

MEDIA KIT

BEST BUDDIES[®]



UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI CHAPTER



FRIENDSHIP. INCLUSION. LEADERSHIP.
Together, we create a more inclusive world.

BEST BUDDIES



Founded in 1989 by Anthony K. Shiver, Best Buddies began creating an atmosphere where individuals with and without IDD form deep friendships and connections.

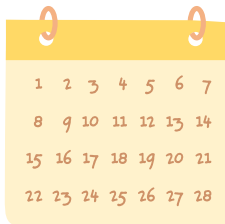


It started with one national chapter at Georgetown University and now has nearly 3,000 national chapters.



HERE ON CAMPUS:

UM Best Buddies has approximately 100 active student members and is open to all University of Miami students.



SIGNATURE EVENTS:

- Friendship Walk
- "Spread the Word to End the Word"
- "World Kindness Day"



JOIN THE GROUPME!

Get involved through the UM Engage page or by joining GroupMe

Members can participate as Associate Members or Peer Buddies, with peer buddies attending monthly meetings and events. The chapter hosts monthly buddy evens and runs one major awareness campaign each semester.



History of Best Buddies International

Best Buddies International was founded in 1987 by Anthony K. Shriver at Georgetown University. The organization was created to end the social, economic, and physical isolation of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) by fostering meaningful one-to-one friendships and providing leadership development opportunities. In 1989, Best Buddies was incorporated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization as America's first program for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

National Programs

Since its founding, the program has expanded into a national program with chapters in schools, colleges, and communities around the nation. The organization supports the IDD community through various initiatives—such as the Friendship Walk, leadership conferences, and community campaigns. Best Buddies is committed to creating an environment where individuals with IDD are supported and encouraged to contribute meaningfully to their communities. Nationally, the organization has independent living options, family assistance programs, and job opportunities for members of the IDD community.

University of Miami Best Buddies

The University of Miami Best Buddies chapter was founded in 2010 and was one of the first collegiate chapters in South Florida. On average, there are 100 active members in the chapter and about 35 registered buddies who participate in events and one-to-one friendships. Many of the

buddies come from local partner organizations—such as Wayside Baptist Church and Bradock Group Homes.

The current president of the chapter is Amelia Smeltz. She is responsible for overseeing the functions of the executive board and delegating responsibilities when it comes to fundraising, member engagement, and event planning. The University of Miami chapter has an advisor, or program manager, who helps manage all of the chapters in the region, ensuring that the program fits national chapter standards.

UM Best Buddies Events

Being a consistent part of the Miami IDD community is one of the primary goals of the chapter.

Every month, the chapter holds at least one friendship event where active members, peer buddies, and associate members can come together and build those meaningful relationships with their buddies. These events can range from friendship bracelet making to bowling. The chapter also participates in several campaigns, like “Spread the Word to End the Word,” which is a campaign to end the use of the r-word, and more recently, they began hosting an Inclusive Education Workshop to promote understanding and inclusive interactions between people with and without IDD.

Because Best Buddies is a non-profit organization, it is important that fundraising is integrated into the chapter’s regular activities to ensure continued program support and growth. The chapter usually hosts about two to three fundraisers a semester. A consistent fundraiser that they hold is the bake sale. The bake sale usually raises the most money for the chapter out of the fundraisers,

which is usually around \$350. Last semester, they also partnered with Chipotle so that every purchase made went directly to the organization.

Becoming a Member

To become a member of Best Buddies, students and faculty are encouraged to look at the University of Miami “Engage Page” to find information about meetings and who to contact to join the chapter. The page no longer includes the link to the group me as fake personas were joining. However, joining the group me is the best way to stay connected and up to date with events that are happening within the chapter.

Executive Bio

Professional Experience

Amelia Smeltz is a biomedical engineering student at the University of Miami. She recently spent her time with Aquabiliti, where she assisted in product quality assurance and testing for medical devices. Before her time there, she was a research assistant at The Miami Project to Cure Paralysis and spent her time analysing physiological data and presenting her findings to the University of Miami's Research, Creativity and Innovation Forum.

Leadership

Smeltz serves as the president of the Best Buddies chapter at the University of Miami. She previously held the role of treasurer for the chapter. Additionally, Smeltz is an active member in Alpha Delta Pi, a sorority on campus, where she has previously held leadership positions.

Education

Smeltz is studying to obtain her Bachelor of Science in biomedical engineering at the University of Miami, where she is set to graduate from in May 2026. After her time at the University of Miami, Smeltz is going to the University of Pittsburg to get her Masters in prosthetics and orthotics. She has a goal of becoming a certified prosthetist and eventually having a specialty for patients with IDD.

Awards and Honors

She has demonstrated academic excellence



through her ability to be recognized on the President's and Provost's honor rolls as well as being a recipient of the President's Scholarship. She is also a member of Tau Beta Pi, Order of Omega and Rho Lambda

Personal

Outside of Smeltz academic and professional work, Smeltz has a passion for mentorship, service and building inclusivity. She enjoys helping rescue animals and recently became a member of Canes for Canines, a club that works with Miami-Dade Animal Services to help get animals adopted.

BEST BUDDIES





FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tessa Guilander
(###)###-###
#####@gmail.com

Best Buddies Toast to Love at Camille and Roberto's Wedding

MIAMI (March 20, 2026) – Love is in the air as Best Buddies invites all members of their community to attend the wedding of Camille and Roberto. The long-awaited union of the pair is being held Sunday, March 29, 2026 from 12 to 2:30 p.m. in the Shalala Activities Room. Anyone in Best Buddies is welcome and encouraged to join the festivities. There is no cost of attendance, however, an RSVP to the event is preferred.

Upholding the integrity of the event and following the wedding theme is incredibly important. Guests are required to wear attire that is not only wedding chic, but it should also be something that they are comfortable with wearing. Those who attend are asked to wear clothing that are along the lines of dresses, tuxedo T-shirts, and jeans.

The wedding will not be an official or legally binding ceremony, but it will closely mimic the real thing. There will be a wedding ceremony and reception following. The reception will have several activities. Food will also be served during the reception.

Camille and Roberto are both affiliated with the Wayside Baptist Church program for members in the IDD community. The inseparable pair have been dating for several years, and the wedding has been a long time coming.

Roberto spontaneously proposed to Camille in the fall of 2025 during a Best Buddies event. Since his declaration of love, wedding plans and preparations have been in the works.

According to Camille's aid, Miss Laura, the inspiration for the idea came from Camille's former roommate, Christy, who had a "wedding" with her boyfriend at Wayside. Ever since then, Camille has wanted to have a wedding of her own.

For more information and to RSVP to the event, go to the Best Buddies GroupMe page.

###