The Mission of F.R.I.E.N.D.S. is to provide free all-encompassing educational and support services to families who have been impacted by Down Syndrome or other Special Needs, while advocating and promoting community integration.

Our Goals are to provide broad reaching educational services, provide peer to peer support, and offer fun social activities for our individuals and families in the Tampa Bay Area. We proudly serve Hillsborough, Pinellas, & Pasco County.

Founded in 2007, F.R.I.E.N.D.S. is a 501c3 non-profit who has been a permanent staple of the Tampa Bay special needs community for the past 14yrs. We strive to improve our services each year and dream of one day opening our own brick and mortar building, "The F.R.I.E.N.D.S. Center". For now we "borrow" space to provide our programs. Please let us know if you need any assistance.

**THE FOLLOWING F.R.I.E.N.D.S. PROGRAMS & SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE:**

1. **F.R.I.E.N.D.S. PARENT PACKETS** - A FREE packet can be delivered or mailed to you. Just send a request to info@friendssupport.org or call (813)245-2782.
   - Parents who receive a new diagnosis of Down syndrome or other special needs can receive a free F.R.I.E.N.D.S. PARENT PACKET. It's a tote bag, full of information, from special needs resource vendors and service providers. The packets are available in English and Spanish.
   - A F.R.I.E.N.D.S. Resource Guidebook – designed to provide parents with all of the important contact information and resources that they may need.
   - A USF Resource Guidebook with statewide resources.
   - Multiple brochures and pamphlets, from vendors around the Tampa Bay area, with special needs resources, partners we work with, and those who sell special needs products, and services.
   - For parents we include the informative book “Babies with Down syndrome, A New Parents Guide” by Susan J. Skallerup in English and Spanish versions.
   - For baby, we include a cute F.R.I.E.N.D.S. onesie and bib from Able United.

F.R.I.E.N.D.S. is an acronym for Families, Respect, Inspire, Educate, Networking, Down syndrome, Special needs.
2. **F.R.I.E.N.D.S. PARENT LIAISONS** – We know all too well the seclusion and exhaustion that comes with raising a child with special needs. We offer in-person and phone support for those who are in need's information, advice, or just someone to talk to. We are available 24/7.

3. **HOSPITAL OUTREACH** - F.R.I.E.N.D.S. assembles and donates our F.R.I.E.N.D.S. Parent Packets and distributes them to eight Tampa Bay NICU’s, who in turn gives them to new parents. We donate approximately 100 packets each year. F.R.I.E.N.D.S. also offers presentations to medical and nursing staff to give them a broader education of our special needs community and its health needs.

4. **BABY F.R.I.E.N.D.S.** – Our wonderful volunteers, Tammy Whatley, & Paula Marsell in Brandon and Lawrence Back & Barbie Feger in Largo, host a monthly, Baby F.R.I.E.N.D.S., for our birth to 5yrs old. Baby FRIENDS is a play and support group where parents can meet other parents who are on the same journey. Held monthly at We Rock the Spectrum in Brandon and Largo.

5. **AFTER SCHOOL SPECIALS** – Kathy Boisseau, her daughter Ava, and son Finn offer our 5yrs to 12yr old's a fun get-togethers. They meet at the park, pool, and splash pads, or other fun spot. Participants make lifelong friends and most of the kids have known each other since the birth. Held monthly in Brandon.

6. **F.R.I.E.N.D.S. DANCES** – F.R.I.E.N.D.S. hosts a fun dance for our adults, 15yrs and older, with free pizza and refreshments. The dances are offers our isolated adults a chance to socialize and get together with their peers. The dances are held monthly in Valrico and Clearwater.

7. **ZOOM PROGRAMS** - In March, Covid hit us hard, but we bounced right back with the help of ZOOM. Join us for these fun programs:

   - **Sweating with Sunshine** – Every other Monday on Zoom, Sweating with Sunshine (aka Heather Brudereck) an Occupational Therapist who also is a Bodybuilder and Swimsuit Competitor offers a fun half-hour workout. You will break a sweat and get your heart pumping! All ages & Abilities welcome.

   - **Good Vibes** – Every Tuesday night we get together with F.R.I.E.N.D.S. and hang out listening to Good Music, with Good FRIENDS, it's Good Vibes! See you soon!

8. **DAD’S** - Dad's Appreciating Down Syndrome - Dad's meet at Beef O' Brady's in Riverview.

9. **FRIENDS POTLUCK SUPPORT MEETINGS** - Bring a dish to share and meet other parents who are raising a child with Down syndrome or other special needs.
10. WORLD DOWN SYNDROME DAY - In March, we celebrate World Down Syndrome Day, 3/21 with F.R.I.E.N.D.S. families spending the day at ZooTampa!

11. EASTER - In April, F.R.I.E.N.D.S. assembles approximately 250 children Easter Baskets for our kids!

12. POOL PARTY - In July, we have a fun “Down Syndrome Awareness & Special Needs Pool Party!” F.R.I.E.N.D.S. and families are invited to meet others, share experiences, and enjoy time together.

13. BUDDY WALK - In October, we celebrate our loved ones and National Down Syndrome Month with our annual F.R.I.E.N.D.S. Buddy Walk. It’s a fun event with an Advocacy Walk, “family reunion” atmosphere. Medals, and awards are given to our awesome individuals and teams. The Buddy Walk is our largest fundraiser and the funds raised go toward our programs and supports.

2021 5TH F.R.I.E.N.D.S. BUDDY WALK

12. FUNDRAISING - Our fundraising includes a Fishhawk Clay Shoot, Coach Bag Bingo, and a monthly Farmers Market, hosted by the wonderful volunteers of the B Street Gives Back Group, Ken Brownlee Realty in association with Keller Williams.

- **PUBLIX FUNDRAISERS** - Our self-Advocates fundraise too! Zachary Foyt, James Farella, and Juan Ramirez host a Publix Fundraiser for F.R.I.E.N.D.S. during Buddy Walk.

- **RAYMOND JAMES/FRIENDS VOLUNTEERS** - Jeff Green and Paul Foyt lead the Raymond James Legends Hospitality Nonprofit booths where F.R.I.E.N.D.S. volunteers work a booth and F.R.I.E.N.D.S. receives a percentage of the sales. Our self-advocates can volunteer and work alongside them, gaining valuable job skills they can put on a resume.

- **F.R.I.E.N.D.S. is a volunteer based non-profit, there are NO paid employees. Funds raised go right back into our services and programs, plus cover the costs of our printing, yearly event Insurance, State, and IRS Fees, and office/phone, and storage facility fees**
13. NATIONAL DOWN SYNDROME MONTH - F.R.I.E.N.D.S celebrates every October’s, National Down Syndrome Month by distributing Halloween Baskets of candy to our eight Tampa Bay NICU’s. The baskets come with “Down Syndrome Facts”, “F.R.I.E.N.D.S. brochures”, and whole lot of candy! It’s a great way to Advocate for our group and community!


15. HOLIDAYS - In December, we celebrate the holidays with our F.R.I.E.N.D.S. Holiday Party and Breakfast with Santa.

16. PARADES - F.R.I.E.N.D.S. promotes our group during the 4th of July Parade in Brandon & the Christmas Parade in St. Pete. We load up a float with kids and families dressed in a Holiday t-shirts and Santa Hat’s and pass out of candy and F.R.I.E.N.D.S. Brochures. It’s a great way to Advocate for our community!

17. F.R.I.E.N.D.S. VOLUNTEERS - A big dose of gratitude goes to some really great volunteers who help us bring our Parent Liaisons, Support/Playgroups, Buddy Walk, Dances, Football Game concessions, and all the other programs we bring to our community. Thank you so much!

18. STUDENT VOLUNTEERS - We want to send a big Thank you to all of the students who volunteer while earning service hours for scholarships. If you would like to volunteer, we would love to have your help, please send an email to info@friendssupport.org for more information.

19. BOARD OF DIRECTORS - F.R.I.E.N.D.S. is run by a dedicated Board of Directors and Advisory Board. Their mission is to seek out opportunities to provide F.R.I.E.N.D.S. the means and support to grow. We are extremely grateful for all their love and support. Our current Board of Directors:

   President – Joe Wright
   Vice President – Ken Brownlee
   Secretary – Tish Knotek
   Treasurer -
   Executive Director – Ann Foyt

20. ADVISORY BOARD - F.R.I.E.N.D.S. Advisory Board consists of partners, sponsors, and other F.R.I.E.N.D.S. members who want to be in on the planning of events, growth, and progress of F.R.I.E.N.D.S.
WEBSITE - www.friendssupport.org
ADDRESS - 11612 Miss Chloe Court, Riverview, FL 33579
PHONE - (813)245-2782
BUDDY WALK - https://www.ds-stride.org/friendsbuddywalk
FACEBOOK PAGE - https://www.facebook.com/FRIENDSWESTFLORIDA
CONTACT - send an email to info@friendssupport.org
TWITTER - https://twitter.com/Friends_DSWF
INSTAGRAM - https://www.instagram.com/friendsdownsyndrome/
TAX EIN - # 65-1261646