



AFK Youth Mentoring



Impacting lives, one mentorship at a time

The mission of Athletes for Kids is to enhance the lives of children with special needs and the high school athletes who mentor them. We believe that modeling acceptance, inclusion, and respect of all individuals transforms and strengthens our communities.

Athletes for Kids is a youth mentoring program serving children with special needs and disabilities of all kinds. The “Kids” in our name are elementary and middle school aged children being mentored by our program. The “Athletes” are high school athletes who make a commitment to mentor a child for one to three years.

Mentor candidates are referred to our program by other AFK mentors, coaches, athletic directors, teachers, and community members. Every applicant must pass a thorough screening and background check before being accepted into our program. Once selected they are required to attend an intense training followed by monthly meetings to receive ongoing support, training, and guidance. The mentee referrals come to us from parents, school counselors, teachers, doctors, therapists, and other service providers.

Athletes for Kids helps children (Buddies), many who have experienced teasing, bullying, and social exclusion, develop a true social connection with their mentor. By meeting with their mentors weekly for an average of six hours per month in out-of-school-time activities, a true sense of comfort and trust is built between them. This helps each child reach their potential by developing essential life skills, improved self-esteem, and a new found confidence to face the day.

At the same time we are helping student athletes reach their potential by developing character, leadership skills, compassion, and commitment. Challenging high school students to step out of their comfort zone and “all about me” attitude to work with a child who faces obstacles different from their own, opens their eyes and hearts to a new view of the world. We consistently hear from our mentors that our program has improved their daily lives by improved time and stress management as well as some have reported that their lives have been forever changed which have led many to choose colleges and careers based on this experience.

Finally, we help schools and communities reach their potential by fostering environments where differences are celebrated and all people are treated with dignity and respect.

Founded on the idea that friendship has the power to restore a child’s faith in life, we were incorporated as a 501 (c)(3) in 2002. Since that time, we have grown from one high school chapter serving a small group of children in one city(Sammamish) to a trusted program with 12 high school chapters serving families in Bellevue, Fall City, Issaquah, Kirkland, Mercer Island, Redmond, Renton, Sammamish, and Snoqualmie. Over the years, the demand for our program has continued to grow and we now serve over 400 children annually.

The Athletes for Kids program has touched and changed hundreds of lives from the children who have disabilities, the high school athletes who mentor them, the families who support them, to the greater communities in which we live.