

# The Buddy Bench

For some, recess can be a lonely place. Most of the time kids at recess play in larger groups. If a student is shy or simply just doesn't enjoy doing what the rest of the kids are doing, that child may find themselves alone. As luck would have it, a young girl by the name of Samantha Vance understood this and acted upon it.



Samantha, or "Sammie", goes to elementary school in Fort Wayne, Indiana. She learned about something called a Buddy Bench in her Vacation Bible School class. At the time, Sammie was just a 3<sup>rd</sup> grader, but she was **mature** enough to understand what it means to make a difference. She shared the idea of a Buddy Bench with her mother, Heidi, and the

two began the process of making it happen.

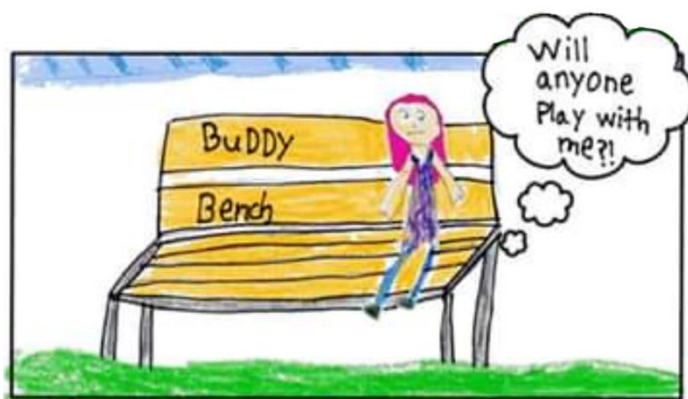
A Buddy Bench offers children a simple way to let their **peers** know that they need a friend. It also gives children who might otherwise be too shy or **awkward** an easy way to meet people. In addition, the Buddy Bench can be a safe place for a child to go if they are being treated poorly, so that adults can be alerted to the problem.

Sammie says that: *"If someone is lonely, they can go sit on the bench and others know to go up and ask them to play."*

Making the Buddy Bench become a reality at her school wasn't simple. Sammie had to raise money to buy a bench. So, Sammie and her mother came up with a **unique** plan. Sammie's mother knew of a company that could turn recycled plastic caps and lids into benches, greatly reducing costs.

To help raise awareness Sammie created a comic explaining the idea of the Buddy Bench. She also made a video, which her mother shared on social media. Soon, with help from her school's PTA and members of the

community, they were able to collect over 1,600 pounds of bottle caps, and the Buddy Bench (well, 3 of them to be exact) became a reality for her school.



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Samantha Vance is proof that even a child can be a hero, and that making a difference is within the reach of anyone willing to act. Imagine the impact that could be made if all schools had a **specific** place for children to go when feeling lonely or left out. The world needs more Buddy Benches. The world needs to recognize more children like Sammie!



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## Vocabulary

**Mature**: *fully developed or advanced in growth*

**Peer**: *a person who is around the same age as another*

**Awkward**: *not smooth or graceful*

**Unique**: *being the only one of its kind; special*

**Specific**: *clearly defined or identified*