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The Best Buddies Difference: Friendship and Skills Leading to Success

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>> Good afternoon and welcome to the RespectAbility webinar for May 12, 2017. My name is Philip Pauli. I'm the Policy and Practices Director of RespectAbility, and it's my pleasure to honor to share with you my webinar today. We're going to talk about the wonderful organization Best Buddies. And talking about the Best Buddy difference. As anyone who has been following RespectAbility knows we have several core partner organizations we feel are doing transformative work. Best Buddies is one of them. They are doing incredible work around building friendships and translating those skills into employment opportunities. They've worked on their [Away from mic] to hire campaign and job placement for young people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. And building lasting friendships with people with and without disabilities and it's a remarkable thing. Their mission is to establish a global volunteer movement to create opportunities for one on one friendship. Integrated [Away from mic]. Best Buddies represents jobs program in [Away from mic] one of the key mission pillars which is integrated employment. I'm excited because one of the people who is joining us today is a Best Buddies jobs program participant who is going to be talking to us about her experiences and how Best Buddies has made the difference for her. Joining me is Jessica Patton and Andrea Schonenberg.
 >> Thank you. And we echo your sentiments. We're excited to be here today. And to connect with the community for a really wonderful mission and purpose. So like Philip mentioned I'm Andrea Schonenberg and the Senior Director for the Best Buddies program. I have here ‑‑
 >> I'm Jessica Patton I'm the director of the National Jobs Program.
 >> Carolina with the Best Buddies programs as administrative assistant.
 >> We thought we would start off by talking a little bit about what Best Buddies is and what is our mission. So like Philip mentioned our three pillars are integrated employment, one to one [ Away from mic ] and leadership development. We're currently present in 54 countries across the globe and have presence in all 50 states. And we'll delve more specifically into the jobs program. Kick us off we have a fantastic video that will give you a good idea of the support that we provide and the quality candidates.
[ Video playing ]

[ No audio ]
 >> I can listen to your cry when your dreams and days don't match.
 >> I can make you laugh.
 >> I'm filled with love.
 >> It has no boundaries.
 >> When you think I've reached my potential
 >> I'm just getting started.
 >> I will translate for those who cannot hear.
 >> I will make a living at a the job I love.
 >> And be valued as a true team member.
 >> Will glide across the piano.

 >> Are you someone who gets stage fright?
 >> I'm not.
 >> Are you afraid?
 >> Are you afraid of what you can't do?
 >> That's how everyone feels.
 >> I'm not afraid today.
 >> I'm a waiter.
 >> I am a leader.
 >> Today is full of potential.
 >> And for me today is just the beginning.
 >> Wonderful. We always say at Best Buddies we can never watch that video enough. It's such a compelling message our participants have.
 >> To break down some of our individual pillars. We did mention the Friendship Program. One‑to‑one friendships for middle schools, colleges and someone with a disability is matched with one without one and form a friendship and this supports with building soft skills and allowing individuals to excel in the community.
 >> Our next pillar is jobs. The integrated employment program. Where we have supports from our program supervisors and employment consultants who work with employer partners in the community focusing on professional type of jobs. And ensuring that we're focused on competitive employment in the community. We have about 324 employed participants in the community and we'll break down a few of our stats later on. We also have the Leadership Develop Program where each individual with intellectual developmental disabilities have the opportunity develop leadership skills through different conferences throughout the year. Primarily our conference at Indiana University in July and practice self advocacy through speaking.
 >> I'll shift it to Jessica who will discuss more.
 >> We do focus on nontraditional employment. And we have ‑‑ because of that some criterias that our participants have to meet before they join. Our mission is to serve people with IDD. Our participants must have that primary diagnosis. They obviously have to want to work in the community and they have to have a way to get to and from the job. We are not designed to serve individuals who have a major mental illness that is not controlled. They can't have any severe behavior problems. Active substance abusers or lack the legal right to work. They have to be independent in the community.
 >> So we're really proud of the statistics that we have for Best Buddies jobs participants. We know these are higher than national average. Our participants make $12.20 per hour on average. They're working over 22 lowers a week ‑‑ hours a week. We have 363 employed participants. Right now we have 203 of those ‑‑ or 203 participants in job development.
 >> This is the best ‑‑ the Best Buddies reach. You will see the multiple colors show our different programs. We have programs in all 50 states. But we don't have offices in all 50 states. Y'all see the teal shows where the job programs are located. Here they are little bit easier for you to see. We have 18 job markets. Throughout the country.
 >> And our employment consultants and programs supervisors are bringing amazing partners. These are a snapshot of some of those businesses and employers that you may recognize. We are really proud to have national partnerships who have hired across the country multiple participants and we also have local employers small, mom and pop shops and businesses that are really reflect the communities that they're in.
 >> Now there are several steps to employment. For our participants as well as employers. So as we get to know our participant. We have an introductory meeting with them to learn their employment goals specific to their skills, hopes and dreams. Then we start developing jobs with employers that match those goals. We'll have an introductory meeting with the employer as well where we explain the participant and their skills and see if it's a match. If we think so, we'll do a little bit further research and find more information about that position through our job analysis. And that is not just look agent hard skills. It's looking at the culture, the environment, and the ideal attributes of the employee. It's our job to make sure the best jobs match so everyone is satisfied.
 >> Once we have a good understanding of what the employer is looking for we source talent. Hopefully we have someone in our current job development pool that is a fit. If not we'll go to our referral agencies, give them a snapshot of the position and receive referrals. We'll prepare them for the interview. Again, our participants have to be competitive. With other people who are applying for jobs for that employer. Once a job offer is made, we do go back to that employer and offer sensitivity training. We find this is an important part of the process so that employers hiring managers, front line supervisors, co‑workers have an understanding of what Best Buddies jobs is. The role of our employment consultant, their role and supporting their co‑worker and employee.
 >> We are there on day one to provide job coaching support. Heavy support at the beginning as they're learning. We're building natural support. As they grow independence we fade because the goal is independence in the work place.
 >> I'm going to share a couple of positions that we're excited about as well as one new employer partnership that we have with Albertson's and Tom Thumb. Their focus is on nontraditional positions. While we have those working in front end clerk. When we partnered with Albertson's we did so finding interesting and unique positions.
 >> One of those is the floral designer. This is a type of job that is typically not available to people with IDD. But it really should be. We have participants who have the skills to work in this position. Preparing flowers, getting the plants ready and designing the floral arrangements.
 >> Another position that we find to be really good fit for our participants is the produce clerk. Actually we just had a participant hired to work as a produce clerk at Tom Thumb. It was great. He has a culinary certificate and this was part of his dream was to work in food preparation and with customers on this position.
 >> Another really cool position is the deli clerk. They're using all this equipment and also, again, providing customer service to the customers that come to the store.
 >> And my favorite is cake decorator. They get to prepare the cakes so they're mixing the cakes. Baking, icing and they're coming up with the decorations. And I just think some of these cakes are so beautiful. This to me is a really interesting and nontraditional position for somebody with IDD. That was one of our national employer partners. We also, like I said, work with small businesses in the communities where our participants live. So this is Adam. You can see he's filing. But he works at a company called Guitar Nook. The company took that developed the position took a look at Adam and set specific goals to meet Adams desires. Adam loves music but has a lot of experience in office work. We were able to merge the two. His experience and interest by getting him a position at a local guitar store.
 >> This is David. He works at the Miami Marlins. This is person centered. He wanted something close to home and this position is close to his house. He enjoys his commute. He is the longest standing person at the warehouse. A warehouse assistant. You see him holding fingers. He just celebrated his fourth anniversary. He's the most tenured person at that warehouse.
 >> Here is Michael. He works for Princeton Place ‑‑ he told us there was a recent webinar talking about it. We have a project search in Albuquerque. And he was a graduate at the University of New Mexico Hospital. He went to the project search and had experiences working with patients and had a desire to work. He works at the rehabilitation facility and working on getting his certification to be a CNA.
 >> Dominique at the Mirage Hotel and Casino. When you guys go to The Mirage and you check in you will see Dominique. A front lobby ambassador. Her job is to greet guests as they're waiting to check in. Help direct them to available agents and make sure they have everything they need starting off a great experience.
 >> This is another really exciting super cool position. Andrew works at Adams Balloons and also works in Albuquerque. If you're familiar with the October event. Adam Balloons is a large balloon manufacturer and Andrew has a cool position in which he weaves the baskets and does quality assurance. They have specific requirements to meet the FDA rules because this is a balloon up in the air. A cool position.
 >> I pass it to Andrea.
 >> These are the few examples of the quality placements that Best Buddies conducts in different industries across the country. Our founder recognized that we needed measurable quantifiable data in order to promote the business ‑‑ the jobs program has been around since 1994 and in the past a big way or compelling factor for several of our employers was a tax break or fundamentally hiring a participant or one with different abilities was really the right thing to do. Anthony recognized we need to shift away from this stereo type. At the end of the day it will drive the bottom line of the business and it makes good business sense. In October of 2014 our founder launched the I'm in to Hire campaign in partnership for Corporate Productivity. And also partners with Carlos Slim to promote the business benefits of hiring people with disabilities. Through the data collection where they surveyed over 230 companies across the states that have hired participants with IDD either through project search or through Best Buddies, they determined that 84% of adults with development disabilities do not have a paid job in the community. Eight out of ten individuals with development disabilities don't have a job and are very eager to contribute. Of the small 16% that do have competitive employment, only 34% have to ‑‑ have secured a competitive job.
 >> Through this study the reach that was pulled. They found three compelling statistics. That participants with IDD proved to have a profile. They are dependable, motivated and productive. I know as a hiring manager and many of you that hire staff, those are fantastic qualities that we would like to see in all employees and those are qualities that our population exhibits.
 >> So there are several compelling business benefits and reasons to hire such as enhanced customer loyalty. Enhanced motivation of existing staff. And we can share the full report afterwards. The bottom line is that I4CP found that two times organizations that [Away from mic] where they looked at customer satisfaction revenue growth. Market share. They found that the high performance organizations or HPOs actually differentiate for IDD. And that's just a true testament that individuals who are differently abled to drive the bottom line for businesses in any industry.
 >> Of course this report did not go unnoticed and Best Buddies recruited extensive celebrity support across the nation. You may notice amazing Best Buddies supporters and those that found the message I'm in to Hire reporting like famous chef guy. Kyrie Irving. Lauren Potter. The Shriver family and anyone who watches House Of Cards Kevin Spacey is a huge advocate. If you're looking to find out more information which is about 40 pages and breaks down the statistics and business benefits and reasons, you can go ahead and navigate to the BestBuddiesjobs.org page. And you can also pledge your support the this campaign by learning more here.
 >> Now of course we have our amazing featured guest here. Who is part of the best buddy ‑‑ Best Buddies International staff team. She's here to share a little bit more about her experience with Best Buddies Jobs. I'll shift it.
 >> Thank you. I am Carolina. I'm part of jobs. I'm a participant at Best Buddies International and I'm the receptionist. I'm a student of FIU. Florida International University. If you can hear me.
 >> I am answering phones. I direct the calls to different department and persons and assist with special projects. I also talk care of mail keeping the kitchen and conference room clean and maintaining copier and stock papers.
 >> And highlights for working with Best Buddies jobs while developing my position, of course, my employment consultants. She is the best. She's is highly motivated and for professional. I can say that I can count on her supporting on all parts of my job experience. My involvement in Best Buddies programs is I am involved with citizens program. We do volunteering work in the community. We also have special ‑‑ social events once a month.
 >> Can you tell us about your experience at the annual Best Buddies leadership in Indiana?
 >> 2016 was my first time of leadership conference. It was very good. It was a great experience. I participated in workshops with Jessica because she was in the workshop. I help prepare for interviews for jobs and the whole process of applying for a job.
 >> That's awesome. I remember that you did the preemployment training services before you started your job. Can you tell us about that?
 >> Of course. Preemployment training is essential to the employment process. It helps me prepare for the different steps of getting a job. It gave me confidence, it helped me get comfortable and with the process.
 >> And I just wanted to add a little something that you guys will understand. There's no I in team. But for Best Buddies there's a bud in Best Buddies.
 >> That's wonderful. Thank you so much. For sharing your experience with Best Buddies and you have such extensive involvements in all parts of the program from participating in our ambassadors and citizens program which focus on leadership development and friendship from attending the huge conference in Indiana. I remember you had to travel there, right?
 >> Yes.
 >> I traveled with the whole group of participants and consultants and I'm so excited to be a part of it this year.
 >> That's amazing. We love to have you in that conference and thank you for acting as our guest speaker for the webinar today.
 >> With that said there's different ways for you to take action. We're always here and available to field any requests that you may have about the jobs program to help strengthen or support your existing supported employment program. If you would like to get more involved with Best Buddies. There are avenues to donate or attend or a [Away form mic] we fundraise money to donate to our programs and continue building improving our services. We also have Best Buddies apparel where you can find merchandise on line. We are looking for volunteers for our local and national events. If you yourself were part of the Best Buddies middle school, high schools, or college chapters. We're working hard to connect our alumni. And I know we're preaching to the choir but advocating to the amazing skills. It will move our entire organization and mission as a whole forward. Best Buddies will at the end ‑‑ the goal at the end of the day is to be out of business because the world is such an inclusive place.
 >> With that, we want to open the floor with any questions. And here we have Jessica Patton our director of National Jobs who is available as well offline.
 >> Thank you so much for that. That was a really wonderful, very focused presentation. You did a great job walking us through everything that Best Buddies is doing and all the great opportunities for growth and involvement. There's two ways the audience member can ask a question. Either you can type it in the chat box, you can type it in the Q and A box in which case I'll read it. And you can also, if you're joining by phone call in a question. Operator, can you walk us through how someone can do that.
 >> For those who have called in, if you like to queue for a verbal question. Press 7 followed by pound.
 >> In the meantime as we're hopefully getting questions on the phone. I've got my own bunch of questions. First, from Allen who is asking us. He said it sounds like a great program and he really wanted to know if Best Buddies was looking at expanding into Canada or if there were any organizations that do similar work in Canada?
 >> That's great question, Allen. We already have Friendship Programs in Canada. You can find out more by going to BestBuddiesdotCA. We're located in Toronto.
 >> You can get the contact information for the Toronto office. The direct is Steven Penik. We currently do not have jobs located in Canada. There are most likely agencies similar to Best Buddies operating in Canada. I have to say I'm not 100% knowledgeable about that. There are project search sites. If you go to project search dot US you might be able to find out where they are located.
 >> And there's also a few projects here [Away from mic]
 >> Operator, do we have any phone questions?
 >> No phone questions at the moment.
 >> Okay. I've got a bunch of questions. I want to circle back to one of the slides that you have. The one about the young man who worked at the guitar store. I know small businesses with 50 or fewer employers is a huge segment of the job market. I know things are inconsistent with small businesses hiring and maintaining beam with disabilities. I wanted to ask both of you about what ideas do you have for a small business who would be interest in on boarding a talented person with a disability and how do you address the fierce of liability as a mom and pop shop might have.
 >> We have had several of our staff people, we network with all of our 18 offices and talk about challenges and best practices and liability comes up often. When we talk to the small business owners we let them know that people with IDD don't have any higher rates of workers compensation claims. Their liability should not increase. They have ‑‑ there have been times when depending upon the type of business whether the possible of risk or there's confidentiality where they might be worried about a job coach and the liability of partnering with somebody outside of their business. We also let them know about how our staff are covered by our liability insurance.
 >> We found that when we work with small businesses. If we ‑‑ if they have a connection with IDD they usually able to just get it. They find ways for a person with IDD can contribute. I remember working with a small family owned business in California and they were able to identify, through job carving, several tasks that needed to be filled that they didn't have full‑time staff to do. So when you are working with small businesses you are really helping them find those little things that are try ‑‑ kind of taking away time from their other staff and helping them be more effective. These are small things that fall through the cracks that they may not even realize that are reducing the bottom line. Resulting in less than stellar customer service. In our experience small businesses are great employers. Especially because they ‑‑ we're able to have close contact with the employer. The owner as well as the managers. Which keeps the employer engaged.
 >> Wonderful. And we have a question from Julia. Who is asking, is there an age that participants age out of the programs?
 >> Our participants, the minimum age to work in the jobs program is 18. And we serve individuals until they decide they want to retire. I was working with a gentleman in Los Angeles who is 65 and he still wants to work. There's no age range for being over the age of 18. We start with our participant when is they're young. Our program starts in middle school. And we grow with them and they grow with us. So we have participants who go from middle school to high school. As long as their school has the Best Buddies they're able to continue to participant. The Best Buddies high school partnership is ‑‑ sticks with a participant through the transition age. And then they ‑‑ when they age out of the school, there are college chapters. Even if they're not affiliated or going a school at a college. If they're college age we can match them with college students. And we have an adult program. People of any age can match the one to one friendship. Eventually we will be a provider of services friendship starting at a very early age and the natural progression is employment for ‑‑ forever.
 >> That sounds great.
 >> Operator, do we have any phone questions?
 >> No phone questions on queue.
 >> I want to circle back to one thing. I have a couple. A whole bunch of questions. I want to circle back to the celebrity. The picture you had up there had some really high ‑‑ some recognizable folks. Kevin Spacey. Warren Potter. And a few others holding up the big I'm in to Hire sign. How did you get to the point of ‑‑ let's be clear. American culture is obsessed with celebrity and see people endorsing a worthy cause people will notice that. How did you go about recruiting the celebrities for the I'm in to Hire campaign?
 >> That's great question. And we're really lucky. The Best Buddies founder is well connected individual. He has used his personal connections to build this organization up to what it is today. So Anthony has compelling mission and personal ties with folks that are interested in this mission. We have a whole entire team that works on engaging. Celebrity and media. We use the data that we had from the I4C. Report. To really bring attention to this. There are individuals that we work with who have ‑‑ again, those close connections with IDD. The family members we figure out who is being connected and we approach them and bring them on board.
 >> Which is my way of shamelessly plugging another connection. Shared between RespectAbility and Best Buddies. As some people who are on our webinar may know. This Tuesday is the new season of the Emmy Award winning show Born This Way. We have a double episode special Tuesday May 16 at 9:00 P.m. Easton. I encourage those who have it watch it. There will be a Twitter chat.
 >> Know that ‑‑ something that is great and why Born This Way is connected to Best Buddies they did a PSA ‑‑ when Born This Way episodes are shown. [Away from mic]
 >> Operator, do we have any phone questions?
 >> No phone questions on queue.
 >> All right. I'm going to keep asking questions before we wrap up. So going back and talking about the friendship piece. You mentioned that some of the friendship chapters are organize [Away from mic] starting to look at elementary school and high school. Is there anybody who is a college student that is passionate about people with disabilities and building friendship how would they go about founding a new chapter of Best Buddies?
 >> So if there's anybody that is on this call or knows someone that would like to start a chapter. They would reach out to Best Buddies. So go to Best Buddies dot organize and go to find programs. And they'll find the state they're located in and get the contact information. If we have a state office, and if you remember from the slide we showed towards the beginning. We don't have state offices in all states. We're working on it. They will be able to click the state. There is no state office there will be contact information for a Best Buddies International staff person who oversees the expansion there. And you could take a look. The college student may not be aware that there already is a Best Buddies chapter. And if they are motivate they can work with that local office to open a program. And you know, something that I think is really fun, Philip we have that partnership with MGM. I mentioned The Mirage. Best Buddies doesn't just stick with our participants but we do work with our student leaders in the ‑‑ and the volunteers. MGM Resorts International that partnership began because we connected through job development efforts with someone in HR there. Turns out she was a chapter leader at her university. So as Andrea mentioned we're trying to engage our alumni. The folks that were engaged with Best Buddies when they were young we want to keep them engaged. We're looking to keep people engaged because those student leaders are going to be the folks that are hiring tomorrow.
 >> Very good point.
 >> Julie had a question. What age does the college friendship club end and the adult begin and how do you find an adult group for your friendship question pup
 >> The age that a person would kind of join the Friendship Program college would be around college age. So I ‑‑ as students are transitioning, 18 to 21, in the school district, they may continue to be matched with a high school student. But as they get closer to that 21, 22 age. We would transition them into a college program. Their peers will be in college. Around the age most people graduate from college they would be transitioned into our adult program. These friendships, they're mutually beneficial. They're organic. And they expand beyond what is happening within our chapters. So if someone becomes a friend with another person in high school, there's no reason for them to stop being friends even if they go and move apart.
 >> If they were looking to be matched with a new buddy, it would fall of the age range of school, school to college. And Andrea just pointed something out. That there's a story about one of our participants. They became friends in the school chapter stayed friends in adulthood and our peer buddies the person without IDD got married her buddy was in her bridal party. It's a life‑long friendship is what we're fostering.
 >> We are out of time for the day unless there's any final phone questions?
 >> No questions on queue.
 >> Was that a yes or a no?
 >> I'm sorry. No questions.
 >> Well. I just wanted to make sure that I didn't miss anybody. Everyone, thank you so much for joining us for today's webinar to talk about Best Buddies job programs. Thank you especially to Carolina and talking about her experiences. You don't often get to have self advocates talk about their experiences. Thank you for being on our presentation. Thank you to Jessica. And Andrea. Everybody who is participated today I will e‑mail you a PDF copy of the Power Point and if there's any issues with that e‑mail me back. Thank you so much. Have a wonderful day and don't forget tune in, Born This Way starts Tuesday May 16, 9:00 p.m. Join us online and contribute to the conversation. Thank you. Have a wonderful day.