

BEST BUDDIES



MISSION PILLARS

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

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Anthony K. Shriver, and Best Buddies participan 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.

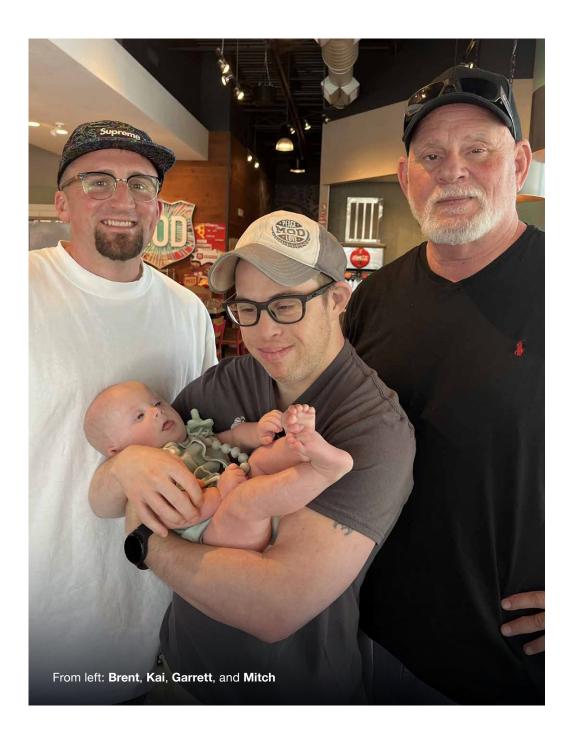
An estimated 84%* of adults (18+) with IDD do not have a paid job in the community. This is where the Best Buddies' Jobs program steps in. The Best Buddies Jobs program has participants employed full time who each have the potential to earn a total income upwards of \$1mm over 30 years and contribute \$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.





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

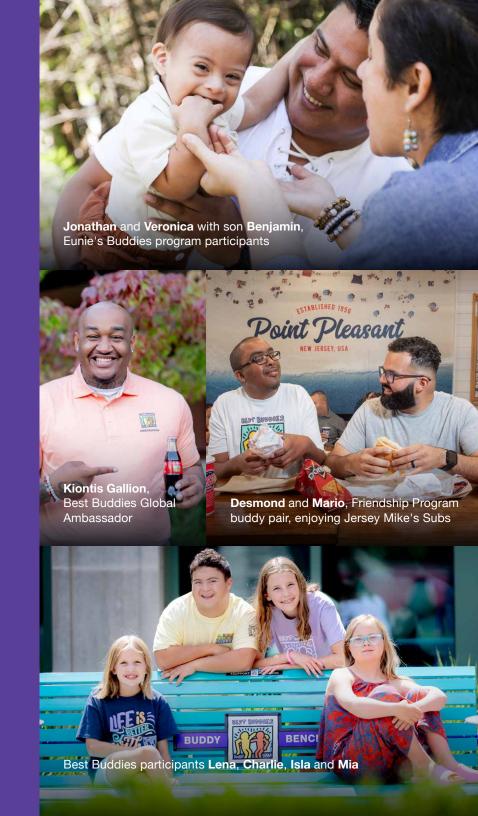
2024 Highlights

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 \$1 MM 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.



Milestones

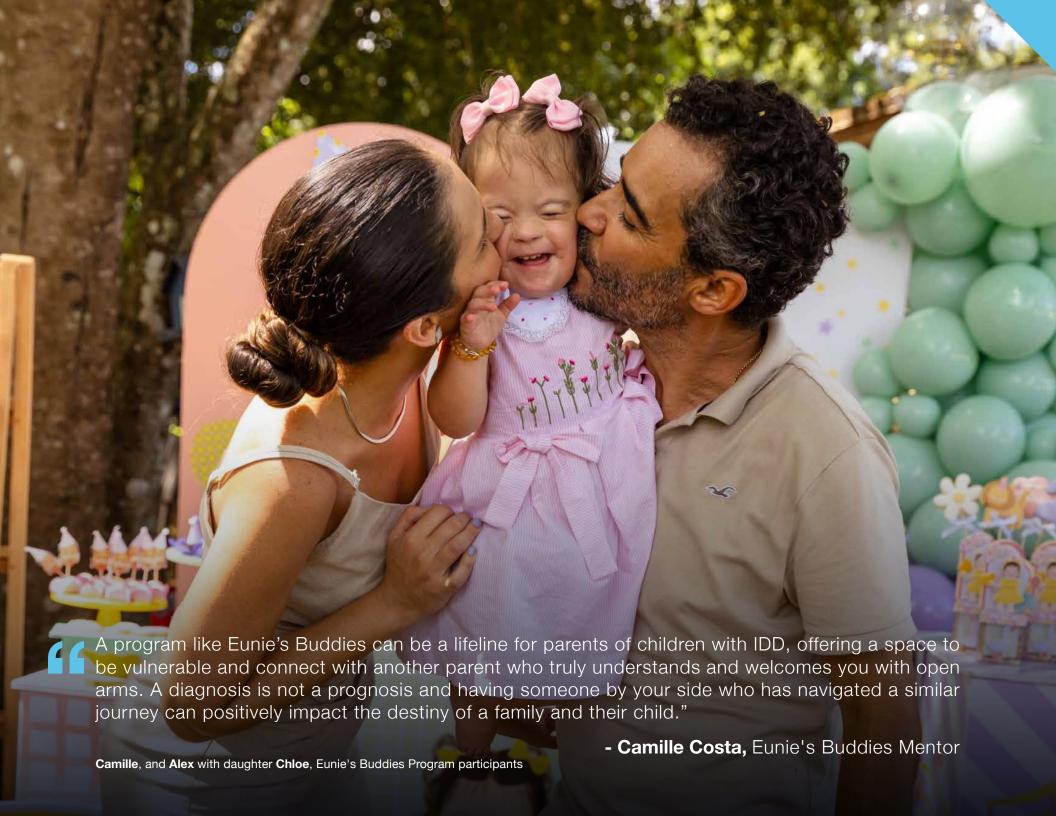
- In 1987, Anthony Kennedy Shriver launches BESTBUDDIES® Colleges by founding the first Best Buddies chapter at Georgetown University.
- In 1988,w the iconic Best Buddies logo was donated to Best Buddies by legendary pop-artist, Keith Haring.
- On January 19, 1989, Best Buddies is incorporated as a 501(c)(3) 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 BESTBUDDIES. 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 BESTBUDDIES, Jobs, a supported employment program targeting high-paying, corporate jobs for people with IDD.
- In 1995, Best Buddies launches BESTBUDDIES® High Schools to pair special education students in one-to-one friendships with high school volunteers.
- In 1996, Best Buddies launches BESTBUDDIES, Middle Schools to pair students with IDD in one-to-one friendships with middle school volunteers.
- 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 BESTBUDDIES® Ambassadors to teach participants with IDD communication and self-advocacy skills.

2019 S 201

- Current

2020

- In 2012, Best Buddies launches BESTBUDDIES® 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, BESTBUDDIES. 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.
- In 2020, Best Buddies introduces BESTBUDDIES® Ventures, with the first launch being BESTBUDDIES® 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 BESTBUDDIES® 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 BESTBUDDIES® 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 BESTBUDDIES® X Rosetta Bakery.
- 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.



Our Impact

3,738Chapters

147,663*

1,476,630

50

43

Participants

Impacted States

Program Participants

Countries

One-To-One Friendship

130 Elementary School Chapters

Middle School Chapters 1,675 igh School
483 College Chapters

6,041

Elementary Schools

10,621

Middle Schools

67,652

High Schools

Colleges



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.).

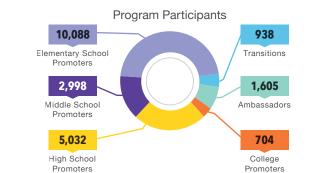
Leadership Development

455 Elementary Schools Promoters Chapters

172 Middle School Promoters Chapters

271 High School Promoters Chapters

College
Promoters Chapters





10 Living Residences

71 Living Participants



58 Eunie's Buddies Participants





We are BESTBUDDIES.

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.

A Integrated Employment

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

BESTBUDDIES, 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.

BESTBUDDIES. 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.

BESTBUDDIES 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.

Marchania 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.



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.

BESTBUDDIES. 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.

BESTBUDDIES. 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.



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

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

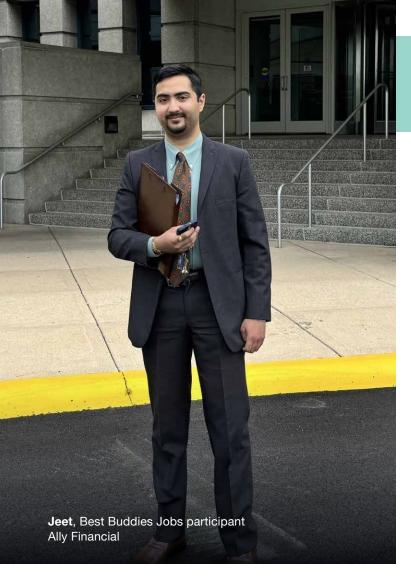


Best Buddies Jobs assists participants in finding meaningful employment, earning a competitive income, receiving benefits, and working alongside others in the community. The program offers people with IDD the opportunity to become financially independent, removing the need for government assistance or 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.



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

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.

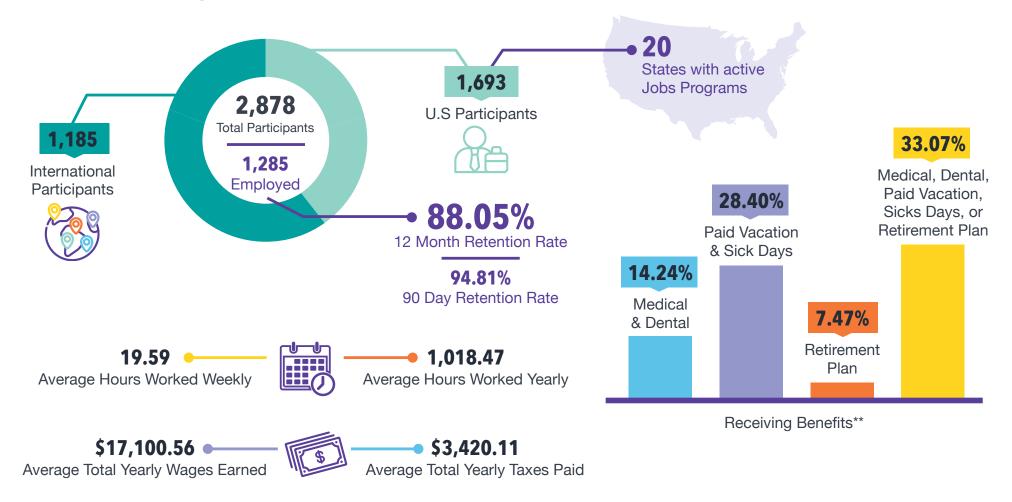
"Best Buddies worked hard to find me a job and provided accommodations throughout the hiring process in support of my disabilities," said Jeet. "My life improved, not only economically but mentally and socially."

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.

Key Jobs Program Stats



Top 4 Jobs Participants Highest Salaries With Benefits

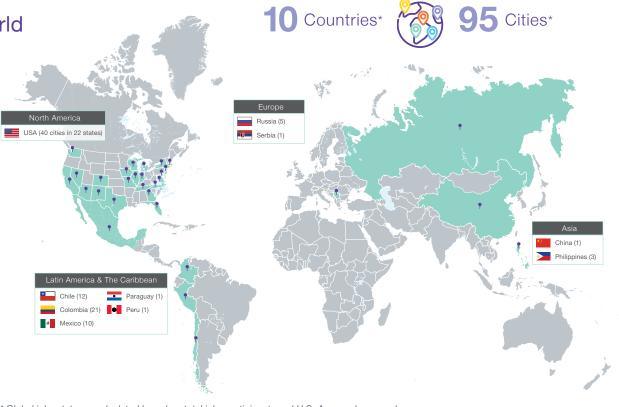
Salary	\$71,780.80	\$71,011.20	\$69,992	\$68,432
Name/	Andrew K. Los Angeles, CA	Nicole K. Los Angeles, CA	Nathaniel M. San Francisco, CA	Miguel H. Miami, FL
Benefits	Holiday Pay, Medical Care	Vacation Pay, Medical Care, Sick Leave, Sick Pay	Vacation Pay, Holiday Pay, Medical Care, Dental Care, Vision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





^{*} 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



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.

BESTBUDDIES. 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.

BESTBUDDIES. 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.



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

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.



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.

BESTBUDDIES. 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.



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

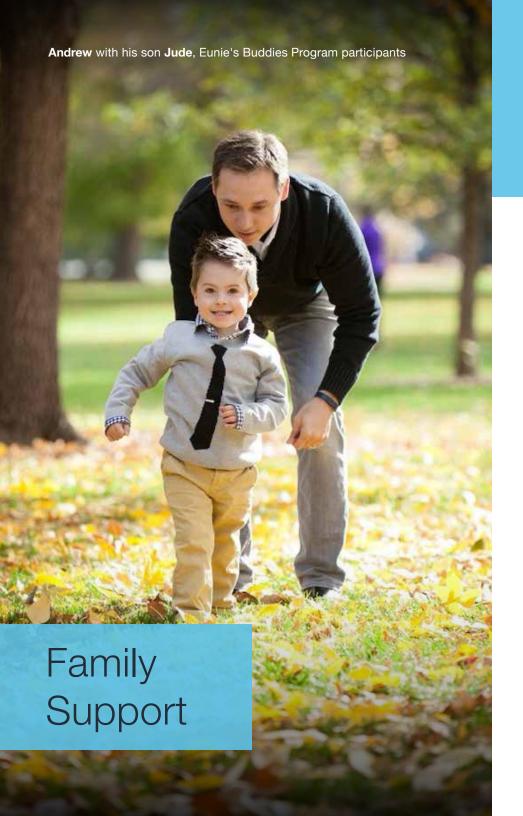
For Yvenie Joseph, becoming a resident of Best Buddies Living in Los Angeles has been truly life-changing. Before joining the program in January 2024, she faced immense challenges—moving from place to place without family support, struggling with her mental health, and ultimately living in a homeless 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."

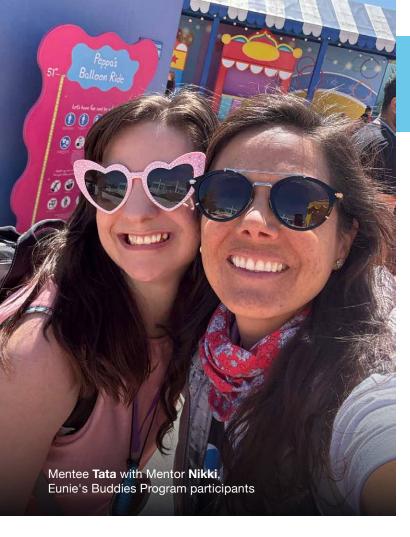


Best Buddies Family Support offers families the support and resources needed to navigate the journey of raising a child with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

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.



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

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

International Programs

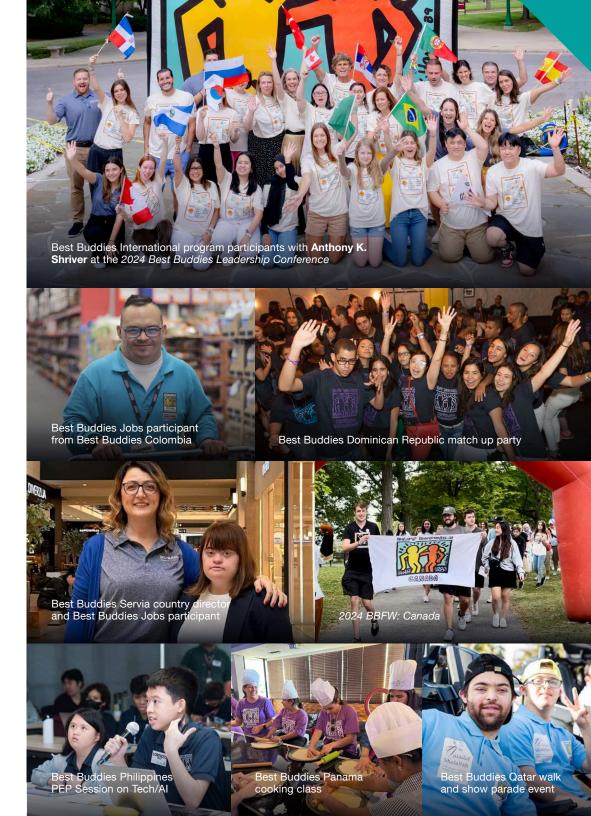
In 2024, the newly formed International Programs and Incubator Teams set out to strengthen global Best Buddies operations through expanded funding opportunities, strategic guidance, social media support, and training. Their primary goal was to deepen the impact of country programs by aligning efforts 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 Around The World

43 Countries & Territories



5 Continents

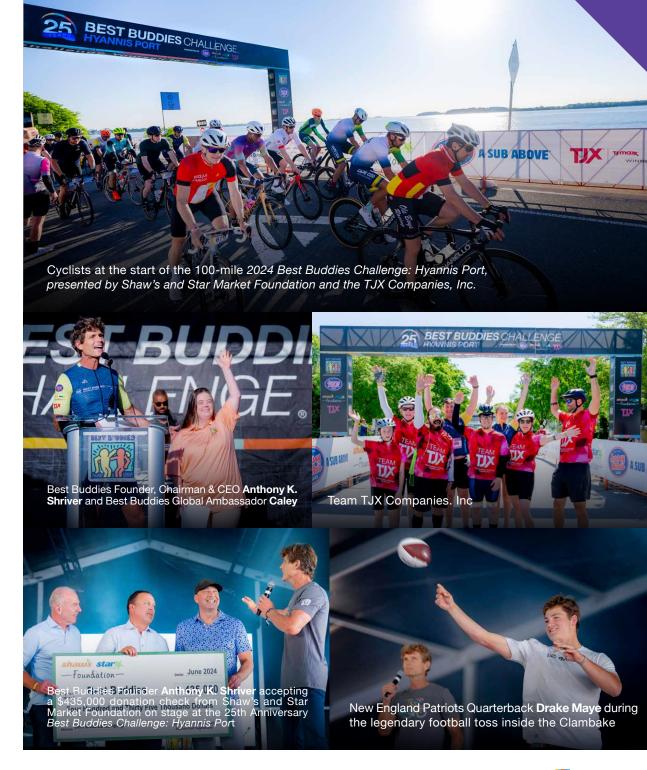




Best Buddies Challenge: Hyannis Port

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.





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.





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.

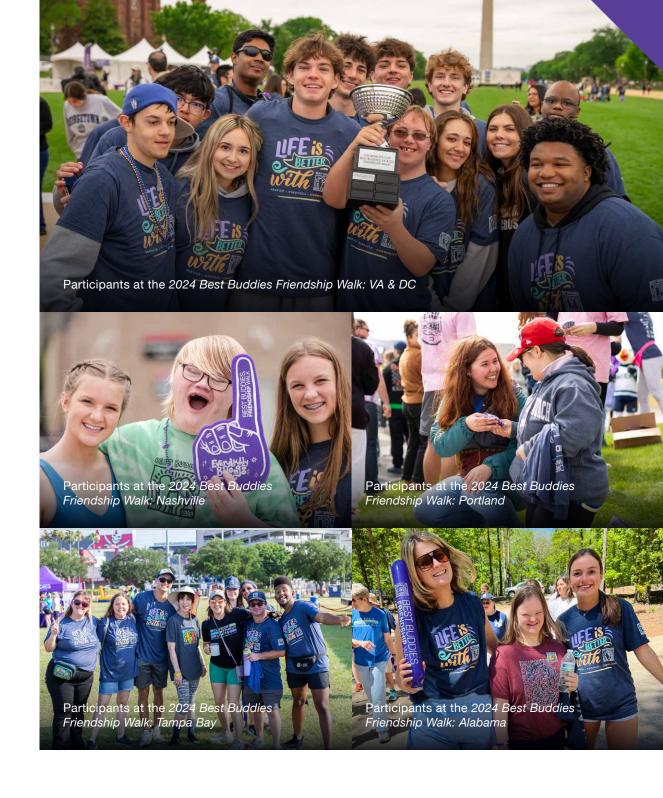
Best Buddies Friendship Balls & Proms

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.



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.



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.

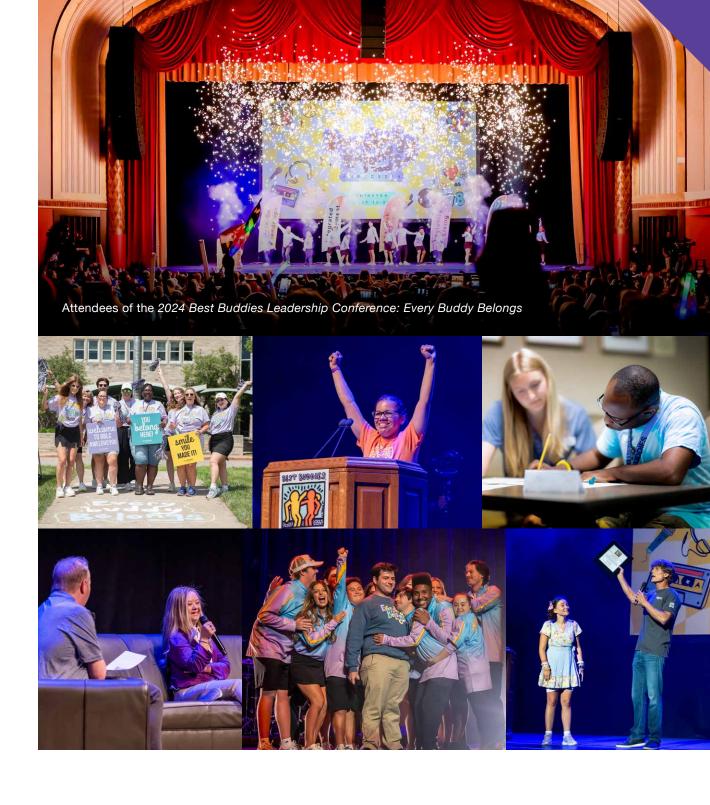


Best Buddies Leadership Conference

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.





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.

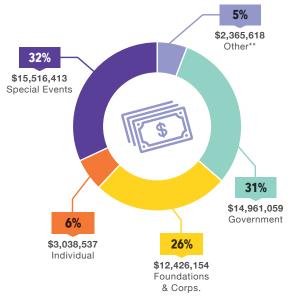




Financials

Consolidated Statement of Activities* (as of 12.31.24)





\$48,307,781

Total Domestic Revenue

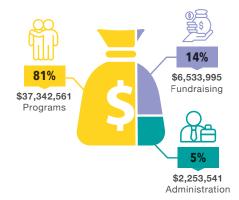
\$30,000,000

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

^{** &}quot;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

Liabilities and Net Assets

With donor restriction

\$45,701,688

Total Assets

Without donor restriction

Elabilities and Net 7 1050ts	
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	

Total Liabilities and Net Assets \$45,701,688

Total Net Assets

\$5,945,187

\$33,488,980

\$39,434,167



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Keith Allen HaringPop Artist, Creator of the Best Buddies Logo



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

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Best Buddies Founder Anthony K. Shriver and Jersey Mike's Subs Founder & CEO Peter Cancro with

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Best Buddies Founder Anthony K. Shriver and Jersey Milks
Best Buddies Global Ambassadors Fran Sheinberg and Armani Coulson

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\$10.000 to \$24.999

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Bahama Buck's Best BuddiesX Rosetta Bakery

Bia 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 Fiii Water

Five Guvs

Food 4 Less

Friends Marketplace Fruit Center of Milton

Fry's Food

Gundalow Gourmet

HMS Host Hannaford Harris Teeter Harvest Sensations

H-F-R

High Flying Foods @SFO

Jersev Mike's

Jimmy's Famous Seafood

Katella Bakerv

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

Addaene Addaene 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

Roval 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







Maryland Year in Review

2024 was a year of continued growth and expansion, marked by strong friendships, meaningful employment opportunities, and inspiring leadership for Best Buddies in Maryland. It was a year that truly showcased the power of inclusion and belonging.

Through our school Friendship Program, served 3,427 of students and successfully matched 459 in one-to-one friendships. Additionally, we were thrilled to add a new focus on transitions to help students prepare for life beyond high school. We welcomed 47 students from Walt Whitman and Bowie High Schools, who participated in 10 workshops covering essential skills, such as self-advocacy, self-determination, resume building, and interview preparation. This is a program we are excited to expand further in 2025.

The Best Buddies Leadership Conference (BBLC) made its triumphant return to Indiana University. It was a weekend full of new friendships, enhanced leadership skills, and countless memories. Over 1,500 participants from around the world attended, including 59 students, job participants, and ambassadors from Maryland. These participants returned to their schools, workplaces, and communities with new skills to further advance our mission of inclusion.

Among our chapter highlights this year were the annual Best Buddies Buddy Ball, Citizens Summer Fest, two Ambassador Summits, and several Ambassador Hangouts. These events continue to be central to our efforts to create a more inclusive and connected community.

The Best Buddies Friendship Walk, held at the University of Maryland on Saturday, May 4, 2024, was another major milestone. With almost 90 teams and over 735 participants, we raised more than \$314,000. We were honored to have University of Maryland Head Football Coach, Mike Locksley, and many players from the football team join us in supporting our mission of inclusion. This year, we saw record-breaking corporate sponsorship, and we are deeply grateful to our founding sponsor, Shulman Rogers, as well as our legacy sponsors and the many other corporate partners and teams that made this success possible.

A truly special event in 2024 was the Champion of the Year Gala at Live Casino and Hotel on October 21, 2024. The evening was a tremendous success, with over 200 guests and more than \$118,000 raised. Our Grand Champion, Mary Snowdon, raised an impressive \$23,687 dollars for Best Buddies in Maryland. The event also featured six local restaurants offering tasting portions of their favorite cuisines, making it a memorable night for all.

As I reflect on the incredible work we accomplished in 2024, I am reminded that none of it would have been possible without the dedication and commitment of so many individuals. Our team members, Advisory Board, school partners, participants, employer partners, community organizations, donors, and our passionate community members played an integral role in creating a more inclusive Maryland. We are forever grateful for your unwavering support, determination, and passion.

As we look to 2025, we're energized by the opportunities ahead. Together, we will build on our momentum and create an even greater impact.

Laura Nicolini, State Director, Maryland



Aidan & Christine

One-To-One Friendships

Howard High School, Ellicott City, MD

Before joining Best Buddies, Christine wasn't very involved in school activities and considered herself a little shy. That changed in 2022, when she became a part of Best Buddies. "It really helped me grow out of my shell and make friendships with people I did not know before," Christine added.

Aidan, who has Down syndrome, joined Best Buddies in 2020, during the pandemic. While the program offered virtual meetings at the time, Aidan's outgoing personality shined, and he was thrilled to be a part of a community of peers. Since then, Best Buddies has brought him joy and lasting friendships, some of which he keeps up with even after they've graduated.

Christine and Aidan were officially matched this year, and their friendship has been filled with fun, creativity, and laughter. One of their favorite activities is the annual Thanksgiving turkey build, where they use recycled materials to create a unique masterpiece. They also enjoy playing games at monthly events, having lunch together, and spending time in the media center. No matter what they're doing, Aidan's energy and enthusiasm make every moment exciting.

Since joining Best Buddies, Christine has met new people, gain confidence, and formed a meaningful friendship with Aidan. Likewise, Aidan has found a friend who shares his excitement for fun activities and quality time. Their bond continues to grow, making every event, lunch, and creative project even more special.



One-To-One Friendships Key Program Stats MD

Elementary Schools Middle Schools High Schools

15 158 36 251 90 2,257
Chapters Participants Chapters Participants

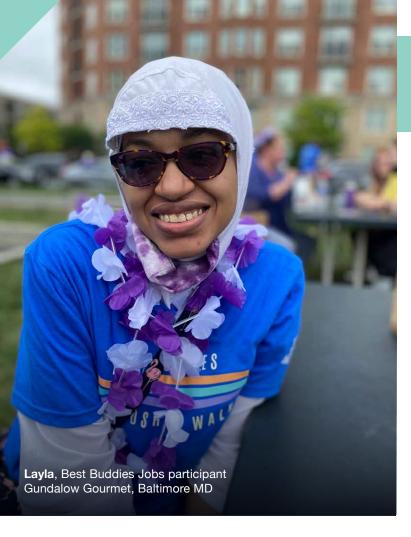
Colleges Citizens e-Buddies

15430246201ChaptersParticipantsParticipantsParticipants



There is never a dull moment with Aidan, and he always puts a smile on everyone's faces."

- Christine





Integrated Employment Key Program Stats MD

Jobs

42 63

Participants Participants

Employed

Layla

Integrated Employment

Gundalow Gourmet, Baltimore, MD

When Layla first entered the Best Buddies Jobs program, her professionalism and drive immediately stood out. She was a perfect addition to the program and was soon matched with Gundalow Gourmet, where her impact was felt right away. Gundalow Gourmet quickly became an incredible employer partner, supporting Best Buddies at major events by making speeches, raising funds, and donating food. Layla's hard work and enthusiasm fit seamlessly with the team, and together they've created a lasting partnership.

Over the past two years at Gundalow Gourmet, Layla has learned a great deal and has enjoyed making new dishes. "I love being in the kitchen and learning new things," Layla shared. Recently, she mastered making pasta salad with roasted squash and enjoys preparing chicken enchiladas and salads. Her growth in the kitchen is a testament to her dedication, and she continues to build on her skills every day.

Layla's supervisor, Patty DeSa, couldn't be more proud of her. "Layla is organized, talented, smart, funny, kind, and very independent," Patty said. "She's the queen of lasagnas, chicken enchiladas, and salads in our kitchen. Layla is always up for any last-minute task and does it with efficiency and a positive attitude. She's one of the hardest-working people I know, and it's a privilege to work with her."

Looking ahead, Layla is excited to continue learning and growing at Gunadlow Gourmet. "I can't wait to see what I get to learn next," she said. With the support of her incredible employer and her own drive, Layla is sure to continue thriving.



Layla is one of the hardest-working people I know, and it's a privilege to work with her." - Patty DeSa, Kitchen Supervisor





Leadership Development Key Program Stats MD

Ambassadors : Promoters

70 24 347

Ambassadors Chapters Participants

Transitions

49 Participants

Anderson

Leadership Development

Ambassador, Bethesda, MD

Anderson joined Best Buddies during a time of isolation—his high school experience began during the pandemic, making it difficult to form lasting connections. "I felt pretty lonely at times," he remembers. Before joining Best Buddies, Anderson's routine was repetitive, with few opportunities to meet new friends. That all changed when he found his place in Best Buddies. Through virtual meetings, he was introduced to his buddy family and developed a close bond with his buddy, Katie. When school returned in person, Best Buddies supported him in making meaningful connections, and Anderson quickly became an active and engaged member of his chapter.

As Anderson's passion for inclusion grew, he decided to take on a leadership role. In his sophomore year, he became Buddy Director on the Executive Board, his first leadership position. "Best Buddies showed me a path to unlocking my potential," he shares. Embracing the chance to be a self-advocate, Anderson worked to bring guest speakers to chapter meetings and organized dance parties that inspired his peers. It was through this leadership that Anderson discovered his passion for motivating others. His newfound confidence led to the launch of his own DJ business, where he's now completed over 50 paid jobs and numerous pro-bono gigs for nonprofits.

Anderson's leadership skills didn't stop there. He expanded his involvement by joining student government, becoming a teacher's assistant, and managing the JV basketball team. As the first special needs assistant coach at Open Door Sports, Anderson has become a key advocate for inclusion and self-empowerment. "Best Buddies gave me the chance to take on roles that allowed me to grow as a leader and advocate," he says.

In addition to his leadership journey, Anderson's role as an Ambassador through the Transition Program at Walt Whitman High School has been life changing. Through this program, he and his peers develop essential skills like resume building and interview preparation, paving the way for a brighter future. "Best Buddies has the power to help people with disabilities make meaningful friendships and be included," Anderson says. As an Ambassador, Anderson continues to advocate for the inclusion and potential of individuals with IDD.

The world may not have seen my potential, but Best Buddies did, and that means everything to me." - Anderson



Programs staff for their collaborative effort in creating this report. Individuals listed below played a major role in its development:

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