



between friends
connecting · growing · belonging

2020 Annual Impact Report

table of contents

message from the ceo & board of directors 1

who we are 2

how we adapted in 2020..... 3

WeConnect 3

relaunch planning..... 8

between friends in the community 9

fostering inclusion in our community 10

a tale of two ceo’s..... 11

thank you Suzanne..... 12

2020 financial statements 13

thank you to donors 14



message from the ceo & board of directors

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March of 2020, it felt like the world came to a screeching halt. In that moment, many people living with disabilities already had a deep understanding of isolation. Not because they were given advance information into the restrictions needed to slow the spread of COVID-19, but simply because social isolation is often a reality experienced by people with disabilities. This is due to lack of inclusive practices & accessibility in our world.

In this unique time of restrictions & lockdowns, we globally began living with similar social and emotional repercussions of isolation, many of us experiencing them for the first time. Through this hardship grew an opportunity to create a level of understanding and accommodation like never before.

It became a top priority for Between Friends to pivot our organization and make sure that people with disabilities could stay socially connected while remaining physically distanced. With an ad-hoc committee of board members and office staff, we promised to make the hard decisions that were needed to sustain the organization for our members and their families well into the future.

We acknowledge that our services fill a true need in the disability community, but we also recognize that we need to provide different pathways of service for our families. Recreation has an exceptional influence on well-being and so, in 2020, we remained committed to reducing barriers for those wishing to access sport and recreation services outside of the disability community. Through the creation of innovative community tools, like an accessibility guide and online inclusion training, we continue to break down the barriers for our members in the hopes of creating communities that are more accessible and welcoming for all.

Had there been no virus or changes in the world, 2020 would have still marked a significant event for Between Friends: the retirement of longtime CEO, Suzanne Jackett. We encourage you to read more through this report as we celebrate Suzanne's time with Between Friends and get to know more about our new CEO, Kim Presser.

If 2020 taught us anything, it's that we can adapt to the most unique of situations; and as we continue planning for a safe return to in-person programming, we will make sure valuable social and recreation programming remains available for our families.

Thank you to our members who adapted with us, tried our online programs and attended our special events. Thank you to our donors who stood by us and allowed

flexibility with their funds. Thank you to our staff and volunteers who donated their time and efforts for a majority of the year. Thank you to our partners and the community for wanting to be more inclusive.

Together let's continue to grow into an inclusive community where people with disabilities reach their individual potential and are recognized as valued citizens.



board of directors

January to December 2020

Jessica Yarnell	Chair / Previous Vice Chair
Cory Vance	Vice Chair / Previous Director
Garth Johnson	Past Chair / Previous Chair
Peter Drag	Treasurer / Secretary
Bradley Fox	Director
Chris Turcato	Director
Crispin Arthur	Director
David Arienzone	Director
Gerry David	Director
Naminder Sandhu	Director
Rhodri Meredith	Director
Sarah Hammond	Director
Kim Presser	CEO
Suzanne Jackett	Previous CEO

who we are

Between Friends is a Calgary-based non-profit organization that provides social and recreation programs for people with disabilities. For almost 40 years the group has worked to increase community awareness and foster positive attitudes towards individuals with disabilities, with the ultimate goal of inclusion. Dedicated staff, volunteers, members and parents have contributed to the social and emotional well-being of thousands of Calgarians by providing them with a place to connect, grow, and belong.

Children, youth and adults with disabilities seek social and recreational activities that are fundamental to enriching self-esteem, quality of life, as well as mental and physical health. These programs become pivotal in the lives of our participants as they decrease the degree of isolation they may face. Activities are customized to all ability levels to maximize enjoyment, and help participants challenge and grow their individual potential.

vision

An inclusive community where people with disabilities reach their individual potential and are recognized as valued citizens.

key messages

Connecting

Between Friends provides unique opportunities for individuals with disabilities to have social interaction with peers who may or may not have a disability.

Growing

Between Friends members develop self-confidence, a sense of accomplishment, and a sense of responsibility.

Belonging

Our focus is on shared interests over individual differences. These shared interactions and experiences often become the foundation of understanding and lasting friendships.



how we adapted in 2020

Between Friends exists for our members and their families. We believe in connection and friendship; physical distancing does not come easily for us. The news of the pandemic hit us hard; how could we connect, grow and belong while we're apart? Our team did not waste any time answering that question and soon new & innovative ways to connect our members were created.

“Between Friends was able to pivot so quickly and more than meet the needs of these special kiddos at home during a pandemic. What impressed me so much was how quickly the Between Friends staff and volunteers developed and ran these fantastic online programs; these kids were at home and anxious and the team did not skip a beat. My son was able to actually increase his social ‘time’ with friends and the COVID-19 isolation became a lot less scary!”

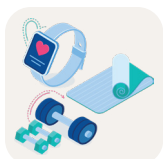
– Patty Richards, Parent



WeConnect

Our team quickly reimagined our programs to fit on an online platform; the safest option while we planned and prepared for our future return to in-person activities. These programs may have gone through an evolution, C.O.V.I.D to WeConnect, but the intention remained the same: to offer a place for our members to stay connected, enjoy fun activities, and be part of a community.

WeConnect programs



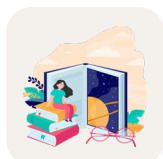
Get Up
& Move



Boombox!



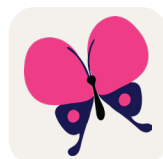
Get Crafty



Between
the Pages



Games Night



Social
Butterflies



Gardening
with Janet



Film Fans

"The uncertainty of the pandemic can be very overwhelming. With WeConnect our participants know every week that these are the people they are going to see, it's something in their routine, something to look forward to and be motivated for, because it's really hard to feel motivated these days, and they see people who understand what they are going through."

-Amanda Petti, WeConnect Leader



"A strong sense of community has developed in the youth music program with Between Friends. The group has grown to support each other in a variety of settings: when sharing their own concerns or struggling with bad days, when adapting song choices in consideration with other's preferences, and ensuring that each participant gets a turn during various activities."

Though the program focuses on fun music activities and song sharing, it has become so much more than that since the program started "

- Hilary at MasterWorx Music Therapy



keeping the spirit of Camp Bonaventure alive!

When the difficult decision was made to cancel Camp Bonaventure in 2020, we wanted a way to keep its spirit alive and feel the sense of community that came from weekly campfires, a favourite tradition for everyone. To achieve this, we all came together every Friday for 8 weeks on Zoom to share our favourite songs and bring a little piece of Camp B. into our homes.

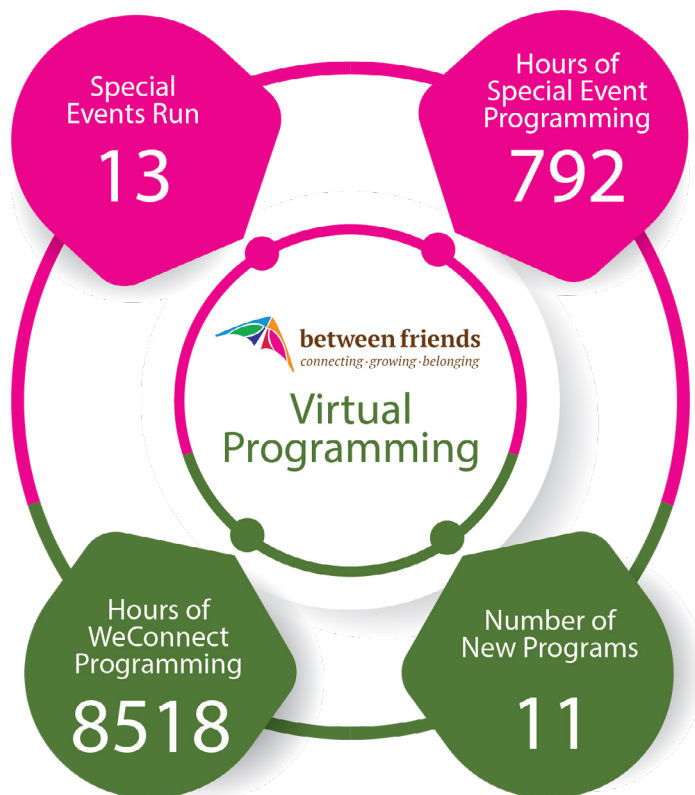
"Thank you guys soooo much for putting the campfire on each week. It made it hurt less for Logan that camp was cancelled this year and gave him something to look forward to. I honestly thought he would be less interested as the weeks went by but nope! Every Friday morning he woke excited for it and then after each Zoom call he climbed into his bed and camping area in our bonus room to camp for the night. So seriously, thank you from the bottom of our hearts. You guys are absolutely amazing!!!!!"

- Kim, Logan's mom

special events

Virtual Special Events have played a vital role during the pandemic and have brought our participants together to enjoy new & exciting activities. Fun times were had at our Superhero event with Captain America and Wonder Woman, A Tangled Adventure with Rapunzel & Flynn, and our virtual dances.

Our Pinnovate Craft Parties were an absolute favourite in 2020. Local DIY Craft & Art Studio Pinnovate generously donated their unique kits to spark the creativity of our participants.



we ran 3 different Pinnovate Parties in 2020



"I have been following the Between Friends journey for a few years. The program they have created is unique to this city and they play a vital role in connecting and creating opportunities for adults with disabilities. I have an adult special needs nephew who moved to Alberta in July 2020 and Between Friends has been a foundation for our family in introducing Nicholas to Calgary, connecting him with friends and resources to set him up for success.

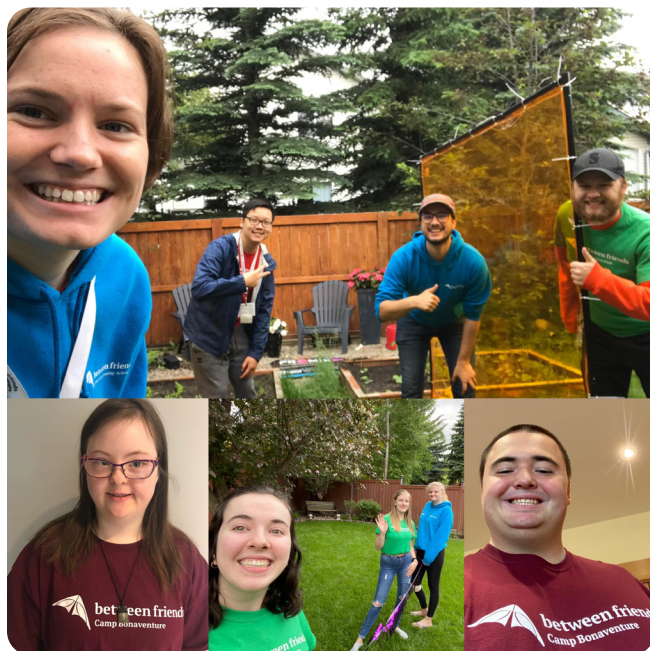
Being able to contribute to the program and give back to a community that has been so instrumental for our family has been an honor and privilege and we can't think of another group more deserving."

– Kiki Lally, Pinnovate

check-ins

When the pandemic hit, we immediately asked ourselves: how are our families coping? What do they need? Our Membership Services team jumped into action and made phone calls to all our members to check in with each family individually. Through these calls it was clear that some participants were feeling isolated and alone.

In addition to our WeConnect programming, we felt it was important to offer a new outlet for participants. Virtual Check-Ins were designed for members who were feeling isolated and wanted extra connection. Between Friends staff members or volunteers were paired with participants to ensure those who wanted a friendly check-in could get it regularly to lift up their spirits.



2020 Individual Check-Ins

45

Average Number of Months Check-Ins Lasted

3
Months

45
Minutes

Average Check-In Times Per Week

400
-
500

Total Hours of Check-Ins

*Range because some check-ins are ongoing

virtual check-ins: Tasha & Aurora's story



Tasha: Between Friends Member for 12 years

Aurora: Between Friends volunteer since 2015, WeConnect Leader since 2020

How often they connected: 1-2 times per week

How have the Virtual Check-Ins with each other helped you during the pandemic?

T: I tell Aurora when I get anxious about something and she will usually help me with a calming meditation or with my mindfulness journal. It's for writing how I'm feeling and different topics. Aurora found it for me. I fill it out and then we talk about it.

A: I was looking for mindfulness resources for myself because the pandemic hit all of us and it was really challenging at times. It was lovely because a lot of the ones I found also help our members; it makes it that much more special to build that connection together.

What are your top 3 favourite things about spending time together?

T: Aurora is getting me into K-pop! Talking with Aurora makes me feel happy and we find different stuff to do every time.

A: I love how spontaneous Tasha is. A lot of the time our visits aren't structured until we get into them; it pushes me out of my comfort level because I like to have everything structured. Hanging out with Tasha makes me grow as a person. Tasha is also easily one of the funniest people in my life. We do BuzzFeed quizzes together, we listen to K-pop, we learn dances, we've done virtual sightseeing in places like Las Vegas. It's great memories we're making as genuine friends.

"Virtual Check-Ins have been great for Natasha's emotional wellbeing; the time she spends with Aurora helps her immensely and is really good for her mental health no matter what activities they are doing. 2020 has been a challenging year, Tasha's only way of getting a social outlet is through Between Friends WeConnect programs and Virtual Check-Ins. It's been a lifesaver for her and for me."

– Nancy, Tasha's mom

relaunch planning

Planning was a big part of 2020 for Between Friends as we worked to create an official Relaunch Plan for the safe return of in-person activities & programs.

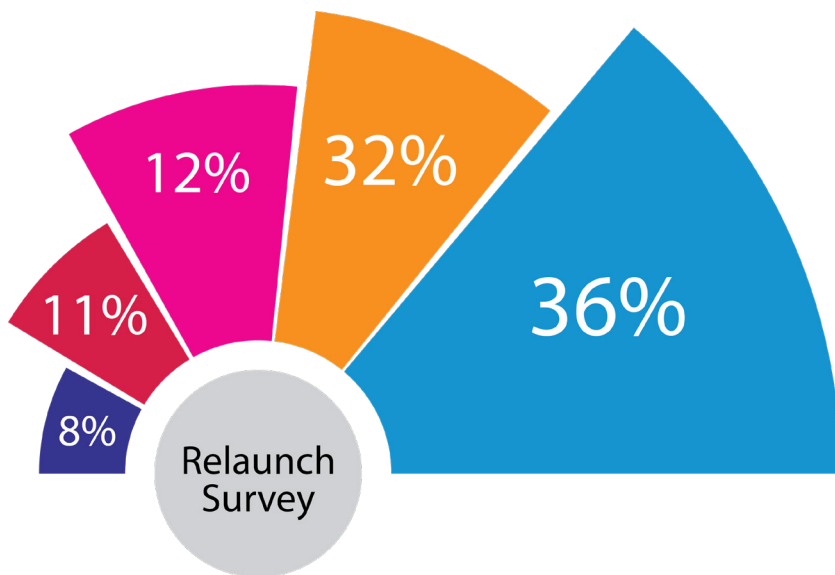
Our ability to relaunch in-person programs depends on the restrictions and guidelines set by the Alberta Government and the advice of public health officials. We are excited and hopeful that we will return to in-person programs once it is safe to do so.

Relaunch Survey

In 2020 we conducted a relaunch survey with participants.

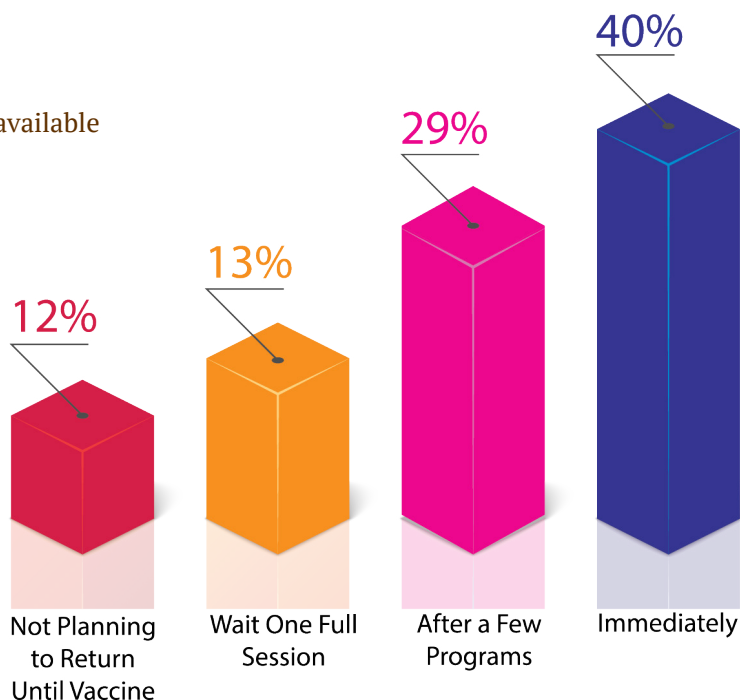
First, families were asked which of the following was most important to them during the pandemic.

- Participant Mental Health
- Participant Safety
- Respite
- Virtual Programs
- Check in with staff/volunteers



Second, families were asked how comfortable they would be attending in-person programs in 2021.

- Were immediately comfortable
- Wanted to see a few programs first
- Were going to wait out one full session
- Were not going to return until a vaccine is available



between friends in the community

collaboration in the era of COVID-19

The global pandemic presented opportunities for like-minded non-profits to come together in support of each other and the individuals they serve.

Between Friends joined forces with our fellow disability service providers to support one another through information sharing and to provide recommendations to Government officials in the best interest of people with disabilities.



Committee	Calgary Ability Network Recreation Table Post-COVID Recovery Committee	Provincial Re-entry Strategy for Persons with Disabilities Taskforce
Purpose	<p>To take the recommendations provided by the Government of Alberta and adapt them to the needs of the disability community.</p> <p>The committee wanted to ensure that policies & guidelines for the return to in-person recreation services were as consistent as possible across organizations.</p>	<p>To engage, with a collective voice, with the Government of Alberta and the disability community around issues impacting the disability community related to the Government's response to COVID-19.</p>
Outcomes	<p>The committee developed two guidelines; one to address Staff & Volunteer Training and one for PPE Suggestions and Sources. The guidelines were shared with the larger community of recreation service providers for those with disabilities. The discussions and guidelines helped support each organization as they developed their own program relaunch strategies.</p>	<p>The committee produced a Re-Entry Strategy for Persons with Disabilities which included four overarching priorities: going out/staying in safely, family stress and supports, transportation, and safe and inclusive design.</p> <p>A town hall was organized to discuss the challenges of COVID-19 and possible solutions. This town hall brought the disability community together to discuss solutions to COVID-19 challenges. It drew the attention of close to 200 people.</p>

“Between Friends’ collaborative efforts to the Provincial Re-entry Strategy for Persons with Disabilities Task Force was remarkable. [Your] contribution and support enriched the dialogue and resulted in a meaningful, valuable report for those living with a disability.”

– Mezaun Lakha-Evin

Cerebral Palsy Alberta/Calgary Ability Network

fostering inclusion in our community

In 2020, Between Friends continued to work collaboratively with community recreation providers to support inclusive programming for those running programs; both online and in-person. Making programs accessible for people with disabilities promotes disability awareness, empowers our members, and creates a sense of community and belonging for everyone.

2020 inclusion highlights

- To better support our I.C.A.N! partners in providing services for people with disabilities, our team created and shared two Accessibility Guides with helpful tips for those offering in-person and online programming. The guides were shared with 35 recreation providers.
- Between Friends was chosen as the inclusion trainer of choice for the new Calgary Adaptive Hub (CAH). The Calgary Adaptive Hub is a community initiative aimed at enhancing the participation and health of children and youth with disabilities in physical activity and recreation. Between Friends will provide inclusion training for the CAH collective which includes the Repsol Centre, WinSport, Vivo, the University of Calgary, Mount Royal University, and Sport Calgary.



a tale of two ceo's

As we collectively learned to adapt to life in a global pandemic, another significant change was taking place at Between Friends: a CEO search was underway after the announcement of Suzanne Jackett's retirement in January of 2020.

Our Board of Directors & CEO Selection Committee bravely remained committed to their search for the next leader of Between Friends. Their thorough effort resulted in the promotion of longtime Between Friends staff member & Director of Operations, Kim Presser; very exciting news for the organization.

Suzanne & Kim worked with collective passion & drive to make the CEO transition a smooth one, while navigating the organization through the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We can confidently say that Between Friends would not be where it is today without the leadership of Suzanne Jackett and we will forever be grateful for her time with us. With the passing of the baton to Kim Presser in September of 2020, a wonderful new legacy has begun.



“My 22 years at Between Friends has been the best time of my life. I am very proud of the contributions that Between Friends has made for our participants, our volunteers, our staff, our donors, our funders, and our community. I will carry my experience with Between Friends close to my heart for years to come.”

– Suzanne Jackett

thank you Suzanne

"Thank you and congratulations on your retirement, well earned, you've given so much to this organization, and set it up to succeed into the future, which is a wonderful legacy to leave for our participants and for the city."

– Crispin Arthur

"Under your wings we have felt the safety and freedom to be exactly who we are and the courage to soar unapologetically with conviction. You are an inspiration."

– Kyle (Aka G-Dog)

"Keith is going to miss Suzanne very much, like the rest of us, but we wish you the very best. You've been with our family for many many years. Keith sends you a big hug."

– Keith & June

"We want to tell you how much we've appreciated being with Between Friends over the years, and your company & friendship. We've appreciated all the work that you've done for our family and for looking after Patty and making sure she was having fun with Between Friends. It's a real pleasure to be in your company. Thank you very much Suzanne."

– Lloyd & Trudy Wilson

"Suzanne, we love you, happy retirement, don't be a stranger."

– Morgan (participant)

Dear Suzanne,
THANK YOU. Thank you for the time you gave to Between Friends. Thank you for the growth that you provided to our staff, volunteers, participants and their families. Thank you for your passion and dedication to furthering our mission and vision. Thank you for being a shoulder to cry on, a friend to laugh with, a mentor, a mediator, and most importantly an advocate. You have forever changed the trajectory of inclusion and have created so many opportunities for people with disabilities in our community. You have been such an inspiration to so many and many of us have additional personal reasons for our gratitude, as you have given such attention to each of us. Thank you for caring so deeply about every single person who walked through the door and into our Between Friends family. We thank you for all that you have done and all that you have taught us and we send our very best wishes for a happy retirement.

– Kim Presser



2020 financial statements

The Calgary Between Friends Club Statement of Financial Position as of December 31, 2020.

Audited by Czechowsky, Graham & Hanevelt Chartered Professional Accountants.

Full financial statements available online at www.betweenfriends.ab.ca

extracts from audited financial statements

Assets	2020	2019
Current	\$1,039,666	\$596,501
Endowment Fund	\$1,581,682	\$1,486,305
Property & Equipment	\$32,603	\$59,386
Restricted cash	\$60,000	\$6,300
Total Assets	\$2,713,951	\$2,148,492
Liabilities	2020	2019
Current	\$53,608	\$80,884
Deferred contributions related to operations	\$473,959	\$145,385
Deferred contributions related to casino	\$55,131	\$10,355
Deferred contributions related to property & equipment	\$86,790	\$54,790
Total Liabilities	\$669,488	\$291,414
Net Assets (includes endowment fund)	\$2,044,463	\$1,857,078
TOTAL	\$2,713,951	\$2,148,492

statement of operations

Revenue	2020	2019
Fundraising	\$573,938	\$1,087,036
Programs	\$95,298	\$859,961
Government Grants	\$391,334	\$217,385
Investment income (grant & endowment fund)	\$22,378	\$38,548
Total	\$1,082,948	\$2,202,930
Expenses	2020	2019
Direct Costs	\$782,013	\$1,853,684
Operating Expenses	\$263,215	\$307,289
Total	\$1,045,228	\$2,160,973
Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses	\$37,720	\$41,957
Other income (unrealized gain on long term investments)	\$69,665	\$152,789
Excess of Revenue Over Expenses	\$107,385	\$194,746

thank you to our fundraising champions, sustainers & leaders



United Way
Calgary and Area

**Gerald A. Cooper-Key
Foundation**



**Stone Creek Charitable
Foundation**



TD Securities

**Gordon and Jill
Rawlinson**



between friends

connecting · growing · belonging

205 8989 Macleod Trail S
Calgary, Alberta T2H0M2
403 269 9133

betweenfriends.ab.ca | [@calgarybfc](https://www.instagram.com/calgarybfc)



Charitable Registration No: 11921 7925 RR0001

Thanks to all of our donors for the generous funding provided to Between Friends in 2020. In such a challenging year, we considered ourselves quite fortunate to have retained such a loyal and caring group of supporters!