

Print

Commission's Grant Application Form - Submission #48526

Date Submitted: 4/13/2016

Shelby County Board of Commissioners
GRANT APPLICATION

Legal Name of the Organization*

Best Buddies International. Inc.

EIN*

52-1614576

Street Address of Organization*

9700 Village Circle, Suite 300, Lakeland, TN 38002

Office Phone*

(901) 937-0005

E-mail*

SarahCarroll@bestbuddies.org

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

First Name*

Melissa

Last Name*

Todd

GENERAL CONTACT FOR THIS REQUEST(if other than Executive Director)

First Name

Sarah

Last Name

Carroll

Title

Director, Government Relations

DESCRIPTION OF GRANT REQUEST

Program/Project Area	Amount Requested*
Shelby County, Tennessee	\$15,000
Total Organizational budget (for current year) *	Total Project/Program Budget*
\$1,202,654.80	\$206,394
Dates covered by this budget.*	Project/Program Name*
January 1, 2016 - December 31, 2016	Shelby County Friendship Project

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF ORGANIZATION

Please summarize in a short paragraph the purpose of your agency. Briefly explain why your agency is requesting this grant, what outcomes you hope to achieve, and how you will spend the funds if a grant is made.

Best Buddies is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to establish 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). In 2009, Best Buddies International opened its Tennessee state office in Brentwood with private funding raised over several years by local volunteers, and after successful expansion, opened our Memphis office in 2013 to better serve the region. In 2013, we began work in the area with five school chapters. The following year, we expanded to 14, and in the most recent school year, served 27 chapters from our Memphis office, including 12 in Shelby County.

Best Buddies Tennessee creates inclusive school communities by organizing and rigorously overseeing volunteer-run chapters at elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, and college campuses statewide. These chapters pair students with IDD and their typical peers in one-to-one peer mentoring friendships. The Best Buddies mission is also carried out through e-Buddies, an e-mail pen pal program; Best Buddies Citizens, an adult friendship program; Best Buddies Jobs, a supported employment program; and Ambassadors, a leadership training and skill development program for people with IDD. Best Buddies is the agency best poised to assist Shelby County in increasing the availability of school-based inclusion programs that have a positive social impact on individuals with and without IDD and their communities.

Funding received through the Shelby County Community Betterment Grant solicitation would allow Best Buddies Tennessee to sustain and grow 25 Best Buddies chapters at middle and high schools throughout Shelby County serving youth and young adults with IDD and their typical peers. We seek funding support from Shelby County because of our robust expansion goals and our commitment to supporting our programs using diverse funding sources. Best Buddies Tennessee will raise the balance of funds needed for this project through special events such as our annual Friendship Walk, individual and corporate donations, and foundation grants.

Our school-based friendship programs address the following goals and seek the following outcomes: 1) promote one-to-one friendship opportunities between students with IDD and their typical peers; 2) develop leadership skills for students with and without IDD to lead the inclusion movement; 3) transform attitudes regarding the needs and natural abilities of people with IDD; and 4) develop social skills for people with disabilities that aid in their employment, independence, and community integration.

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Narrative - Organization

Current programs and accomplishments. Please emphasize the achievements of the recent past.*

In 2015, Best Buddies Tennessee involved 3,800 individuals with and without IDD in our school-based inclusion programs statewide. In Shelby County, we served nearly 550 youth and adults with IDD and their typical peers through 12 school-based inclusion programs, with excellent results. We have observed that following successful Best Buddies program launch, awareness is raised and school environments shift toward inclusion, drawing more students to the program. At Arlington High School, Best Buddies program enrollment has increased five-fold since 2013, due to a perceptible shift in the school culture toward social inclusion. In 2015, we hosted our most in depth leadership training day for Memphis area student leaders, focusing on their individual needs and best practices for program delivery. Best Buddies provided leadership training to more than 45 area youth with and without disabilities last year. We host a regional prom every year. In April 2016, over 500 participants with and without disabilities attended, making this our most successful Memphis area prom to date.

Program growth and success has increased awareness of our inclusion efforts among funders and public officials as well. In 2016, the mayor of Collierville participated in our annual respectful language awareness campaign, proclaiming a "Spread the Word to End the Word" week and promoting Best Buddies Tennessee and our work along with the campaign itself. "Spread the Word to End the Word" is a worldwide student-led effort to promote respectful language and eradicate hurtful use of the word "retard" or "retarded" run in partnership with Special Olympics. Our students lead awareness efforts throughout the region every March. Carnival Memphis recently selected Best Buddies Tennessee as one of three local charities to receive grants this year, and Best Buddies will occupy the "charity spotlight" during Lipscomb and Pitts' Signature Breakfast in May, 2016.

Our crowning programmatic recognition for the region, Ridgeway High School Best Buddies received Tennessee's Outstanding Best Buddies Chapter of the Year award at the Best Buddies International Leadership Conference held in July at Indiana University and attended by more than 2,000 youth leaders representing Best Buddies chapters around the world. Our experienced, dedicated full-time staff based in Memphis provide the highest level program support to Shelby County Schools, making them among the strongest programs in Tennessee.

Number of paid full-time staff.

12

Number of paid part-time staff.*

3

Number of volunteers.*

4,870

Narrative - Funding Request

Please describe the program/project for which you seek funding and include how it will benefit the general welfare of residents in Shelby County, TN.

This project will involve individuals with and without IDD at 15 existing programs in Shelby County located at Riverdale Elementary School, Colonial Middle School, White Station Middle School, Arlington High School, Bartlett High School, Bolton High School, Germantown High School, Houston High School, Ridgeway High School, St Ann Catholic School, St. George's Independent School, Christian Brothers University, Rhodes College, University of Memphis and the University of Tennessee Health Science Center, along with 10 new chapters to be launched at Lakeland Elementary, Richland Elementary, Schilling Farms (Collierville School), Arlington Middle School, Collierville Middle School, Houston Middle School, Kingsbury Middle School, Collierville High School, Evangelical Christian School, and Hutchison School.

Best Buddies programs, by their nature, create socially inclusive environments where they may not have existed before. For example, in many schools, Best Buddies participants break down the invisible social barrier between students with and without IDD by sitting together at lunch. While, in theory, the cafeteria is intended to be an inclusive environment because students with and without IDD may eat simultaneously, they may eat and socialize in separate groups. Chapters based at elementary, middle, and high schools demonstrate social inclusion to the larger community by hosting regular inclusive social opportunities and participating in larger school events such as dances, sporting events, and school festivals. Typical hangouts such as parks, bowling alleys, coffee shops and fast food restaurants, open to the public, are technically inclusive because they are open to all. Best Buddies participants make them socially inclusive for youth with and without IDD by spending time there enjoying each other's company. Every Best Buddies activity is a socially inclusive one. Inclusive environments in schools lead to more inclusive spaces outside schools. Best Buddies participants with and without disabilities promote respect for one another's differences. Our participants without IDD become the community leaders, elected officials, and employers of tomorrow, eager to live in community with, hire and work alongside their peers with disabilities.

General Operating Support

If applying for general operating support, briefly describe how this grant will be used.

Not applicable

Project Support

Please explain the specific project including a statement of its primary purpose and the need or problem that you are seeking to address.*

Despite movement toward inclusive educational environments in recent years, children and adults with IDD in Shelby County still experience damaging social isolation. Researchers have found that children without disabilities still see their peers with disabilities, especially those with IDD, in a negative light (Nowicki and Sandieson, 2002). A 2008 study shows that this real and persistent social divide leaves children and young adults with IDD at greater risk of loneliness, isolation, and depression (Ferrer and Fugate), and researchers at George Mason University reported in 2006 that As students with disabilities are increasingly being taught with their non-disabled peers, they ... may be at an increased risk for bullying. (Carter and Spencer, 2006)

Best Buddies Tennessee directly addresses a documented need for school and community-based programming that supports and empowers Shelby County youth. Through Best Buddies, students with IDD are paired in one-to-one mentoring friendships with their typical peers. Best Buddies ensures program success by providing the support, training, and encouragement the students need to become effective leaders – skills they will continue to employ as the community's future civic and corporate leaders. Youth with IDD that participate in Best Buddies have the chance to build positive peer relationships, the effects of which can include improved school attendance, fewer disciplinary incidents, and improved academic performance (Florida Legislature OPPAGA Report on Mentoring). Shelby County funds will support staff time, to ensure that one-to-one friendships between participants with and without IDD are initiated and maintained over the duration of the project, in addition to providing leadership training opportunities for student leaders at the local and international level.

The Best Buddies Shelby County Friendship Project will engage at least 1,070 youth and adults with IDD along with their typical peers in organized, structured Best Buddies chapters which promote inclusion in schools and communities through one-to-one peer mentoring friendships. Our chapters function as official school clubs, supported by school administrators along with designated faculty advisors. Best Buddies staff provide individualized assistance selecting and training student leaders with and without IDD, facilitating the one-to-one matching process and follow-along, along with strategy support during site visits and meetings with key players. The Best Buddies program runs on a school calendar year. Participants make a commitment to attend chapter events and activities, and members of each buddy pair commit to contacting one another once per week and spending time together in person twice per month. These activities are self-driven and may include anything that interests the two involved, from playing video games to hanging out at the movies or the mall. By spending time together doing typical social things with their Best Buddy, participants with IDD are introduced to that person's social network. Often, new and unexpected relationships develop as buddy pairs spend time in social settings together; the potential for access to new social networks is exponential. Independent of the social networks already connected to students involved in the program, participating in Best Buddies can introduce students with IDD to the larger student body and community at large, through sporting events, theater, and awareness activities conducted by each chapter.

How does the project contribute to your organization's overall mission?*

In our 27th year of providing inclusion programs, Best Buddies has become the world's largest non-profit organization focused on one-to-one friendships between peers with and without IDD and a leader in the disability rights movement. Since 1989, Best Buddies has grown from the one original chapter at Georgetown University to more than 1,900 nationwide, overseen by 26 self-supporting state affiliates. In 1995, Best Buddies launched our first high school program, followed in 1996 by our first middle school chapters. Our program model has been tested around the nation and the world, allowing us to develop constantly evolving best practices and update our programs when necessary. This year we will impact more than 900,000 individuals with and without IDD worldwide through programs in 35 states and 50 countries outside the U.S. In a recent national survey conducted by Michael Hardman, Ph.D., Distinguished Professor and Chief Global Officer, President's Office, University of Utah, 91% of special education professionals involved with Best Buddies reported that they think students with IDD benefit from their involvement in our programs.

Best Buddies Tennessee, launched just seven years ago, has demonstrated unparalleled success and now fully implements all elements of the Best Buddies mission by offering a continuum of inclusion services beginning in elementary schools and continuing through adulthood, when participants with IDD can achieve their professional goals through community-based, competitive employment alongside their typical peers. Individuals in Shelby County who participate in our school-based friendship programs and uniquely poised to utilize their enhanced social skills, which are essential for success in the workplace and connection to the community.

Narrative - Evaluation

Please explain how you will measure the effectiveness of your activities. Describe your criteria for a successful program and the results you expect to have achieved by the end of the funding period."

Our target population demonstrates the direct benefit of Best Buddies programs through four evaluative tools. Monthly friendship updates serve as a maintenance tool to log the progress of the pairs, including contacts, one-to-one activities, and friendship successes and concerns. Friendship updates are used to help determine whether individual matches are successful or whether students should be re-matched, and are completed through our online database.

Mid and end year reports, filled out by chapter leaders twice a year, detail chapter activities, number of matches, goals for the following semester, etc. Best Buddies' staff uses the information from these reports, along with observation during frequent site visits and consistent communication with chapter leaders, to complete their own comprehensive mid and end-year reports for each chapter, which we use to monitor progress and to highlight areas where chapters need additional targeted support.

The final tool used for evidenced-based evaluation of program performance is our annual survey, developed by Michael Hardman, Ph.D., Distinguished Professor and Chief Global Officer, President's Office, University of Utah. The survey is administered to both the student with and without IDD, faculty advisors and parents and analyzes factors such as satisfaction with the program, skill acquisition and preparedness for graduating school and entering post-secondary school and or the workforce.

Using our systematic approach and extensive follow up activities conducted to assure each chapter is making an impact in their community, we expect our school-based chapters in Shelby County to achieve the following specific programmatic outcomes during the funding period:

- Friendship: Recruit and match students with IDD and their typical peers in 300 one-to-one friendships. Friendships provide supportive relationships, valuable physical and social skills and enhanced self-esteem.
 - Leadership: Recruit and train a minimum of 75 student leaders with and without IDD and 25 faculty advisors at the local or international level. Training helps educate school leadership on the elements of social inclusion, provides skill development for students with and without IDD and promotes collaboration.
 - Social Skills: Provide opportunities for the development of critical social skills in at least 150 individuals with IDD, through frequent contact with peers without disabilities. Participation in one-to-one activities, small group, and larger school-wide events, provide the opportunity to practice and enhance social skills.
 - Activities: Execute 100 inclusive group activities that will engage elementary, middle school, high school and adult participants in recreation, sports, community service, etc. These activities will demonstrate successful inclusion to community members.
 - Attitude Changes: 85% of non-disabled participants will develop a more positive attitude about people with IDD;
- and
- Integration: 80% of special education advisors will report that students with IDD are more socially integrated as a result of our program.

Attachments:

If your request is under \$25,000 please attach the following:

1. Copy of the entity's 501 (c) 3 certificate for charitable organizations or 501 (c) 4 certificate for civic organizations
2. Most recent IRS Form 990 or Financial Statements (balance sheet and income statement) as of the most recent fiscal year and certified by Chief Financial Officer/Treasurer of the entity
3. Complete Budget for grant request

If your request is \$25,000 or more please attach the following:

1. Copy of the entity's 501 (c) 3 certificate for charitable organizations or 501 (c) 4 certificate for civic organizations

2. Copy of an annual report as of a date within 10 months of the start of the current fiscal year.

3. Complete Budget for grant request.

File 1:

BBI_501(c)(3) Determination Letter_2013.pdf

File 2:

2014 Form 990_Best Buddies.pdf

File 3:

Best Buddies Tennessee_Project Budget_Shelby County Community Enhancement

Grant_FY16.pdf

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

Read, and if you agree to the provisions, sign the following:

The information provided has been submitted in good faith and as completely as our records and recollections permit.

I understand that the information provided in this application shall be open to inspection upon filing with the office of the Shelby County Board of Commissioners.

Signature:

Sarah M Carroll

Printed Name:

Sarah M Carroll

Date:

4/13/2016