

Social isolation is the **problem**.

3 in **5**

Americans consider social isolation a “very serious problem.”

85%

of Americans strongly support programs that tackle social isolation through peer-to-peer programs in school.



71%

of Americans believe the issue of social isolation among youth is becoming more serious.

Beyond Differences is the **solution**.



Annual Report 2017–2018

BEYOND
DIFFERENCES™

www.BeyondDifferences.org

Data in the above infographic is based on February/March 2018 findings from national polling conducted by renowned FM3 Research.

Dear friends,

It is my honor to bring you news and highlights of this past year, one that has been full of amazing accomplishments and growth, within the movement we've built together *to end social isolation among youth. Thank you for being a part of this incredible journey!*



who passed in her sleep at the age of 15½ from medical complications associated with Apert syndrome.

Looking back, I now realize that Lili was socially isolated in middle school. But in those days, we had no words to describe her loneliness and perception of herself as being invisible.

Our earliest hopes and dreams were to speak out about social isolation. We began by building the confidence and skills of young people, inspiring them to become a new generation of leaders, steadfast in their belief that accepting and respecting differences would ultimately

lead to a healthier, smarter and happier generation of adults.

We started in just a handful of schools in Marin County. Today we are a national organization in 5,000 schools—in all 50 United States—representing fully 25% of the middle schools in America!

We started with eight brave teens who had the courage to talk at local schools about social isolation, something that no one had ever spoken of out loud. These pioneers became our first Teen Board of Directors.

Today, we have over 100 high school students on our teen boards in Oakland, Marin County, Portland, Oregon and soon in San Mateo County.

We started with a single heroic education leader—Marin County Superintendent of Schools Mary Jane Burke. Today, we not only partner with 5,000 schools, but with national organizations, too, and speak to millions of adults through social media, television, and radio.

In the beginning, when we talked about social isolation, we were often met with blank stares. Today social isolation is in the lexicon.

My promise to myself—to honor Lili's life and memory—has long been satisfied.

Yet I remind myself daily that the promise I made to Lili *is a promise I now make to all children* who face challenges because they are different.

Whether you are a Muslim child living in the middle of America, an LGBTQ youth struggling in a hostile climate or you are just plain different, Beyond Differences intends to bring the promise of inclusion to you.

One word which we inherited from past generations who fought against bigotry and hate is “tolerance.”

But I now know that *we must fight for something beyond tolerance*. We are fighting for nothing less than the *total acceptance of everyone, no matter their difference*.

Thank you again for your support this last year. We invite you to continue helping us change the world in which our children live so they can reach their fullest potential.

With respect and appreciation,

Laura Talmus
Co-founder and
Executive Director



Our new look

Strength and **boldness**—two words that describe both Beyond Differences and our new logo. We hope you agree that our new look reflects our smart, edgy programs which are transforming our communities. The Beyond Differences' starburst is still central to our look, representing our belief that there are no limits to the passion, energy and movement-building we can create together!

BEYOND DIFFERENCES™

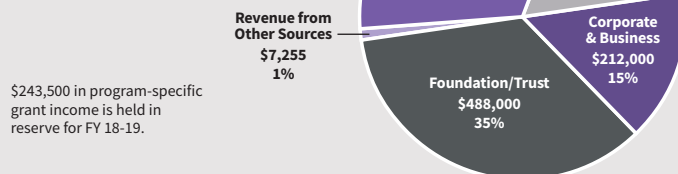
Inspiring Youth to End Social Isolation

Financials

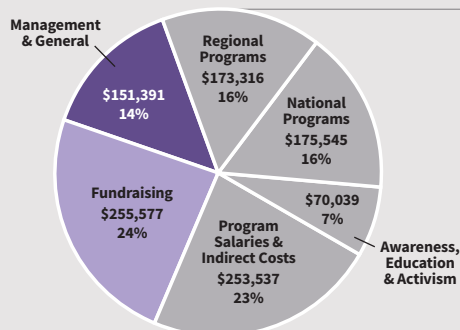
June 1, 2017–May 31, 2018

Income

Total \$1,395,287



\$243,500 in program-specific grant income is held in reserve for FY 18-19.



Program
Total
\$672,437
62%

Expenses
Total \$1,079,404

Student leadership works!



Positive Prevention Initiatives

Beyond Differences reached an unprecedented number of schools and students this year. Our three Positive Prevention Initiatives — all offered to participants free of charge — took place in all 50 states. Nearly 50% of the schools served are low-income Title 1 schools.

The 33 lesson plans we provided throughout the year to teachers and student leaders focused on creating a culture of belonging through a variety of lenses:

**KNOW
YOUR
CLASSMATES™**
1,200+ schools

Feeling included and including others based on identity, culture, and diversity

This annual curriculum, campaign and national awareness day—last held on October 20, 2017—helps eliminate fear of differences among middle school students by celebrating everyone's cultures, faith, and family traditions.



**NONE
EATS ALONE™**
2,500+ schools

Feeling included and including others during social times, most importantly at lunch, which can be the hardest time of the day for socially isolated students

On February 9, 2018, students in thousands of schools from Maine to Hawaii led events to bring together their classmates at lunch, to make sure that everyone has someone to eat with.



**CALL IT
OUT**
500+ schools

Feeling included and including others in online spaces such as social media

Students joined together on April 27, 2018 to learn how to spot social isolation online, how to respond to digital gossip, and how to be authentic and true to themselves online.

Students Leading CHANGE

Strong. Caring. Vulnerable. Powerful.

Just a few words to describe Beyond Differences' incredible high school teen leaders. This year, more than 100 teen leaders from Marin County and Oakland in California and Portland, Oregon used their experiences and desire to create a better world to lead assemblies, mentor younger students, and organize campaigns.



Beyond Differences' programs are inspiring youth throughout the country to end social isolation.



Meet Keaton and Cierra

Beyond Differences' newest video (<https://bit.ly/2L5WjF2>) highlights Cierra and Keaton, two of our teen leaders.

I feel very thankful for Beyond Differences because it changed me a lot. I learned how to step up to help others.

Cierra, sophomore, Oakland Technical High School

When I joined Beyond Differences, I really started to get an understanding of who I was as a person and I learned how to be myself.... Beyond Differences is probably where I have grown most throughout my entire life.

Keaton, junior, San Rafael High School

Student Activists

On March 11, 2018, more than 100 teens from Beyond Differences stood together and elevated their voices at the **Students Rising to End Social Isolation** march and rally in Oakland to end social isolation and make schools inclusive for everyone. Beyond Differences stood in solidarity with **National School Walk Out Day** and **March for Our Lives** in saying #ENOUGH.



Students created a social media campaign called **#Whatsmydifferent**, followed by the student-organized march and rally in Oakland.



Media coverage helps spread the word

Beyond Differences received extensive print, online and broadcast media coverage this year. Our No One Eats Alone initiative had nearly 130 broadcast stories with more than 3 million viewers in addition to print/online stories that reached millions of people in small and large cities throughout the U.S.

Great media coverage of all of the efforts of our student leaders—including the Students Rising to End Social Isolation March and Rally, Call It Out Day, and Know Your Classmates Day—ensured that young people and adults from coast to coast learned about Beyond Differences' work to end social isolation.

Just some of Beyond Differences' great media coverage this year:

KGW8 NEWS

NBC CONNECTICUT

ELVIS DURAN AND THE MORNING SHOW

Chicago Tribune

Martin Independent Journal

abc 7

msn

NBC LIMA

Alice @97.3

EAST BAY TIMES

MOMTRENDS

We Can't Thank Them Enough

We want to thank the following individuals, companies and foundations who have supported Beyond Differences and invested \$250 or more in our student leaders and school programs. This list reflects contributions received between June 1, 2017 and May 31, 2018.

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The Fabulous Women of Sonoma County
Devon and Daniel MacEachron
Marcia and John Lenser
Michaela L. Simpson

Expanding our reach

Beyond Differences continues to grow our reach through social media:



Facebook: **18,730** followers



Twitter: **19,020** followers



Instagram: **975** followers

- In the **Bay Area**, middle school students from Marin, the East Bay, and the Peninsula attended leadership retreats led by our high school teen leaders. These retreats brought together students from diverse family and ethnic/racial backgrounds who created a strong community of new friends while learning from one another how to be leaders in their middle school.
- In **New York City**, Beyond Differences is collaborating with the city's Department of Education on a groundbreaking project. Thanks to a grant from the Einhorn Family Charitable Trust, we are delivering—as well as assessing the impact of—our curriculum, leadership activities for students, and professional development for teachers to a cohort of 12 middle schools.
- In the **Central Valley of California**, where the safety and security of all children—regardless of documentation status—is at risk, Beyond Differences is working with six middle schools to develop resiliency for all students and faculty.
- As the leader in addressing social isolation, Beyond Differences has received awards and presented at conferences throughout the country, from **Louisiana to Michigan to California**.



BEYOND DIFFERENCES™

Inspiring Youth to End Social Isolation

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Our thanks to **Peter Oppenheimer** and **Amy Sullivan** for their wonderful photos used in this report.

Beyond Differences is the only student-led nonprofit organization and social justice movement dedicated to ending social isolation. From the start, we identified social isolation among youth as a public health crisis with links to community violence. Social isolation puts children at risk for lower academic achievements, increases the risk of depression and can lead to suicide ideation.