

Abilities Awareness

Best Buddies Bringing Friendship To UNB

Best Buddies Canada, a non-profit organization that creates friendships between adults with developmental disabilities and university and college students, is extending the hand of friendship to University of New Brunswick students.

Beginning in September 1997, a new Best Buddies chapter at UNB will offer students the chance to make a new friend, while providing an opportunity for valuable community volunteer service. The organization is currently searching for a student to start-up and manage the chapter during its first year of operation.

Fifteen Best Buddies chapters are now active in central and southwestern Ontario, including chapters on three community college campuses. Universities with active chapters are Queen's, Trent, York, Glendon College, University of Toronto, Ryerson, McMaster, Brock, Guelph, Wilfrid Laurier, Western and University of Windsor. This year, Best Buddies Canada will launch an Atlantic Canada program with 10 new chapters in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, in addition to three new chapters in Ontario. The organization plans to establish chapters across the country by the year 2000.

"Best Buddies is really about friendship and having fun," says Best Buddies Canada president Heather Johnston. "But it's also about breaking down barriers and changing attitudes about people with developmental disabilities. Students who get involved with Best Buddies are often surprised at what they learn...not only about people with developmental disabilities, but about themselves. There's no doubt that a Best Buddies friendship can be a real challenge, but many of our student volunteers would tell you that the commitment is worth the effort. Your Buddy will turn out to be one of the best friends you'll ever have."

In addition to the friendship aspect of the program, Best Buddies has also created a

leadership and training program to assist students in developing management and leadership skills. Campus coordinators from across the Maritimes will travel to Halifax for two and a half days of training in September. "This is a fabulous opportunity for any student looking for real life management experience," says Johnston. "Our campus coordinators are well-trained and receive ongoing support. At the same time they still get the experience of managing a volunteer program, of marketing that program and of overseeing the chapter's finances."

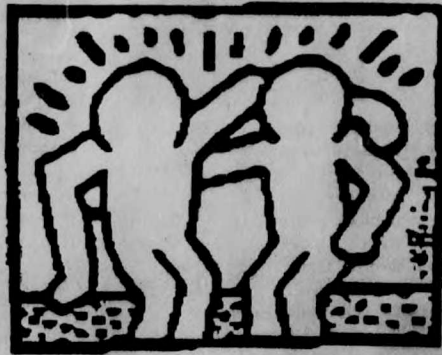
Student volunteers with Best Buddies are put through a rigorous matching and screening process prior to meeting their Buddy for the first time. Once the match is created, Student Buddies and Buddies are required to keep in touch by phone on a weekly basis and get together for a one-on-one outing every two to three weeks. Group activities involving the entire chapter occur four times a year. Students also get together twice each term for "rap sessions", a time to discuss any concerns, plan events and learn more about developmental disabilities. Best Buddies subsidizes all group activities.

"Best Buddies is a peer friendship program, not a mentoring program," adds Johnston. "We really encourage volunteers to go out and do the same kinds of things they do with other friends...go for a coffee or walk, take in a movie or a show, invite each other over for dinner, get together with friends, or just hang out."

Best Buddies is looking to recruit students at UNB who would be interested about in starting and managing the chapter. Students wanting more information about the program should contact the Best Buddies office at 1-888-779-0061 or by e-mail: best.buddies@sympatico.ca

Reprinted from a press release by Best Buddies

BEST BUDDIES



Support and Information Groups for the Physically Disabled in Fredericton and the Surrounding Area

As is the case with any sort of disability, community support and community based support groups play a tremendous role in the lives of the physically disabled. In Fredericton and the surrounding area, there are several community based support groups available for people with a vast variety of disabilities. There have also been information/education groups established to help the community understand more about certain disabilities.

The Arthritis Society - N.B. Division was implemented to provide information and education services to the public, to patients and to health professionals. They seek to find the cause and cure for arthritis through medical research, while promoting best possible care. Funds are raised to support these two programs.

The Brain Association of New Brunswick Inc. is a charitable organization incorporated in 1987 by a group of volunteers who were concerned about the rising population of traumatic brain injured individuals in the province of New Brunswick. B.I.A.N.B. is committed to assist persons who suffer from the effects of a brain injury and their family members to achieve the best quality of life possible following this type of injury. Volunteer members are available to visit schools, businesses, etc., to make presentations, conduct workshops or to assist those who might wish to form support groups in their area.

Camp Rotary is a camp offered to children and adults with physical disabilities, as well as to those with diabetes, moderate mental or emotional disabilities and persons with speech or learning difficulties. Since 1985 the program has also been offered to able-bodied children to allow for integration.

The Canadian Diabetes Association is an independent organization whose mission is to promote the health of Canadians through diabetes research, education, service and advocacy.

The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association is a self-help group for persons with a hearing impairment who use speech for communication.

The Canadian Mental Health Association - N.B. Division, supports and promotes community reintegration of persons with mental disabilities and advocates for major

issues related to mental health. They also offer patients civil rights information and works at coordination and development at the provincial level.

The Canadian National Institute for the Blind is a voluntary agency which provides specialized rehabilitation and support services to individuals to whom loss of vision is a central problem in personal and social adjustment. They also act as a consultant and resource agency to the helping professions, government departments and private industry.

Canadian Paraplegic Association N.B. Inc. offers rehabilitation counseling, employment counseling and placement assistance, and public education on behalf of persons of all ages who have a mobility impairment. The goal is to enable these individuals to have an independent and meaningful lifestyle.

The Canadian Rehabilitation Council for the Disabled New Brunswick Branch Inc. is committed to assisting children and adults with physical disabilities to achieve maximum rehabilitation. Some of their services include transportation, board and lodging allowances for persons who have to travel to other areas for medical treatment; orthopedic shoes; and many types of appliances, wheelchairs, computers and technical aids.

The purpose of the Fredericton Recreation Council for the Disabled is to better serve the leisure and recreational needs of persons with disabilities. The FRCD also operates an equipment loan bank which provides recreational equipment to persons with disabilities in the greater Fredericton area, free of charge, on a loan basis.

The Learning Disabilities Association of New Brunswick is a non-profit organization aimed to foster a better understanding of learning disabilities in our community. It supplies information on understanding and coping with learning disabilities to parents, professionals, as well as to individuals with learning disabilities. Along with being a support group, it promotes public awareness and strives to improve services for people with learning disabilities.

The Multiple Sclerosis Society's mission is to be a leader in finding a cure for multiple sclerosis and enabling people affected by MS

to enhance their quality of life. Their activities are supported by volunteers.

The Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada is committed to eliminating neuromuscular disorders and alleviating the associated distress. The association offers hope through research, creates awareness and understanding through education, and provides services through personal support programs.

The New Brunswick Association for Community Living is a provincial federation of 28 local associations throughout the province. NBACL is an advocacy organization that promotes support networks which enable people with mental disabilities to live, learn, work and play alongside people with no disability as valued members of our communities.

The New Brunswick Wheelchair Sports Association is a non-profit, volunteer organization dedicated to the promotion and development of wheelchair sports and activities both locally and provincially. They also provide opportunities for persons with physical disabilities to compete in sports events at national and international levels.

The Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons was created by legislation to advise the provincial government on matters relating to the status of persons with disabilities. It reports directly to the Premier of New Brunswick but has access to all ministries or government departments. The Council's definition of persons with disabilities is broad enough to cover all types of disabilities and allows it to look at all aspects of problems involving persons with disabilities.

The Saint John Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Inc. offers services designed to create equal opportunity and accessibility to the deaf and hard of hearing. Some of the services offered by this group are employment counseling, interpreter services, information/referral, Hard of Hearing Self Help Group, information re: technical devices.

For more information on these or other physical disability groups in the Fredericton or surrounding area, contact the Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons at (506)444-3000 or 1-800-442-4412.

Statistics On Persons With Disabilities

Definition of Disability:
"...any restriction or lack of ability (resulting from impairment) to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being."
- World Health Organization

Statistics	Canada	New Brunswick
Total Population	27,296,855	723,900
Total no. of persons with disabilities	4,200,000	128,130
Disability rate	15.5%	17.7%

Highlights
• Disability increases with age: just 7 percent of children under 15 years of age experience some level of disability, compared to 14 percent of adults aged 35 to 54, and 46.3 percent of those aged 65 and over.
• Severity of disability also increases with age: only 2.9 percent of children with disabilities had a severe disability, compared to 32.4 percent of those aged 65 and over.

Compiled by the Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons.

Learning Disabilities: A Personal Struggle

Jenn Brown
The Brunswickan

The following is an interview with Blair Saulnier. Blair has a learning disability. He is a fifth year Forestry student who has been on Student Council for the past 2 years as a Forestry Representative. Blair is also active in the student's Forestry Association.

Q: What is the learning disability that you have?

A: I have a comprehension disability- it's a form of dyslexia.

Q: What was life like for you before you were diagnosed?

A: It was normal. I was above average, I was on the principal's list in High School. I did very well.

Q: So, how did you discover there was a problem?

A: One of my professionals in first year asked me some questions before a mid-term and then those questions were on the mid-term and I answered them incorrectly. After the mid-term he asked me the questions again and I got them

right, so he suggested that I go see Dr. Fred Horsley.

Q: How has this affected your academic endeavors?

A: Thus far it has made it difficult. Its harder to get through some things. Some professors aren't very lenient to try and meet the needs, however there is a policy that says they have to. I had some problems with a professor. I had to redo his course. I worked with Fred Horsley to push for the policy to help students with learning disabilities.

Q: Is there anything or anyone who stands out in your mind as especially helpful at UNB?

A: Fred Horsley- he's been really helpful. Dave Daugherty- he's the assistant Dean of Forestry. Ian Methven-Dean of Forestry they were all really helpful.

Q: Now that you are graduating, do you have any advice that you think would help other students?


A: Yes, just don't give up. Don't get scared. I know it sounds corny but just don't get discouraged. There's a lot of assistance around, a lot of tools that can be used to make it easier.

The Definition of Learning Disabilities

Learning Disabilities is a generic term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders that are identifiable as inherent mental or physical dysfunction. Each disorder may be characterized by delays in early development and/or difficulties in any of the following areas: Attention, memory, reasoning, organization, communication, reading, writing, spelling, calculation, social interaction, and emotional adjustment.

Learning disabilities are intrinsic to the individual, and may affect learning and behaviour in any individual, including those with generally average, above, or above average intelligence.

Learning disabilities are not due primarily to visual, hearing or motor handicaps; to cerebral malformation, emotional disturbance, or environmental disadvantages although they may occur concurrently with any of these. Learning disabilities may arise from genetic variation. Biochemical factors, especially the pre- to post-natal period, or age-related subsequent events resulting in neurological impairment.



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