



a 501(c)(3) public charity

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## FACT SHEET: Good Friend, Inc.

- Mission** To create autism awareness, teach acceptance of differences, and foster empathy among typically-developing peers for students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).
- Method**
- Inform those who teach, lead, or otherwise guide children between the ages of 4 and 15 — particularly if a child with ASD is amongst their group — about ASD in general and social relationships particularly. This is done through staff in-services and guest lectures.
  - Educate typically-developing peers using proprietary curriculum in a grade-specific manner about ASD in general. In 30- to 60-minute Peer Sensitivity Workshops, customize this education to fit the needs of their peer with an ASD. With parental consent, Good Friend agents learn about this child through the educators and caregivers before the workshop to maximize effectiveness. (*PSWs for grades K-5*)
  - Through the interactive portion of the curriculum, foster empathy among typically-developing peers for their classmate or group member with an ASD. Get them to “feel” what it’s like to be this child. Teach them how they can be a good friend to this student. (*Individualized Classroom Presentations for grades 6-8 do not focus on a particular student, but offer a platform for guided dialog and/or self-disclosure.*)
  - Provide general assemblies for organizations that choose not to focus on the empathy aspect of the Awareness-Acceptance-Empathy® model. Offer general information on ASD and friendship in such instances, and include cooperative exercises, without citing the special circumstances of individuals.
  - Keep all interactions focused on the positive aspects of differences and the strengths of those with ASD.
  - For all services, show the 16-minute video, *How Can I Be a Good Friend to Someone with Autism?* (elementary, 2007) / *Choosing To Be a GFF* (middle school, 2011)
- Leadership** Governed by co-founders Chelsea Budde and Denise Schamens, both mothers to children with ASD, along with a seven-member Board of Directors, which includes Nicole Bessert, Ken Genin, Gail Kolvenbach, Pam Lara, Jeff Schill, Claire Topp, and Sarah Zubarik.
- History** Organized as a Ch. 181 non-stock, non-profit corporation in the State of Wisconsin in 2007 by co-founders Chelsea Budde and Denise Schamens. Obtained 501(c)(3) public charity status through the IRS in February, 2008.

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