

Best Buddies Kenya (BBK)

September 2007 Update – Report from the Field Organizational Meeting of the St. Genesis Chapter

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“No doubt that a small group of committed individuals can change the world, indeed it’s the only way it has ever happened.” Margaret Mead, Anthropologist



On September 14th 2007, just one week after school vacation, members of St. Genesis High School Chapter of Best Buddies gathered for their organizational meeting. The meeting took place in one of St. Genesis High School's classrooms. It was a successful meeting with a lively interchange between the 15 peer buddies from St. Genesis High School and the 15 buddies from St. Maurus Special School. Four associate buddies were also present at the meeting.

Every chapter of Best Buddies Kenya is required to have an organizational meeting once a year. Organizational meetings serve many purposes, including:

Socializing and Sharing Personal Stories and Mutual Experiences. Because the St. Genesis meeting happened so soon after the national holidays, the attendees had many exciting stories to share about what they did while on vacation.



Reflecting on the Personal Impact of the Best Buddies Program. During the St. Genesis meeting, the Chapter President introduced Peer Buddy, John Owiti (blue sweater in photo), and his Buddy, Steve Ochieng (grey sweater). The pair expressed how meaningful their mutual friendship has become and how much enjoyment and fun their friendship has generated for themselves, their immediate families and their local community. Both expressed confidence that the Chapter would be a beacon of

friendship and integration for people with and without intellectual disabilities.

Emphasizing the Commitment Needed When Joining a Chapter. During the meeting, the St. Genesis High School Chapter President reminded his fellow peer buddies about the policies and procedures of Best Buddies and that: (1) A peer buddy agrees to be paired for one academic year; (2) Make contact once a week either in person, by email, phone or mail; (3) Have two one-to-one activities per month; (4) Attend all chapter meetings and group activities throughout the school year; (5) Students can join as peer buddies or associate members. Associate members agree to attend chapter meetings and group activities, but are not matched in a one-to-one friendship. Associate members can also join committees to help plan activities or fundraisers.



Explaining the Importance of the Best Buddies High School Chapters. The St. Genesis meeting was attended by the Executive Director of Best Buddies Kenya. In his address to the peer buddies and buddies, he explained that Best Buddies fulfils its mission in High schools by facilitating mutually enriching one-to-one friendships between high school students and their peers in the special education program. He mentioned the importance of chapter meetings and group activities which are held regularly during the school year in order to provide information of upcoming events. Chapter meetings are also an opportunity for members to discuss their experiences, ask questions and become more aware of issues surrounding students with intellectual disabilities.

Inspiring Potential Peer Buddies to Join the Chapter. Organizational meetings serve as an opportunity to inform potential peer buddies about the mission of Best Buddies Kenya, including the requirements of membership and the selection and matching process. While attending the meetings, potential peer buddies can see for themselves how much fun the members have and how much the members feel the experience has enriched their lives and the lives of others. By demonstrating the rewards of the program to potential new members, it is hoped that the new attendees will become excited about the program and will be inspired to join the Chapter.

After all of the above issues were covered, the Chapter President of St. Genesis High School Chapter concluded the meeting by thanking all of the participants and reminding them that the great anthropologist, Margaret Mead, once said that the only way to change the world was through a small group of committed individuals. We at Best Buddies Kenya are extremely thankful and appreciative of the commitment made by our peer buddies and all of you towards changing the world for the better.

