

BEST BUDDIES®



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Iowa

Our Current Impact & Goals



Iowa Programs Stats

Best Buddies in Iowa



1,717

Participants

411

Buddy Pairs

11

New Schools



One-to-One Friendships

School Chapters: 53



Leadership Development

Ambassadors: 7

What Your Support Made Possible

We are grateful for the continued support and commitment to investing in programs that strengthen communities across Iowa. Your leadership and stewardship of these resources make this work possible, and we do not take that responsibility lightly.

Thanks to the state's previous investment, we have expanded program delivery, reached even more lowans, and improved outcomes for people with IDD across the state.

During the past three years, our focus has been on sustainable growth, accountability, and measurable results.



Participant Growth

2022 - 2023: **1,612**
 2023 - 2024 : **1,616**
 2024 - 2025 : **1,510**
 2025 - 2026 : **1,750**



Chapter Growth

2022 - 2023: **7 New Schools Opened**
 2023 - 2024: **3 New Schools Opened**
 2024 - 2025: **11 New Schools Opened**
 2025 - 2026: **2 New Schools Opened**



Geographic Reach

Growth in 3 new counties.
Marion County
Shelby County
Story County

Real Programs. Real People. Real Outcomes.

Our chapters and events create consistent opportunities for connection, skill-building, and community engagement. These programs are where funding turns into real experiences for participants.



Roosevelt High School Chapter Spotlight

Every year during the spring semester Roosevelt Best Buddies and their basketball team celebrate a night of inclusion. Students within Best Buddies play basketball with people on the basketball team and celebrate each others differences.

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Event Highlight

2025 Central IA Friendship Ball
Over 300 members attended
from around the state to
celebrate inclusion and their
friends. Games were played,
dancing was had and of course
pizza was eaten!

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Cain Burwell - Humboldt High School Member

“

Having my match Jacob call me on my birthday was the best day of my life, and it showed me that someone cares about me.

”



Why Continued Investment Matters

Maintaining current funding ensures program stability while allowing us to meet increasing demand. Without this level of support, we risk reducing access, limiting chapter capacity, or scaling back key programming.

1

Growth Projections

In 2025, our goal was to open five new chapters, but we surpassed that target by launching ten. We intend to sustain this momentum in our chapter expansion as we move ahead.

2

Growth Related Costs:

As we expand, additional resources are needed to sustain quality. Ideally, funding would support hiring a new Program Manager to oversee growth. In addition, the cost to open a new chapter averages \$1,500, covering materials, training, and startup expenses.

3

Participant Need:

5 out of every 100 people in Iowa are estimated to have a developmental disability.

Research shows that approximately 36% of youth with intellectual disabilities report experiencing bullying.



Friendship Match in Action

North High School Members
Kaleb Kennis & Jacob Sims

At the center of our work are meaningful, lasting connections. This is the first year Kaleb Kennis (junior) and Jacob Sims (sophomore) joined the Best Buddies program — and they've already created an unforgettable friendship.

Kaleb joined to become a better friend and meet new people, and he's already shining as North's varsity quarterback AND heading to state for Unified Bowling! He even stepped up as a leader at the Best Buddies Central Iowa Leadership Training.

Jacob joined to improve his bowling skills and make new friends — and he's celebrating a huge milestone of launching his own YouTube channel. The duo even made a deal: when Jacob hits his next goal, he gets to give Kaleb a haircut of his choice.

Kaleb shares an important reminder:

“Best Buddies is called Best Buddies for a reason — we're all just friends, and everyone deserves to be treated with love, kindness, and compassion.”



Graham Cowan & Sam Harrington



Iowa
Buddy
Pair



Thank you



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