

BEYOND DIFFERENCES™

Inspiring Youth to End Social Isolation



2019 Annual Report

www.BeyondDifferences.org

Dear Friends,

Ten years ago, I had absolutely no awareness of social isolation as a concept, let alone as a public health crisis. I had never heard of it before nor had many others.

When social isolation was first brought to my attention, I remember quite clearly going online and reading research studies and articles about social isolation, but only about its impact on senior citizens. Socially isolated adults were susceptible to more dire medical problems, increased emotional challenges such as depression and even shortened life expectancy due to loneliness.

I had no idea that social isolation was harming my own family, and that it was possible for children to suffer the same consequences. And yet it was all too true that my sweet adolescent daughter, Lili Rachel Smith, was feeling socially isolated in middle school.

Today, we know from both scientific and anecdotal evidence that social isolation seriously impacts young children, often resulting in life-long disadvantages and consequences. We also know social isolation is at crisis levels for adolescents in our country.

My husband, Ace Smith, and I started Beyond Differences—with a group of incredible teens and pre-teens from our community—to address the needs of middle school students.

We are proud that Beyond Differences was the very first organization in our country to sound the alarm about adolescent social isolation and, today, we know the worldview on this issue has changed and is being addressed by educators, parents, policy leaders and elected officials. As you read our 2019 Annual Report, we hope you will see for yourself the positive impact we have had on ending social isolation for youth.

We are impacting millions of individual children who attend schools that use our year-round Positive Prevention Initiatives and celebrate our national awareness days.

We are impacting thousands of teachers who bring these initiatives to their schools free of charge so that middle school students can learn to recognize and accept differences.

We are impacting policy at a state-wide level as we advocate for easy access to quality social-emotional learning (SEL) materials and programs for all K-12 teachers and educators.

Through our years of working with schools and communities to bring awareness, skills, and insights to address the issue of social isolation, we know that when students raise their voices and lead a movement, meaningful change is realized. More than 6,000 schools in all 50 United States are using our initiatives.

We appreciate your interest in Beyond Differences. With your help, we will achieve our dream of reaching 100% of all middle and junior high schools in our country with sound and effective programs that work to stimulate children and change the trajectory of their lives forever.

We hope you enjoy reading this annual report and meeting some of our student leaders. You will know why I am so excited about Beyond Differences and hope you will be too.

With respect and appreciation,



Laura Talmus
Co-founder and Executive Director



THE IMPACT OF BEYOND DIFFERENCES™

Beyond Differences' Positive Prevention Initiatives and national awareness days—No One Eats Alone, Know Your Classmates, and Be Kind Online—provide hands-on entry points for schools and students to address social isolation.

These initiatives offer an easy, fun and flexible way for students to raise awareness of this issue and for schools to strengthen the voice and leadership of students.

All 33 lesson plans in Beyond Differences' Positive Prevention Initiatives are written by teachers for teachers and are aligned with both Common Core standards and CASEL* competencies.

*The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning

We are proud that our materials and support are provided for free to teachers and student leaders, with a focus on creating a culture of belonging!



KNOW YOUR CLASSMATES™ is in 1,200+ SCHOOLS

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

This curriculum, campaign and national awareness day — held in October each year — combats hateful language, anxiety and fear of differences among middle school students.



NO ONE EATS ALONE™ is in 2,700+ SCHOOLS

Feeling included and including others, most importantly at lunch, oftentimes the hardest time of the day for socially isolated students

Each February, around Valentine's Day, students in thousands of schools from Maine to Hawaii lead events to bring together their classmates at lunch, to make sure that everyone has someone to eat with.



BE KIND ONLINE™ is in 870+ SCHOOLS

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

Each April, students join together for Be Kind Online which teaches them to learn how to recognize social isolation online, how to respond to digital gossip, and to learn how their behavior should be the same whether online or not.

**During the 2018 – 2019 school year,
MILLIONS of STUDENTS took part in these national awareness
days, throughout all 50 states as well as the District of Columbia!**

TEENS
AT THE
HEART
OF THIS
MOVEMENT

The more than 120 members of Beyond Differences' Teen Boards in Marin County, San Mateo County, Oakland and Portland, Oregon lead by example. "Everybody on the Teen Board embodies the spirit of inclusion and is loving," says new board member Chiqui Diaz, a freshman at San Rafael High School.

Chiqui joined the board after serving as a Beyond Differences coordinator in seventh and eighth grade at Davidson Middle School in San Rafael, California. "It's always been my calling to help people, improve life on campus and make sure everyone feels accepted," she said. "Eighth grade was a rough year for me because there were times that I felt that I was struggling to find my group of people."

Having had that experience, it's powerful for Chiqui to know that she is working to help others experiencing social isolation. "I am excited to help open up conversations about social isolation and bring more awareness to the issue," she said.

Chiqui says that serving on the Teen Board is empowering. "The teens take a lot of initiative and our voices are heard," she said. She notes that initiatives like No One Eats Alone reach thousands of students. "But it's the fact that we are reaching that one kid in a classroom or this group of kids - we're making an impact in their lives," says Chiqui.

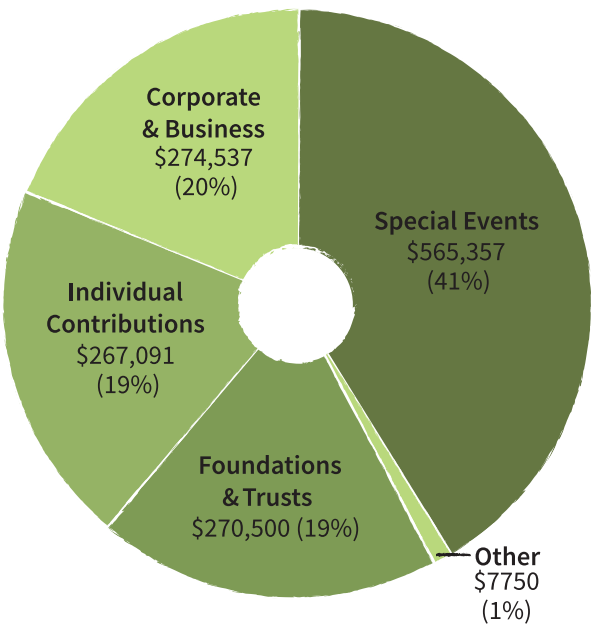
"We are making adolescence easier and helping students carry an attitude of inclusion throughout their lives," she says. "When we change the mindset of people early on, it has the effect of making the world a better place."

The power of Beyond Differences' programs and initiatives continues to spread throughout the country. Thanks to Beyond Differences' vision and determination, social isolation is now recognized as a serious public health issue that impacts not just a few marginalized individuals, but millions of young people. Beyond Differences continues to influence the conversation on social isolation, impacting both policies and people.

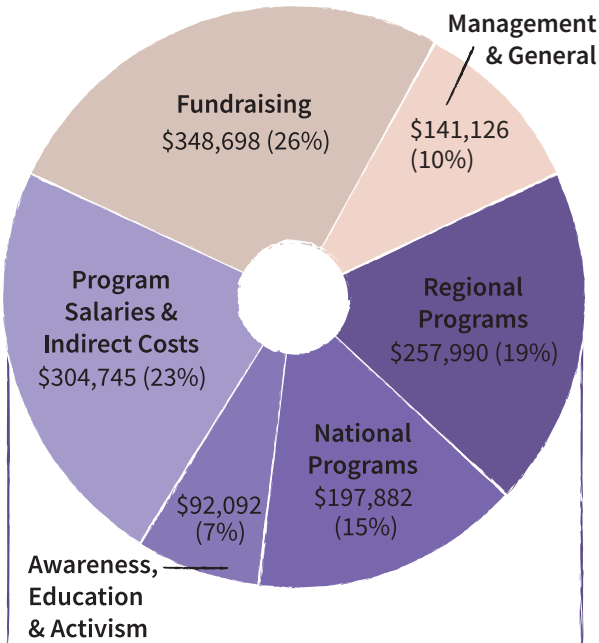


FINANCIAL
IMPACT

INCOME TOTAL: \$1,385,235



EXPENSES TOTAL: \$1,342,533



PROGRAM TOTAL:
\$852,709 (64%)

The Einhorn Research Study: Collaborating with
The New York City Department of Education

At a New York City reception in June 2019, Beyond Differences celebrated the culmination of a groundbreaking evidence-based research project at 10 New York City public schools. Thanks to the generous support of the Einhorn Family Charitable Trust, Beyond Differences engaged 7th grade students, teachers, and administrators during the 2018-19 school year in using our Positive Prevention Initiatives and national awareness days.

"From the beginning, the research study asked the question: Is one academic year enough time to make a substantive impact toward creating cultures of belonging in middle school through student leadership?," says Laura Talmus, Beyond Differences' Executive Director. "Overwhelmingly, the enthusiasm, the data, and the stories from participants have shown us that, yes, we can."

Highlights of this research study, which collected and analyzed data on dozens of indicators including awareness of social isolation, student leadership, youth voice, relationship skills, and improved student intervention behaviors, include:

88%
of student leaders say:

Beyond Differences being at their school had a substantial or huge effect on their campus.

87%
of school administrators say:

Beyond Differences contributed substantially or hugely to youth voice, student leadership and student awareness of social isolation.

85%
of student leaders say:

They feel like more of a leader as a result of having Beyond Differences in their school.

84%
of student leaders say:

They were more aware of the consequences of their actions thanks to Beyond Differences.

Any faculty member can bring Beyond Differences programs to their school. The programs blend in seamlessly with existing district curriculum and with children from all demographic backgrounds.



IN THE NEWS



Just a few highlights:

January 2019

Visions, a Canadian mental health and substance abuse journal, published a bylined essay by Beyond Differences' Executive Director Laura Talmus.

February 2019

The Mercury News ran a front-page feature on the No One Eats Alone event at San Jose's LeyVa Middle School in which San Francisco 49er football player DeForest Buckner and his wife, Ashlyn, participated.



April 2019

PBS's Inside California Education featured No One Eats Alone, interviewing Laura Talmus and our Teen Board members.

We received extensive print, online and broadcast media coverage in such diverse cities as San Francisco, Ft. Worth, Cincinnati, Dayton, Nashville, Baton Rouge, Indianapolis, Portland, Tampa, Chicago, Toledo, Omaha, Spokane, Houston, Denver, Harrisburg, Cleveland, Milwaukee, and Jacksonville, among many others.

No One Eats Alone was also featured in more than **125 television and radio spots** throughout the country with more than 3 million viewers as well as print/online stories in cities all over the country that reached millions of people in small and large cities.

THE NFL'S LOS ANGELES RAMS FOOTBALL ORGANIZATION

partnered with Beyond Differences to hold Know Your Classmates at two schools in Los Angeles, leading to print and television coverage including NBC Los Angeles, CBS, Fox, The Los Angeles Daily News, San Fernando Valley Sun, and Rams.com.

We also had great coverage in Portland with our Portland Teen Board featured as they led Know Your Classmates at a middle school. Fox 12 interviewed our Teen Board about the importance of Know Your Classmates and ending social isolation.



LAURA TALMUS HONORED BY AARP

In December 2018, Beyond Differences' Executive Director, Laura Talmus, was selected as one of 10 national AARP Purpose Prize Fellows, a prestigious award that celebrates leaders 50 years and older in the United States who are using their life experience to make a difference.

To underscore the prestige of this honor: in the last 10 years AARP, has received nearly 10,000 Purpose Prize nominations and has selected just under 100 winners and 400 fellows. Cash grants totaling \$5 million have been awarded to social entrepreneurs working in fields ranging from early childhood learning to eradicating homelessness.

"This was an experience of a lifetime and perhaps, even while we were applying, I didn't fully realize how special this honor was until I stood on stage in Washington, DC at the Annual AARP Gala to be recognized along with the other fellows and winners in my cohort," says Talmus. "AARP offers us continued learning, access to resources, and the chance to network with incredible changemakers transcending issues affecting all of us."

TEENS IN NEW YORK CITY

Beyond Differences was honored to be invited by The Hershey Company to New York City in June 2019 to participate in its inaugural Makers of Good Teen Summit. This event brought more than 100 teens from throughout the country together to "tackle social isolation and work together to create more inclusive communities."

Three Beyond Differences Teen Board members—Javonte Francis, Nicole Fuches, and Sally Garretson — led the audience in a simulated No One Eats Alone celebratory lunch event. "Being at the Hershey's conference was very enlightening for me because I realized that when many people unite behind the same cause, nothing holds us back," says Fuches. "I really found a community I wasn't expecting to have, and I'm forever grateful for the experience."



TEENS IN AUSTIN, TEXAS

In March 2019, Beyond Differences was invited to present at the SXSW EDU. The conference was a great opportunity to extend the reach of Beyond Differences to an audience of educators, funders, and business vendors from throughout the country.

Teen Board members Kuniko Randles and Zakary Yudhishtu and three of our staff members led the workshop "Hungry for Connection: No One Eats Alone." "Leading discussions and presenting about how student leadership and connection can solve the problem of social isolation was a great experience," says Randles.

TEENS IN NAPA VALLEY

Beyond Differences' Executive Director Laura Talmus was invited to provide opening remarks at the April 2019 State Conference of CASCWA (California Association of Supervisors of Child Welfare and Attendance). Teen Board members Mats Sunshine, Javonte Francis and Brittany Medina led a break-out workshop demonstrating Know Your Classmates, one of Beyond Differences' Positive Prevention Initiatives.

"The teen leaders, my colleague Dr. Louise Malandra and I were heartened by the great response of the principals, administrators, and superintendents to our keynote and workshop session," said Laura. "We highlighted the importance of social-emotional learning in schools, showed how it is woven into Beyond Differences' materials, and practiced a fun and engaging student lesson from our Know Your Classmates curriculum with our adult workshop attendees." It was another banner year for media coverage of Beyond Differences!



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. The list reflects contributions received between June 1, 2018 and June 30, 2019.

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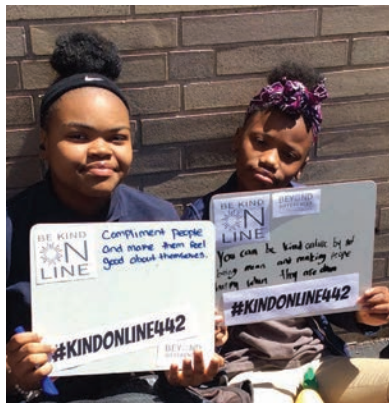
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Alzire Messenger
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Amy Blume-Marcovici
Amy Donohue
Amy Friedkin
Amy Grossman
Amy Kohnstamm
Amy Salomone-Thornton
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Ynze Bijl and Tina Smith
Zahra Ali

THANK YOU!

OUR MISSION

Inspire students at all
middle schools nationwide
to end social isolation
and create a culture of
belonging for everyone.

STAFF AND CONSULTANTS

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Grace Alexander

Director of Finance and Operations

Air Gallegos

Director of Education, Curriculum and Instruction

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With members from California to New York,
our board proudly reflects the national
reach of Beyond Differences.

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Joe Salesky

Michaela Simpson

Ace Smith

Evie Talmus, MFT

Lisa Towne

Tony Winnicker

Join the movement to end social isolation today!

Beyond Differences is the only student-led nonprofit organization dedicated to ending social isolation. From the start, we identified social isolation among youth as a public health crisis that puts children at risk for negative health consequences, lower academic achievements, and the increased risk of depression that can lead to self-harm, suicide ideation or violent behavior.



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