

# BESTBUDDIES®

## Arkansas



Trae and Jesyah, Buddies Since 2011

## Best Buddies 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 and leadership development for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

## Research Shows

**96%**

of Best Buddies participants with special needs say they feel more accepted by their friends.

**96%**

of peer buddies are more aware that people with IDD can hold jobs in the community.

**95%**

of peer buddies would work at a company that employs people with IDD.

Best Buddies helps develop the social and leadership skills that make students college and career-ready.

### Arkansas Office

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## THE BIG PICTURE

By creating one-to-one friendships between people with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities, we are erasing the invisible line that too often isolates those with disabilities from our schools, our workplaces, and our lives.

## THE NEED

- 83% of adolescents with IDD...have experienced bullying, which puts them at risk for crushing loneliness and depression. (Reiter and Lapidot-Leftler, 2007)
- Despite anti-bullying legislation enacted in 2012, in 2015 Arkansas was ranked 42 out of 43 states examined by a WalletHub study of “bullying prevalence” ([www.wallethub.edu](http://www.wallethub.edu))
- The same study, including data obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, StopBullying.gov, the National Education Association, Youthhealhsafety.org and the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services showed that Arkansas high school students were more likely than students in 37 other states to miss school because they were afraid to go.
- In 2014, 9,495 students with intellectual disabilities and autism ages 6-21 were enrolled in Arkansas public schools. ([ideadata.org](http://ideadata.org))
- Nearly half of Arkansas students with intellectual disabilities spend more than 60% of their school day separated from their peers. ([ideadata.org](http://ideadata.org))

## FAST FACTS

- Best Buddies opened its Arkansas office in 2015
- There are currently 252 people participating in nine Best Buddies chapters in Arkansas
- Youth with IDD that participate in Best Buddies have the chance to build positive peer relationships, leading to improved school attendance, fewer disciplinary incidents, and improved academic performance. (Florida Legislature OPPAGA Report on Mentoring, 2011)



## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Best Buddies enables Arkansas youth with IDD to participate in social activities with their typical peers. This is achieved through the creation and management of school-based, volunteer-led chapters which facilitate and support one-to-one mentoring friendships between participants with IDD and their typical peers. A study conducted by Yale University concluded, "Best Buddy relationships appear to offer unique benefits to the psychological adjustment of adolescents with IDD. The frequency of contact that young people with IDD had with their peers without disabilities was concurrently associated with lower frequencies of peer victimization, better adaptive behavior, higher levels of self-esteem, and fewer psychological symptoms." (Prinstein, 2005)

## PROGRAMS

**Best Buddies Middle Schools** matches students with IDD with other middle school students to create one-to-one friendships between them. In today's middle schools, students with IDD often enter the same building and walk the same hallways as their peers, but are frequently left out of social activities. Best Buddies Middle Schools brings young adolescents into the inclusion movement early to help develop young leaders.

**Best Buddies High Schools** matches students with IDD with other high school students to create one-to-one friendships between them. By introducing Best Buddies to public and private high schools, we are crossing the invisible line that too often separates those with IDD from those without.

**Best Buddies Colleges** matches adults with IDD age 18 and up with college students. Best Buddies helps combat the isolation experienced by adults with IDD who have not had the opportunity to have friends outside of their own, often lonely, environment.

**Best Buddies Ambassadors** educates and empowers people with IDD to be leaders and public speakers in their schools, communities, and workplaces.

## 2015-16 PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

### HIGH SCHOOLS

Bryant High School - Bryant  
Conway High School - Conway  
Beebe High School - Beebe  
Valley View High School - Jonesboro

### COLLEGES

Arkansas State University - Jonesboro  
Arkansas Tech University - Russellville  
Hendrix College - Conway  
University of Arkansas at Little Rock  
University of Arkansas at Fayetteville  
University of Arkansas at Fort Smith  
University of Central Arkansas - Conway