

Kathryn LaRiviere, Garden City High School Class of 2013, on being a Best Buddy

I joined best buddies my freshman year in Garden City High School. I really didn't know what to expect, but I knew from that first day of the club meeting, seeing all of the members and hearing each and every one of their experiences in this amazing club, that this was definitely the place for me. I was fortunate enough to form very special bonds with people that I will have for the rest of my life.

I was lucky enough to get a Buddy my junior year, and his name was Jack. Jack and I formed a pretty close bond with one and other, and now being a sophomore in college I still keep in-touch with him. We both bonded over our love of watching animated movies together. He always amused me with his fantastic impressions of any Disney character you can think of. I also formed very close bonds not just with Jack, but multiple other buddies who never failed to make me smile. Seeing the happiness this club brought to each and every one of the buddies, made me realize that this was not just a club, but it was something that made every single person feel united, as if we were all one, leaving behind any disability anyone had.

Looking back at high school, I can honestly say that joining Best Buddies was probably the best decision I have made in my life. This club has changed me and made me grow in ways that I never thought were possible. I am honored to be able to say I was part of such an amazing organization that does nothing but bring happiness to so many lives.

Best Buddies® is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to establishing a global volunteer movement that creates opportunities for one-to-one friendships, integrated employment and leadership development for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Best Buddies' formal programs positively impact nearly 800,000 individuals with and without disabilities worldwide. Best Buddies volunteers annually contribute, at no cost to their communities, support services that equate to more than \$168 million USD.

Do you know of a student who would like to be involved in this fantastic program? If so, please contact **Ms. Tammy Kear, (516) 478-2541 at the Garden City High School.**