

TEAM CAPTAIN TOOLKIT



INTRODUCTION

We are very excited that your team will be joining us for the **2024 Wiregrass Area Buddy Walk® on SATURDAY, March 16, 2024**, for a day full of fun and excitement. Remind your friends and family to mark their calendars. Whether this is your first walk, or your 16th walk, this toolkit will provide you with all the tools and information necessary to prepare for the event and/or achieve your fundraising goal.



First things first, go to www.ds-stride.org/wiregrassbuddywalk and REGISTER YOUR TEAM online so that you can easily “grow your team.” You will want to upload a photo of your buddy and a quick story of your buddy to your team’s page. After you have customized your page, encourage your friends and family to go to www.ds-stride.org/wiregrassbuddywalk and register to walk with your team or make a donation. You can do this with phone calls, emails, and social media posts. Ideas of how to do this and other tips are included in this team captain toolkit. We encourage registrations and donations to be made through this secure site.

We encourage you to read through this toolkit to make sure you are aware of deadlines, standards, and tips that you need to be successful. If you have any questions over the next few months, please do not hesitate to contact Heather by phone at 334-790-8292 or by email at info.downsyndromefriends@gmail.com. To ensure you receive all correspondence for the 2024 Wiregrass Area Buddy Walk®, please add our email address to your contacts.

Best of luck and Thank You for ALL You Do!
The F.R.I.E.N.D.S. Board



ABOUT F.R.I.E.N.D.S.

F.R.I.E.N.D.S. MISSION AND VISION:

The mission of **F.R.I.E.N.D.S.** is to provide resources for support and education for families, friends, and caregivers of individuals with Down syndrome. We hope to help people with Down syndrome improve their quality of life through advocacy, education, and promoting a positive understanding of Down syndrome in the Wiregrass area. Our vision is to recognize the value of people with Down syndrome within their families, communities, and workplace and to educate families and communities about Down syndrome.

WHAT IS THE F.R.I.E.N.D.S. ORGANIZATION?

As a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization, we are committed to providing support, assistance, and education to individuals with Down syndrome and their families. We operate with a part-time Administrative Assistant and are grateful for the many who volunteer their time to promote our mission.

WHERE THE MONEY GOES

Since it was established in 2002, the F.R.I.E.N.D.S. organization has been one made up of people of all ages with Down syndrome, parents, and caregivers of children with Down syndrome, and family and friends all working together to ensure that all individuals in our community living with Down syndrome have every opportunity to achieve their full potential.

93% of every dollar raised by the Wiregrass Area Buddy Walk® teams stays in the Wiregrass area.

7% of every dollar raised by the Wiregrass Area Buddy Walk® teams is sent to NDSS for advocacy and support.

EXPECTANT/

NEW PARENT SUPPORT:

- New parent packages
- Newborn hospital/home visits
- New family gatherings

RESOURCE GROUPS:

- MOMS lunch/night out
- Pre-school social group

EDUCATION:

- Seminars for parents
- Conferences: For educators, parents, caregivers, and individuals with DS
- Lending library – books, brochures, and other material

SOCIAL EVENTS:

- Swim parties
- Arts & Crafts
- Bowling
- Family Picnics
- NPF Special Citizens Day
- Holiday gatherings

GRANTS:

- Education resources/equipment
- Recreational Therapeutic activities
- Safety devices/equipment
- Medical devices/equipment

AWARENESS:

- F.R.I.E.N.D.S. website
- Newsletters
- Activities on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram
- World Down Syndrome Day activities 3/21
- Down Syndrome Awareness Month activities in October

MISCELLANEOUS:

- Pay Miracle League fees for a
- Purchase Ambucs for members



F.R.I.E.N.D.S.
P. O. Box 9551
Dothan, AL 36304
334-790-8292

www.downsyndromefriends.org



HOW TO SETUP ONLINE FUNDRAISING

HOW TO SET UP YOUR TEAM ACCOUNT FOR ONLINE REGISTRATION AND FUNDRAISING

1. Go to www.ds-stride.org/wiregrassbuddywalk
2. Select TEAM CAPTAIN – You will then select HOW TO START A TEAM. This tab will give you step by step instructions on how to set up your team page. Under the TEAM CAPTAIN tab, you will also find other info on how to maximize the benefits that ds.connex offers for online fundraising.
3. If at any time you have questions or stumble across any issues, on the main page you will find a tab that says HELP. There are several drop down selections for you to choose from.



FUNDRAISING INCENTIVES

By challenging our community to aim high in their fundraising efforts, we are able to better provide a variety of information, education, support, and assistance to individuals with Down syndrome and their families in the Wiregrass area. As a direct result of your fundraising efforts, F.R.I.E.N.D.S. has been able to offer a \$300 grant to every member each year, conferences to educators, parents and caregivers, new parent packages and much more! Every dollar raised impacts a life.

ONLINE FUNDRAISING INCENTIVE DEADLINE = JANUARY 18TH

OVERALL FUNDRAISING INCENTIVE DEADLINE = MARCH 7TH

ONLINE FUNDRAISING INCENTIVE: All BUDDIES that have an Online Fundraising Page and raise \$500 by January 18th, will receive a double-sided large yard sign with the Buddy's photo and a personal accomplishment or DS fact. These will be placed on the walking trail and then will be yours to take home (please bring back in future years to place on the trail so that everyone can enjoy them)

BUDDY OF THE YEAR: This will be our Top ONE or TWO fundraising teams (depending on how close in totals they are). This team/buddy will be featured in advertising and billboards the following year. This buddy will have his/her photo on the F.R.I.E.N.D.S. website throughout the coming year. The "fundraising monies" are any sponsorship monies that you secure from businesses, churches, civic groups AND your team t-shirt sells/donations and any other fundraising donations that you may have collected.

BILLBOARD BUDDIES: *You must attend Buddy Walk kick off to be entered into this drawing.* We will draw TWO names at the Buddy Walk event. *You must be present at Buddy Walk at the time of the drawing to be featured on the billboard.* **If your name is drawn and you are not present, another name will be drawn.** The Billboard Buddies will be featured on our 2025 BW Event Billboards one month prior to the event. (Buddies that have been featured within the past 10 years will not be eligible at this time).

TOP FUNDRAISING TEAMS:

If you are a **top 10 fundraising team** for the 2024 event, your team will receive a front area set up and use of ONE 10x10 tent at the 2025 event. You will also receive a team banner/sign to carry in the 2025 walk.

If you are a **top 5 fundraising team** for the 2024 event, your team will receive a HIGH FIVE parking pass (one vehicle per team front row parking) for the 2025 event. You will also receive a Buddy Walk logo Gift item.



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TIMELINE

With about 5 months available to you for fundraising, it's easy to procrastinate and tell yourself you will get to it tomorrow. Fundraising for the Wiregrass Area Buddy Walk® should be fun and fulfilling for your whole family, not stressful! Give yourself plenty of time to fundraise by registering your team early and utilizing the information below:

- Set a goal for team
- Enlist the help of your family, friends, and coworkers to reach your goal
- Use motivation and incentives
- Be creative in the way you fundraise
- More tips on the next few pages

Below is a timeline of events for the upcoming Wiregrass Area Buddy Walk®, so you can set your team up for success!



October 21	Buddy Walk Kickoff and Online Team Registration Opens – Create your team!
October 30	Encourage friends, family, and coworkers to register for the Wiregrass Area Buddy Walk® or donate to your team and remind them to submit their corporate matching requests, if applicable. It can take months for checks to be received by F.R.I.E.N.D.S.
November 1	Begin posting weekly on social media as a reminder for your friends to register online. Don't forget to include the link to your team page. It is also a good idea to post a picture of your buddy.
January 5	Have a creative fundraiser in mind? Make it happen this month!
January 18	ONLINE INCENTIVE DEADLINE – Must raise \$500 online by January 18th
February 1	Plan how you can involve your child's school in fundraising efforts and encourage them to attend and support your buddy.
February 15	PRE-REGISTRATION DEADLINE – Greystone United Methodist Church
March 7	Team t-shirt Pick Up – Greystone United Methodist Church
March 15	Team tent set up
March 16	2024 Wiregrass Area Buddy Walk® at the National Peanut Festival Fairgrounds

FUNDRAISING METHOD

We are so thrilled that you have decided to fundraise for the Wiregrass Area Buddy Walk® and F.R.I.E.N.D.S. organization. F.R.I.E.N.D.S. depends on donations and fundraisers to provide the programs and services we offer our families and to meet operational costs. It is only through the generosity of many individuals and corporations that F.R.I.E.N.D.S. is able to provide quality programs and services for individuals with Down syndrome and their families. We need your help!

We have pulled together a quick four-step method to assist you in your fundraising.

STEP ONE: PLAN

Before you begin fundraising, we suggest creating a plan for your fundraising efforts. We have included a fundraising timeline to provide you with an idea of good times to push your efforts throughout the Buddy Walk season. We want you to be successful with your fundraising.

Build your network! Think about a list of people or businesses who might donate to your efforts this year. We recommend starting with:

- Friends, families, and neighbors
- Current or former colleagues and classmates
- Church/Religious network
- Local businesses your family frequents (restaurants, retail stores, coffee shops, etc.)
- Social media connections



STEP TWO: TELL YOUR STORY

We encourage you to tell your story. Your child or individual who inspired you to create a team for the Wiregrass Area Buddy Walk® is a great start to your story. The questions below can help you practice your story.

- Why do you walk with the Wiregrass Area Buddy Walk®?
- How have the funds raised by the Wiregrass Area Buddy Walk® helped your family? (What grants have you used: Have you attended any of the social activity groups?)
- What are your child's goals for this year: How can the funds you raise help your child reach these goals?
- How has Down syndrome impacted your life and why do you believe it's important to raise money for F.R.I.E.N.D.S. and NDSS?

STEP THREE: REMINDING YOUR NETWORK

We understand that reminding your networks about your fundraising can be difficult. We suggest using stories of your child to promote your fundraising efforts throughout the year. Sending out notes to remind your network about a milestone your child has reached can also be a great way to solicit for additional donations at different times of the year. The more personal you make it, the better!

STEP FOUR: THANKING YOUR DONORS

Don't forget to thank all those people who supported your family this year.

SOLITICITATION SAMPLES

SAMPLE SOLICITATION LETTER / EMAIL:

Dear _____,

We invite you to join us for 2024 Wiregrass Area Buddy Walk®!

On Saturday, March 16th, we will celebrate Down Syndrome Awareness Month by attending the Wiregrass Area Buddy Walk® at the National Peanut Festival Fairgrounds. We hope you will help us celebrate _____ (insert name of individual with DS) and join us at the Walk with our team _____ (insert team name).

Registration is \$5 (\$20/\$22 if you also purchase a t-shirt) and you can register or donate by going to www.ds-stride.org/wiregrassbuddywalk. While the Wiregrass Area Buddy Walk® is a fundraising endeavor for F.R.I.E.N.D.S., the main objective is to promote awareness and advocacy, and to celebrate and support all people with Down syndrome – so we want you there!

All pre-registered participants receive an event T-shirt, which I will deliver to you prior to the event. The day is filled with fun, food, music, cheers, and the walk itself is about 1-mile. The Wiregrass Area Buddy Walk® begins at 9:00 AM, with Opening Ceremonies at 10:00 AM and the walk beginning immediately following. Lunch will be provided to all participants and snacks and drinks are available.

The Wiregrass Area Buddy Walk is more than a walk. It is a day of CELEBRATION! You will not only join our family, but more than 1,000 walkers from all around the Wiregrass as we unite for a common cause. It is truly an inspiring day!

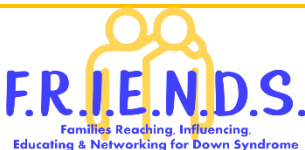
SAMPLE FACEBOOK POST: (FROM DEXTER'S WONDER WALKERS)

This week, I signed Dexter up for Pre-School Social Group with the F.R.I.E.N.D.S. organization. Do you know why that's awesome? Because Dexter gets to enjoy playing with other preschoolers with DS and I get to interact and communicate with Moms/Dads of those children. So, what's the big deal you might say, well the funds raised by DEXTER'S WONDER WALKERS and all the other Wiregrass Area Buddy Walk® teams go toward great events like Pre-School Social Group, educational/therapeutic/medical needs grants, educational conferences, for parents/caregivers/individuals with DS and so much more. Every dollar earned is well managed by F.R.I.E.N.D.S. for each of the members in the service area!

I know you see a lot of fundraising posts from me. It is important to me that we celebrate DEXTER and his friends. We only have ONE WEEK left for pre-registration and to reach our team goal of 25 members! Register now at www.downsyndromefriends.org.

SAMPLE INSTAGRAM POST: (FROM TEAM "OH HENRY")

Support Henry and our local Down syndrome group, @friends_wiregrass_area while supporting this awesome shirt. C'mon you know someone named Henry. #youdo || Adult Sizes SM-XL available || #teamohhenry #henryismyhomie Link to order is in profile.



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FUNDRAISING IDEAS

We encourage you to choose some creative ways to fundraise for your team, aside from soliciting donations through letters and social media. Think outside the box! Here are examples for the most fun and successful fundraising ideas we've seen over the years.

EASY FUNDRAISING IDEAS:

- Encourage your friends/family/network to register to JOIN YOUR TEAM! For every person that registers to walk, their fee goes towards your total. Plus, within the registration process, they can add an additional donation to their cart.
- Encourage all teammates to contact their HR director to find out if/how their company matching gifts and encourage them to get their contributions matched.
- Enlist the help of friends/family to host bake sales, garage sales, car washes, etc.
- Think of ways you can assist people in your neighborhood to raise money – mowing lawns, weeding flower beds, watching pets while they are away.

IDEAS THAT REQUIRE SOME WORK:

- Have a consultant party (ex. Pampered Chef, Scentsy, Jamberry, etc.) and have a portion of the proceeds go to your team.
- Ask friends and local businesses to donate items and services that can be raffled off for donations.
- Create a fun challenge for your social media network – Pie in the Face challenge, Ice Bucket Challenge
- Ask your gym to host a benefit workout class where donations can be made to your team, some ideas are listed below:
Yoga Studios, CrossFit Gyms, Orange Theory Fitness Centers, Group Fitness Classes, etc.
- Make DOLLARS FOR DOWN SYNDROME donation bottles / cans and ask various businesses if you can leave at their location.
MAKE SURE YOU CHECK THESE AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK AND RETRIEVE MONEY
- Visit your favorite restaurant and see if they will host a Dine & Donate, where a percentage of sales for the day goes towards your teams fundraising goal – a few ideas listed below:
 - Buffalo Wild Wings – <https://ewrf.buffalowildwings.com>
 - Red Elephant Pizza – <http://redelephantpizza.com/share-events.php>
 - Chick-fil-A – <https://www.chick-fil-a.com/About/Giving-Back>
- If your employer allows for solicitation at work, ask if you can have a “Dress Down for Down Syndrome Day” where employees and students (if a school with uniforms) can wear jeans.



FUNDRAISING IDEAS

A LOT OF EFFORT, BIG PAY OFF IDEAS:

Look for sponsors for the event – sponsorship packages are found below. A blank sponsorship form is included in the back of your packet and can be duplicated as needed. This will also be available for your convenience on the Facebook page and the F.R.I.E.N.D.S. website.

PLATINUM BUDDY SPONSOR - \$1000

- Recognition by **logo** as a Platinum Sponsor on event day signage and social media
- Logo placement on event t-shirts
- Booth placement for promotional material at event
- Logo recognition on F.R.I.E.N.D.S. website as Platinum Sponsor
- Opportunity for 15 employees to participate in event (t-shirts and armbands included)

GOLD BUDDY SPONSOR - \$750

- Recognition by **logo** as a Gold Sponsor on event day signage and social media
- Logo placement on event t-shirts
- Logo recognition on F.R.I.E.N.D.S. website as Gold Sponsor
- Opportunity for 10 employees to participate in event (t-shirts and armbands included)

SILVER BUDDY SPONSOR - \$500

- Recognition by **name** as a Silver Sponsor on event day signage and social media
- Name placement on event t-shirts
- Name recognition on F.R.I.E.N.D.S. website as Silver Sponsor
- Opportunity for 8 employees to participate in event (t-shirts and armbands included)

BRONZE BUDDY SPONSOR - \$250

- Recognition by **name** as a Bronze Sponsor on event day signage and social media
- Name placement on event t-shirts
- Opportunity for 4 employees to participate in event (t-shirts and armbands included)

If you have any questions regarding the sponsorship opportunities for 2024 Wiregrass Area Buddy Walk®, please feel free to contact Heather Adkins at 334-790-8292 or by email at

info.downsyndromefriends@gmail.com.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

ARE DONATIONS TAX DEDUCTIBLE?

Your gift is tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law. The F.R.I.E.N.D.S. organization is a registered 501(c)3 organization. Our tax ID number is 02-0680691.

WHO SHOULD WIREGRASS AREA BUDDY WALK CHECK BE MADE PAYABLE TO?

Please make check payable to F.R.I.E.N.D.S. Checks should not be written to Buddy Walk Teams, team captains or individual participants.

DO I HAVE TO SEND MY DONATIONS AS SOON AS I RECEIVE THEM?

No, however if your donors choose not to donate and / or pre-register online you may want to so that your donations can be entered into the online system prior to the ONLINE INCENTIVE DEADLINE.

WHAT IF PEOPLE WANT TO GIVE ME CASH?

It is safest and best for record-keeping that you convert all cash received to a check or money order. If you are able, the safest option is to send a personal check / money order covering the full amount, along with corresponding donation forms. We will be able to credit your friends and family for their generosity. If it is not possible, you can also always bring the cash donations and appropriate forms to Heather Adkins or to any of the turn in dates.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARTICIPATE?

The participation fee is \$5 (5 and under free). The event t-shirts are \$15 for everyone EXCEPT individuals with Down syndrome and they attend for no charge and receive a free t-shirt – but they must still register in order to receive the t-shirt.

SHOULD I REGISTER MY KIDS?

Yes, please register everyone who will be attending the walk (including toddlers in strollers). This helps us plan for lunches the day of the event.

I HAVE A FAMILY MEMBER WHO WANTS TO JOIN MY TEAM BUT MAY NOT BE ABLE TO ATTEND THE WALK. CAN THEY STILL JOIN MY TEAM?

Yes, family members can still support you by joining your team and can even help fundraise and donate monies even if they cannot attend.

WHAT IS THE CUT OFF TO JOIN A TEAM?

The pre-registration deadline is February 15th. This is the last day that your team members can join and be guaranteed an event t-shirt. However, even after this date, please encourage others to attend. They can always pay the participation fee for the day of (\$5).

SOME OF MY FAMILY WOULD LIKE TO COME, BUT NOT WALK, DO THEY NEED TO REGISTER?

Yes, again, this helps with us preparing for a lunch count. It is not mandatory for event attendees to walk. But it is required that they enjoy themselves and help us celebrate our individuals with Down syndrome.

WHAT SHOULD I HAVE MY TEAM BRING TO THE WALK?

It is always a good idea to bring a chair, a hand fan, and a smile. You may also suggest that they bring some cash as there will be snacks and drinks available and donations are accepted.

WILL I BE ABLE TO SET UP MY TENT SPACE THE DAY BEFORE THE EVENT?

Yes, Early tent set up will be on Friday, March 15th, beginning at 4:30 and ending at 6:30. You will enter through the AG Gate. (Should this change, you will be notified via email)