

Welcome TO THE CITIZENS PROGRAM Best Buddies



WHAT IS CITIZENS?

Overview

The Best Buddies Citizens program is a **one-to-one adult friendship program** for adults with and without disabilities to connect with one another in meaningful friendship. It is created those ages 18 and up who are not already connected in one of our other Best Buddies friendship programs. It was started for adults all over our community who were looking for **sincere social connection** in their adult years.

We started the Citizens program in the Virginia and DC area in 2017 and have grown up to 250 adults. There are nearly 80 friendship matches all over our community and we cannot wait to have you be a part of the Citizens family.

Why it matters?

1 IN 3 ARE DISCONNECTED



Nearly one in three young adults had no community participation in the past year. With less social and community participation they likely have fewer opportunities to learn about jobs, schools, or training programs to further their learning.*

75% LIVE WITH FAMILY



75% of individuals with developmental disabilities live with a family member. Over 20% of those caregivers are over age 60.

BEST BUDDIES





Expectations of joining the program

What is Citizens?

Citizens is not a mentorship program, a care-providing system, a "big brother-big sister" volunteer position, or a day program- it is a **social friendship program** for the purpose of **mutual**, respectful, and fulfilling adult friendship where everyone involved is treated as an **adult** and is included and appreciated for who they are and all they offer!

How often should I connect with my buddy?

This program requires at least **two in-person interactions per month** and at least one form of communication (text, call, or email) **per week** for 12 months. Both the hang-outs and communication can take on any style that specific friendship finds beneficial. **Expectations and personal boundaries** can be set at the onset of the friendship at the initial match meeting.

Mutuality & Reciprocity

We consider both those with a disability and those without to be a "volunteer" and fully hope and expect both adults to treat this friendship like **any other adult friendship**. We do not expect the peer buddy to have to do all the travel, pay for any of the activities for their buddy, plan all of the hangouts, or lead all of the communication rather hope that it is an equal effort on both adults part.

Need help?

We do not except you to form this new friendship on your own. We have a whole family of Citizens members who are here to support. We have quarterly Citizens trainings, and also have program managers who deeply care about the health of your friendship.

Friendly Reminders:

1. You both are adults starting a new friendship so as new conflicts arise try to **resolve** them as you would with any other adult friendship before reaching out to staff.
2. You may talk about dissolving a friendship only after 2 months of trying the initial friendship fully and the reasons for dissolving are mutually discussed.
3. The **Friendship Update** is the primary way to update staff on how the match is progressing.

"Friendship makes life doable"

Ideas for hanging out

Your friendship truly is what you make it.

It is up to you two to take time and effort to discover what the other person enjoys and what they believe makes up a real and meaningful friendship. Give it time and don't give up- friendships don't form overnight!



GROUP ACTIVITIES

Each month, **once a month**, Best Buddies will fully plan and host a **group event** open to all matched and unmatched Citizens in the program. Occasionally, the events will also be open to family and friends of Citizens as well! These activities range in price and location and include a wide variety of activities for all! These are unique opportunities for you to meet other Citizens and to feel a part of the Citizen group as a whole. For more details on our group events, sign up for our monthly newsletter (sign up information on the back page).

ONE-TO-ONE ACTIVITIES

Be creative! Listen well! Have fun!



Festivals	Zoo	Movie nights
Museums	Sporting events	Makeovers
Walks	Mini-golf	Bowling
Dinners	Shopping	Concerts
Lunches	Painting	Swimming
Happy Hours	Fishing	Cooking night
Caroling		Pumpkin Carving

Lead your own event

We are looking for more adults and adult pairs to step up and lead mini-events within their neighborhoods. Email Natalie if interested!

have activity ideas?

You are free to put up any of your activity ideas to the entire Citizens group via our Facebook page or email MC at mariaeliaselias@bestbuddies.org

Stay Connected

To stay involved in the Citizens group events and also your friends life it is important that you take initiative to get connected to the various ways we share information.



Friendship Updates

Each month, you will see a link to the Friendship Update in the Citizens Newsletter. This is a 5 question survey you need to fill out by the end of each month to let Best Buddies know how your friendship is going.



Monthly Emails

Search: <https://bit.ly/2kFfZrQ> and in the top left-hand corner you will find a "subscribe" button.



Facebook group

Join our Citizens Facebook page at:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/bbcrcitizens/>



General Instagram

Follow **BestBuddesVADC** to see up-to-date stories of Best Buddies!



Personal Information

Make sure to get each others numbers, address, and emails before leaving your match meeting!

