



# BEST BUDDIES FRIENDSHIP WALK

## Participant Guide







# BEST BUDDIES FRIENDSHIP WALK

## Welcome

Congratulations you have registered to participate in the Best Buddies Friendship Walk!

Whether this is your first time participating in the Friendship Walk or you're a seasoned veteran, we're thrilled and hope this Participant Guide steers your efforts.

As next steps, we encourage you to follow the steps outlined in this Guide as they have been crafted to help you prepare and be successful leading up the Friendship Walk.

We're excited to see you at the Walk and wish you the best of luck with your fundraising efforts! When you raise \$100 or more, we look forward to rewarding you with the exclusive 2025 Walk t-shirt at the event."

Regards

Melanie Haydon  
Director, Community Events



# You Rock!

As a walker you serve as the link between the mission of Best Buddies Canada and the communities in which we live and serve. You are on the ground, actively promoting and pursuing inclusion in your community, and you have a chance to make a real difference.

Now, let's spread the word about your participation and the fundraising goals you've set.





# Because of You...

The Friendship Walk has become a catalyst in fueling the mission of Best Buddies through community engagement, visibility, dollars raised and volunteer recruitment. Your leadership affords the opportunity to educate, empower, and instill a culture of inclusion in your community.



## Mission

Best Buddies Canada an extension of Best Buddies International is a nonprofit organization dedicated to establishing a global volunteer movement that creates opportunities for one-to-one friendships, integrated employment, leadership development, inclusive living, and family support for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

## Who We Serve

Best Buddies Canada serves individuals with IDD and their families. The IDD community includes, but is not limited to, people with Down syndrome, autism, Fragile X, Williams syndrome, and other undiagnosed disabilities.

## Programs

Best Buddies is the largest organization dedicated to ending the social, physical and economic isolation of the 200 million people worldwide with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Our programs empower people with IDD to form meaningful friendships with their peers, secure jobs, improve communication and advocacy skills, and live independently, while also offering support for their families.

# Best Buddies Canada Story Spotlights

## BEST BUDDIES STORY SPOTLIGHT

30  
YEARS

Jessica Rotolo  
Lauren Abela

*"Best Buddies helped me become a leader in my community."*



Jessica and Lauren have been involved with Best Buddies Canada for nearly a decade. Their journey with the organization has brought them exciting leadership opportunities and a lifelong friendship, shaping their lives and leaving a lasting impact on their community.

Their efforts helped the Guelph-Humber chapter grow and positively impacted the broader school community. For many students, it was their first time engaging with individuals with disabilities. "The Best Buddies Canada chapter on campus sparked that curiosity, created those positive experiences," Lauren explains. She, too, felt inspired by her experience with the chapter and her friendship with Jessica.

## BEST BUDDIES STORY SPOTLIGHT

30  
YEARS

Romir Robinson  
Minaxi Sharma

*"I truly cherish the friendship that we have."*



Romir, was new to the school and eager to join Best Buddies Canada to make new friends. Paired together; "It was easy to be around Romir," Minaxi says. "I love coming to school to spend time with friends like Romir." Their bond was instant and quickly developed. They enjoy playing games and going for walks together at lunchtime. One of their favourite things to do is visit the school's classroom turtle. Whether they work on puzzles, read books, or simply chat, they're always happy to spend quality time together. "As the months went on, Romir's excitement increased and so did mine," Minaxi says. "Our relationship evolved from its beginning stages into a really close friendship."

## BEST BUDDIES STORY SPOTLIGHT

30  
YEARS

James O'Donohue  
Cy Fletcher

*"It takes a really special person to be a part of Best Buddies."*



Cy and Jame spent their lunches together playing card games, participating in sports, or going to the weight room. Cy introduced James to his group of friends. "Everyone knows James now. He's friends with so many different people. He never treats anyone bad; he's nice to everyone."

As Cy prepares to attend university, he feels better equipped to make new friends, communicate, and relate to people who might be different than him. He knows his friendship with James will continue beyond high school. "We're always there for each other," he says. "We'll definitely maintain our friendship. Whenever I come back, I'll say hi to James and everyone else in the Best Buddies Canada program."

# Participant Check List

## 8-12 WEEKS

- ☐ Now that you're registered, customize your fundraising page with your photo and share your story
- ☐ Set your fundraising goal
- ☐ Begin sending solicitation emails through your participant center
- ☐ Inquire if your company has a matching gift policy

## 4-8 WEEKS

- ☐ Follow-up with people who have not yet donated
- ☐ Be grateful and thank the people who donated to you

## 1-4 WEEKS

- ☐ This is a great time to host a top-up fundraiser: bbq, garage sale, etc.
- ☐ Get creative, make t-shirt and sign to bring to the BBFW

## Event Day - Get ready for the best day ever!

- ☐ We walk rain or shine, suntan lotion or umbrella, know what you need!
- ☐ Bring the Spirit as we will be celebrating the abilities that all of us have to offer, there's no better time to be yourself
- ☐ Check-in to pick up your Walk t-shirt for having raised \$100 or more. (To qualify for the Walk Reward, funds must be remitted no later than 10 days after the Walk.
- ☐ Get Social at the Walk. Share the fun you are having on your social media Remember to tag us using these hashtags #WalkWithBBC2025, #BBCFriendshipWalk2025, #WalkForFriendship2025, #StepUpForFriendship, #FriendshipInMotion
- ☐ Join the Party! Your top priority for the day is to have fun!



# Let's Get Started

## Login to your participant centre

You will see the words login at the top right corner of the Friendship Walk website. Click on that and enter your user name and password you used at time of registration

## Set your goal

It's important to have a vision on what you would like to raise. Your goal should be realistic. Remember at \$100 you will receive the Walk reward (t-shirt).

## Make it personal

Upload a photo of yourself or the individual you are walking for. Next, tell your story about why you are participating and what Best Buddies means to you

## Upload your contacts into your participant centre

This is the easiest way to engage people to support you with a donation. Who can you count on? Who counts on you? Your closest friends family and fellow Best Buddies supports is the best place to start.

## Kick things off

Lead by example by donating to yourself. It shows your personal vested interest in the cause and your efforts.

## Get Social

There's no easier way to reach a huge audience all at once, and you never know who your story might impact. Upload your fundraising page link to Facebook and Instagram and you'll almost always receive a donation you never expected!



## Remember...

- ☒ Always include a link to your personal fundraising page
- ☒ Don't be afraid to post frequently about your fundraising progress
- ☒ Publicly thank you donors and let them know they are appreciated

# Make Your Plan

## Use Your Online Fundraising Tools

Fundraising online is the most effective way to fundraise, and it is also the easiest way to reach friends and family to ask them for their monetary support.

Every registered walker has access to their very “own” Participant Centre which includes a customized fundraising link. Within the participant centre individuals can track their fundraising, send emails requesting support with their custom fundraising link and send thank you letters to their donors. There are lots of templated emails available in the participant centre.

Fundraising online is simple, safe and secure and it's convenient for donors because they automatically receive their tax receipt.

## Who to ask

Making a plan will help you reach your fundraising goal. Below are a few suggestions on how you can get there. Having a plan = SUCCESS!

	<b><u>\$100</u></b>	<b><u>\$1000</u></b>
Donate to yourself	\$25	\$ 100
Ask 3 friends @ \$25-\$30	\$75	\$ 90
Ask 4 family members @ \$50		\$ 200
Ask 3 teachers @ \$30		\$ 90
Ask 3 colleagues @ \$30		\$ 90
Ask 4 more friends @ \$50		\$ 200
Ask 4 neighbours/clubmates @ \$20		\$ 80
	<b><u>\$100</u></b>	<b><u>\$1000</u></b>

## HOT TIPS



Set a realistic goal – once you achieve it don't be afraid to increase it higher



Get social by posting your fundraising link on your social platforms. Download the shareable graphics found on the walk website to support your social pages



# Fundraising Ideas

Top Up fundraisers can be a lot of fun! The more unique you make it, the more fun you and the people who support you will have. Below are some ideas to help top up your online fundraising efforts.

## Corporate Matching Gift

Companies will often match gifts given to you by employees. This is a great way to double or triple your fundraising efforts. Contact your HR Department for more information.

## Spaghetti Dinner, BBQ, Pot Luck or Pancake Breakfast

Host a spaghetti dinner, BBQ, potluck or pancake breakfast in conjunction with your school, work, club. Don't forget to charge a fee and always have a donation jar for those who might just want to donate more.

## Bake Sale

Ask people to join you to bake up some goodies to use to raise donations. Schools. Workplace and places of worship is a great place to have a bake sale.

## Restaurant Night

If you have contacts at a local restaurant where you are a frequent customer, maybe they will consider donating a certain percentage of sales or tips. Boston Pizza and Five Guys have a special program to support these requests.

## Garage Sale

Organize a company-wide or household garage sale. This is an easy way to get rid of items you no longer use and put the monies towards a good cause.

## Bottle Drive

Collect pop and alcohol bottles from friends, family and neighbours to turn in for cash. Do a neighbour drive. Advertise in the neighbourhood to drop off their bottles to your house in support of Best Buddies Canada.

## Use your passion

Rack the leaves, baby sit, alterations, offer to cut the lawn, spring yard clean-up are also great ideas. Let your neighbours know what you are doing and why.



# BEST BUDDIES FRIENDSHIP WALK

## Thank you

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[DONATE](#)



[VOLUNTEER](#)