

BEYOND ME

INFORMATION PACKAGE

What is Beyond Me?

Montreal Beyond Me is a student-run non-profit organization out of McGill University with a mandate to provide a fun and flexible one-on-one mentoring program for children and teenagers with special needs. Beyond Me gives students with special needs from these schools an opportunity to be paired up with a student volunteer from McGill to act as a mentor, tutor, or a friend and to develop a rewarding relationship! Beyond Me's network of volunteers have a diverse set of skills, experience and interests, which allows Beyond Me to match volunteers with buddies who share their interests and who would most benefit from working with that volunteer.

All children in the program are matched up with a McGill volunteer for one-on-one interaction throughout the year. The relationship between a buddy and volunteer can take on many forms, including subject specific tutoring, homework help, language and play stimulation, social skills building through a social relationship, fun outings in the community, and short-term respite care for parents. The nature of a mentor and a buddy's relationship and the location of their meetings are flexible and completely dependent on the needs of the child and their parent or guardian.



For more information or to sign up, visit www.montrealbeyondme.ca or email montrealbeyondme@gmail.com

At our inception, Beyond Me started with a mandate to make a positive impact on children with special needs through one-on-one mentorship and organized group events. The organization envisioned the provision of a system that could provide the children in our program with role models, mentors, and friends in an environment that facilitates social development. Beyond Me has evolved to become an all-encompassing organization defined by our five point mandate, the “Five E’s Approach:”

Engage Youth and Families, through the provision of inclusive activities and events for children with special needs, their family members, and McGill students.

Empower Self-Growth, through the creation of an environment where children with special needs can gain confidence, independence, and skills that will last beyond the length of the mentorship.

Encourage Communication by acting as a bridge between the mentor, the mentee, their families, and the partner schools, to facilitate the development of meaningful relationships.

Enhance Perceptions by breaking down misconceptions and emphasizing the similarities between individuals and the ability within disabilities as we build relationships.

Experience Community through providing an opportunity for both the mentor and the mentee to be active members of the Montreal community.



How are volunteers screened and matched?

All of the volunteers who join the Beyond Me program go through a three step screening process before they are able to be matched with or start working with a child in the program.

First, volunteers complete an exhaustive application form and provide details on their prior experience working with children, prior experience working with children or adults with disabilities, their hobbies, interests and special skills, and their comfort level working with individuals with disabilities (for example, whether or not the volunteer is comfortable working with a child who is non-verbal). All of these answers are used later in the process to assist in matching the volunteer with a child. During this application stage, volunteers are also screened based on their responses to questions about the reason for their interest in volunteering with the program and what will make them a good mentor for Beyond Me.

After the initial applications have been screened, successful applicants are invited for an interview in person conducted by members of the executive team. During the interview, volunteers will provide more information about their experience working with people with

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disabilities, their skills (including language proficiency), and their time management ability and commitment level. At this stage, volunteers are also asked to respond to specific scenarios that assess their ability to deal with behavioural issues, to conduct themselves appropriately with children, parents, and teachers, and deal with difficult situations.

Volunteers and buddies are matched based on a number of criteria, including language proficiency (particularly for francophone children and families), location within Montreal, the level of experience and comfort with particular disabilities, and shared hobbies and interests. Partner schools and organizations have the option of being involved with the matching or letting the Beyond Me executives to do the matching themselves. After matching, volunteers are given the contact information of their buddy and their parents and the relationship can begin!



What happens after the initial match?

Once the volunteer has contacted their buddy and their family, regular meetings are organized. In addition to the one-on-one activities or outings that are the hallmark of the Beyond Me program, the executive team also hosts group events approximately once a month to which all mentors, buddies, and families are invited. In order to keep Beyond Me events as inclusive as possible, all events are either free or at a very low cost. These group events give the children in the program an opportunity to socialize and make new friends, try new skills, and be creative, while also giving mentors and parents an opportunity to network as well.

Past events hosted by Beyond Me include trips to the Biodome, Cosmic bowling, the Ecomuseum, Redpath Museum, the Science Centre, the Fine Arts Museum, and custom events hosted at McGill University, including Mad Science Day, Carnival Day, and “Messy Fun Day.”

Frequently Asked Questions:

Where does the volunteering take place?

All activities between matches will take place at a location determined by the mentor and the buddy or the parents of the child. Possible locations include the buddy’s school, the buddy’s home, local community centres, local libraries, and other child-friendly locations (ie. the Biodome, a bowling alley, shopping mall, the park).

What are some examples of activities that mentors and buddies could do?

The types of activities matches pursue depend on both the interests of the mentor and the interests of the buddy. Some examples of the activities logged by volunteers this past year

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