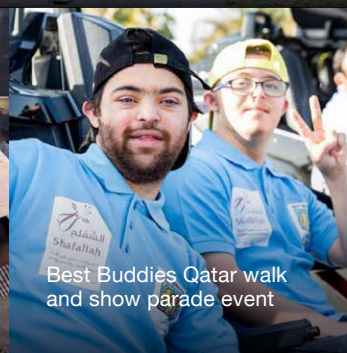
Best Buddies Dominican Republic match up party

Best Buddies Servia country director and Best Buddies Jobs participant

2024 BBFW: Canada

Best Buddies Philippines PEP Session on Tech/AI

Best Buddies Panama cooking class



Best Buddies Qatar walk and show parade event

Best Buddies Around The World

43 Countries & Territories

5 Continents

Revised 1.30.25

Signature Events

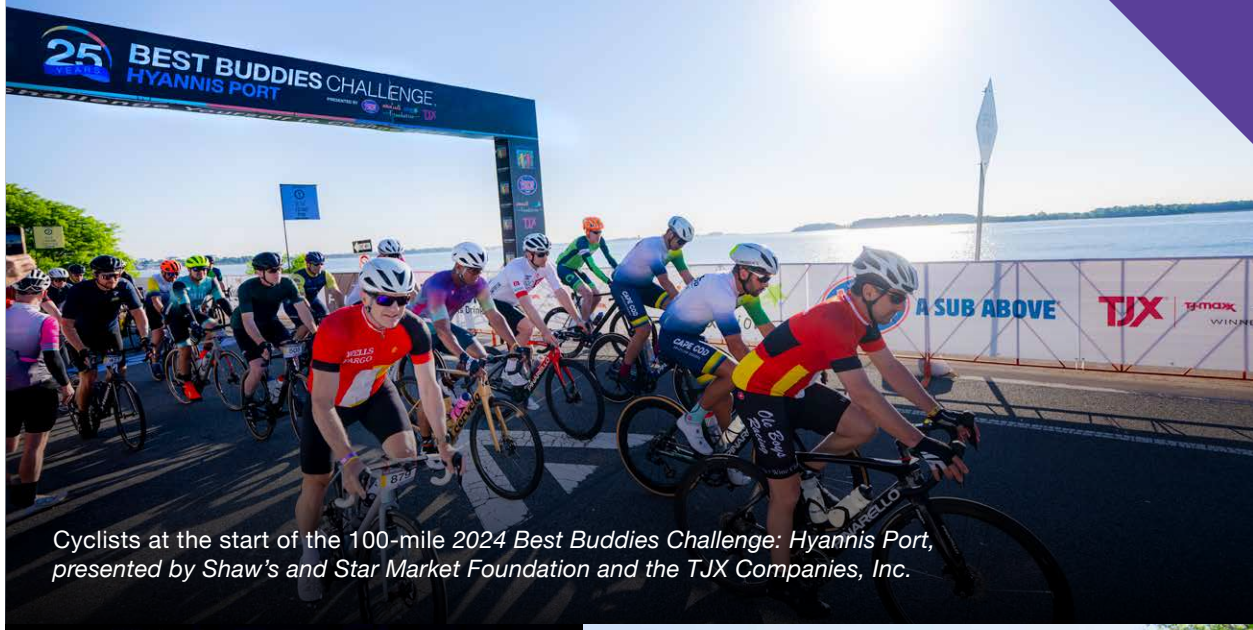
Best Buddies Global Ambassador **Caley Versfelt** with, from left, former World Tour Pro Andrew Talansky, Argentine Olympian and mountain bike legend Jimena Florit-Dolzadelli, and professional cyclists Alberto Contador and Cam Wurf at the 100-mile start line of thee *2024 Best Buddies Challenge: Hyannis Port, presented by Shaw's and Star Market Foundation and the TJX Companies, Inc.*

The purpose of special events is to garner support, funds, and awareness for the Best Buddies mission. There are numerous ways to get involved with Best Buddies events including attending events, volunteering, and pursuing sponsorship opportunities.

Best Buddies Challenge: Hyannis Port

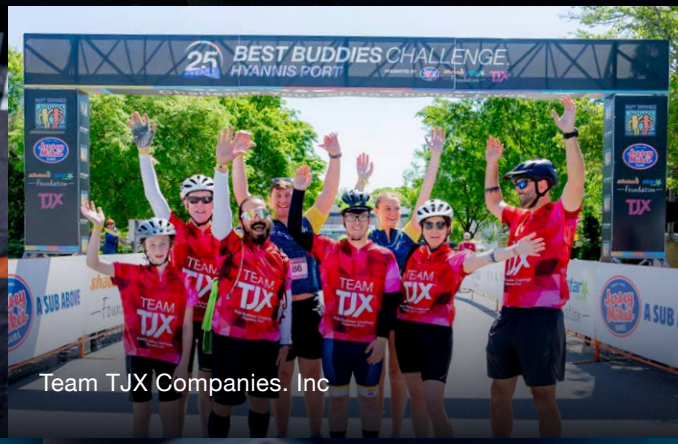
May 31 - June 1, 2024 | Boston to Hyannis Port

The *Best Buddies Challenge: Hyannis Port, presented by Shaw's and Star Market Foundation and the TJX Companies, Inc.* returned to Massachusetts for its 25th Anniversary. The Challenge weekend kicked off Friday, May 31 with a dinner reception at John F. Kennedy Presidential Museum & Library. On Saturday, June 1, hundreds of riders took to the start line at the JFK Library for the picturesque 100-mile ride portion of the event, from Boston to Hyannis Port. The Challenge was capped off by a celebratory clambake and included a special musical performance by guitar legend Don Felder, formerly of the Eagles, at Craigville Beach. In total, the event raised $4 million for Best Buddies programs.



Cyclists at the start of the 100-mile *2024 Best Buddies Challenge: Hyannis Port, presented by Shaw's and Star Market Foundation and the TJX Companies, Inc.*

Best Buddies Founder, Chairman & CEO **Anthony K. Shriver** and Best Buddies Global Ambassador **Caley**



Team TJX Companies. Inc

Best Buddies Founder **Anthony K. Shriver** accepting a $435,000 donation check from Shaw's and Star Market Foundation on stage at the 25th Anniversary *Best Buddies Challenge: Hyannis Port*

New England Patriots Quarterback **Drake Maye** during the legendary football toss inside the Clambake

Cyclists at the *2024 Best Buddies Challenge: California, presented by the Safeway Foundation*

Best Buddies Challenge: California

October 18-19, 2024 | Marin, CA

The *Best Buddies Challenge: California, presented by the Safeway Foundation* returned to California for its 20th year. The event kicked off with the welcome reception at the iconic Summit Skywalker Ranch on Friday, October 18, where guests enjoyed cocktails, dinner and a program hosted by Best Buddies International Founder, Chairman & CEO Anthony K. Shriver that highlighted the achievements of the Best Buddies Global Ambassadors and key supporters. On Saturday, October 19, hundreds of cyclists took to the starting line at the Summit Skywalker Ranch for an 80 or 38-mile ride through Tomales Bay, Point Reyes, and the Marin countryside led by pro-cyclists Geraint Thomas and Alberto Contador. The event was capped off with a gourmet lunch, wine tasting and live entertainment and raised $2.5 million for Best Buddies programs.

Best Buddies Challenge: Miami

November 16, 2024 | Miami, FL

The *Best Buddies Challenge: Miami, chaired by Kenneth C. Griffin Charitable Fund and presented by Andrew P. Barowsky Foundation and Mack Cycle & Fitness*, brought together cycling legends for an unforgettable ride through the Magic City. Led by four-time Tour de France winner Chris Froome, alongside professional cyclists Mark Cavendish, Alberto Contador, Geraint Thomas, and Cam Wurf, participants journeyed through some of Miami's most iconic and scenic areas, including South Beach and Key Biscayne. Riders experienced a Tour de France-style, police-escorted peloton, with 100- and 75-mile route options, both starting and finishing at the Four Seasons Hotel Miami. The day culminated with the Jersey Mike's Subs Best Buddies Miami Gala, an evening of celebration in support of inclusion for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Cyclists at the *2024 Best Buddies Challenge: Miami, chaired by Kenneth C. Griffin Charitable Fund and presented by Andrew P. Barowsky Foundation and Mack Cycle & Fitness*

2024 Spirit of Leadership Award recipient **Guy Fieri** with Best Buddies Ambassadors **Chris Harrington**, **Michael Jaxtimer-Barry** and **Cassidy Bauer**

Jersey Mike's Subs Founder and CEO **Peter Cancro** and Best Buddies Global Ambassador **Fran Sheinberg**

Olympic Legend **Carl Lewis**, Latin artist **ADSO** and Best Buddies Founder **Anthony K. Shriver**

Emmy and Grammy Award-winning artist Curtis "50 Cent" Jackson

2024 Miss America Teen **Hanley House,** Pop Artist **Romero Britto**, Best Buddies Founder **Anthony K. Shriver**, and 2024 Miss America **Madison Marsh**

Jersey Mike's Subs Best Buddies Miami Gala

November 16, 2024 | Miami, FL

The Jersey Mike's Subs Best Buddies Miami Gala was a vibrant celebration of the Best Buddies mission, honoring the incredible dedication of Best Buddies supporters, participants, and volunteers.

The 2024 Miami Gala honored celebrity chef and Best Buddies Global Ambassador Guy Fieri with the Spirit of Leadership Award in recognition of his leadership, generosity, and support of Best Buddies since 2010.

Guests enjoyed an unforgettable evening featuring a cocktail hour, gourmet dinner, live and silent auctions, and a high-energy performance by Emmy and Grammy Award-winning artist Curtis "50 Cent" Jackson.

Thanks to the generosity of our community, this year's Gala raised a record-breaking $7.2 million in support of Best Buddies programs!

Best Buddies Breakaway Camps

Malibu, CA *Spring* April 24-28, 2024

Aspen, CO *Fall* September 4-8, 2024

Malibu, CA *Winter* December 4-8, 2024

In 2024, Best Buddies hosted two *Best Buddies Breakaway Camp: Malibu* events —one in April and another in December—offering 20 cyclists a pro-level training experience in the scenic Santa Monica Mountains. Based at the Four Seasons Westlake Village and supported by Pinarello, the camps featured expert coaching, Tour de France mechanics, and a focus on nutrition, recovery, and sustainable wellness.

The inaugural *Best Buddies Breakaway Camp: Aspen* brought riders to the stunning Rocky Mountains for a week of world-class cycling, Olympic-level recovery, and chef-prepared meals, led by pro cyclists Cam Wurf and Andrew Talansky. Guests experienced a five-star blend of fitness, adventure, and philanthropy. Each camp helped raise funds and awareness for Best Buddies' global mission to support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Best Buddies' 2024 Mother of the Year, **Ellen Boyer**, with **David Quilleon**, Grammy-winning and Emmy-nominated songwriter **Desmond Child**, **Catherine Anne Hennessy**, Best Buddies Founder **Anthony K. Shriver**, and Best Buddies Global Ambassadors **Marlana VanHoose** and **Fran Sheinberg** at the 7th Annual *Best Buddies Celebrating Mothers* event in Nashville, TN

Best Buddies' Celebrating Mothers

May 4, 2024 | Nashville, TN

The 6th Annual *Best Buddies' Celebrating Mothers,* honored advocate Ellen Boyer, founder and president of the Nashville-based Brett Boyer Foundation, that focuses on funding congenital heart disease research, supporting affected families, and promoting inclusion within the Down syndrome community.

During the event, Best Buddies officially launched its newest mission pillar, Family Support. This initiative offers families the support and resources needed to navigate the journey of raising a child with IDD through the Eunie's Buddies program. Guests enjoyed an afternoon filled with delicious cocktails, a gourmet lunch, and unforgettable live performances by Grammy-winning and Emmy-nominated songwriter Desmond Child and Best Buddies Ambassador Marlana VanHoose.

Best Buddies Friendship Balls & Proms

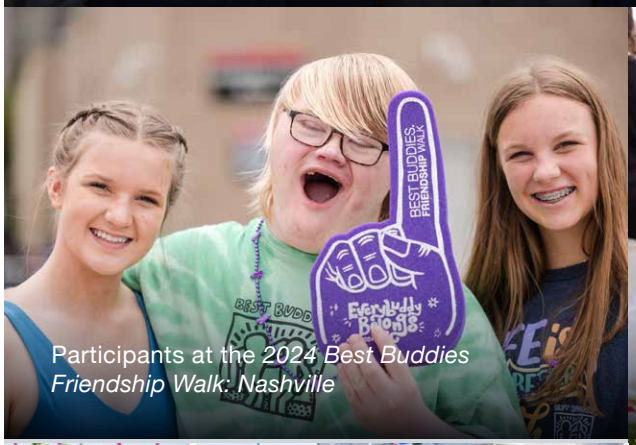
Best Buddies Friendship Balls and Proms are annual events for program members with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities to celebrate inclusion, joy, and friendship. Held at more than 50 venues across the country with thousands of attendees, these events bring together people of all abilities to share an evening of fun, laughter, dancing, and memorable experiences. The events feature a variety of lively and creative themes, including an 80s Night, Under the Sea, Western, and Red Carpet/Hollywood. Attendees form meaningful connections on the dance floor with old friends and new, while also enjoying a variety of activities like carnival games with prizes, arts & crafts, food & drinks, sensory spaces, and photo booths. The events are a wonderful display of the Best Buddies mission in action and highlight the impact of meaningful friendships between people with and without disabilities. We look forward to these events continuing again in 2025, as well as the addition of new events.

Guests at the *2024 Best Buddies Prom in Eastern Pennsylvania*

Best Buddies Friendship Walk

The *Best Buddies Friendship Walks* continued to grow and expand, serving as a significant platform for raising awareness and funds in support of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). In 2024, more than 48,000 participants across 76 cities joined the cause, collectively raising over $5.8 million. These walks have positively impacted communities nationwide, creating spaces for new friendships, unlocking promising opportunities, and, above all, promoting inclusion for all.

Participants at the *2024 Best Buddies Friendship Walk: VA & DC*



Participants at the *2024 Best Buddies Friendship Walk: Nashville*

Participants at the *2024 Best Buddies Friendship Walk: Portland*

Participants at the *2024 Best Buddies Friendship Walk: Tampa Bay*

Participants at the *2024 Best Buddies Friendship Walk: Alabama*

Best Buddies Champion of the Year Gala

Best Buddies Champion of the Year Gala is a competitive fundraising campaign that brings together and celebrates leaders of inclusion in local communities across the nation. Champion Candidates dedicate themselves to raising funds and awareness for Best Buddies during their campaigns. The culmination of these efforts is the Champion of the Year celebration, where the Champions are honored, and the individual who raises the most funds is named the *Champion of the Year*.

In 2024, *Champion of the Year* achieved a record-breaking milestone, hosting 52 events nationwide, with over 405 Champion Candidates, exceeding the fundraising goal by raising over $10.3 million for Best Buddies. This year the Top 10 Champion Candidates raised a collective $1.4 million. Nathan Dean, in Tennessee, emerged as the National Grand Champion by raising $369,216 setting a record for the most raised ever by a Champion Candidate. Looking ahead to 2025, the goal is to recruit 450 Champions and raise $11 million through 54 events, which will continue to raise critical funds for Best Buddies and empower community leaders to advocate for inclusion.

Champions and mission partners at the *2024 Best Buddies Champion of the Year Gala: Bay Area, CA*

2024 Best Buddies Champion of the Year Gala: North Texas

Best Buddies Global Ambassador **Mollie Noble**

2024 Best Buddies Champion of the Year Gala: Minnesota

2024 Best Buddies Champion of the Year Candidates for Best Buddies in Tampa, FL

Best Buddies Leadership Conference

July 19-21, 2024 | Bloomington, IN

The *2024 Best Buddies Leadership Conference* brought together nearly 2,000 students from across the U.S. and around the world from July 19–21 at Indiana University in Bloomington, IN, under the theme “Every Buddy Belongs.”

Over the weekend, participants took part in dynamic educational sessions and interactive workshops aimed at empowering them to advance the Best Buddies mission in their communities. A highlight of the conference was a TED Talk-style roundtable featuring inspiring speakers who shared innovative ideas for creating inclusion. The event concluded with a celebratory Closing Ceremonies, honoring the powerful impact of student leaders with and without IDD.

Attendees of the *2024 Best Buddies Leadership Conference: Every Buddy Belongs*

Special Olympics Founder **Eunice Kennedy Shriver** and Special Olympics participants

EKS Day

Created in 2010, Eunice Kennedy Shriver (EKS) Day serves as a unique opportunity to celebrate her legacy, indomitable spirit and life-long commitment to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Even during a time when society did not, Eunice Kennedy Shriver believed in the abilities of people with IDD and led the effort to end the physical and social isolation they endured. EKS Day promotes a global call for individuals to commit to actions of change, inclusion, and acceptance for people with IDD. Across the United States and in 100 countries, EKS Day is celebrated with love, justice, faith, hope, and courage – her five key values. Activities included sports clinics, picnics, leadership trainings, and disability rights awareness efforts.

March
Best Buddies Month

What began as a one-day celebration of the Best Buddies mission evolved into a month-long festivity to reflect on the importance of inclusion and acceptance for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities every March. In 2023, the celebration began with the annual *Spread the Word: Inclusion* campaign that encouraged participants to showcase how they promote inclusion in their communities. Throughout the month, participants hosted virtual chapter parties, awareness activities, and engagement campaigns to honor their unity in advancing opportunities for friendship, employment, leadership development, and inclusive living.

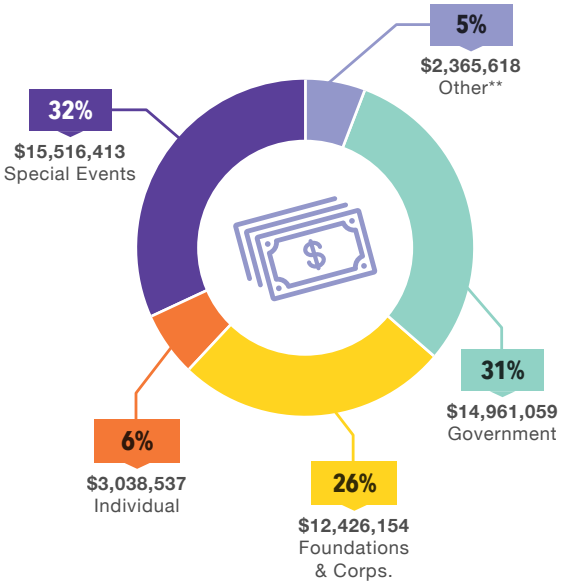
Andreas, Best Buddies Volunteer and **Joshua Felder**, Best Buddies Global Ambassador and Actor from the film "Champions"

Matthew Von Der Ahe, Best Buddies Global Ambassador and actor from the film "Champions"

Financials

Consolidated Statement of Activities* (as of 12.31.24)

Domestic Revenue

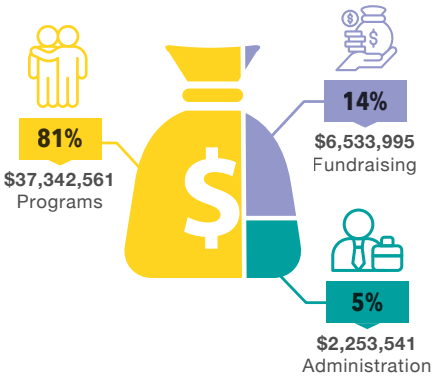


$48,307,781
Total Domestic Revenue

$30,000,000
Total International Revenue***

$78,307,781
Total Gross Revenue

Domestic Expenses



$46,130,097
Total Domestic Expenses

Domestic Net Asset Summary

Net Assets (beginning of year)	$35,604,831
Change in Net Assets	$2,177,684
Net Unrealized Gains (Losses) on Investments	$1,651,652
Net Assets (end of year)	**$39,434,167**

** Statement of Activities for calendar year 2023 based on Best Buddies International's Form 990*
*** "Other" represents revenue generated from a collection of sources including; Chapter Dues, Annual Best Buddies Leadership Conference, Investment Income and Cause-Related Marketing.*
**** Gross consolidation of International Licensees that operate as their own NGOs.*

Financials

Balance Sheet (as of 12.31.24)

Assets

Current Assets

Cash and cash equivalents	$5,761,354
Investments, short-term	$12,276,825
Accounts receivable	$74,643
Contributions receivable, net	$686,602
Grants receivable	$3,492,661
Prepaid expenses	$1,195,113
Total Current Assets	**$23,487,198**

Property and Equipment

Computers	$461,647
Furniture and equipment	$85,104
Auto	$61,522
Land	$1,152,473
Total Property and Equipment, Cost	$1,760,746
Less Accumulated Depreciation	($578,759)
Total Property and Equipment, Net	**$1,181,987**

Right-of-Use Assets

Financing lease right-of-use, net of amortization	$72,983
Operating lease right-of-use, net of amortization	$2,899,208
Total Right-of-Use Assets	**$2,972,191**

Other Assets

Investments, Long-term	$16,077,404
Long-term contributions receivable, net	$1,765,924
Inventory artwork	$58,361
Security deposits	$134,871
Investments - Rosetta Bakery x Best Buddies	$23,752
Total Other Assets	**$18,060,312**
Total Assets	**$45,701,688**

Liabilities and Net Assets

Current Liabilities

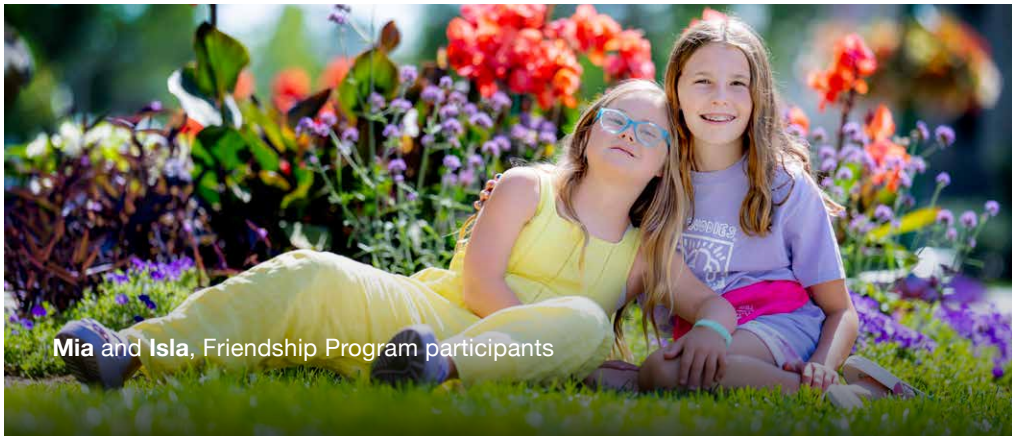
Accounts payable	$1,598,003
Deferred revenue	$1,365,552
Compensated absences payable	$276,511
Line of credit	$13,940
Current portion of financing lease liabilities	$27,797
Current portion of operating lease liabilities	$1,555,683
Total Current Liabilities	**$4,837,486**

Long-Term Liabilities

Security deposit	$55,508
Long-term portion of financing lease liabilities	$46,879
Long-term portion of operating lease liabilities	$1,327,648
Total Long-Term Liabilities	$1,430,035
Total Liabilities	**$6,267,521**

Net Assets

With donor restriction	$5,945,187
Without donor restriction	$33,488,980
Total Net Assets	**$39,434,167**
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	**$45,701,688**



Mia and **Isla**, Friendship Program participants

Board of Directors

Cory Alexander
Founder & Chief Executive Officer
Alexander Consulting

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“I hope more people with disabilities will see it's possible to achieve their dream job! And that employers will give us a chance. My job brings so much light to my life.”

- Fran Sheinberg, Global Ambassador

Best Buddies Global Ambassadors, **Jada Thompson** and **Fran Sheinberg**, with 2024 Miss Texas **Annette Addo-Yobo**

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Greenberg Traurig
Jewish Communal Fund
Jill D Brown Living Trust
Modern Woodmen Fraternal Financial
The Elder Law Center of Kirson & Fuller
UPMC Life Changing Medicine
Alex Simpson
Robert R. Kane
Jonathan M. Mings
Kendra Scott LLC
Kenneth Gordon
Andrew Fowler
Chris Doherty
Jeremy Camp
John Adams
Andrew Watson-Hogan
Archbishop Edward A. McCarthy High School
Big Blue Sky Foundation
Community Foundation of West Alabama
Field Family Foundation
Lithia Ramsey Subaru #384
Wiremold Company
Joseph P. Parisi
Greater Houston Community Foundation
Sheila Stabile
Derek Reformat
Hanover Reserve LLC
John Vezina
Sam Gough
Michael Serpa
Steve Cronin
Eein McGuire
Admiral Transfer & Rigging
Daniel Buettner
Carl Bloms
Zeeann Kane
Robert C. Walker
Stephanie Webb
Luuk Remmen
Heather Fath
Adam Petrzelka
Blue Grass Community Foundation
Capital Markets Company
Child Development Foundation
Colliers International - WA
Commonwealth Edison Company
Evolution Risk Advisors, Inc.
Fontainebleau Development LLC
IMC Financial Markets
Jeffrey P. Ossen Family Foundation
Shopping Center Management
Swire Properties Inc., Miami
The Bloedorn Foundation
The Bob and Marie Gallo Foundation
The Irene E. & George A. Davis Foundation
The Katharine Matthies Foundation
The Molina Healthcare Charitable Foundation
Universal Insurance Holdings
Vanguard Charitable
David Herro
Donald Hoffman
Melanie Nussdorf
Shannon Sloop
Ben Silverman
Tami James
Boundless Health
Brandon H. Elledge
Shirley Phelan
Matthew Mingus
Sumeet V. Singh
Brent L. Brooks
Jones Lang LaSalle
Scott Resnick
Bethany Vietmeier
David L. Lanier
Devin DeStefano
Maureen DeStefano
Mandy Welgos
Scott Markovich
The Michael and Denise Dubyak Charitable Fund
Ryan Gaetz
J.C. Edwards Corporation
Cigna Health Insurance
Loan Pronto, Inc
Mac Haik Ford
The Feigenbaum Foundation
The Martino Family Foundation
Trends International Charitable Foundation Inc.
Catherine Anne Hennessy
Vishal Verma
Michael Stein
Elizabeth Romp
John S. Peters
Sandra L. Holmgren
Kathryn Klimek
Larry E. Ott
Butler Family Foundation
Charles & M R Shapiro Foundation Inc
Confluence Wealth Services, Inc.
Dade County Federal Credit Union
Florida Power & Light Company
Margaret M. Spalding
Charlene Huard-Marcoux
The J.M. Smucker Company
Dan Cash
Benjamin Ballard
Trulieve Inc
Luke Allen
Steven Feller
Anthem Blue Cross & Blue Shield
Doug Flutie Jr. Foundation for Autism, Inc.
The Whiting-Turner Contracting Company
Leslie Little
Sanofi US Services, Inc.
Rob Cancro
Wesco Distribution, Inc
Waukesha County Community Foundation
Katherine Reed
Katherine Jones
MOD Super Fast Pizza, LLC
Grapevine Giving Foundation
JOH Kids 360
Geoffrey Carroll
Vanessa J. Manners
Meryl Wolfson - Friedman
Robert J. Friedman
Brian Henry

Givinga Foundation, Inc.
Emily Levine
Eliza Flug
Institute for Corporate Productivity, Inc.
David Ferdman

FOUNDATIONS

$250,000 to $499,000
Diane and Bruce Halle Foundation
Taft Foundation
The Golisano Foundation

$100,000 to $249,999
Fundacion MAPFRE
May and Stanley Smith Charitable Trust
Nike, Inc.
The American Gift Fund
Tulsa Community Foundation
YourCause, LLC

$50,000 to $99,999
Community Foundation for Northern Virginia
Fidelity Charitable
John H. and Ethel G. Noble Charitable Trust
JTMF Foundation
Kaiser Permanente Honolulu
Liberty Mutual Foundation
M. J. Murdock Charitable Trust
PHLY Foundation
PWC Charitable Foundation, Inc.
PWC Charitable Foundation, Inc.
St. Louis Blues for Kids Foundation
Stavros Niarchos Foundation
The Batchelor Foundation, Inc.
The Genentech Foundation
The Jim Moran Foundation
The Mouse Trap Foundation
The Sharon D. Lund Foundation
The Tepper Foundation
United Way of North Central New Mexico
Vegas Golden Knights Foundation Inc.
VoLo Foundation
Wealth Management & Trust

$25,000 to $49,999
Accenture
Bader Philanthropies, Inc.
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas
CenterPoint Energy Foundation
Greater Green Bay Community Foundation Inc.
Jabil
Kimsey Foundation
Macys Foundation
ManpowerGroup Foundation Inc.
Memorial Foundation
MoneyGram Foundation
Orchid Giving Circle
Saint Joseph's Catholic School
TD Charitable Foundation
The Anthony R. Abraham Foundation
The Columbus Foundation (CF)
The Dr. P. Phillips Foundation
The Healthcare Foundation of NJ
The Mosaic Company
The Rees-Jones Foundation
Thunderbirds Charities
William S. Abell Foundation

$10,000 to $24,999
Accenture
Albuquerque Community Foundation
Aspen Community Foundation
Bank of Hawaii
Boston Bruins Foundation
Charter Oak Federal Credit Union
Comcast Financial Agency Corporation
Community Foundation of Greater New Britain
Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts
Donald B and Dorothy L Stabler Foundation
DuPage Foundation
Enterprise Holdings
Ernest and Mae Sanctis Foundation
Fichtenbaum Charitable Trust
Fiduciary Trust International
Florida Panthers
Frost Foundation
Greater Milwaukee Foundation
Harper Family Foundation
IPA Foundation
James & Abigail Campbell Family Foundation
Jana Foundation Inc.
Kelly Foundation
KOVAR
Libra Foundation
Longwood Foundation Incorporated
Maine Community Foundation
Maximus Foundation
May Ellen and Gerald Ritter Foundation
Merrill Family Foundation Inc
MGM Resorts Foundation
Nora Roberts Foundation Inc
Nordson Corporation Foundation
Nusenda Foundation
OrthoIndy Foundation
PNC Private Bank
PNM Resources Foundation
Potawatomi Bingo Casino
Prairie Meadows
Ralph M. Parsons Foundation
Rochester Area Community Foundation Depository, Inc.
Roles Family Foundation
Sandia National Laboratories
Speedway Children's Charities
State Farm Companies Foundation
Suncoast Federal Credit Union Foundation
Tempe Diablos Charities, Inc.
The American Eagle Outfitters Foundation
The American Tower Charitable Foundation
The Bishop Family Charitable Fund
The Carl and Ruth Shapiro Family Foundation
The George Preston Marshall F oundation
The Graham and Carolyn Holloway Family Foundation
The Hamilton Company Charitable Foundation
The Joseph Leroy and Ann C. Warner Fund, Inc.
The Laffey McHugh Foundation
The Lowell S. and Betty L. Dunn Family Foundation
The McSweeny Family Foundation, Inc.
The Merancas Foundation Inc
The Sorenson Legacy Foundation
The Thomas W. Bradley Foundation Inc.
The William & Sheila Konar Foundation
United Jewish Foundation of Metropolitan Detroit
Valley Community Foundation
Variety - the Children's Charity
Wilmington Trust

$5,000 to $9,999
A. J. and Sigismunda Palumbo Charitable Trust
Albemarle Foundation
American Online Giving Foundation, Inc.
Ayres Foundation, Inc.
Blue Grass Community Foundation
BNY Mellon
Boston Celtics Shamrock Foundation, Inc.
Cardinals Charities
Charles & M R Shapiro Foundation Inc
Child Development Foundation
Clarfeld Citizens Private Wealth
Cogswell Benevolent Trust
Commonwealth Edison Company
Community Chest of New Britain and Berlin, Inc.
Coop Bank of Cape Cod Foundation
Cralle Foundation Inc
Doug Flutie Jr. Foundation for Autism, Inc.
G Russell and Constance P Lincoln Foundation
Geodis Foundation
George and Mary Josephine Hamman Foundation
George S. and Dolores Doré Eccles Foundation
Greater Washington Community Foundation
Jeffrey P. Ossen Family Foundation
Jim Jacobson Charitable Fund
John Ruan Foundation Trust
June Rockwell Levy Foundation
Junior League of Indianapolis
Kiwanis Club of Ann Arbor Foundation, Inc.
Larry H. & Gail Miller Family Foundation
Liberty Bank Foundation
McLane Middleton Foundation
Nashville Predators Foundation
Nicor Gas Company
Pacific Life Foundation
Raymond James Global Account
Stackner Family Foundation Inc
The Albert and Ethel Herzstein Foundation
The Bloedorn Foundation
The Charro Foundation
The Community Foundations of the Hudson Valley
The Feigenbaum Foundation
The Fuller Foundation, Inc.
The Gheens Foundation
The Irene E. & George A. Davis Foundation
The James & Juli Boeheim Foundation
The John E. Fogarty Foundation
The Katharine Matthies Foundation
The M&T Charitable Foundation
The Molina Healthcare Charitable Foundation
The PNC Charitable Trusts
Venable Foundation, Inc.
Wells Fargo Clearing SVCS, LLC

GOVERNMENT PARTNERS

$250,000 to $375,000
Diane and Bruce Halle Foundation
The Golisano Foundation
Taft Foundation

$100,000 - $249,999
Nike, Inc.
Fundacion MAPFRE
Tulsa Community Foundation
YourCause, LLC
May and Stanley Smith Charitable Trust
The American Gift Fund

$50,000 to $99,999
PHLY Foundation
PWC Charitable Foundation, Inc.
PWC Charitable Foundation, Inc.
St. Louis Blues for Kids Foundation
Stavros Niarchos Foundation
The Batchelor Foundation, Inc.
The Genentech Foundation
The Mouse Trap Foundation
The Sharon D. Lund Foundation
Wealth Management & Trust
United Way of North Central New Mexico
Fidelity Charitable
Community Foundation for Northern Virginia
John H. and Ethel G. Noble Charitable Trust
The Jim Moran Foundation
Vegas Golden Knights Foundation Inc.
VoLo Foundation
Kaiser Permanente Honolulu
Liberty Mutual Foundation
JTMF Foundation
The Tepper Foundation
M. J. Murdock Charitable Trust

$25,000 to $49,999
CenterPoint Energy Foundation
Greater Green Bay Community Foundation Inc.
Jabil
Kimsey Foundation
ManpowerGroup Foundation Inc.
Memorial Foundation
The Columbus Foundation (CF)
The Dr. P. Phillips Foundation

The Healthcare Foundation of NJ
The Rees-Jones Foundation
Thunderbirds Charities
William S. Abell Foundation
MoneyGram Foundation
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas
Macys Foundation
Orchid Giving Circle
TD Charitable Foundation
The Mosaic Company
Saint Joseph's Catholic School
The Anthony R. Abraham Foundation
Accenture
Bader Philanthropies, Inc.

$10,000 to $24,999

Comcast Financial Agency Corporation
Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts
Donald B and Dorothy L Stabler Foundation
DuPage Foundation
Ernest and Mae Sanctis Foundation
Fiduciary Trust International
Florida Panthers
Frost Foundation
Harper Family Foundation
Jana Foundation Inc.
Kelly Foundation
Libra Foundation
Maine Community Foundation
Maximus Foundation
May Ellen and Gerald Ritter Foundation
MGM Resorts Foundation
Nora Roberts Foundation Inc
PNC Private Bank
Prairie Meadows
Ralph M. Parsons Foundation
Sandia National Laboratories
Speedway Children's Charities
State Farm Companies Foundation
The American Eagle Outfitters Foundation
The American Tower Charitable Foundation
The Bishop Family Charitable Fund
The Graham and Carolyn Holloway Family Foundation
The Hamilton Company Charitable Foundation
The Laffey McHugh Foundation
The McSweeny Family Foundation, Inc.
The Sorenson Legacy Foundation
The Thomas W. Bradley Foundation Inc.
Valley Community Foundation
Variety - the Children's Charity
Boston Bruins Foundation
Bank of Hawaii
Charter Oak Federal Credit Union
Nusenda Foundation
Roles Family Foundation
James & Abigail Campbell Family Foundation
Accenture
Aspen Community Foundation
Community Foundation of Greater New Britain
Fichtenbaum Charitable Trust
IPA Foundation
PNM Resources Foundation
Tempe Diablos Charities, Inc.
The Joseph Leroy and Ann C. Warner Fund, Inc.
Wilmington Trust
The George Preston Marshall Foundation
Albuquerque Community Foundation
Greater Milwaukee Foundation
KOVAR
Longwood Foundation Incorporated
Merrill Family Foundation Inc
OrthoIndy Foundation
Rochester Area Community Foundation Depository, Inc.
Suncoast Federal Credit Union Foundation
The Carl and Ruth Shapiro Family Foundation
The Lowell S. and Betty L. Dunn Family Foundation
The Merancas Foundation Inc
The William & Sheila Konar Foundation
United Jewish Foundation of Metropolitan Detroit
Nordson Corporation Foundation
Potawatomi Bingo Casino
Enterprise Holdings

$5,000 to $9,999

A. J. and Sigismunda Palumbo Charitable Trust
Albemarle Foundation
American Online Giving Foundation, Inc.
Ayres Foundation, Inc.
BNY Mellon
Cardinals Charities
Clarfeld Citizens Private Wealth
Cogswell Benevolent Trust
Coop Bank of Cape Cod Foundation
Cralle Foundation Inc
G Russell and Constance P Lincoln Foundation
Geodis Foundation
George and Mary Josephine Hamman Foundation
George S. and Dolores Doré Eccles Foundation
Greater Washington Community Foundation
Jim Jacobson Charitable Fund
John Ruan Foundation Trust
June Rockwell Levy Foundation
Junior League of Indianapolis
Kiwanis Club of Ann Arbor Foundation, Inc.
Larry H. & Gail Miller Family Foundation
Liberty Bank Foundation
McLane Middleton Foundation
Nashville Predators Foundation
Nicor Gas Company
Pacific Life Foundation
Raymond James Global Account
Stackner Family Foundation Inc
The Albert and Ethel Herzstein Foundation
The Charro Foundation
The Community Foundations of the Hudson Valley
The Fuller Foundation, Inc.
The Gheens Foundation
The James & Juli Boeheim Foundation
The John E. Fogarty Foundation
The PNC Charitable Trusts
Venable Foundation, Inc.
Wells Fargo Clearing SVCS, LLC
Community Chest of New Britain and Berlin, Inc.
Boston Celtics Shamrock Foundation, Inc.
Blue Grass Community Foundation
Child Development Foundation
Commonwealth Edison Company
Doug Flutie Jr. Foundation for Autism, Inc.
Jeffrey P. Ossen Family Foundation
The Bloedorn Foundation
The Irene E. & George A. Davis Foundation
The Katharine Matthies Foundation
The Molina Healthcare Charitable Foundation
The Feigenbaum Foundation
The M&T Charitable Foundation
Charles & M R Shapiro Foundation Inc

TOP RIDE TEAMS

$250,000 and Above

Team Frazier Life Sciences

$100,000 to $249,000

Team Natixis
Team King James Buddies
Team Morgan Stanley

$50,000 to 99,000

Team Snyk
Team ServiceNow

$25,000 to $49,000

Team Papa Wheelies
Team Gallo/G3
Team Greenberg Traurig
Team Volvo
Team Henry
Team Wyatt - Domestiques
Team Mal's Pals
Team MACK Cycle
Team Susan G
Team SVB/FC
Team Sunshine

$10,000 to $24,000

Team Evergreen
Team Bike Zone of Cape Cod
Team Amundi
The Big Guava
Team Mark's Buddies
Team Louis Miguel
Team Kendra
Team Blach Construction
Team Sobah Ridahs
Team The James Gang
Team 603 Pride
Team Holland & Knight
Team KIDS 360
Team Harrington
Team UBS
Team Flat Top Johnny's
Team Cheshire Loves Best Buddies
Team Mali
Team PDC Inc
Team Xcitebike Racing

TOP BBFW TEAMS

$25,000 to $49,000

Team Diego V.
Team Macon Friends for Makin' Friends
Team Miami Country Day School
Team OneJLL - Stronger Together
Team TCNJ!
Team Roman Josi

$10,000 to $24,000

Team Academy of the Holy Names
Team Ben Orent
Team Best Buddies UA
Team Career Group Companies - Los Angeles
Team Champa Bay Jobs Program
Team Creekside High School
Team Danielle & Coley's Buddies
Team DNI Corp
Team Dylan's Dominators
Team Emeritus
Team FSU Best Buddies
Team Garrett's Fight
Team Holland & Knight
Team Mission Possible
Team Navy Federal
Team Palm Beach Orthodontics
Team Peeps With A Purpose
Team PH.
Team RS&H_2024
Team Seminole Ridge High School
Team Seretta Construction
Team Shulman Rogers
Team GOAT
Team KellieBoo 2024!
Team Sephora Distribution Center - Las Vegas
Team Sephora Distribution Center - Olive Branch
Team Special Events
Team Walk with Wylie
Team West Broward High School

PARTICIPATING EMPLOYERS

Agriculture

Alameda Greenhouse
Empower Farms

Animal Services

Barkin' Creek the Village
Camp Run-A-Mutt
Doggie Daycare & More
Dogtopia
Elite Suites Pet Resort
Good Dog Hotel and Spa
Nauset Canine Club
Nova Animal Hospital
Petco

PetSmart
Pompano Pet Lodge
Zionsville Country Vet Clinic

Aquaculture
ARC Shellfish Hatchery

Arts/Culture
Aurora Hill Library
Broadway at Music Circus
Capital One Hall
Georgia Aquarium
Houston Museum of Natural Science
Lyric Opera of Chicago
Museum of Contemporary Art
New Jersey Symphony Orchestra
9/11 Museum
Old Sturbridge Village
Park West Gallery
Sacramento Children's Museum
Shedd Aquarium
The Children's Museum of Indianapolis
Tradewinds Studio

Automotive
Evanston Subaru
Findlay Toyota
Herb Chambers – Land Rover Jaguar
Koons Tysons Toyota
Miami Lakes Automall
Mister Car Wash
Ocean Mazda

Communications
AActiveCampaign
Civic Edge Consulting
Conill Advertising
i4cp
Kubik
Quad Graphics

Construction
Fortis Construction
Johnson Mirmiran & Thompson
MasTec
Whiting Turner

E-Comerce
Amazon

Education
Alexandria City High School
Aemillian Preschool
Angier Elementary School
Ben Davis University High School
Bergen County Community
Bishop Moore Catholic High School
Bright Horizons
Building Block Academy
Catholic University
Center for Research Libraries
Childtime of Huntersville
Clark County School District
Curley Academy
Curry College
Dana Middle School
Dean College
Dunlap High School
Elk Grove School District
Genesee Community Services
Holy Spirit School
ISP Management at Northeastern
JRE Lee Educational Center
Montessori Schools at Holmes Run
Montgomery County Public Schools
NYC Board of Education
Peoria Public Schools
Port View Preparatory
Princeton University Athletics
Promise Child Development Center
Santa Margarita Catholic High School
Springstone Montessori
St John XXIII Catholic
UC Davis
UCNJ
UMass Lowell
Unit 5 School District
Wachusett Regional School District
Whitefish Bay High School
Worcester Public Schools

Facilities
ABM Industries
Ally Universal Security
Block by Block
CBRE Microsoft
PHD Services
S.A.F.E.
SBM
Vonachen Services, Inc.

Finance/Insurance
Ally
Amwins
BMO Harris Bank
Bank of America
Credit Union of Texas
Crescent Capital
First Citizens Bank
Five Star Federal Credit Union
H&R Block
H.I.G. Capital, L.L.C.
IMC Financial Markets
Kayne Anderson Capital Advisors LP
Klingman and Associates
Mapfre
Mastercard Worldwide
Morgan Stanley
Natixis Global Asset Management
PLAN Special Needs Trust
PNC Bank
SCN Accounting & Tax Services
Wells Fargo

Fitness
Blink Fitness
Four Seasons Health Club
LA Fitness
Planet Fitness
SPIRIT Club

Food/Beverage
Amazon Fresh
Aramark
Bahama Buck's
Best BuddiesX Rosetta Bakery
Big Bowl
Big Y
Blaze Pizza
Blono Pizza Co.
Bon Appetit @ Google
Bubba's 33
Cafe Blu
Cafe Joyeux
California Pizza Kitchen
Campus Catering Clovis Unified School
Candified
Canteen
CAVA
Centerville Pies
Chartwell's
Chase County Roasters
Chick-fil-A
Chili's
Constellation Culinary Group
Cotuit Fresh Market
Culver's
Davio's Restaurant
Dennis Public Market
Denny's
Dion's
El Pinto Restaurant
Farm Family Foods
Fazenda Coffee Roasters
Festival Foods
Fiji Water
Five Guys
Flik
Food 4 Less
Friends Marketplace
Fruit Center of Milton
Fry's Food
Gundalow Gourmet
HMS Host
Hannaford
Harris Teeter
Harvest Sensations
H-E-B
High Flying Foods @SFO
Jersey Mike's
Jimmy's Famous Seafood
Katella Bakery
Kenny's Westside Pub
Kroger
Lady Baker
Levy Restaurants
Market 32
Maschio's Food Service
McAlister's Deli
McDonald's
Milam's Markets
Misha's Cupcakes
MOD Pizza
New City Microcreamery
PDQ
Panera
Papa John's
Pemberton Farms Market
Pick N Save
Pieology
Piggly Wiggly
Pilo's Street Tacos
Pizza Hut
Price Chopper
Provider Contract Food Service
Publix
Rail Trail Flatbread
Ralph's Fresh Fare
Restoration Pizza
Roselli's Pizza
Rosetta X Bakery
Safeway
Seasons AARP
Shaw's Supermarket
Smart & Final
Sodexo
Sonny's BBQ
Sprouts
SSA Group, LLC
Star Market
Starbucks
Stone Creek Dining Company
Stop & Shop
Sunrise Health Food Stores
Sweet Cup
Sweetly Baked
Taziki's
Tedeschi Food Shops
Texas Road House
The Cheesecake Factory
The Fresh Market
The Merchant LB
The Paramount Group
The Popcorn Shoppe
Thomas Cuisine
Trader Joe's
Tropical Smoothie Cafe
Una Pizza Napoletana
Wegmans
Wendy's
Whitson's Culinary Group
Whole Foods Market
Wildfire

Government
Alexandria Library
Baltimore City Recreation and Parks
Cherrydale Library
City of Baltimore
City of Bal Harbour
City of Hialeah
City of Los Angeles
City of Miami Beach
City of Miami Parks & Recreation
City of New York
City of South San Francisco
Cosumnes Community Services District
Department of Rehab-Fresno
Department of Rehab-San Diego
Employee Development Department
Exchange-Nellis Air Force Base
MA-Developmental Disabilities Council
Marion County Prosecutor's Office
MVA-Annapolis
Navy Federal Credit Union
New York Public Library
OPR Sacramento

Health Care
Addgene
Addgene
Advent Health
Atrius Health

Bickford Senior Living
Calvin Community
Cambridge Nursing & Rehab Center
Cape Cod Hospital
CB Orthodontics
Cecelia Place Assisted Living
Cleveland Clinic
Clovis Community Medical Centers
Community Regional Medical Center
Decatur House
Dignity Healthcare
Enos Residence
Fairlawn Rehabilitation Hospital
Fort Harrison Senior Living
Goodman Campbell Brain and Spine
HealthStream
Hiatus Med Spa
Honeybee Healthcare
IU Health-North
Jackson Health System
Kaiser Permanente
Merck
Modern Salon and Spa
Nspire Healthcare
Palm Beach Dermatology
Pamilla Senior Living
PathGroup
PharmaLink
Somerby
Syntonic Systems, Inc.
Takeda Pharmaceuticals
The Christopher House
The Manhattan Psychiatric Center
Touchpoint
UC Davis Medical Center
UCLA Dept. of Pathology & Lab Medicine
UMass Memorial
UNM Hospital
Verus Healthcare
Vierra Falls

Hospitality

Aramark @Fenway
Chatham Bars Inn
Compass Group
Embassy Suites
Flagship @Facebook
Flik Hospitality
Genevieve N. Johnson Seniors Daycare Center
Grand Hyatt Nashville
Harvard Maintenance
Holiday Inn Express
Homewood Suites
Hotel Albuquerque
Live Casino Hotel
Loews Coral Gable
Longfellow's Wayside Inn
Marriott
Mayfair House Hotel & Garden
MGM Resorts International
Oakmont of Torrance
Restaurant Associates
Seaport Hotel
The Lodge
The Ritz-Carlton-Coconut Grove
UCLA Housing & Hospitality

Law

Barket Marion Epstein & Kearon, LLP
Chasen and Boscolo
Elder Law Firm of Kirson & Fuller
Envoy Global
Fried Frank Harris Shriver & Jacobson
Gelfand, Rennert, & Feldman
Holland & Knight
Latham & Watkins
Manatt, Phelps &Phillips, LLP
Pacific Workers' Compensation Law
Seyfarth Shaw
Shuffield Lowman
Special Needs Law Group of MA
The Ferraro Law Group

Manufacturing/Distribution

Baby K'tan
Boeing Distribution Services
Brunswick Land and Sea
Lake Country Manufacturing
Northrop Grumman
PCNA
Prime Source
Printing Partners
RDS Same Day Delivery
Sakura Finetek USA
Shipetze LLC
Telamon
Tuuci

Nonprofit/Foundations

Best Buddies International
Central Park Conservancy
Chicago Park District
Community Connections, Inc.
Good 360
Goodwill
Gordon Jewish Community Center
Harbor Regional Center
LA Habilitation House
National Aquarium
National Down Syndrome Society
Picket Fence Foundation
QSAC
Special Faces
Special Olympics
The Arc of Mercer
The Mentor Network
Think Together
Valley Life
Virtuous, Inc
Westside Regional Center
YMCA

Oil Industry/Energy/Mining

Schlumberger

Real Estate

Capital Properties
JLL-Jones Lang LaSalle
Network Community Management
Starwood Capital
Tavistock

Recreation

Cat Cay Yacht Club
Disneyland Park
Prairieville Park
Presidio Golf Course
Richland Country Club
Sunnyside Country Club
The Preserve at Eisenhower Golf Course
We Rock the Spectrum

Retail

Ace Hardware
Anthropologie
Aventura Mall
Bath and Body Works
BJ's Wholesale Club
BrandsMart
Build-A- Bear Workshop
Burlington
Cost Plus World
Crate & Barrel
CVS
Dillard's
Discount Welds
Disney Store
Gucci
Home Goods
HomeSense
Hope's Treasures
Hot Topic
Hy-Vee
Jewel Osco
Jondie
Kessler's Diamonds
Kohls
Lowes
Mack Cycle
Macy's Furniture Gallery
Malicious Women Candle Co.
Marshalls
Masks Y Mas
Michaels
Nike
99 Cent Only Store
Nouria Energy
Office Depot
OfficeMax
Ollie's Bargain Outlet
Once Upon a Child
Primark
Sam's Club
Sephora
Sierra
Sloomoo Institute
Target
The Home Depot
The Paper Store
The UPS Store
TJ Maxx
Urban Decay/L'Oreal
Walgreens
Walmart
Wawa
Weis

Sports/Entertainment

AEG Merchandising
AMC Theaters
Axe Hockey Group
Boston Red Sox
Century Rio 24
Charlotte FC
Citi Field
COSM
D.C. United
DCU Center
Entertainment Industry Foundation
Gillette Stadium
Golf N Stuff
Good Thomas Entertainment
Mercedes Benz Stadium
Milwaukee Brewers
Milwaukee Bucks
Monumental Sports & Entertainment
NFL
NY Islanders
NY Mets
NY Yankees
Oakland Athletics
Propagate Content
Range Media Partners
SeaWorld
Silva Lanes
Tepper Sports & Entertainment
UCLA Dept. of Intercollegiate Athletics
Universal Studios
Walt Disney Television
Woosox
Worcester Railers

Talent/Staffing

Career Group Companies
Career Group Companies
Job Options Inc.
K Force
William Morris Endeavor

Technology

Accenture
Avid
Avnet
CIC
Google
Insight
Palo Alto Networks
Rapid7
Xactly Corporation

Telecomunications

TCC

Transportation

ABF Freight
Brightline
Envoy Air
Fast Park
Fontainebleau Aviation
JFK Airport
Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd
SMS International
U-Haul Moving & Storage

Warehousing/Storage

American Lumper
Bollore
D.S. Hull Company, Inc.
Iron Mountain
TDS Logistics LLC
Value Store It

Illinois Year in Review

Best Buddies in Illinois continues to provide program participants with opportunities and resources to overcome the social and economic isolation that individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) face every day. Our work in Illinois supports social engagement and mental well-being by facilitating friendships, fostering leadership development, and supporting inclusive employment throughout Illinois.

We closed out 2024 with 155 active school Friendship chapters across Illinois—a powerful milestone that reflects the strength and reach of our mission. The true impact of these chapters is seen in the meaningful friendships formed and the inclusive events hosted in schools across the state. One standout example is Andrew and Allison from Centennial High School in Champaign. Their connection embodies how friendship can transform school communities and drive a culture of inclusion throughout Illinois.

We also supported new Ambassador leaders through numerous training events and then as active voices in their communities. State Ambassador Zach Fintel proudly spoke at events in the Chicago area, and was one of the many participants again featured in the commercial featuring Best Buddies' national partnership with Jersey Mike's Subs.

Staff are leading supplemental hands-on training to 51 students in High School Transition programs who are now seeking more advanced workplace opportunities thanks to Best Buddies. The Best Buddies Jobs team placed 28 people into integrated employment in Illinois during 2024, including participants like Jeet Dave, who are improving their workplaces and are valuable members of their teams. These placements are also helping our participants achieve their personal and financial goals.

Our core mission pillars united communities at four Friendship Walks held in Chicago, Normal, Champaign, and Will County, where nearly 2,200 participants came together to celebrate inclusion and friendship. At the Chicago Marathon, 65 dedicated runners took to the course to champion our cause. We also raised nearly $500,000 through our Galas in Chicago and Peoria led by our twenty-one Champions including Grand Champions Nicole Marty and Joey O'Brien. This remarkable support fuels the continued growth of our programs. We're especially grateful to Aetna Better Health of Illinois, the DuPage Foundation, Walsh Construction, and The Yard for leading the way and helping us expand our impact in the year ahead.

We are deeply thankful for the incredible support of our Best Buddies participants, corporate partners, sponsors, foundations, and community advocates who help ensure individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities are included in every part of our communities. With this strong foundation, Best Buddies in Illinois is excited to reach new heights and make an even greater impact in 2025.

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Allison and **Andrew**, Friendship program Buddy Pair

Andrew & Allison

One-To-One Friendships

Centennial High School, Champaign, IL

Andrew joined Best Buddies during his sophomore year of high school in 2022–2023. “Before joining Best Buddies, I went to a private school and didn’t realize someone like me could have such a strong connection with another person,” he shared. “Best Buddies gave me a chance to shine.” Since joining, Andrew has felt more connected to his community and has developed a meaningful friendship with Allison, who he calls his best friend.

Andrew and Allison were matched in early 2024 through the Best Buddies Friendship Chapter at Centennial High School, and their bond has only grown stronger since. Whether it’s playing volleyball in the gym, grabbing food, bowling on the weekends, or just enjoying car rides, they love spending time together. More than anything, Andrew says, he values having someone he can trust and share meaningful conversations with.

Their friendship is mutual. “I love how energetic and fun Andrew is,” said Allison. “He’s so outgoing—I wish I could be more like him.” Their connection is built on encouragement, laughter, and a shared commitment to showing up for each other.

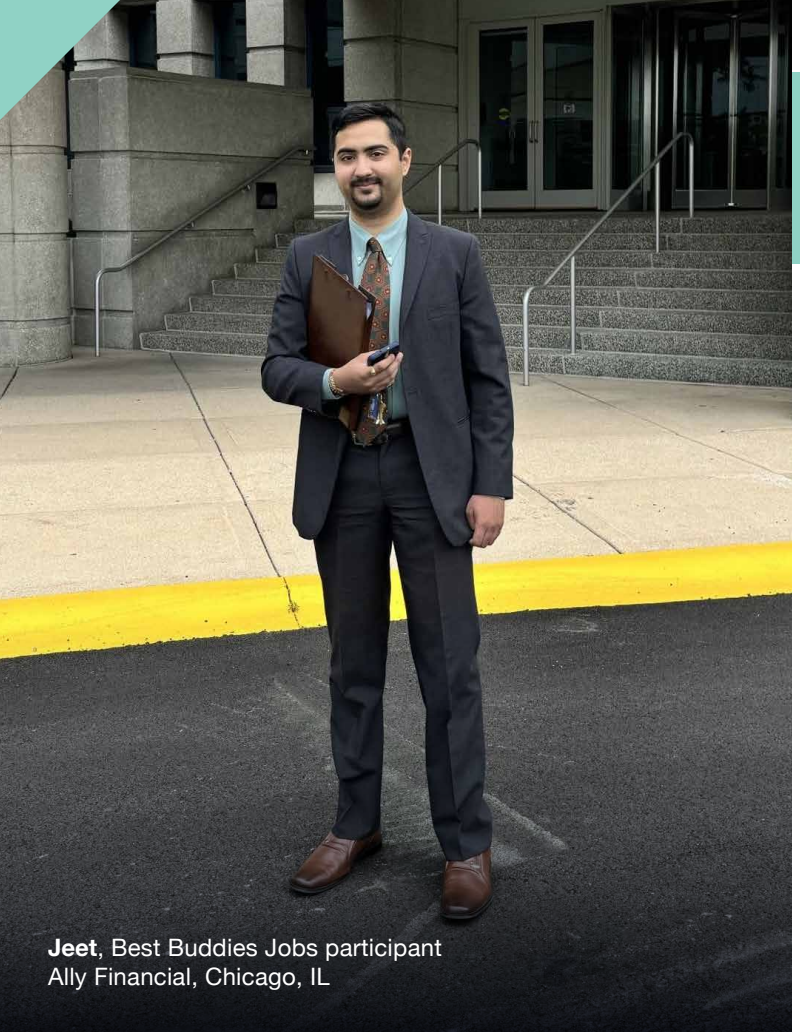
Andrew and Allison plan to attend the Best Buddies Leadership Conference together, excited to bring what they learn back to their school and community. Their friendship is a shining example of the Best Buddies mission in action—breaking down barriers, building confidence, and showing the power of inclusion.

One-To-One Friendships
Key Program Stats IL

Elementary Schools		Middle Schools		High Schools	
30 Chapters	**410** Participants	**44** Chapters	**772** Participants	**94** Chapters	**3,414** Participants

Colleges		Citizens	e-Buddies
16 Chapters	**460** Participants	**584** Participants	**301** Participants

> “We all come from different places, we are all different people with different abilities, but through Best Buddies, we all can be a part of the same community.” **- Andrew**



Jeet, Best Buddies Jobs participant
Ally Financial, Chicago, IL

Jeet

Integrated Employment

Ally Financial, Chicago, IL

Jeet was diagnosed with Autism during his school years and was placed under a partial IEP program. Before becoming involved with Best Buddies, he began pursuing an associate degree in Accounting at Oakton Community College with support from the IEP program. During this time, he experienced feelings of insecurity and concern about securing a job in accounting. It was around this period that he was introduced to Best Buddies through Ms. Eileen Morrison.

In his final year of college, Jeet started working with Best Buddies to find a job in accounting. Initially, Best Buddies connected him with a position as a merchandise associate at a large retailer. He continued working with the organization to achieve his long-term goal of securing an accounting role. Simultaneously, he found an office assistant job at the office of a family friend. Recognizing the importance of stability, he decided to pursue a full-time office position that could support his disabilities and offer future career growth.

“Best Buddies worked hard to find me a job and provided accommodations throughout the hiring process in support of my disabilities,” said Jeet. “My life improved, not only economically but mentally and socially.”

Ultimately, Jeet was hired at Ally Financial with the assistance of Best Buddies and over two years of office work experience.

“The part I love most about my job is that my colleagues are very nice, friendly, and cooperative,” said Jeet. “I feel secure and safe in my work environment and, my job gives me opportunities to be social and continue advancing my professional skills.”

With a stable job and a steady income, Jeet has taken on personal financial responsibilities, including credit card payments and other necessary expenses. Looking ahead, he envisions getting married and starting a family.

> “I feel secure and safe in my work environment and, my job gives me opportunities to be social and continue advancing my professional skills.” **- Jeet**

Integrated Employment
Key Program Stats IL

Jobs

82
Participants Employed

138
Participants

Zachary, Best Buddies Ambassador

Zachary

Leadership Development

Ambassador, Chicago, IL

I began attending Hawthorne Scholastic Academy at age 7, shortly after being diagnosed with autism. It was there that I began to learn how to make friends and received the support I needed to grow both academically and socially. That foundation helped me earn a spot at Walter Payton College Prep High School, one of Chicago's selective enrollment schools. Walter Payton was a tough environment—especially for someone like me, whose brain works a little differently. I faced real challenges. But in 2008, something life-changing happened: I joined Best Buddies.

A teacher introduced me to Best Buddies while I was still at Walter Payton. At the time, I had no idea how much that introduction would shape my future. I went on to join the Best Buddies chapters at my schools, and later became involved in the Citizens, Jobs, and Ambassadors programs. I even competed in Champion of the Year. At DePaul University, I continued my involvement and was honored to give a speech on the Spread the Word: Inclusion campaign. That experience lit a spark in me—I began to realize my passion for advocacy.

Attending the Best Buddies Leadership Conference was a turning point. The speakers inspired me deeply, and I knew then that I wanted to become a public speaker—to share my story, motivate others, and make an impact just like those speakers made on me. Though I still face challenges every day, I meet them with determination and continue to succeed in my own unique ways.

Best Buddies has transformed my life. I've learned what true friendship feels like. I've found joy in social events, and I've gained confidence, employment opportunities, leadership skills, and a powerful sense of belonging. I'm incredibly grateful for the Best Buddies staff who have believed in me, supported me, and created an environment where I feel safe, seen, and included.

Leadership Development
Key Program Stats IL

Ambassadors

84
Ambassadors

Promoters

62
Chapters

871
Participants

Transitions

84
Participants

> "Best Buddies has transformed my life. I've learned what true friendship feels like. I've found joy in social events, and I've gained confidence, employment opportunities, leadership skills, and a powerful sense of belonging." **- Zachary**

Thank You!

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