MISSION PILLARS

One-To-One Friendships
Integrated Employment
Leadership Development
Inclusive Living
Dear Best Buddies family,

There is no denying the challenges we have faced over the past year and a half — however, in many ways, Best Buddies is coming out of the pandemic stronger than we were before it started. Across the nation and globally, our programs hosted hundreds of virtual chapter events and Ambassador trainings, allowing participants to remain engaged and connected with the mission. Our Jobs program transitioned to the digital space to ensure participants thrived in their work-from-home positions and remained job-ready.

We ended the year more certain than ever of the essential and life-changing role that Best Buddies programs play in connecting people and developing a more inclusive world for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

Best Buddies’ resilient staff and leadership team, my fellow board members, and our dedicated partners in the public and private sectors have shown incredible fortitude and commitment throughout the challenges stemming from the pandemic.

With your support, Best Buddies reached thousands of participants with IDD and provided them with the resources needed to feel included, confident and optimistic about the road ahead.

I am incredibly proud of what we have accomplished together over the past year. Our Best Buddies staff, volunteers, and supporters quickly adapted to unprecedented change while at the same time continuing to support and engage with Best Buddies participants here in the U.S. and internationally.

As we reflect on the global impact of Best Buddies’ mission and the millions of lives touched, please know that I am deeply grateful to each of you who have supported this organization and made our mission possible. Thank you for making this world a better place for individuals with IDD.

Looking ahead, we will need each of you to help lead our mission forward because there is still much more work to be done. Together, we will meet the moment and continue to change lives through the power of inclusion.

In Friendship,

Anthony K. Shriver,
Founder, Chairman & 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, 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 works to improve the quality of life for individuals without IDD.

Through the creation of meaningful one-to-one friendships with peers without disabilities, the pursuit of integrated employment and inclusive living opportunities, and the development of leadership skills for individuals with IDD, Best Buddies is changing lives and building a more inclusive world for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. For more information, please visit BESTBUDDIES.ORG

"Best Buddies is the world’s largest organization dedicated to ending the social, physical and economic isolation of the 200 million people with IDD."

A Parent’s Perspective

“When I first learned that my son Riley had a disability, I had a realization that has given me endless joy as a father. I knew that no matter how difficult Riley’s journey would become, he would never have to go through it alone. He and I are in it together as a union.

Riley has been involved with Best Buddies for more than 20 years and participates in the Best Buddies Jobs program in California.

- Brian Grazer, Riley’s dad, Oscar-winning producer and philanthropist

Riley wakes up happy every day. He is the glue, soul, and heartbeat of our family. All I want is for him to really hear me when I say how important he is to me and to the family itself.

I didn’t understand Best Buddies at first, but once I realized it’s about making sure every kid like Riley gets some incoming phone calls from a pal, and that leads to friendships that lead to things like going to a movie theater, grabbing a coffee and other social outings – my outlook completely shifted. All those things have given Riley, and anyone like Riley, confidence, love and a sense of appreciation.

You should join Best Buddies if you want to be part of a community of people who don’t judge you but comfort you, giving you a sense of confidence and tools to go forward in your life."

“You should join Best Buddies if you want to be part of a community of people who don’t judge you but comfort you, giving you a sense of confidence and tools to go forward in your life."
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).

Vision
To put Best Buddies out of business, Best Buddies envisions a world where people with IDD are so successfully integrated into schools, workplaces and communities that its current efforts and services will be unnecessary. Until that vision becomes a reality, the organization will continue to educate middle school, high school and college students, community members, corporations and employers about the emotional, functional, and natural needs and abilities of people with 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:

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<th>One-To-One Friendships</th>
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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.

BESTBUDDIES, 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.

BESTBUDDIES, e-Buddies
Offers an e-mail program, in which a participant with IDD communicates online with a friend without IDD.

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

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.

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.

BESTBUDDIES, 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.

BESTBUDDIES, 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.

BESTBUDDIES, 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.
Best Buddies hired its first Director, Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion to develop and lead the organization’s diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) strategies for recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce, leverage the benefits of diverse cultural groups, create a more inclusive work environment, and engage Best Buddies chapters globally.

Best Buddies revamps its e-Buddies program to provide opportunities for volunteers with and without IDD to develop one-to-one friendships online and create connections using the e-Buddies online platform, which is designed to expand friendships and create shared experiences through virtual social events.

Best Buddies opens an office in Dominica in November 2021 to serve a new community of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities on a global scale.

All program stats are as of 12/31/2021, and reflect the most recent Best Buddies program year (July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022).

*Total number of participants does not include residents in Living location(s) and participants in the new pre-ETS curriculum, not listed.
Milestones

1987-1998

• Anthony K. Shriver charts 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, BESTBUDDIES® 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 BESTBUDDIES® Citizens, a friendship program that pairs adults with IDD with their working peers who do not have disabilities.
• Best Buddies launches BESTBUDDIES® Jobs, a supported employment program, targeting high-paying, white-collar jobs for people with IDD in Florida, California and Massachusetts.
• Best Buddies establishes BESTBUDDIES® High Schools, pairing special education students in one-to-one friendships with high school volunteers without IDD.
• The BESTBUDDIES® 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.

1999-2011

• BESTBUDDIES®, 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.

2012-2018

• In October 2019, under the leadership of the Entertainment Industry Foundation, Best Buddies, Special Olympics and Autism Apeaks, launch Delivering Jobs, a campaign to create pathways to one million employment and leadership opportunities for people with IDD by 2025.
• Best Buddies launches BESTBUDDIES® Ventures, creating a new source of revenue independent of traditional methods of fundraising. The first-ever venture opens in Miami, FL: BESTBUDDIES® X Rosetta, The Italian Bakery --- an equal partnership that creates employment opportunities for individuals with IDD and serves as a profit-center for Best Buddies through a store-front bakery and coffee shop.

2019-Current

• Best Buddies celebrates its 30th Anniversary on January 19, 2019.
• Best Buddies officially launches its fourth mission pillar, Inclusive Living. BESTBUDDIES®, 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.
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BESTBUDDIES.ORG

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BESTBUDDIES® Jobs, a supported employment program, targeting high-paying, white-collar jobs for people with IDD in Florida, California and Massachusetts. BESTBUDDIES® High Schools, pairing special education students in one-to-one friendships with high school volunteers without IDD.

BESTBUDDIES® 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.

BESTBUDDIES®® Ambassadors becomes Best Buddies’ seventh formal program.
Without love, support and friends, life may feel isolating – this is a reality people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) have faced throughout history. Best Buddies offers people with IDD the chance to have a friend, gain self-confidence and self-esteem and share interests, experiences and activities that many other individuals enjoy.

**BEST BUDDIES®, Middle Schools, High Schools and Colleges**

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

**BEST BUDDIES®, Citizens**

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

**e-BUDDIES®,**

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

In 2021, e-buddies served 3,236 total participants. These participants exchanged more than 50,000 emails. e-Buddies was also used as a teaching tool in the classroom by more than 100 special education teachers and other professionals across the country.
Ian & Rohan
Friendship Program Buddy Pair

Ian Kahalewai, 22, first heard about Best Buddies in 2018 during his senior year of high school. When he graduated, his mom reached out to the staff of Best Buddies in Hawaii to see how Ian could join the Friendship program. Ian attended a meet-and-greet party at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa campus and became a member. Since then, he has developed the confidence to be himself, and credits his best friend and buddy, Rohan Sridharan. The two have been matched since 2018 and although the pandemic has kept them from seeing each other, they still text and FaceTime often.

“When I was young, I told my parents I would never make any friends. Then, along came Rohan. We’ve been buddies ever since! His friendship has impacted me so much. He’s been there for me and supports me and all the people and things I love. Having a friend like Rohan has changed my life. He likes a lot of the same things that I like, such as playing basketball. I have learned how to cook, gotten better at math and I am appreciative of Rohan for introducing me to his sister, brother, and his college friends.” – Ian

“It’s hard to remember that Ian and I met through Best Buddies because it feels like we have always been friends. “When I joined Best Buddies and matched with Ian, I knew we would be great friends because we’re close in age, kind of look alike (everyone keeps asking if we’re brothers), and like the same kinds of things.” – Rohan

Ian and Rohan’s connection is rooted in shared interests and grows stronger every year. They love cooking together, going to sporting events, and celebrating Ian’s favorite holiday – Halloween!

“We transcend the mission of Best Buddies,” says Rohan. “I think of Ian as my third sibling. He has gotten to know my friends and family and now he works with my sister at the Department of Health to practice social skills and learn how to navigate within the community. I am thankful for Sandy and Danny (Ian’s parents) because they are so supportive of our friendship and welcomed me into their home. I don’t have a lot of family here, so having Ian really has helped me, too. Although I am a senior this year, Ian and I will always remain friends and I plan to stay in Hawai’i and create more memories with him.”

“ When I was young, I told my parents I would never make any friends. Then, along came Rohan. We’ve been buddies ever since! His friendship has impacted me so much. He’s been there for me and supports me and all the people and things I love.”

- Ian
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 intellectual and developmental disabilities (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.

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 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 an active Best Buddies Jobs program as of December 31, 2021, include Arizona, California, Capital Region, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Tennessee, Texas, and Wisconsin.
### Key Jobs Program Stats

- **Total Participants**: 2,780
- **U.S. Participants**: 1,787
- **International Participants**: 1,506
- **Average Weekly Hours Worked**: $20.68
- **Average Weekly Hours Worked in U.S.**: 7.32%
- **401K Plan**: 25.23%
- **Vacation Pay**: 15.28%
- **Medical & Dental**: 95%
- **Retirement Plan**: 29.48%
- **U.S. Retention Rate**: 95%
- **States with active Jobs Programs**: 17
- **Total Participants Receiving Benefits**: 1,274
- **Participants Receiving Benefits in U.S.**: 1,187
- **Participants Receiving Benefits Internationally**: 87

### Top 5 Jobs Participants Highest Hourly Rates

1. **John H.**
   - Civic Edge Consulting, San Francisco, CA
   - Hourly Wage: $33.22
2. **Chantom P.**
   - Central Park Conservancy, New York, NY
   - Hourly Wage: $30.98
3. **Michael D.**
   - JLL@Google, MA
   - Hourly Wage: $29.33
4. **Anthony S.**
   - Kaiser Permanente South Bay Medical Center, Long Beach, CA
   - Hourly Wage: $27.91
5. **Paul P.**
   - Whiting Turner, San Francisco, CA
   - Hourly Wage: $26.67

### Top 5 Jobs Participants Highest Salaries With Benefits

1. **Michael D.**
   - Genentech, CA
   - Annual Salary: $61,006
2. **Paul P.**
   - Whiting Turner, CA
   - Annual Salary: $55,473
3. **Chantom P.**
   - Central Park Conservancy, NY
   - Annual Salary: $56,383
4. **Miguel H.**
   - City of Hialeah, FL
   - Annual Salary: $53,872
5. **Lee S.**
   - JLL@Google, MA
   - Annual Salary: $53,248

### Best Buddies Jobs Around The World

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

**Middle East**
- Qatar: 1

**North America**
- USA: 31 cities in 17 states

**Latin America & The Caribbean**
- Brazil: 1
- Chile: 10
- Colombia: 34
- Dominican Republic: 1
- Mexico: 3
- Peru: 1

**Europe**
- England: 1
- Netherlands: 3
- Russia: 3

**Best Buddies Jobs Around The World**

- **Reflects countries and cities that have the Best Buddies Jobs program, as of 06.30.2020**

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*Global job stats are calculated based on total jobs participants and U.S. average hours and wages.*

*Represents benefits received by U.S. BB Job participants.*

*All Jobs Program stats are as of 12/31/2021*
Before becoming involved with Best Buddies, Zach was not very socially active and did not participate in many extracurricular activities. After joining his high school Best Buddies chapter during freshman year, that all changed. Zach made tons of friends, went to parties, and even was named the Best Buddies Buddy Director at his school. This confidence led Zach to have the chance to catch a touchdown pass from Tom Brady at the Best Buddies Challenge: Hyannis Port event in Boston, which he says was one of the best moments of his life. From there, Zach went on to join his college Best Buddies chapter and live and work in New York City. Zach is currently part of the Jobs program and is also matched in a one-to-one friendship in the Citizens program.

One of the biggest challenges Zach faced in 2021 was trying to find a job. After graduating college in May 2020, he did not have much luck getting responses or invitations to interview. That’s when the Best Buddies Jobs program offered assistance. The New York City Jobs team supported Zach in finding employment as a GSIS Statistician at the National Football League (NFL) headquarters, which has been a perfect fit and huge growth opportunity.

“My life has positively improved in so many aspects since securing my job at the NFL,” says Zach. “Not only have I developed amazing social relationships with my co-workers, but I’m now living on my own for the first time in my life. I’m responsible for paying my own rent, cleaning, buying groceries, and figuring out transportation around the city. Not only has the job brought me the tasks that employment provides, it has also made it so that I have more responsibilities to succeed now that I’m living on my own in the largest city in the U.S.”

In this role, Zach is responsible for the support, audit, and process of all NFL and NCAA game statistics for the 2021 season. The skills he has learned have been predominantly technical, but what he loves the most is getting to watch football on Sundays with his co-workers.

When describing his experience, Zach says, “Being in an NFL-related job is one thing, but when you add amazing people to work with in that environment, it doesn’t get better than that. Best Buddies has helped me improve my social communication skills, establish close friendships, attend many fun events, and find a job I love. I am very thankful for the opportunities and support Best Buddies has given me since joining.”
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.

**BEST BUDDIES® Ambassadors**

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

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

**BEST BUDDIES® Promoters**

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

Each Promoters chapter is led by a chapter president from the student body and a faculty advisor and is assigned a Best Buddies staff person who offers regular support and guidance. Once formed, Promoters chapters host events, activities, and fundraisers where they advocate for people with IDD, and promote the Best Buddies mission.
“Hello! My name is Allie and I want to share with you a bit about myself and why Best Buddies means so much to me. My middle and high school years were hard. I remember being in high school and never getting a phone call to hang out. That made me so sad. I didn’t have many friends in middle school and in high school; I just wasn’t included in activities. I was at a different lunch than most of my friends, so I often sat alone. Think back to your middle and high school years and think about not having friends by your side. It was not fun, to say the least.

Instead of sitting back and just accepting this as the way my life would be, I started getting involved in activities geared towards individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). I am involved with Special Olympics, and I work 25 hours a week at an early childhood center. Finding and keeping friends is often hard for people with IDD and Best Buddies helps us do that so well. Best Buddies has changed my life and allowed me to stay connected and engaged with my friends during the pandemic. Throughout this time, we had dance parties, practiced yoga, and had lots of fun chats via Zoom.

I love that Best Buddies helps connect people with and without IDD who have similar interests. I am part of the Best Buddies Citizens adult friendship program and the day I was matched with my buddy Nicole was a day filled with excitement. My buddy and I are a perfect match. We are both disability advocates, we’re also both great public speakers, and we love to have lots of fun together. So far, we have gone to the farmer’s market, to some coffee shops, and eaten outside at restaurants during the pandemic.

I am excited to see so many people celebrating true friendship through Best Buddies. It is important to be a friend and to have a friend. That’s what Best Buddies does so well.”

- Allie, Best Buddies Ambassador

“I became a Best Buddies Ambassador because I want to advocate for myself, and my peers within the IDD community.”

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

**BEST BUDDIES, Living**

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

The Best Buddies Living program supports inclusion by:

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

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

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

As of December 31, 2021, Best Buddies operated two Living residences in Washington, D.C., and one in Miami, FL.
“My name is Vince, and I currently live in the Best Buddies Living residence at Union Market. I first learned about the organization when I attended an activities fair in 8th grade, just before entering high school. Since joining Best Buddies, my life has undoubtedly changed for the better. I am part of all four Best Buddies programs --- I am paired with a buddy, I advocate for my peers with intellectual and developmental disabilities as an Ambassador, I have a job thanks to the Best Buddies Jobs program, and of course, I live at the Best Buddies Living: Union Market residence.

The past two years have presented many obstacles due to the pandemic, but thankfully, I have been able to keep in touch with my family and friends virtually and sometimes in person. My housemates at Best Buddies Living have also helped me over the past two years; everyone is so friendly and welcoming. A bonus is that I love my neighborhood!

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities deserve to be included, and we deserve the opportunity to experience an inclusive living environment like Best Buddies Living. What I know for sure is that I am a lot more confident and independent since joining this program. As a Best Buddies Living participant, you will learn, grow and thrive.”

- Vince, Best Buddies Living resident
Best Buddies’ International Programs (IP) began 2021 focusing on sustainability, with goals that included finding new funding sources, helping return to in-person events safely, continuing to pivot to virtual events when needed, and strategic planning for participating countries. Some programs were naturally unable to survive the pandemic and were forced to close in 2021. Therefore, IP shifted its efforts from expansion to strengthening the existing international presence.

Despite the challenges of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Best Buddies’ International Programs (IP) reached its strategic goals in 2021. IP aided in bringing in more funding to Macau, Greece, Serbia, Chile, and the Philippines. Virtual trainings were hosted to reach more Best Buddies global staff members and guide them on programs and strategic planning for their respective programs.

For 2022, Best Buddies’ International Programs department is excited and optimistic. Goals include hosting virtual regional staff events, launching a new IP website, developing a public service announcement, facilitating marketing alignment among countries, and expanding to new countries for the Friendship and Jobs programs. The department also looks forward to providing chapter grants to programs in Latin America, fortifying strategic partnerships such as the US Embassy and multinationals, improving the International Programs accreditation process, and hosting department-specific events such as Best Buddies Leadership Conference in July 2022 and the Global Staff Forum in November 2022. Lastly, the department looks forward to finalizing a strategic plan for the regions where we operate.

Key Updates

- **Serbia:** In 2021, Best Buddies in Serbia successfully started a partnership with the US Embassy in Belgrade. This allowed them to officially launch their programs and provide monthly online trainings to local and U.S. participants and staff.
- **Chile:** 2021 proved to be a great year for Best Buddies in Chile, as their Jobs program expanded and welcomed new partnerships, such as Taller VerdeSur and Grupo Mingas.
- **Kenya:** Best Buddies in Kenya celebrated their return to in-person events by hosting a family field day event for all participants, staff, family and supporters.
- **Saudi Arabia:** This year Best Buddies in Saudi Arabia officially launched in partnership with ACCEL. The program kicked off with their first match party!
- **Macau:** Best Buddies in Macau held an in-person Best Buddies Friendship Walk on May 9, 2021. The event was attended by over 400 participants, including buddies and their families and friends from various companies.
Programs Around the World

- **Europe**
  - England
  - France
  - Germany
  - Greece
  - Ireland
  - Northern Ireland
  - Poland
  - Russia
  - Scotland
  - Serbia
  - Spain
  - Turkey
  - Ukraine

- **Asia**
  - China
  - Hong Kong, China
  - Macao, China
  - Indonesia
  - South Korea
  - Malaysia
  - Philippines
  - Vietnam

- **Africa**
  - Egypt
  - Ghana
  - Kenya
  - Nigeria
  - Tanzania
  - Uganda

- **Middle East**
  - Lebanon
  - Saudi Arabia
  - United Arab Emirates
  - Qatar

- **Latin America & The Caribbean**
  - Argentina
  - Dominican Republic
  - Ecuador
  - Brazil
  - El Salvador
  - Chile
  - Mexico
  - Colombia
  - Panama
  - Costa Rica
  - Paraguay
  - Dominica
  - Peru

- **North America**
  - Canada
  - USA

- **North America**

- **50 States**
- **47 Countries & Territories**
- **5 Continents**
The purpose of special events is to garner support, funds, and awareness for the Best Buddies mission. There are numerous ways to get involved with Best Buddies events including attending, volunteering, and pursuing sponsorship opportunities. Best Buddies was excited to safely host both in-person and virtual signature events again in 2021.
Best Buddies Challenge: Hyannis Port
October 1 - 2, 2021 | Boston to Hyannis Port

The Best Buddies Challenge: Hyannis Port, presented by Pepsi-Cola and Shaw’s and Star Market Foundation returned to Massachusetts for its 22nd year. The Challenge weekend kicked off Friday, October 1 with the annual Guy Cooking with Best Buddies Celebrity Chef Food Festival, presented by Pepsi-Cola and Shaw’s and Star Market Foundation at the Encore Boston Harbor. On Saturday, October 2, professional cyclists George Hincapie, Christian Vande Velde, and hundreds of riders took to the starting line at the JFK Library in Boston for the picturesque 100-mile ride portion of the event, from Boston to Hyannis Port. The Challenge concluded with a New England-style clambake and live musical concert.

Best Buddies Challenge: California
October 30, 2021 | Petaluma, CA

The Best Buddies Challenge: California presented by Pepsi-Cola kicked off on Saturday, October 30 at Rosewood in Petaluma, CA. The event featured an in-person event and a Do-it-Yourself (DIY) event for those who wanted to participate in their local communities. The in-person event included a 5-star 100K (62-mile) cycling experience, starting and ending at Rosewood.
Four-time Tour de France winner Chris Froome joined professional cyclists George Hincapie and Christian Vande Velde for the Hublot Best Buddies Challenge: Miami Chaired by the Kenneth C. Griffin Charitable Fund on Friday, November 19. Additional professional cyclists participating in the 2021 event included Leanda Cave, Bobby Julich, Tom Pidcock, Magnus Sheffield, and Cam Wurf. In total, the event raised $1.5 million for Best Buddies programs.

Best Buddies Breakaway Camps

Malibu, CA
April 28 - May 3, 2021
Best Buddies Breakaway Camp: Malibu offered cyclists a world-class, five-day riding experience through the scenic canyon roads and rock-studded hillsides of the Santa Monica Mountains overlooking the Pacific Ocean.

Base camped at the world-renowned Four Seasons Hotel Westlake Village, cyclists ended each ride focused on recovery with daily massages and gourmet meals handcrafted by sports nutrition experts.

Asheville, NC
August 25 - 29, 2021
Best Buddies Breakaway Camp: Asheville offered riders a once-in-a-lifetime cycling experience, traversing some of the most beautiful vistas that can be seen on a bike as they spend five days exploring the iconic Blue Ridge Mountains.

Best Buddies Challenge: Miami
November 19, 2021 | Miami, FL
Four-time Tour de France winner Chris Froome joined professional cyclists George Hincapie and Christian Vande Velde for the Hublot Best Buddies Challenge: Miami Chaired by the Kenneth C. Griffin Charitable Fund on Friday, November 19. Additional professional cyclists participating in the 2021 event included Leanda Cave, Bobby Julich, Tom Pidcock, Magnus Sheffield, and Cam Wurf. In total, the event raised $1.5 million for Best Buddies programs.
Best Buddies Friendship Walk

The Best Buddies Friendship Walk continued 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 worldwide with IDD.

In 2021, over 30,000 participants in more than 60 cities walked to move Best Buddies’ mission forward. Collectively over $5 million was raised as participants, sponsors, volunteers and public figures joined the movement that celebrates friendship, inclusion and unity. Over the years, Best Buddies Friendship Walks have made a profound impact in communities nationwide, providing a platform for participants to showcase the Best Buddies mission. Each walk provides an atmosphere for new friendships, promising opportunities and most of all, inclusion for all people.

Best Buddies Champion of The Year

In 2021, Best Buddies’ Champion of the Year Galas and social events continued to raise critical funds and awareness for the organization. Community leaders, corporate partners, and Champions for inclusion showed unwavering support through both virtual and in-person events. These core events collectively raised over $6.5 million and engaged 380 Champions across the country. Since 2015, Champion of the Year Galas have generated over $19.5 million through the efforts of over 1,300 Champion leaders and their supporters. These events and the people that lead them continue to provide life-long support and opportunities for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
Best Buddies Leadership Conference

Summer 2021

The 2021 Best Buddies Leadership Conference (BBLC) was a three-day digital event uniting Best Buddies leaders, volunteers, and community advocates from around the globe to imagine, create, lead and empower the future of the inclusion movement. Over the past 32 years, BBLC has inspired thousands of leaders to be Best Buddies advocates and to bring about social change in their communities.

Traditionally held as an in-person conference, the 2021 Best Buddies Leadership Conference transitioned to an online experience that allowed thousands of participants and advocates from around the world to unite virtually, creating connections and building community as they prepared for the year ahead.

Best Buddies Month

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 kicked off with the annual Spread the Word: Inclusion campaign, that encouraged participants to showcase how they promote inclusion in their communities. In March 2021, 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.

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.
2021 Board of Directors

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Joshua Felder, Global Ambassador, Best Buddies International
Tina A. Fox, Actress
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Chris Lindstrom, Professional Football Player, Atlanta Falcons
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Lisa Ludoff, President, Celebrity Chases
Molly Nizoli, Global Ambassador, Best Buddies International
Mitch O’Meara, Young Leadership Council Chair, Best Buddies International

Anthony Kennedy Shriver, Founder, Chairman & CEO, Best Buddies International
Lisa衍, Global Ambassador, Best Buddies International
Steven C. Stuck, Founder, Chairman & CEO, Best Buddies International
Eunice K. Shriver II, Founder, Special Olympics Int.

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Lisa Drez, Vice President, Government Relations
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Jessica Schwartz, Vice President, Marketing & Partnerships

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Honorary Board Members

Eunice Kennedy Shriver, Founder, Special Olympics Int.
Keith Allen Haring, Pop Artist, Creator of the Best Buddies Logo

47 48 BESTBUDDIES.ORG
48 49
FOUNDATIONS

$250,000 to $499,000

The Albertsons Companies Foundation
American Online Giving Foundation, Inc.
Charities Aid Foundation of America
May and Stanley Smith Charitable Trust

$100,000 to $249,999

Andrew P. Barowsky Foundation
Ann G. and James B. Ritchey Foundation
Aria Foundation
Drew Foundation
Foundation Fundation
NIKE, Inc. - Beaverton
Phyllis H. Foundation
Stavros Niarchos Foundation
The GEO Group Foundation Inc.
The Taft Foundation
The Tina and Richard V Carolan Foundation
Tides Foundation
Tulsa Community Foundation
UBS Financial Services Inc. - MIA, FL

$50,000 to $99,999

American Endowment Foundation
Anthony P. Abraham Foundation Inc.
Citizens Bank Corporate Giving Program
Frederick A Deluca Foundation
Greater Milwaukee Foundation, Inc.
Jim Moran Foundation
ManpowerGroup Foundation, Inc.
Micky and Madeleine Arison Family Foundation
Moorhead National Bank
Poston Gardens Charitable Foundation
Rubin Family Foundation
Stanniusa Community Foundation
The Batchelor Foundation, Inc.
The Florida Endowment Foundation For Rehabilitation Inc.
The Sharon D. Lund Foundation
The Sullivan Foundation, Inc.
Volo Foundation
Wealth Management & Trust

$25,000 to $49,999

Acencenture - San Francisco
Arizona Community Foundation
Badger Philanthropies, Inc.
California Community Foundation - E.G. Watkins Family Foundation
Edith L. Trees Charitable Trust
Hawaii Community Foundation
Jeffrey P. Ossen Family Foundation
Jordan Spieth Family Foundation
Kenneth and Eileen Norris Foundation
Kessler Family Foundation
M.J. Murdoch Charitable Foundation
Marc J. Leder Foundation Inc
Memorial Foundation
New York Life Foundation
Taco Bell Foundation, Inc.
The 1111 Foundation
The Ernst & Gerrude Ticho Charitable Foundation
The GivenGain Foundation
The Mentor Network Charitable Foundation
The Morrison & Foerster Foundation
United Way of Central New Mexico

$10,000 to $24,999

Accenture Federal Services LLC
Agrawal Family Foundation

Albuquerque Community Foundation
AutoZone
Bank of America
Bank of Hawaii
Barbolas Foundation
BNY Mellon, N.A.
Carrillo and Joseph J. D'Urso Foundation
Carl and Ruth Shapiro Family Foundation
Central Indiana Community Foundation
Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts
Cornell Foundation
Delaware Community Foundation
Dolgate Family Charitable Foundation Inc.
Douglas Family Foundation
Enterprise Holdings
Gary & Penne Arramian Charitable Foundation
Graham and Carolyn Halloway Family Foundation
Maine Community Foundation
Man-Anderson Family Foundation
Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission
Mitsubishi Motors USA Foundation
National Christian Foundation Georgia
Reliant Charitable Foundation
Renee and Ted’s Big Heart Foundation
Sanctus Care
Silicon Valley Community Foundation
State Farm Companies Foundation
Tempe Dabols Charities, Inc.
The Arina Covey Foundation
The Bumpard Foundation Inc.
The Comcast NBCUniversal Family Foundation
The Community Foundation For Northeast Florida
The Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee
The Community Foundation of Will County
The Dodge Family Fund
The Dresher Foundation Inc.
The DuPage Foundation
The Eamon Foundation
The Jack Buncher Foundation
The John C. Kish Foundation
The Lafferty McHugh Foundation
The Merrill Family Foundation
The Mick Foundation
The Connecticut Foundation
The Sorensen Legacy Foundation
The Walter & Christina Griffith Foundation, Inc.
The Wava Foundation Inc.
Thomas W. Bradley Foundation, Inc.
Universal Orlando Foundation, Inc.
Virginia Kids Foundation
Vanguard Charitable
Walmart Foundation
Warmhaven Family Foundation
Wayne & Arline Chaplin Family Foundation
Weis Fargo Foundation
Wilmingtom Trust

$5,000 to $9,999

AEGION Transcommunity Foundation
Albert & Helga Herrlentzen Charitable Foundation
AmazonSmile Foundation
Anheuser-Busch Foundation Bank of America - CT
Brett Boyer Foundation Inc.
Brito Foundations
Cady Family Foundation
Campbell Foundation Inc.
Capital Group Companies Charitable Foundation
Child Development Foundation
Cogswell Beneficiency Trust
Community Foundation of Howard County
Community Foundation of Tampa Bay
Crescent Cares Foundation
Dart Group Foundation Inc.
Exelon Generation Company, LLC
Feiziwji WWJD Foundation Inc.
FIS Foundation
Georgia and Mary Josephine Hamman Foundation
George S. and Doree Dore' Eccles Foundation
Givel授 Community Foundation
Harper McCrady Charitable Foundation, Inc.
IMC Chicago Charitable Foundation
Irene E. and George A. Davis Foundation
Jeff and Yolanda Berkowitz Family Charitable Foundation Inc
John J. Pohanka Family Foundation TR
Joseph Briere Foundation
Julie and Martin Franklin Family Foundation
Junior League of Indianapolis Inc.
JWL Foundation
Mai United Way
Morgan Stanley
National Christian Foundation Indiana
Neuberger Berman
NFL Foundation
Nordern Conservation Foundation
Sheila, Dave & Sherry Gold Foundation
St. Louis Blues for Kids Foundation
Stackner Family Foundation
State Farm - HO
TD Charitable Foundation
The Arandie Family Foundation
The Beeke Family Foundation
The Carl M. Freeman Foundation, Inc.
The Chapo Foundation
The Chesley G. Magruder Foundation,
The Chicago Community Foundation
The Earl & Betty Fields Administrative Group Foundation, Inc.
The Gheens Foundation, Inc.
The Hometown Community Foundation
The Landmark Foundation, Inc.
The Lenox Foundation, Inc.
The Lindy Loo Foundation, LTD

$10,000 to $24,999

The Meltzer Group
The Chicago Community Trust
TD Ameritrade Clearing, Inc.
Sterling Capital Partners LLC.
Stephen S. Nuell P.A. Attorneys at Law
Stearling Capital Partners
Stifel Nicolaus
Swisher International, Inc.
TDM System Design Clearing
TD Bank, NA
Terra Grove Communities LLC.
The Chicago Coral Trust
The Harper/Harpoohan Family Fund
The Meltzer Group
The PNC Charitable Trusts
The Signatory
The Vandervpool Family Fund
TheseFunding
Tillamook County Creamery Association
Total Marketing Concepts
Traina Interactive
Triple Threat Productions, Inc.
Trust - Maryland
Truly Nolen of America, Inc.
Tschetter Group
Textiles LLC
Tuck and Ties Inc.
TUCCI LLC
T Vil Management Corporation
Ultimate Software Group, Inc.
UMPC Changing Medicine
United Healthcare Services, Inc.
United Phoenix Firefighters Association, Inc.
Value Store it.
Variety-The Children’s Charity
Veridian Credit Union
Vivian Gaither High School
Webcor Construction LP
Wendy's
Wegmans Food Markets, Inc.
West Bank
Westermont Union WU - Money Orders
WestRiver Management LLC.
WHAS Crusade For Children, Inc.
Whidby Turner Contracting Company
Whole Foods Market
Wilmorid
WM NIC Philanthropic East
Zuckerman Gravely Management, Inc.

GOVERNMENT

$500,000 and Above

Florida Department of Education
Illinois Department of Human Services
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Texas Education Agency
U.S. Department of Education

$250,000 to $499,000

Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission
New Mexico Public Education Department

$100,000 - $249,999

Boston, Massachusetts Public Schools
California Department of Rehabilitation
Central Valley Regional Center
Connecticut Department of Developmental Services

$50,000 to $99,999

Illinois Vocational Rehabilitation
Indiana Department of Education
Maryland Department of Health
Maryland State Department of Education
Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services
Miami-Dade County, Florida Office of Management and Budget
New York Office of Persons with Developmental Disabilities

$10,000 to $24,999

New Mexico Public Education Department

$500,000 and Above

Florida Department of Education
Illinois Department of Human Services
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Texas Education Agency
U.S. Department of Education

$250,000 to $499,000

Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission
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Illinois Vocational Rehabilitation
Indiana Department of Education
Maryland Department of Health
Maryland State Department of Education
Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services
Miami-Dade County, Florida Office of Management and Budget
New York Office of Persons with Developmental Disabilities

$10,000 to $24,999

Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission
New Mexico Public Education Department

$500,000 and Above

Florida Department of Education
Illinois Department of Human Services
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Texas Education Agency
U.S. Department of Education

$250,000 to $499,000

Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Texas Education Agency
U.S. Department of Education
### Financials

#### Consolidated Statement of Activities* (as of 12.31.21)

#### Domestic Revenue

- 25% $10,342,952 Special Events
- 24% $9,911,633 Foundations & Corps.
- 43% $17,658,629 Government
- 7% $2,807,768 Individual
- 1% $619,657 Other**

**Total Domestic Revenue**: $41,400,639

#### Domestic Expenses

- 80% $20,057,302 Programs
- 15% $3,779,033 Fundraising
- 5% $1,318,999 Administration

**Total Domestic Expenses**: $25,155,294

#### Domestic Net Asset Summary

- **Net Assets (beginning of year)**: $17,098,734
- **Change in Net Assets**: $16,245,345
- **Net Unrealized Gains (Losses) on Investments**: $(150,186)

**Total Domestic Net Assets (end of year)**: $33,193,893

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#### Balance Sheet (as of 12.31.21)

**Assets**

- **Current Assets**
  - Cash and cash equivalents: $6,567,077
  - Investments: $21,141,312
  - Accounts receivable: $119,421
  - Contributions receivable, net: $1,478,069
  - Grant receivable: $3,629,202
  - Inventory artwork: $58,428
  - Prepaid expenses: $162,616
  - Cash and cash equivalents: $6,567,077
  - **Total Current Assets**: $33,156,125

- **With donor restriction**: $5,363,514
- **Without donor restriction**: $27,830,379

**Net Assets**

- **Total Net Assets**: $33,193,893

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**Liabilities and Net Assets**

- **Total Current Liabilities**: $1,512,605
- **Total Long-Term Liabilities**: $101,226
- **Total Liabilities**: $1,613,831
- **Total Property and Equipment, Cost**: $1,705,723
- **Less Accumulated Depreciation**: $(547,354)
- **Total Property and Equipment, Net**: $1,158,369

**Total Assets**: $34,807,724

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* Statement of Activities for calendar year 2021 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.
2021 was a transformative year for Best Buddies in Massachusetts (MA) and Rhode Island (RI). After the previous full year of working with COVID-19 protocols, added safety measures, and remote work and programming, we took what we learned, honed our methods, and continued to grow across all our programs.

It gives me great pleasure to report that, among our biggest successes in 2021, our Best Buddies Jobs program hit record highs. In 2020, our Jobs team served more participants than ever and ended the year with the most new placements in the history of the program. Given the uncertain employment landscape, this was a huge achievement that we look forward to building on in years to come. I am most thrilled for the 167 adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), who were supported in finding integrated employment as they enter new fulfilling careers.

The Friendship program continued to grow as we expanded into new school districts while increasing participation at our existing chapters in both Massachusetts and Rhode Island. We are especially proud of our expansion within Boston Public Schools where, despite urban challenges, our chapters have managed to grow, our leadership programs have been implemented, and we are now serving more students than ever in most all areas of the city.

Best Buddies thrives on its volunteers to support its programs, provide expertise, and spread the mission of inclusion. We are lucky to have dedicated volunteers, many of whom serve on our Advisory Board. This Fall, we launched a Young Professionals Board to further foster the work of our young adult supporters as they graduate from our college chapters and enter their careers. This group will support Best Buddies in MA and RI as ambassadors promoting our mission as we continue to grow in their communities.

Best Buddies in MA and RI had one of our strongest years ever in 2021. With the generous support from our local corporate, individual, and foundation partners, we were able to foster programmatic growth and serve more people than ever across both states. The strides that we make every day in the community would not be possible without this immense support. I truly thank all of those supporters for the impact that their generosity makes not just in the lives of people with IDD, but in the greater community at large.
“Best Buddies gave me the opportunity to become best friends with Gianna, and many other people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD),” says Megan.

Megan and Gianna met three years ago, during Megan’s freshman year at Bryant University. Gianna, a seasoned member with previous experience as a member at her high school was excited to meet new people within this program.

Prior to joining Best Buddies, Megan notes “I didn’t know a lot about people with IDD, and I did not have the same perspective I have on inclusivity that I have today.”

Bryant University in Rhode Island has been making inclusive friendship for several years now, which has given Megan and Gianna time to grow their friendship. However, it has not been without challenges. As COVID-19 hit, Megan and Gianna experienced a lot of changes to their regular routine and had to come up with creative ways to stay connected.

“The biggest challenge was trying to stay connected with Gianna when we couldn’t hang out in person as much,” says Megan. “We had to overcome those obstacles and hang out on devices instead! We played trivia games on Zoom, met each other’s pets over Zoom, and talked every week.”

Gianna adds, “We loved using FaceTime to catch up, and constant texting back and forth! We held Zoom calls every Wednesday to play Kahoot and watch movies like Scooby Doo.”

Both women acknowledge the happiness that this friendship has brought them. “[My life] changed because I didn’t know some people before” says Gianna.

In reflecting on their time together, Megan says “My favorite thing about Gianna is that she makes me feel a lot of joy when we hang out. She’s always looking on the bright side and making me realize that we have so many things in common. She is an amazing friend to me!” Gianna reciprocates these feelings, adding “I like spending time with Meg. Our friendship makes me happy!”

This duo looks forward to what is still to come, which hopefully will involve even more in-person activities—specifically to Six Flags, which is one of Gianna’s favorite memories. Megan looks forward to her senior year with Gianna and reflects on her time in the chapter saying “this club changed so many peoples’ lives and filled it with joy. I am so happy that Best Buddies gave me the opportunity to be friends with such an amazing person!”

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**One-To-One Friendships**

**Key Program Stats MA & RI**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Middle Schools</th>
<th>High Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>49 Chapters</td>
<td>134 Chapters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>592 Participants</td>
<td>4,020 Participants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colleges</th>
<th>Citizens</th>
<th>e-Buddies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>33 Chapters</td>
<td>1,394 Participants</td>
<td>202 Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>242 Participants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Elycia
Integrated Employment

Elycia has been a participant of the Massachusetts Jobs program since May 2012. Like many of our Jobs participants, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, she lost both of her two part-time jobs in 2020. Elycia returned to Best Buddies Jobs program determined to find a new job with the opportunity to grow her career. Working with her Jobs development manager, Elycia updated her resume, brushed up on her interview skills, and began applying to jobs that fit her interests. After a few months of actively searching, Elycia interviewed with Flik Hospitality Group and was hired in April 2021 as a food service worker.

In her new role, Elycia quickly learned her stocking and cleaning tasks and became eager to take on more responsibilities. After a few short months, she began assisting her team with catering and more advanced food prep tasks. Elycia’s can-do attitude and willingness to learn and take on any task really set her apart. The Best Buddies in Massachusetts Jobs team was inspired by Elycia’s growth and independence in her new role. As recognition for all her hard work at Flik, Elycia was recognized as the 2021 Employee of the Year.

Elycia was honored to be the Employee of the Year, commenting that, “This is a wonderful recognition. It’s nice to know that people acknowledge and value my work. It’s great, I have so much fun and my mother is very proud of me.”

Michael, Elycia’s supervisor at Flik, shared that “Elycia has a great personality, and she is a pleasure to work with. Having someone who is so positive and so full of energy has really boosted employee morale and everyone loves her.” He went on to add that “Elycia has all of the intangible skills that you cannot teach. I can teach the Flik standard of how to set up a catering or salad bar, but I cannot teach people how to have a great attitude; how to want to come to work and learn, be excited, happy, and energetic, and Elycia has all those things.”

Elycia has participated in the Best Buddies Jobs program for 10 years. Change is challenging, but with a positive attitude, Elycia has thrived in her new role at Flik. She continues to work hard and strive for independence. She utilizes the supports and tools she has learned from the program to help her grow professionally and achieve her career goals.

“Elycia has a great personality, and she is a pleasure to work with. Having someone who is so positive and so full of energy has really boosted employee morale and everyone loves her.” - Michael
Jamel has been a part of Best Buddies programs since his high school years, and since then has worked to become an Ambassador for Massachusetts and Rhode Island, supporting friendship program expansion in his home state of Rhode Island. He was selected for and currently serves on the Best Buddies Massachusetts and Rhode Island Young Professionals Board.

Prior to becoming involved with Best Buddies, Jamel says his life was very challenging. “After joining Best Buddies in 2016, my life changed a lot because when I became a godfather in 2019 and 2022,” says Jamel. “I’m now able to show my two beautiful goddaughters Legacy and Jai’Loni how successful I am in the Best Buddies organization. Currently, I’m a part of the Ambassador program and I love it.”

Despite not being able to see everyone in person since 2019, which Jamel identifies as the biggest challenge in the last year, he looks forward to getting back into the community to spread awareness for the mission. You can find him at the local Best Buddies Friendship Walks, as well as any opportunity he can find to speak publicly about inclusion.

Looking ahead, Jamel hopes to use his role as an advocate to help with opening up more Best Buddies Friendship chapters in schools throughout Rhode Island before the end of 2022. My message for people with IDD is to never give up, always believe in yourself and keep striving because having a disability is not a sickness --- it's a blessing.”

“I’m now able to show my two beautiful goddaughters Legacy and Jai’Loni how successful I am in the Best Buddies organization. Currently, I’m a part of the Ambassador program and I love it.” - Jamel
The Communications, Marketing and Strategic Development Department thanks Best Buddies International Headquarters, state offices, and International Programs staff for their collaborative effort in creating this report. Individuals listed below played a major role in its development:

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**Thank you,**
Mark Lewis, Senior Vice President, Development, Marketing & Technology