One-To-One Friendships

Integrated Employment

Leadership Development

Inclusive Living
Contents

4 Message From Our Chairman
6 Why We Matter
7 Changing Lives
8 Mission, Who We Serve & Mission Pillars
10 Our Impact
13 2019 Highlights
14 Milestones
16 One-To-One Friendship
20 Integrated Employment
26 Leadership Development
30 Inclusive Living
34 Best Buddies International Programs
40 2019 Expansion Programs
42 Signature Events
66 Board of Directors & Executive Team
68 Our Supporters
74 Participating Employers
76 Financials
78 State Year In Review

BEST BUDDIES
BESTBUDDIES.ORG

Best Buddies Ambassador Bret Fleming
Message From Our Chairman

Dear Friends,

In 2019, Best Buddies celebrated its 30th Anniversary, a remarkable milestone for the organization. When I started Best Buddies 30 years ago at Georgetown University, I never imagined that this organization would impact the lives of more than 1.2 million people across the globe, spanning 57 countries and five continents. Furthermore, if someone had told me then that I would live to see individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) working in tech labs earning more than $50,000, participating in pension plans and receiving full healthcare benefits; reporting for a national television show, testifying in front of Congress, and delivering the keynote address at an annual corporate conference in Silicon Valley; I would not have believed any of it. Thirty years later, our world is much more inclusive and diverse, although there is still so much more to be done.

To celebrate our 30th Anniversary, we were excited to launch the organization’s newest program, Best Buddies Living. This program represents our organization’s fourth key mission pillar, Inclusive Living. Best Buddies Living provides individuals with and without IDD the opportunity to live together in a vibrant community that supports all residents in advancing their employment, financial literacy, continued education and life skills as they work to achieve their personal goals.

As we look ahead, I am excited to watch the next generation of leaders step up to the plate to guide our global movement to new levels. I was only in my early 20’s when all of this began, and I have never lost faith in the endless creativity, genius level of talent, leadership and power that young people have. We will need each of you to help lead our movement forward as I am confident that the spirit of Best Buddies will continue to live on through each of you.

As we celebrate the impact Best Buddies has had on over a million lives, please know that I am eternally grateful to each and every one of you who have supported this organization over the past 30 years. Without you, we would not have reached this momentous milestone. From the bottom of my heart, thank you for making this world a better place for people with special abilities.

In Friendship,

Anthony K. Shriver
Founder & CEO, Best Buddies International
Why We Matter

Throughout nearly six decades, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) have gained access to opportunities that have improved their lives. Despite this, our society is far from being inclusive in every aspect. The number of people within the IDD community who still face access barriers, social isolation and discrimination is staggering. Many people with IDD are unemployed and do not experience the simple joys of genuine friendships that people without disabilities often take for granted.

This is where Best Buddies International plays a vital role. Best Buddies is the world’s largest organization dedicated to ending the social, physical and economic isolation of the 200 million people with IDD. For individuals within this community, Best Buddies serves as a lifeline to creating life-long friendships, securing successful jobs, living independently and gaining self-confidence.

Currently, an estimated 81%* of adults (18+) with IDD do not have a paid job in the community. The Best Buddies Jobs program strives to place participants with IDD in supported employment with the potential to receive benefits and earn a total income upwards of $900,000 over 30 years. In turn, these individuals will contribute $153,000 in taxes back into the economy, rather than receiving nearly $895,000 in Federal SSI and Medicaid benefits during that time period.

This is just one of the countless examples of how Best Buddies is working to improve the quality of life for individuals with IDD. Through the creation of meaningful one-to-one friendships with peers without disabilities, the pursuit of integrated employment opportunities, the development of leadership skills for individuals with IDD, Best Buddies is helping people with IDD grow one friendship, one job, one leader, and one inclusive living opportunity at a time. For more information, please visit BESTBUDDIES.ORG

“Best Buddies serves as a lifeline to creating life-long friendships, securing successful jobs, living independently and gaining self-confidence.”

“Source: 2016-17 National Core Indicators Survey

Changing Lives

As a mom, my biggest concern for Randy in high school, and after, was that he would feel alone. I think that isolation is a large concern when you are the parent of someone with an IDD. Best Buddies helps to ensure that does not happen. As a mom, there is comfort knowing that Randy has friends and that, even in times of great isolation, the friendships Randy made in Best Buddies remain and those friends are there to help each other through good times and bad. It is difficult to find the proper words to explain the happiness I feel when I look at Randy’s accomplishments. So, I can simply say that I am grateful and blessed to watch Randy live his most independent life in the way he chooses to live it.”

- Nina Greene, mother of Best Buddies participant Randy and South Florida Advisory Board Member

He suddenly was sitting at lunch with his new friends that he met in Best Buddies. Then he started to go to football and baseball games at the high school with his friends in Best Buddies.

"What has given me the most joy as a mother is seeing just how similar Randy’s life and problems are to any other 25-year-old’s life. This is because Randy is living his most independent life with the good and the not so good. The life he lives today—having attended college and now living and working independently—was not a life I allowed myself to dream about for him, but he did. He wanted these things, and he constantly pushed for them on his path to independence. Randy never gave up. To see him now living independently as a kind and caring man, with his sense of determination and happiness, makes me beam with pride and joy. My life is filled with love because I am Randy’s mom.

I think of how, before Best Buddies, Randy’s social life was essentially my social life and my friends were basically his only friends. Nobody should grow up feeling that way. Once he joined Best Buddies in high school, things changed for Randy.

He started to have a social life. He suddenly was sitting at lunch with his new friends that he met in Best Buddies. Then, he started to go to football and baseball games at the high school with his friends in Best Buddies. I began to have to wait up for him to get home at night on the weekends because now he was out with his friends. He had so many plans that it was hard to keep up.

Best Buddies Ambassador Zach

Randy and his mother Nina at the Best Buddies Miami Gala

*Source: 2016-17 National Core Indicators Survey
Best Buddies International is the world’s largest organization dedicated to ending the social, physical and economic isolation of the 200 million people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Our programs empower the special abilities of people with IDD by helping them form meaningful friendships with their peers, secure successful jobs, live independently, improve public speaking, self-advocacy and communication skills, and feel valued by society.

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 and inclusive living for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

Who We Serve

The IDD community that Best Buddies serves includes, but is not limited to, people with Down syndrome, autism, fragile X syndrome, Williams syndrome, cerebral palsy, traumatic brain injury and other undiagnosed disabilities.

Programs

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

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

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

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.

Integrated Employment
Secures jobs for people with IDD, allowing them to earn an income, pay taxes, and continuously and independently support themselves.

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.

An estimated 81% of adults (18+) with developmental disabilities do not have a paid job in the community. The Best Buddies Jobs program strives to place participants with IDD in supported employment, with the potential to receive benefits and earn a total income upwards of $900K over 30 years. In turn, these individuals will contribute $153K in taxes back into the economy, rather than receive nearly $895K in Federal SSI and Medicaid benefits during that time period.

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

BEST BUDDIES, Ambassadors
Offers people with 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, workplaces and government.

BEST BUDDIES, Promoters
Empowers youth to become advocates for people with IDD and help open new Best Buddies chapters and programs by organizing special events that promote awareness to the disability rights movement.

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
Provides 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.
Our Impact

3,021 Chapters
129,103 Participants
1,291,030 Impacted
50 States
57 Countries

One-To-One Friendship

- 525 Middle School Chapters
- 1,356 High School Chapters
- 550 College Chapters

Integrated Employment

- 33,836 Weekly Hrs. Worked
- 1,657,958 Yearly Hrs. Worked
- $4,327,271 Yearly Taxes Paid
- $21,636,353 Yearly Wages Earned

Leadership Development

- 352 Elementary Schools Promoters Chapters
- 70 Middle School Promoters Chapters
- 158 High School Promoters Chapters
- 10 College Promoters Chapters

Inclusive Living

- 804 Ambassadors
- 131 College Promoters
- 5,180 Elementary Promoters
- 790 Middle School Promoters
- 4,623 High School Promoters

Average Total Participant Stats

- 29,834 Colleges
- 63,805 High Schools
- 12,713 Middle Schools
- 7,554 Citizens
- 2,057 e-Buddies

All program stats are as of 12/31/2019, and reflect the most recent Best Buddies program year (July 1 – June 30).

2019 Highlights

Launches

- Best Buddies opens offices in China and Ukraine to serve a new community of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) on a global scale.
- The Best Buddies Jobs program begins operating in 10 new markets: Cape Cod, Massachusetts; Des Moines, Iowa; Long Beach, Orange County and Sacramento, California; Tampa, Florida; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Peoria, Illinois; Troy, Michigan; and the Dominican Republic.

Partnerships

- Best Buddies joins forces with Autism Speaks and Special Olympics, under the leadership of Entertainment Industry Foundation, to launch Delivering Jobs, an inclusion campaign designed to create pathways to one million employment and leadership opportunities for people with autism, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy and other intellectual and developmental disabilities by 2025.
- MOD Pizza commits to its first nationwide partnership with Best Buddies focused on raising awareness for inclusive hiring practices and raising a minimum of $50,000 to support Best Buddies programs. MOD has approximately 300 supported employees with IDD across its 455+ locations in the U.S. and U.K. Throughout the month of October, MOD donated a portion of all sales of a select menu item to Best Buddies.

Key Events

- Best Buddies officially launches its fourth mission pillar, Inclusive Living. BESTBUDDIES® Living provides an integrated experience in which people with and without IDD live independently in a dynamic environment where they can learn, grow, and thrive.
- In March, Best Buddies with Fundación MAPFRE launches a Pre-Employment Training Program in Massachusetts to prepare Friendship program participants ages 14-22 with IDD for the transition into the Jobs program.

Local program participants getting together at the Buddies Living’s flagship residence in Westwood, Los Angeles
Anthony K. Shriver charters the original Best Buddies Chapter while a junior at Georgetown University in 1987.

Incorporated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization on January 19, 1989, BEST BUDDIES® becomes America’s first national, unified, social, and recreational program for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

Best Buddies establishes the Best Buddies Fine Art Collection, featuring masterpieces by Keith Haring, Roy Lichtenstein and Robert Rauschenberg.

Best Buddies hosts the first unified Leadership Conference, training both college student leaders and people with IDD by providing intensive lessons in public speaking, management, team building, problem solving and leadership skills.

Best Buddies launches BEST BUDDIES®Citizens, a friendship program that pairs adults with IDD with their working peers who do not have disabilities.

Best Buddies launches BEST BUDDIES®Jobs, a supported employment program, targeting high-paying, white-collar jobs for people with IDD in Florida, California and Massachusetts.

Best Buddies establishes BEST BUDDIES®High Schools, pairing special education students in one-to-one friendships with high school volunteers without IDD.

The BEST BUDDIES® Middle Schools pilot program launches, reaching out to an even younger age group with the hope that inclusion of people with IDD will have a lasting effect on societal norms for the next generation.

e-BUDDIES® launches as a cutting-edge online friendship program.

Best Buddies hosts the most successful fundraising event in its history, the nationally televised inaugural Volvo Hearst Castle Challenge, a 100-mile bike ride along the Pacific Coast Highway chaired by California First Lady Maria Shriver.

For the first time, Best Buddies has programs in all 50 of the United States and on six continents.

Best Buddies celebrates 20 years of friendships and jobs in 2009.

For its 20th Anniversary, Best Buddies updates its mission statement: “To establish a global volunteer movement that creates opportunities for one-to-one friendships, integrated employment and leadership development for people with IDD.”

For the first time, Best Buddies has programs in 50 countries around the world.

BEST BUDDIES®Ambassadors becomes Best Buddies’ seventh formal program.

BEST BUDDIES® Promoters officially launches as the organization’s eighth program for the 2012–2013 school year. It is the first Best Buddies program open to elementary schools.

Best Buddies celebrates its 25th Anniversary.

Best Buddies launches the I’m In To Hire campaign to promote the business benefits of hiring people with IDD.

In October 2015, A&E Network partnered with Best Buddies International and premiered a new docu-series, “Born This Way,” which chronicled the lives of seven young adults with Down syndrome, several of whom were Best Buddies participants.

In May 2017, Best Buddies hosts the inaugural Mother’s Day Brunch in Malibu, CA, with Global Ambassador Cindy Crawford and her daughter, Kaia Gerber.

In April 2018, Best Buddies Global Ambassador Tom Brady travels to Qatar to launch an integrated employment initiative in partnership with the country’s Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy, Qatar Museums and Best Buddies Qatar participants.

In October 2018, Best Buddies is featured on ESPN’s 50 Game Changers – a docu-series about the achievements of individuals with IDD and the game changers who promote inclusion for people with IDD in the sports world and beyond.


Best Buddies officially launches its fourth mission pillar, Inclusive Living. BEST BUDDIES®, 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.

In March 2019, Best Buddies with Fundación MAPFRE launches a Pre-Employment Training Program in Massachusetts to prepare Friendship program participants ages 14–22 with IDD for the transition into the Jobs program.

In October 2019, under the leadership of the Entertainment Industry foundation, Best Buddies, Special Olympics and Autism Speaks, launch Delivering Jobs, a campaign to create pathways to one million employment and leadership opportunities for people with IDD by 2025.
Citizens

For people with IDD, the absence of meaningful friendships extends into adulthood. After age 21, some individuals with IDD may never spend time with anyone besides a paid caregiver and family. 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.

Middle Schools, High Schools & Colleges

In today’s schools, students with IDD enter the same building and walk the same hallways as their peers, but they often miss out on key elements of the school experience such as sitting with friends at lunch, attending homecoming or prom, or joining a club.

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 they also help facilitate an environment of inclusion throughout the school and in the community.

Citizens

For people with IDD, the absence of meaningful friendships extends into adulthood. After age 21, some individuals with IDD may never spend time with anyone besides a paid caregiver and family. 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

In 2019, e-Buddies served 2,057 total participants. These participants exchanged more than 30,000 e-mails, and also posted more than 500 messages on the e-Buddies Community message boards. e-Buddies was also used as a teaching tool in the classroom by more than 100 special education teachers and other disabilities professionals across the country.

One-to-One Friendship Programs

Without love, support and friends, life may feel isolating – this is a reality people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) have often been 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.
Tanner & Tyler
Friendship Program Buddy Pair, Higley High School, Gilbert, AZ

“I think at the heart of inclusion is the belief that everyone has something to contribute and everyone is worthy of being loved.” - Tanner

Though they have only been matched for a year, Tanner and Tyler’s friendship is so strong it seems like they have known each other their entire lives.

Tanner said, “Tyler is actually a pretty big reason why I got involved with Best Buddies. Tyler is so compassionate and energetic with everyone that he meets. He quickly taught me how to carry on that kind of love for others.”

“Tanner and Tyler have become such an inspirational buddy pair,” explained Mrs. Wittenburg, their Best Buddies advisor. They spend birthdays together and see each other in unified sports daily. Tanner tries to keep up with Tyler’s outgoing and sarcastic personality, but sometimes gets caught off his feet by Tyler’s zingers. Tanner, being our schools Student Council President, has really been able to show the campus what a true buddy pair looks like, as well as what Best Buddies has to offer!”

Tanner and Tyler have truly become best friends. Tyler said, “I love Best Buddies because I love hanging out with Tanner --- he’s my best friend. He takes me out to lunch, we go on double dates, we hang out all the time and he came to my birthday party. I love Tanner.”

There is no doubt that Tanner and Tyler will stay friends for the long haul and will continue to show the world what Best Buddies is all about! Tanner stated, “Any love I show to Ty is returned tenfold, and I think kindness and inclusion are often like that, because they are truly the gifts that keep on giving!”

“He’s my best friend. He takes me out to lunch, we go on double dates, we hang out all the time and he came to my birthday party. I love Tanner.”

-Tyler
Since its inception, Best Buddies Jobs has assisted thousands of participants in earning an income, paying taxes, receiving benefits and working in an environment alongside others in the community. The Jobs program offers the opportunity for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) to become financially independent through their own efforts, removing the need for government assistance or parental support. This program focuses on white-collar jobs, which sets it apart from so many others. Best Buddies assists individuals in finding jobs that are enjoyable, inclusive and competitive in terms of pay.

Jobs

Best Buddies Jobs furthers the integration of people with IDD into the community through supported employment. The focus is on developing competitive, integrated jobs 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. Best Buddies Jobs conducts a person-centered approach with each participant, working with the individual to ultimately achieve his or her personal employment goals. Coaching is provided in essential job interviewing skills, and once a job is secured, there is assistance with on-the-job training. Job placement for participants depend on factors such as their skills and abilities, location and vocational preference. Once fully adjusted to their job, Best Buddies supports participants with job coaching for continued career development.

The Jobs program prides itself on developing employment opportunities in professional environments and focuses on white-collar jobs such as receptionist, mail room assistant, file clerk, office assistant, front desk assistant and retail associate. Employers range from some of the top law firms and talent agencies to well-known retail businesses and luxury hotels. The states with active Best Buddies Jobs programs as of December 31, 2019 include California, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and Wisconsin.
Key Jobs Program Stats

- **15** States with active Jobs Programs
- **2,517** Total Participants
- **2,051** U.S Participants
- **1,612** Total Employed
- **94.07%** Retention Rate**
- **89 Cities**
- **11 Countries**

Top 5 Jobs Participants

- **Highest Hourly Rates**
  - Cristen M. Holland & Knight, Boston, MA: $24.36
  - Adraine A. Jones Lang LaSalle, New York, NY: $25.00

- **Highest Salaries With Benefits**
  - Cristen M. Holland & Knight (Boston): $50,668
  - Eric H. Fried Frank Harris Shriver & Jacobson: $46,228
  - Paul P. Whiting Turner: $45,344
  - Jean Paul L. Jones Lang LaSalle (JLL) Google: $44,616

- **Average Total Yearly Wages Earned** $21,636,353
- **Average Total Yearly Taxes Paid** $4,327,271

**Best Buddies Jobs Around the World**

- **11 Countries**
- **89 Cities**

**Top 5 Jobs Participants**

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<tr>
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<th>Name</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Hourly Rate</th>
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**Key Jobs Program Stats**

- **33,836** Average Total Hours Worked
- **1,657,958** Yearly Hours Worked
- **26.81%** Paid Vacation/Sick Days
- **16.76%** Receiving Benefits**
- **8.45%** 401K Plan
- **33,836** Weekly
- **50,936** Medical & Dental
- **401K Plan**
- **4,327,271** Average Total Yearly Wages Earned
- **$21,636,353** Average Total Yearly Wages Earned
- **1,515** International Participants
- **1,612** Total Participants
- **94.07%** Retention Rate**
- **2,517** Total Participants
- **26.81%** Paid Vacation/Sick Days
- **16.76%** Receiving Benefits**
- **8.45%** 401K Plan
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- **11 Countries
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**Notes**

- Global jobs stats are calculated based on total job participants and U.S. average hours and wages.
- **Benefits received by US BB Job participants.
- All Jobs Program stats are as of 12/31/19.
Fred
Jobs Program Participant, Central Park Conservancy, New York, NY

“I am so proud that I have been working at the Central Park Conservancy in New York City as part of the Best Buddies Jobs program since August 2016! Before that, I was part of the Citizens program and was working part-time at a movie theatre. I knew I wanted to get a better, full-time job, but was not sure how to do that. The Citizens program manager connected me with the Jobs team, and it was like magic! I had two interviews with Central Park, and I told them about my experiences, and I got their attention. They offered me the job and I have been working as a groundskeeper ever since.”

“I love my job. Some of the tasks I have learned are mowing, weeding, mulching, raking, sweeping, planting and irrigation. One thing I am most proud of is that I now manage the volunteers who come to work in the park every Thursday. I worked hard to learn plant identification and I can now teach the volunteers how to identify which are the weeds and which are the plants. I tell the volunteers that we can learn a lot from each other and that it is ok to make mistakes. I treat my volunteers like a team and I am proud of this.”

According to Fred’s supervisor, “Fred is a great guy and takes great pride in his job. During the last year and a half, he has been improving his skills in managing the group of volunteers assigned to him; on top of that, he has learned to recognize many trees, shrubs and weeds, and this knowledge helps him manage, in a more productive way, the area he takes care of.”

When asked what he loves most about his job, Fred says, “I am thankful for my job. I have great benefits, a great salary and am also able to earn overtime pay. When the weather is bad and I must work outside all day, I always tell my job coach, ‘somebody’s got to do it’ or ‘it comes with the job.’ I think my positive attitude makes me a great employee.”

“I am thankful for my job. I have great benefits, a great salary and am also able to earn overtime pay.” - Fred
Best Buddies educates and empowers people with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities (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.

Ambassadors

Best Buddies Ambassadors is a program that provides training for participants with and without IDD in areas of 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. The program prepares people to not only become active agents of change, and informed, compelling advocates for the disability rights movement.

Ambassadors participate in trainings focused on the art of public speaking and advocacy. Once trained, they are expected to identify opportunities in their chapters, communities and states to share their stories and become more involved and empowered as citizens. They are encouraged to make high-profile connections, speak to state and national legislators about opportunities for people with IDD, present at recruitment fairs and Best Buddies events and develop partnerships in the community. Ambassadors also help fundraise, present to other interest groups and train their peers with IDD.

Participants are paired with a speech coach for the duration of their Ambassador training to assist with the writing and presentation of a speech. Speech coaches help Ambassadors in areas of brainstorming and organization, and serve as guides who provide one-on-one attention, as needed.

Promoters

Best Buddies Promoters empowers youth to become advocates for people with IDD by organizing and attending special events that promote inclusion and bringing awareness to the disability rights movement. 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, fundraisers and assemblies where they advocate for people with IDD, educate the public about inclusion and promote the ideals of Best Buddies’ mission. Throughout the school year, Best Buddies encourages all Promoters chapters to host as many activities as possible on and off campus that are inclusive of people with IDD.

Leadership Development Programs

Topher, Best Buddies Ambassador
Jada
Best Buddies Ambassador, Chicago, Illinois

From the time Jada Thompson was young, her mother told her that she would someday be speaking in front of important people and have an audience. “I knew what she was called to do as a verbal person on the autism spectrum; I knew she was meant to be the person to speak up,” her mother Deanna explains. Fast forward to 2018 when Jada found Best Buddies. She first joined the Jobs program, and her job coach recommended the Ambassador program. Near the end of 2018, Jada came to her first Ambassador training and explains that “it was the start of something magical.” These trainings, hosted throughout the year, help individuals learn to tell their stories, speak publicly, and advocate for inclusion. In 2019, Illinois trained 18 State Ambassadors, including Jada, to speak in their communities and build bridges of acceptance and understanding.

In Jada’s words, “Best Buddies has changed my life tremendously. It helped me be true to who I am and embrace my differences, and now I get to be myself unapologetically. I learned that I am brave and have a powerful, impactful voice. The Ambassador program has given me a chance to use that voice.” Jada has spoken at the Annual Best Buddies Leadership Conference, the Meeting of the MODs (receiving a standing ovation from 900 people), the Best Buddies Challenge: Hearst Castle, the Best Buddies Friendship Walk in Illinois, and more. Her Citizens buddy, Kara, talks of the pride she feels watching Jada speak: “She’s shy and extremely humble, but when she gets on stage, she speaks with love, truth, passion and an understanding that everyone in the room can feel. I’m lucky to call Jada one of my best friends and to be part of her journey as she continues to become a global impact to individuals with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities.”

Jada is going to be a Global Ambassador for Best Buddies International starting in 2020, along with two others from Illinois! To her, being an Ambassador means being a role-model and inspiration for others. She explains, “I want to educate people about the need for inclusion and to teach those with disabilities to be themselves. Be brave and don’t change who you are for anyone just because they don’t see your potential yet.” We are so proud of Jada and are looking forward to seeing the continued impact of her powerful story and voice!

“Best Buddies has changed my life tremendously. It helped me be true to who I am and embrace my differences, and now I get to be myself unapologetically.”
- Jada
Best Buddies staff and participants at the Best Buddies Living residence in Westwood, Los Angeles

Supporting and empowering individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) to live as integrated, contributing members in the larger community. The program encourages people with and without IDD to live together in a dynamic and enriching environment rooted in a college or university setting.

Inclusive Living Program

Living

Best Buddies Living locations are near school campuses – offering an environment that encourages the development of independent living skills, life-changing relationships, and educational pursuits in connection with college life.

The Living program is open to individuals over the age of 18 who are ready to embrace independent living. Residents are asked to participate in weekly group meals and activities, maintain employment or attend a higher education program, and support fellow residents when needed.

Program participants are immersed in the campus experience, attending college sports games, cultural events, holiday parties, volunteer opportunities, and other social activities alongside their student peers.

Each Inclusive Living location will have a unique pricing structure that includes room and board, onsite support, transportation and access to campus facilities and amenities, and Best Buddies team members onsite to support residents and ensure an inclusive environment. As of December 31, 2019, Best Buddies operated two Living residences --- one in Westwood, CA, and one in Washington, D.C.
Ain

Best Buddies Living Resident, University of California, Los Angeles, CA

Born and raised in Pakistan, Ain joined the Best Buddies Living program at the start of his freshman year at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). He was drawn to Best Buddies Living because it was an entirely new concept that the university dorms didn’t offer. The living is completely integrated, 100% inclusive and beyond that, the program’s description convinced Ain, “the residence didn’t just include sleeping accommodations, but it was fully immersive, offering weekly activities and THAT was what convinced me to apply.”

Ain and his brother Adeel reside in the Best Buddies Living’s flagship residence in Westwood, just minutes away from the UCLA campus, with Residential Manager Shammir Khan, and Best Buddies participants Aric and Austin. Since day one, Ain experienced the Best Buddies mission of inclusion and acceptance. “Everyone was incredibly hospitable, our roommates cooked dinner for us, took our luggage to our rooms and immediately helped us feel welcome in a new country.”

Ain shares that acclimating became easier with support from the Best Buddies Living program: “activities, like grocery shopping or public parking, add up and end up forming a big part of your day – they can create discomfort when you move to a new place, but we didn’t experience that because they were there with us since the very first day.”

Through this program Ain and his roommates participate in group outings, house dinners and Best Buddies meet-ups. Ain describes the Best Buddies Living experience as enlightening, providing a better understanding of the challenges and social barriers people with IDD face.

“In Pakistan, we don’t talk about people with IDD and their rights. This experience has allowed me to recognize the intricacies of IDD – you can read about it, but you have to immerse yourself in inclusion to better understand, as we have through Best Buddies Living.”

Inspired by Best Buddies Living, Ain plans to get more involved with UCLA’s Best Buddies chapter and continue growing alongside his new Best Buddies family. “The biggest thing that Best Buddies Living achieves is facilitating personal and professional growth. We’ve all grown so much, socially – we all interact with each other’s friends and encourage them to get involved with Best Buddies programs. We learn from each other daily, especially Adeel and I from Austin, Aric and Shammir, about how to excel in school and in the workforce. We vent, laugh and enjoy each other’s input and advice.”

“We’re more than roommates, we’re friends, great friends with unique perspectives and diverse experiences! We’re all working to break the stigma and proving that this should be the norm on every college campus and in society, as a whole.”

“This experience has allowed me to recognize the intricacies of IDD – you can read about it, but you have to immerse yourself in inclusion to better understand, as we have through Best Buddies Living.” - Ain
International Program participants representing more than 30 countries with Founder & CEO Anthony K. Shriver (center) at the 2019 Best Buddies Leadership Conference in Bloomington, Indiana.

Best Buddies International Programs
International Programs

Despite challenging headwinds in 2019, Best Buddies continued to expand internationally.

In 2019, Best Buddies International launched Friendship programs in both China and the Ukraine. Three Open Houses were held in Europe to share the importance of friendship and inclusion at schools and universities - including one in Dublin, Ireland; Kiev, Ukraine; and Paris, France. Response to Best Buddies Friendship programs has been overwhelmingly positive and has included excellent media coverage including a segment on the news in Ukraine.

An International Jobs Training Program was held in Boston last spring and the Dominican Republic joined Brazil, Chile, Colombia, the United Kingdom, Mexico, Peru and Russia in opening a Best Buddies Jobs program in 2019. More than 1,500 individuals with IDD are now part of our Best Buddies Jobs programs overseas, with over 800 participants employed to date. Our program participation grew by 13% with U.S. corporations in the Asian region reaching out to Best Buddies to learn more about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities and the possibility of establishing a Jobs program with their corporate partners. Diversity, Inclusion and “Decent Work” are all key components of the 17 United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals. Companies today are eager to promote their corporate social responsibility as a record number of millennials join the workforce in search of employers who wish to make a difference in society.

Goals for 2020 include reaching 2,000 jobs worldwide by launching an integrated employment program in at least three new countries and recruiting corporate partners on a global scale.

Remote solutions are currently being put in place to continue our chapter activities and trainings around the globe, while events such as the Virtual Friendship Walk will be expanded to 14 Latin American countries in an effort to raise funds for the region and continue promoting our mission. Best Buddies will also continue to introduce Friendship programs to new countries including Portugal and Serbia, in 2020. In addition to hosting Open House events and providing staff trainings to launch the programs throughout Europe and Asia, the International Programs team will actively pursue additional funding opportunities from high net-worth individuals, foundation grants and supranational entities like the European Union.

“More than 1,500 individuals with IDD are now part of our Best Buddies Jobs programs overseas, with over 800 participants employed to date.”
Expansion in the U.S.

Best Buddies’ Expansion Team’s focuses on reaching areas of the country that do not have a physical office, but are aiming to bring one to the area by increasing awareness about the mission, piloting new programs and raising funds to support our efforts. The Expansion team saw a tremendous amount of growth in 2019 through programmatic initiatives, donor cultivation, and fundraising efforts. The team worked tirelessly to build relationships with companies like Divergent and SPMG that have become national partnerships. Newly hired staff in Michigan provided local support to our efforts, paving the way for the team to launch a partnership with Kelly Services and hire a Best Buddies Jobs staff member in the region. Through the support and dedication of volunteers, committees, and donors, we look forward to hiring staff in Minnesota, Oklahoma, Oregon, and Washington based on the successes of 2019!

Throughout 2019, the Expansion team and worked with “on-the-ground” volunteers to open 57 new school Friendship and Promoter chapters. Every state in the U.S. officially has a school-based program and Best Buddies’ mission was expanded by launching Citizens programs in Michigan, Minnesota, Oregon, South Carolina and Washington, laying the groundwork to open programs in Colorado and Kansas and expand programmatic efforts in Michigan and Minnesota.

In order to further the organization’s mission and continue to serve areas that do not have a physical Best Buddies office, the Expansion Team relies heavily on volunteers to help run programs and raise funds. In seven different areas across the country, staff and a team of committed volunteers executed Friendship Walks that collectively raised over $76,000. The greatest success in fundraising events was through signature Champion of the Year galas in six different markets (three of those were new markets) which raised close to $920,000 collectively.

On behalf of Advisory Boards and the Expansion team staff, we would like to thank you for your continued support of our efforts to reach more individuals across the country. We have big plans for 2020 and cannot wait to impact the lives of even more individuals!
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: volunteering, advocating and pursuing partnership and sponsorship opportunities. A few of the organization’s prominent events are featured on the following pages.
Best Buddies Challenge: Hyannis Port, presented by Pepsi-Cola and Shaw’s and Star Market Foundation

May 31 – June 1, 2019 / Boston & Hyannis Port, Massachusetts

The Best Buddies Challenge: Hyannis Port, presented by Pepsi-Cola, and Shaw’s and Star Market Foundation chaired by Tom Brady, Guy Fieri, Congressman Joseph P. Kennedy, III, and event chair Ted English, is a 100, 50 or 20-mile cycling adventure from Boston to Hyannis Port, with an optional 5K run/walk. The event kicked off with the Best Buddies Tom Brady Football Challenge and the Guy Cooking with Best Buddies Celebrity Chef Food and Wine Festival, presented by Pepsi-Cola and Shaw’s and Star Market Foundation and concluded with a celebratory clambake and a private concert by multi-platinum artist Flo Rida.
Cyclists crossing the iconic Bixby Bridge along the Pacific Coast Highway during the 2019 Best Buddies Challenge: Hearst Castle, presented by Pepsi-Cola.

Protestants cyclists Christian Vande Velde, Bobby Julich and George Hincapie riding along the Pacific Coast Highway during the 2019 Best Buddies Challenge: Hearst Castle, presented by Pepsi-Cola.

The 16th Best Buddies Challenge: Hearst Castle, presented by Pepsi-Cola, co-chaired by Governor of California Gavin Newsom, Steve Hearst and event chair Carl Guardino, is a 100, 60, 30 or 15-mile cycling adventure along the picturesque coastlines of California, arriving at the renowned Hearst Castle in San Simeon, with an optional 5K run/walk. The event kicked off with the Official Opening Ceremony of the Best Buddies Challenge: Hearst Castle, presented by Pepsi-Cola on Friday, September 6 at the Quail Lodge Resort & Golf Club in Carmel, and concluded with an exciting finish line village, a festive barbeque at Hearst Ranch and lively performance by KC and The Sunshine Band.

Best Buddies Founder & CEO Anthony K. Shriver, journalist Maria Shriver, California Governor Gavin Newsom, and 2019 event chair Carl Guardino honoring Donna Lucas, Chief Executive Officer and President of Lucas Public Affairs, with the 2019 Spirit of Friendship Award.
Professional cyclists Christian Vande Velde, George Hincapie, four-time Tour de France winner Chris Froome with Best Buddies Founder & CEO Anthony K. Shriver Best Buddies Ambassadors greeting guests at the 2019 Best Buddies Miami Gala. Left to right: Best Buddies Ambassadors Bret, Adam, Nick, Michael, Elyse, Jackie, Eric and Tashunda Flo Rida on stage in a live concert at the 2019 Best Buddies Miami Gala

**HUBLOT BEST BUDDIES CHALLENGE, MIAMI & BEST BUDDIES MIAMI GALA**

**November 22, 2019 / Miami, Florida**

The Hublot Best Buddies Challenge: Miami, presented by Abaco Wines, Braman Miami, Mack Cycle & Fitness, Makarov Foundation and Pepsi-Cola, is a 100K six-star cycling event, limited to just 50 cyclists beginning and ending at Mr. C Hotel Miami in Coconut Grove. The Challenge was followed by the 23rd Annual Best Buddies Miami Gala at Mana Wynwood. During the event, Best Buddies awarded Ed Ansin, co-founder, president and CEO of Sunbeam Television Corporation with the Spirit of Leadership Award, the highest Best Buddies accolade presented to distinguished luminaries who have shown great leadership, generosity and spirit in supporting the organization’s mission. This star-studded event also included a gourmet dinner, a top-notch auction and a live performance by multi-platinum artist Flo Rida.
Best Buddies Global Ambassador Caley presenting a speech at the 2019 Best Buddies Breakaway Camp: Malibu

Cyclists climbing the scenic roads of Malibu, CA

Best Buddies Founder & CEO Anthony K. Shriver with cyclists along the Pacific Coast Highway at the 2019 Best Buddies Breakaway Camp: Malibu

Best Buddies Global Ambassador Caley delivering a speech at the 2019 Best Buddies Breakaway Camp: Malibu

Cyclists climbing the scenic roads of Malibu, CA

Breakaway Camp attendees riding together along the majestic Pacific Coast Highway

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**BEST BUDDIES BREAKAWAY CAMP: MALIBU**

**May 1-5 and December 11-15, 2019 / Malibu, California**

The Best Buddies Breakaway Camp: Malibu offers cyclists a world-class, four-day riding experience through the scenic canyon roads and rock-studded hillside of the Santa Monica Mountains overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Cyclists pedaled from coast to valley through remote, twisting and winding canyon roads, cliff-side Malibu mansions and acres of forest.

During the Best Buddies Breakaway Camp: Malibu, each attendee benefitted from a custom-designed program. Experienced cyclists and weekend warriors alike learned from various industry professionals including sports nutritionists, exercise physiologists, bike mechanics and personal trainers. The experience provided cyclists with a holistic approach to training, with special attention given to efficiency on the bike, proper rider nutrition, and post-training recovery; leaving them with the foundation for a sustainable, healthy lifestyle.
The 2019 Hublot Best Buddies Mother's Day Celebration was co-hosted by Best Buddies Founder & CEO Anthony K. Shriver and journalist and philanthropist, Maria Shriver. During the event, Title sponsor Hublot introduced a 2019 limited-edition Best Buddies Classic Fusion Titanium Pavé, the first women’s timepiece in collaboration with the organization, crafted specially to honor the “Remarkable” women who strive to leave a legacy throughout their local communities and beyond. The celebration featured cocktails, delicious food, live performances and a special award ceremony honoring Best Buddies’ Mother of the Year, Yanti Lugito.
Nearly 2,500 student leaders, chapter advisors, volunteers and community leaders gathered in Bloomington, Indiana for the 2019 Best Buddies Leadership Conference: Inclusion Lives Here. The conference brought together student leaders from Best Buddies Middle School, High School, College and Promoter chapters across the world from 16 countries, including Canada, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Hong Kong, Ireland, Kenya, Lebanon, Macau, Mexico, Panama, Spain and the United States. The conference presented dynamic engagement opportunities, advocacy trainings, leadership development and expansion strategy sessions to teachers, community leaders, volunteers and supporters. Inclusion advocates and leaders in the disability rights movement provided engaging keynotes, educational workshops and interactive large group forums, preparing attendees to share the Best Buddies mission in their communities.
The Best Buddies Friendship Walk continues to grow and expand—aiming to be the number one walk in the country raising awareness and funds to support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). The Best Buddies Friendship Walks are fundamental in supporting local Best Buddies programs dedicated to ending the social, physical and economic isolation of the 200 million people with IDD. In 2019, over 40,000 participants in more than 55 cities walked to move our mission forward. Collectively over $5,000,000 was raised as participants, sponsors, volunteers and public figures joined the movement that celebrates friendship, inclusion and unity. Over the years, the Friendship Walks have made a profound impact in communities nationwide, providing a platform for participants to showcase the Best Buddies mission. Each Walk offers an atmosphere for new friendships, promising opportunities and most of all, inclusion for all people.
BEST BUDDIES
SOCIAL EVENTS

Best Buddies social events contribute to the life-changing community engagement needed to fuel the mission. Philanthropic trailblazers, community leaders and corporate partners play substantial roles in uniting their communities in the urgency of inclusivity. Unique events such as Chef Tastings, Best Buddies Galas and Champion of the Year gave a platform for the organization and its supporters to educate communities on the significance of changing how individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) are perceived.

These core events collectively raised over $5.5 million dollars, an astonishing 85% increase over 2018. Of that, Champion of the Year - a signature series of local events - engaged 365 Champions in generating over $4.7 million dollars, a 39% increase over the previous year. These events, and those that lead them, continue to provide life-long support and opportunities for individuals with IDD.

Attendees Marc Dedman, Juli Beck, Matt Mingus, and Grace at the 2019 Champion of the Year Gala: Nashville

Champion of the Year candidate Erin Coleman with her parents, Michael and Faye Long, at the 2019 Best Buddies Champion of the Year Gala: Indiana

Buddy Sous Chef Kaitlyn and Chef Dustin Gardner at 2019 Best Buddies TasteBuds: Pittsburgh

Best Buddies participant Larry and Best Buddies Champion Candidate Dion Lim at the 2019 Best Buddies Champion of the Year Gala: Bay Area
Best Buddies Balls/Proms are a unique way for the organization’s state offices and chapters to showcase their achievements and celebrate friendship. Best Buddies Balls/Proms were offered to high school and college participants in nearly 40 locations nationwide in 2019. The celebrations offer activities for students and parents alike, including chef tastings and silent auctions. Best Buddies in Chicago hosted its 16th Annual Best Buddies Prom in 2019 at a local high school, relying on the energy and creativity of chapter leaders to organize the event, decorate, secure donated refreshments and DJs for dancing! Many Best Buddies Balls/Proms, such as the one hosted at the Bridgestone Arena in Nashville, Tennessee, offered participants tuxedo rentals, gown selections, hair and make-up for buddy pairs and a red carpet to round out the extravaganza.
Each year, the organization’s celebrity supporters host community events that engage and inspire our program participants and corporate sponsors to promote Best Buddies’ mission of inclusion and challenge communities to ignite change. These dynamic events, such as Bowling for Buddies and Best Buddies’ Night of Beauty at Blushington, not only raise funds and awareness but also provide opportunities for Best Buddies program participants and supporters to develop life-long relationships.
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 include sports clinics, picnics, leadership trainings and disability rights awareness.

March is 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. The month kicks off with the annual Spread the Word: Inclusion campaign, which invites all members to showcase how they promote inclusion in their communities. In March 2019, participants hosted school parties, awareness activities and engagement campaigns, to honor their unity in advancing opportunities for friendship, employment and leadership development.
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<th>FOUNDATIONS (CONT)</th>
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<td>George S. and Dolores Dore’ Charitable Fund</td>
<td>$50,000 and Above</td>
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<td>The Jewish Federation of Greater Buffalo</td>
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<td>Irene E. and George A. Davis Foundation</td>
<td>Team Wisconsin Water Utility</td>
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<td>Team Wyndham Hotels &amp; Resorts</td>
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<td>Dolgate Family Charitable Foundation Inc.</td>
<td>Team X</td>
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**Financials**

**Consolidated Statement of Activities* (as of 12.31.19)**

**Domestic Revenue**

- **29%** Foundations & Corps.
- **13%** Government
- **10%** Individual
- **4%** Special Events
- **44%** Individual

Total Domestic Revenue: **$32,492,420**

**Domestic Expenses**

- **83%** Programs
- **13%** Fundraising
- **4%** Administration

Total Domestic Expenses: **$30,158,159**

**Domestic Net Asset Summary**

- Net Assets (beginning of year): **$12,311,015**
- Change in Net Assets: **$2,334,261**
- Net Unrealized Gains/(Losses) on Investments: **(-95,959)**

Total Domestic Net Assets (end of year): **$14,549,317**

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**Balance Sheet (as of 12.31.19)**

**Assets**

- **Current Assets**
  - Cash in Bank: **$3,802,036**
  - Marketable Securities: **$6,735,027**
  - Pre Paid Expenses: **$569,759**
  - Accounts Receivable: **$158,917**
  - Contributions Receivable: **$2,733,350**
  - Grant Receivable: **$1,996,818**
  - Investments - BB x Rosetta Bakery LLC: **$332,604**
  - Investments - Deferred Compensation Plan: **$89,363**

- **Total Current Assets**: **$16,417,874**

- **Fixed Assets**
  - Computers: **$14,687**

- **Total Assets**: **$16,432,561**

**Liabilities and Fund Balance**

- **Liabilities**
  - Accounts Payable: **$1,023,353**
  - Deferred Revenue: **$606,530**
  - Deferred Compensation Plan Liability: **$89,363**
  - LOC Payable: **$150,000**
  - Refundable Security Deposit: **$14,000**

- **Total Liabilities**: **$1,883,246**

- **Fund Balance**
  - Fund Balance: **$14,549,315**

- **Total Liabilities and Fund Balance**: **$16,432,561**

- **Beginning Balance With Current Year Adjustments**: **$12,311,015**

- **Net Surplus/(Deficit)**: **$2,238,302**

- **Ending Fund Balance**: **$14,549,317**

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* Statement of Activities for calendar year 2019 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.
California
Year in Review

Best Buddies in California had a record-breaking year in 2019, with a focus on programmatic and monetary growth. We laid the groundwork to expand our Jobs program into both Orange County and Sacramento for the first time, and saw tremendous growth in employment opportunities for participants this program: 162 placements across the state. Our Friendship Programs impact grew to 171 school chapters across the state and we reintroduced the Citizens program in San Francisco with five adult matches after 12 years of inactivity due to the 2008 recession. With the collective support of our volunteers, donors, and staff the Best Buddies mission was able to impact over 7,200 people across California.

In July, 142 student leaders, 12 ambassadors, four jobs participants, and 20 community leaders represented California at the Best Buddies Leadership Conference at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana. California’s most inclusive leaders attended this three-day leadership conference and left inspired to implement the valuable tools and resources they gained in their own communities.

In the Fall, our Best Buddies Champion of the Year Galas honored 25 leaders across San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego that our staff and Advisory Boards identified as leaders within our community. Over the course of 10 weeks, these candidates, along with their mission partners, worked tirelessly to raise as much funding and awareness as possible for Best Buddies in California and their respective areas. Combined, these leaders brought in $350,000 for Best Buddies programs in California and celebrated at the end of each campaign with a gala.

On behalf of our Advisory Boards across the state and the staff at Best Buddies in California, thank you for your support of friendship, inclusion and a kinder world. We are so grateful for the impact you have made in California.

“One-To-One Friendship
Kyle & Cole

“I wasn’t super aware of the Best Buddies community at Tesoro, and I had no idea how big the program here was. It was such an eye opening and wonderful experience to begin with, so Cole and I had to get involved! We met over the summer before I knew Best Buddies was a thing, and we were genuine buddies before anything was officially assigned through the program. When school started, he brought me to the Best Buddies program and we were officially matched up! We sit with each other every lunch and it’s just a wonderful experience.

Cole’s favorite thing to do is to go bowling, so we do that quite often and he beats me almost every time. Cole and I both play with bumpers and it’s been pretty close a couple times, but he almost always wins. Bowling is usually our monthly activity outside of school. We enjoy going to see new movies at our local theater and we sometimes go to the mall when we want to have more of a relaxed day. We also like to get lunch together go for a walk around the lake. Cole loves to walk around and “fish” with a pole without a hook on it, so sometimes we will sit at the lake, fish and climb on the huge rocks around that area.

I have become a lot more understanding, empathetic and compassionate since joining Best Buddies. It’s been incredibly eye-opening and helpful to gain a different perspective of the world.

The Best Buddies program has been such a great influence on my life. I have really enjoyed forging these friendships, especially with my buddy Cole.”

– Kyle, Best Buddies High School Peer Buddy

With the collective support of our volunteers, donors, and staff the Best Buddies mission was able to impact over 7,200 people across California.”

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One-To-One Friendship
Key Program Stats

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<tr>
<th>Middle Schools</th>
<th>High Schools</th>
<th>Colleges</th>
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<tr>
<td>17 Total Chapters</td>
<td>109 Total Chapters</td>
<td>20 Total Chapters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>285 Total Participants</td>
<td>5,123 Total Participants</td>
<td>906 Total Participants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Citizens
8 Total Participants
e-Buddies
269 Total Participants
Drew began working as a team member for Pieology Pizzeria in July 2019. While at work, Drew performs a variety of tasks that include greeting customers, pressing dough, keeping ingredients stocked, making lemonade, baking pizzas in the brick oven, and keeping the restaurant clean. While he loves everything about pizza, he especially loves his coworkers. His mom, a life-long advocate for the disability community, shared how Drew’s Pieology team respects and protects him. “They love working with Drew and having him on their team. Like many people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), Drew has not experienced this degree of inclusion before. Drew’s passion for pizza and people, along with his inclusive workplace makes Pieology Pizzeria a meaningful place to work and belong.” While speaking with Drew about his journey to employment, he shared that he could work at Pieology forever.

“I always dreamed of working with food. Best Buddies helped me get my job at Pieology. It’s my dream job! Best Buddies also helps me continue to do the work to keep my job and thrive in my role. I couldn’t have done it without Best Buddies,” said Drew.

Although Drew has landed his dream job at Pieology, the journey has not always been easy. In January 2018, Drew began Project SEARCH, a business-led job preparation internship. He bravely went through nine months of professional and personal growth, and then graduated in October with a robust resume; however, his confidence was still lacking. After months of job searching with the help of the Best Buddies Jobs program, Drew found his dream job. Throughout his training, Drew’s employment consultant encouraged him to trust himself and be confident in his skills and knowledge. Pretty soon, all of Drew’s coworkers were reiterating the same advice. It wasn’t until October that Drew realized he had every reason to be confident. Drew was asked to create a special signature pizza to celebrate National Disability Employment Awareness Month – The ‘Drew-Za Pizza.’ More than 200 purchases were made showing Drew that he is cared for and accepted in his Pieology family. You can visibly see Drew’s confidence as he greets guests and is making their pizzas. With this renewed sense of confidence, Drew’s new mission is to, “help others like Best Buddies has helped him.”

Drew’s passion for pizza and people, along with his inclusive workplace makes Pieology Pizzeria a meaningful place to work and belong.”

“Hi, I’m Caley. I love life, learning new things, acting, dancing, advocacy, public speaking, photography, my job, family and friends.

I have been a keynote speaker at events with over 3,000 people for Best Buddies and Special Olympics. I have also worked as a special correspondent at several red carpet events such as the Media Access Awards, and the Special Olympics World Games, where I had the opportunity to interview Hollywood celebrities on live television. I want to keep surprising the world, and opening doors for others, by sharing my abilities. As an actress and production assistant in the Easter Seals Disability Film Challenge, I encouraged the entertainment industry to have authentic disability representation. I enjoy acting in films and was featured on A&E’s Emmy Award winning show, Born This Way. Additionally, with my t-shirt business, Tides of Kindness, I promote the idea that “Kindness is Contagious.”

Best Buddies is amazing. I participate in the organization’s friendship, integrated employment, and leadership development programs. Best Buddies believes that every person has value and deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. My goal is to help expand Best Buddies’ mission and show the world that we all have abilities. We are alike in so many ways—all people want to be included, to be self-sufficient, and to contribute to society.

With the help of Best Buddies, my confidence and job skills have grown. In 2018, I started working at the Entertainment Industry Foundation. I value the company because it develops campaigns to improve public health, education, and the impact of natural disasters. I am happy to have been involved with my company’s Delivering Jobs campaign, in partnership with Best Buddies, Special Olympics, and Autism Speaks, to help create pathways to one million employment and leadership opportunities for people like me, with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

As a Best Buddies Global Ambassador, my advocacy skills improved through the different speaking opportunities provided to me by Best Buddies, including speaking engagements at the annual Best Buddies Leadership Conference, the Best Buddies Mother’s Day Celebration in Malibu, and the Best Buddies Challenges: Hyannis Port and Hearst Castle. At these events, I meet amazing people while spreading acceptance and inclusion. We all can make a difference.

Having Down syndrome is a gift. We all have strengths. Let’s look at what we can do. Be yourself and be confident. My goal is for everyone to be seen as people, and as a friend. We all have value. Dream big, and never give up. If we can dream it, we will achieve it.”

– Caley, Best Buddies Global Ambassador
Ain Siddiqui, born and raised in Pakistan, joined the Best Buddies Living program at the start of his freshman year at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA).

Ain was drawn to Best Buddies Living because, "it was an entirely new concept" that the university dorms didn’t offer. “The living is completely integrated, 100% inclusive” and beyond that, the program’s description convinced Ain, “the residence didn’t just include sleeping accommodations, but it was fully immersive, offering weekly activities and THAT was what convinced me to apply.”

Ain and his brother Adeel reside in the Best Buddies Living’s flagship residence in Westwood, just minutes away from the UCLA campus, with Residential Manager Shammir Khan, and Best Buddies participants Aric and Austin. Since day one, Ain experienced the Best Buddies mission of inclusion and acceptance. “Everyone was incredibly hospitable, our roommates cooked dinner for us, took our luggage to our rooms and immediately helped us feel welcomed in a new country.”

Ain shares that acclimating became easier through the Best Buddies Living program: “activities, like grocery shopping or public parking, add up and end up forming a big part of your day – they can create discomfort when you move to a new place, but we didn’t experience that because they were there with us since the very first day.”

Through this program Ain and his roommates participate in group outings, house dinners and Best Buddies meet-ups. “Aric loves horror movies and bonds with Adeel about them, Shammir loves Mexican the way I do so we’ve made a list of all the taco spots we want to try and host Taco Tuesdays, we all love Disney movies, video games and spending time in our pool.”

Ain describes the Best Buddies Living experience as enlightening, providing a better understanding of the challenges and social barriers people with IDD face. “In Pakistan, we don’t talk about people with IDD and their rights. This experience has allowed me to recognize the intricacies of IDD – you can read about it, but you have to immerse yourself in inclusion to better understand, as we have through Best Buddies Living.”

Inspired by Best Buddies Living, Ain plans to get more involved with UCLA’s Best Buddies chapter and continue growing alongside his new Best Buddies family. “The biggest thing that Best Buddies Living achieves is facilitating personal and professional growth. We’ve all grown so much, socially – we all interact with each other's friends and encourage them to get involved with Best Buddies programs. We learn from each other daily, especially Adeel and I from Austin, Aric and Shammir about how to excel in school and in the workforce. We vent, laugh and enjoy each other’s input and advice.”

“We’re more than roommates, we’re friends, great friends with unique perspectives and diverse experiences! We’re all working to break the stigma and proving that this should be the norm on every college campus and in society.”

Inclusive Living

Ain Siddiqui
Resident, Best Buddies Living

Inclusive Living Key Program Stats

1 Open Location
4 Total Residents

When you have members who are willing to adapt to these situations it makes it all worth it for a buddy to know that not only one person, but an entire chapter cares about their relationship” - Lizzy

Molly & Lizzy
Friendship Program Buddy Pair
Best Buddies helped me find friendship in High School, leadership in college, and now a job that I am so excited about as a office clerk at a Law Firm. I am so grateful for all the opportunities Best Buddies has provided for me.” - Elyse
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