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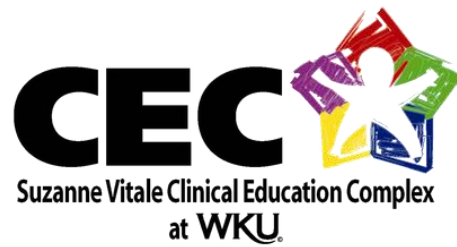
Title: **Best Buddies at WKU**

Best Buddies had a very good year this past school year. Best Buddies is a registered student organization at Western Kentucky which pairs student volunteers with buddies who have intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) to provide them with a friend or mentor. The organization is dedicated to ending social, physical, and economic isolation of individuals with IDD. It is an international organization with chapters in middle, high school, and colleges across the nation and other countries.

Buddy pairs are matched based on interests, personality traits, and experiences. Peer buddies are interviewed to determine which buddy could be the best fit for a deeply developing friendship. Peer buddies commit to contacting their buddy at least one time per week and hanging out with their buddy at least twice per month for special “buddy one-on-one time.” Each organization has at least one host site where the buddies receive services of some type and is considered their “home” organization. Here at WKU, we have three host sites affiliated with our chapter. These sites are WKU Suzanne Vitale Clinical Education Complex, the Buddy House, and the HIVE. Each host site has a host site coordinator who helps buddies complete applications for involvement, trouble shoot transportation or other issues, facilitate activities and friendships, and assist with matching buddy pairs. There are two faculty advisors from WKU: Dr. Rheanna Plemons and Mrs. Leisa Hutchison.

This past year the WKU chapter had 169 members (includes peer buddies/college student, buddies/individuals with IDD, and associate members/those who are not paired) and 38 matches. Activities for the year included the Match Party, Halloween Party, Spring party, Fashion for Friendship, Step-Up for Down Syndrome Walk, February Random Acts of Kindness Day, monthly organization meetings plus various activities that buddy pairs engaged in during the year.

Faculty Advisor Leisa Hutchison, was named one of the Champion of the Year campaign candidates for Kentucky and was able to raise over \$6000 dollars to support Kentucky Best Buddies Chapters and their work. She and her mission partner and son, Ben Hutchison, a Buddy in the Best Buddies chapter at WKU would like to thank all of those who contributed to their campaign. While they did not ultimately win the overall title of Champion of the Year, they had



a great time meeting people and participating in the gala in Louisville. They would especially like to thank their campaign manager, Lizzie Loy, who helped immensely throughout the campaign.

Special thanks to this past year's officers: Kyah Neal, Jackson Hite, Logan Johnson, Angelina Colmaneres, Madi Conn, Ashley Fortner, Bethany Waddey, and Abby Yelton for their outstanding service to the WKU chapter. We would not have had such a great year without their leadership.

If you or someone you know is interested in joining Best Buddies at WKU next year, please go to bestbuddies.org/join and complete the application. If you wish to be a peer buddy (college student who is interested in being matched with a buddy with IDD), you will complete the Peer Buddy role on the application. If you are interested in signing up as a buddy (individual with IDD), complete the form using the Buddy role. After completing this application, advisors and host site coordinators will be in contact regarding matches, etc. in early September. ***All members must complete an application every year, even if you were a member last year.*** If you have further questions, contact Leisa Hutchison at leisa.hutchison@wku.edu.