



Friends

The National Association of Young People Who Stutter

29TH ANNUAL CONVENTION

"TOGETHER WE'RE GOLDEN"

CHICAGO

JULY 23-25, 2026

Embassy Suites by Hilton O'Hare Rosemont



NETWORK: Embassy Meeting
PASSWORD: Friends2026



Friends The National Association of Young People Who Stutter

If you stutter, you have Friends!

Your support makes an impact!

"I am the only kid in my school who stutters.
I like coming to Friends because I get to
meet other kids who stutter.
Friends events make me happy, excited,
and feel like I belong."



Help us grow the Friends
family and impact
the lives of more
young people who stutter:



Friendswhostutter.org



[@FriendsWhoStutter](https://www.instagram.com/FriendsWhoStutter)



278 Shady Brook Drive
Langhorne, PA 19047



Friends



Friends

The National Association of Young People Who Stutter

If you stutter, you have Friends!

Welcome to the 29th Friends Annual Convention! Friends is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that provides support, education, and empowerment to young people who stutter, their families, and the professionals who work with them. Founded by Lee Caggiano, a parent of a child who stutters, and John Ahlbach, an adult who stutters, Friends was born from a shared belief that meaningful change doesn't happen in isolation. Rather, when families, professionals, and peers are engaged in the process, everyone has the opportunity to better understand stuttering and support one another.

Nearly three decades later, the Friends community is thriving. It's a place where kids, teens, adults who stutter, their loved ones, and professionals come together to connect, reflect, and support. These connections across ages, roles, and life experiences are part of the "special sauce" that makes Friends so unique. Today, our programming has extended beyond the Annual Convention to include multiple One-Day Events around the country and free virtual support groups throughout the year!

In workshops and conversations throughout the weekend, you will hear new ideas, share meaningful stories, challenge old assumptions, and reconnect with your own experiences. We hope you leave this convention with a renewed relationship to stuttering and a deep sense of belonging to our community.

We are excited you are here and look forward to another transformative convention!



Friends

29th Annual Convention FAQs and Things to Know

What's a hospitality suite?

Think of the hospitality suite as the convention's living room! Drop by in the evening to relax, chat with friends old and new, and enjoy complimentary snacks in a fun, welcoming, atmosphere.

Tween Hospitality Room: Room 235

Teen Hospitality Room: Room 205

Adult Hospitality Room: Walden (8th Floor)

Friday night event

Attending a Friends convention is a busy and uplifting experience. Much of the weekend is spent at the Embassy Suites, but Friday night (July 24th) is reserved for fun activities in the local community.

Our planned activity on Friday evening from 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM will be at Dave and Buster's!

Breakfast times: 6:30–9:30am Thu/Fri & 7:00–10:30am Sat/Sun

Happy hour times: 6:00–7:30pm (Daily)

Dress code:

Comfortable, casual clothing, plus a sweater or extra layer in case the AC is a little too enthusiastic. Some folks like to dress up right before Saturday night's dinner and dance, but wear whatever makes you feel good!

Thursday, July 23rd 2026

	Kids ages 6-9	Tweens ages 10-13	Teens ages 14-17	Adults	Parents	SLPs
Thursday, July 23 rd 2026						
1:00 – 1:45pm	Registration					Grad Student (GSTP) Meeting 1:15 – 1:45pm Arin, Julie, & Tricia Salon AB
2:00 – 2:45pm Session 1	Welcome Activity with Tim Salon CDEF					
3:00 – 4:00pm Session 2	Getting to Know Your Leaves Jenny, Kristel, Nic, Stephen, & GS Walden (8th Floor)	Speed Meeting Allison & Albert Salon EF	Stuttering Support Jeff & Lauren Salon A	New Parents Adannaya, Tricia, Kendra, Mark, Naomi Salon C Returning Parents Anna, Catey, Dori, Erin, Ben Salon D	SLP Stuttering 101 & Getting the Most of the Convention Allegra & Arin Salon B	
4:15 – 5:15pm Session 3	Fun with Stuttering Jenny, Kristel, Nic, Stephen, & GS Walden (8th Floor)	Dysfluency in Motion Aidan & Liliam M. Salon EF	Authoring Our Future Barry & Allegra Salon AB	Stutter Affirming Therapy – What Does it Look Like? Heather Salon CD		
5:30 – 6:15pm	Getting Involved with Friends Tricia, Adannaya, & Joel Room 235					
6:00 – 7:30pm	Evening Reception in Atrium					
6:30 – 7:00pm	Opening Ceremony 2026 Salon CDEF					
7:00 – 8:00pm	Dinner with Friends Salon CDEF					
8:00 – 11:00pm		Tween Hospitality Room 235	Teen Hospitality Room 205		Adult Hospitality Walden (8th Floor)	

Friday, July 24th, 2026

	Kids ages 6-9	Tweens ages 10-13	Teens ages 14-17	Adults	Parents	SLPs
Friday, July 24 th 2026						
8:00 – 9:00am	Registration					
9:00 – 9:45am	Morning Welcome, Open Mic (Bennie, Liam N., Morgan) Salon CDEF					
10:00 – 11:00am Session 1	Mini Outing Jenny, Nic, & GS Walden (8th Floor)	Panel: Connection Through Vulnerability Chaya (facilitator), Albert, Joel, Lauren, Lewis Salon CDEF				
11:15 – 12:15pm Session 2	Inter-generations Kristel, Jenny, Nic, Stephen, & GS Salon CDEF				Somatic Awareness Adannaya & Elizabeth Salon AB	Integrating Support Katie & Ryan Walden (8th Floor)
12:15 – 1:15pm	Lunch with Friends in Atrium					
1:15 – 1:30pm	Group Picture in Salon CD					
1:45 – 2:45pm Session 3	Stuttering Feelings & Art Mackenzie, Morgan, Jenny, & GS Salon B	Having Fun with Your Voice Nora Salon A	Bringing Humor to Self-Disclosure Cole & Heather Walden (8th Floor)	What We Wish Our Parents Knew Ben & Mark Salon CD	Counseling – Where to Begin Nic & Evelyn Salon EF	
3:00 – 4:00pm Session 4	Juggling Reuben, Stephen, & GS Salon B	Write Now! Adam & Kerrigan Salon A	The Music in Stuttering Voices Aidan and Luke Salon CD	Line Dancing Adannaya Walden (8th Floor)	Stuttering Affirming Goals Emily & Mark Salon EF	
4:15 – 5:15pm Session 5	Dance Liiam M., Danby, Jenny, Stephen, & GS Walden (8th Floor)	Outing: 4:00 – 5:30pm Ben*, Albert, Barry, Cole, Elizabeth, Eric, Gianna, Grace, Jack, Joel, Katie, Luke, Marc, Mark, Nora, Reuben, Riley, Ryan, Tim Salon AB			Kind Words Thriving Lives Ana & Naomi Salon CD	Swapping EBP Ideas Mary & Tricia Salon EF
6:00 – 7:30pm	Evening Reception in Atrium					
6:00 – 9:00pm	Dave and Buster’s Activity (tickets required) or Dinner and activities on your own					
8:00 – 11:00pm		Tween Hospitality Room 235	Teen Hospitality Room 205	Adult Hospitality/Jam Session Walden (8th Floor)		

Saturday, July 25th, 2026

	Kids ages 6-9	Tweens ages 10-13	Teens ages 14-17	Adults	Parents	SLPs
Saturday, July 25 th 2026						
8:00 – 9:00am	Registration					
9:00 – 9:45am	Morning Welcome, Announcements, Open Mic (Dougie, Lauren & Mackenzie) Salon CDEF					
10:00 – 11:00am Session 1	Notice It, Feel It, Say It Mary, Nic, & GS Walden (8th Floor)	Keynote – Kristel Kubart Salon CDEF				
11:15 – 12:15pm Session 2	Leaves Art & Games Cole, Liam N., Jenny, Stephen, & GS Walden (8th Floor)	Fear or Love Jack & Allegra Salon A	The Journey of a Lifetime Barry & Dougie Salon EF	Roundtables Adannaya, Ben, Chaya, Dori, Elizabeth, Julie, Katie, Kendra, Mark, Naomi, Ryan, Tricia Salon CD	Counseling Skills Jason Salon B	
12:15 – 1:15pm	Lunch with Friends in Atrium					
1:30 – 2:30pm Session 3	Improv for Stuttering Tim, Jack, Jenny, Nic, Stephen, & GS Walden (8th Floor)		Fishbowl Allison, Barry, Ben, Cole, Elizabeth, Eric, Gianna, Grace, Joel, Lauren, Luke, Marc, Mark, Naomi, Nora, Reuben, Riley Salon A, Salon B, Salon CD, Salon EF			
2:45 – 3:15pm Session 4	Together We're Golden Jenny, Kristel, Nic, Stephen, & GS Walden (8th Floor)		Together We're Golden Joel & Marc Salon A	Together We're Golden Mark & Naomi Salon EF	Together We're Golden Adannaya & Catey Salon CD	Together We're Golden Allegra & Arin Salon B
3:30 – 4:30pm Session 5	Closing Ceremony Salon ABCDEF					
6:00 – 7:30pm	Evening Reception in Atrium					
6:30 – 11:00pm	Dinner, Dance, Karaoke Salon ABCDEF					

A Letter From Our Executive Director: Caryn Herring



Dear Friends,

Welcome to the 29th Annual Friends Convention! For those I haven't met yet, my name is Caryn Herring. I am a person who stutters, a speech-language pathologist (SLP), and the Executive Director of Friends.

I attended my first Friends Convention in 2010 and immediately felt at home. When Lee Caggino founded Friends, she created and nurtured a space where young people who stutter and their loved ones could feel safe, challenged, accepted, and empowered. A space where unconditional acceptance thrives. For many of us who have felt alone and misunderstood, finding a space like this is life-changing. That's the magic of Friends. Friends transforms fear into hope for young people who stutter, their families, and professionals who support them.

As we begin our 29th Convention, I encourage you to step outside of your comfort zone. This experience will only be as powerful as you allow it to be – talk to someone new, introduce yourself, speak at an open mic, be vulnerable, visit a hospitality room, let yourself be seen, laugh, cry, connect.

I'm really looking forward to seeing the changes that occur over the next few days, as well as reconnecting with old friends and meeting new ones.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Caryn Herring". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Caryn Herring, Ph.D. CCC-SLP
Executive Director

Friends Etiquette Guide

If you stutter, you have Friends!

Talking About Stuttering

- All stuttering is welcome here. Everyone is encouraged to communicate in the way that feels most comfortable for them—whether that means stuttering openly, staying quiet, or saying a lot.
- Avoid offering unsolicited advice. This space is about connection and support.
- Be patient listeners—don't finish someone's sentence or interrupt.

Respect & Inclusion

- Friends is a judgment-free zone. Let's honor each person's experience, voice, and identity.
- Be kind and inclusive to everyone

Participation & Presence

- Keep name tags on during programming so we can learn each other's names (and pronouns, if included)
- Please only attend the workshops and activities that are intended for your age group or role. For example, adults and SLPs should not attend kids' or teen workshops, and vice versa. This helps keep each space safe, comfortable, and age-appropriate.
- Please be mindful of start and end times. Arrive on time and help us keep things running smoothly.
- Everyone's participation is valued, but no one is required to speak or share. You're welcome to just listen.

Help Us Keep Friends Safe & Welcoming

- If you have any concerns, questions, or feedback, please don't hesitate to speak with a Friends team member. We're here to help.

Social Media and Friends

If you stutter, you have Friends!

Sharing the Magic Respectfully

We know how special it can be to capture and share moments from the Friends convention, but we also want to protect the privacy of our community.

Social Media & Photography

- Be thoughtful before posting pictures of others
- Please do not post photos or videos of children or teens at the convention unless you have explicit permission from their parent or guardian.
- Workshops and small group discussions are safe spaces. Please do not record or photograph these sessions without permission.

Feel free to tag us!

@friendswhostutter



#FriendsWhoStutter | #FriendsConvention

Thanks for helping us keep Friends a safe, respectful space for everyone.



29th Annual Convention Theme "Together We're Golden"

Sometimes other people see what's golden in us before we see it ourselves. Friends notice our strengths, value what makes us unique, and remind us of our worth when we may not believe it. They help us see the parts of ourselves that we may overlook or try to hide. And when we do that for one another, together, we shine even brighter.

For many people who stutter, life can sometimes feel like living as two versions of ourselves: the version the world sees (the one that tries to fit in, pass, or stay comfortable), and the fuller, more authentic version we may only share when we feel safe. Sometimes hiding feels safer than being seen, but at Friends, surrounded by people who understand, we can begin to let more of ourselves show and discover that the parts we've learned to hide may be what connect us most deeply.

This year's theme invites us to explore what becomes possible when we are honest about who we are. What happens when we see vulnerability as part of our strength? What might we say, try, or become if fear, shame, or the pressure to pass no longer stood in our way?

And when it still feels scary to be seen, to speak, to stutter openly, or to let others know the real us (because of course it sometimes will), we don't have to do it alone. We can lean on one another and borrow courage from the people around us. Fear may still be there, but so is community.

That's the power of Friends.

We don't have to have everything figured out. We don't have to become someone else to belong. In this community, we help each other recognize that the gold has always been there, and we remind one another that being fully ourselves is golden.

Together, we're golden.





Meet our Keynote Speaker: Kristel Kubart MS, CCC-SLP

Keynote: Saturday 7/25 @ 10am

Kristel Kubart is a speech-language pathologist based in New York City whose passion lies in working with kids, teens, and adults who stutter. Growing up with both a stutter and cerebral palsy, Kristel spent years feeling like an outsider, often the subject of stares and unwanted attention. A breakthrough came in her early twenties when her own speech therapist, Lee Caggiano (the founder of Friends), told her, "Maybe it's OK to just stutter" — a moment that changed the course of her life.

That shift sparked a journey toward acceptance, leading her to graduate school at Purdue University and, eventually, to over a decade of work as a speech therapist. Today, Kristel helps her clients embrace their stuttering and trust their voices, drawing on her own lived experience with disability. She also helped launch a disability pride club at the elementary school where she works, creating a space for young students to talk openly about disability and challenge ableist assumptions.

Beyond her clinical work, Kristel is an active disability advocate and activist. She speaks internationally about stuttering, helped create the Stuttering Pride Flag, and was part of a group of artists who stutter who designed a stuttering pride billboard displayed at the Whitney Museum. A devoted traveler, she has visited all 50 states and 39 countries with her husband, Jason. Kristel says she feels "tallest" at stuttering conferences—surrounded by community, connection, and shared stories.

Panel: Connection Through Vulnerability

For tweens, teens, adults,
parents, and SLPs

Friday 7/24 @ 10am

Living vulnerability means choosing to show up and be seen when you cannot control the outcomes. It asks for courage, a willingness to take risks, and emotional exposure that may not seem worthwhile.

Why do it? Join our panelists as they share how and why they choose to show up fully. Hear about the risks, rewards, abundant connection, and positive life impact they've experienced and why they wouldn't do it any other way.



Chaya Goldstein-Schuff



Albert Bushala



Joel Korte



Lauren Plemmons



Lewis Brown III

Meet our 2026 Workshop Facilitators, Speakers, and Volunteers



Mike Bauer, a person who stutters, is married and has four children. Since 2007, he has been actively involved with the National Stuttering Association. In the past few years, he has been collaborating with FRIENDS to produce video content for their website, YouTube page, and social media platforms. Currently, Mike is a freelance Videographer/Editor based in the Pittsburgh, PA sports market. Mike is thrilled to continue supporting FRIENDS and strengthen his bond with the organization.



Evelyn Brow, MA, LCMHC, RN, HN-BC, has worked since 2020 supporting adolescents, adults, and couples through anxiety, trauma, grief, relationship challenges, life transitions, chronic illness, and existential concerns. She is also a board-certified holistic nurse and registered nurse with more than 30 years of experience. Her training includes EMDR, CBT, Internal Family Systems, mindfulness, ecopsychology, and the Gottman Approach. As the mother of a person who stutters, she brings insight into communication, resilience, and compassion.



Nic Brow M.A., CCC-SLP works as a speech language pathologist at the Sisskin Stuttering Center. He has worked as a speech therapist within multiple public schools with students from the preschool to high school level. He frequently presents on acceptance-based therapy for stuttering both nationally and internationally. In his free time, Nic enjoys surfing, pickleball, and spending time with family and friends.



Adannaya Brown (she/her) is a parent of a person who stutters, dedicated advocate, friend, and student of the stuttering community. A relentless chaser of joy, her favorite pastimes are reading, dancing, and staring at the sky. She lives with her husband, four children, and two dogs in Aurora, Colorado.

Meet our 2026 Workshop Facilitators, Speakers, and Volunteers



Lewis Brown III is a person who stutters and has been impacted by and involved with the supportive community of Friends for more than five years. He enjoys connecting with his peers who stutter at conventions, and sharing and hearing stories of growth and triumph.



My name is Erin Burback (previously Plemmons). My husband Paul and I are parents to Lauren, Skyler, Brigg, Lani, and Ayla. After teaching students who have special needs for 24 years I will begin working on a PhD program at the University of Iowa where I will continue my education in the area of applied behavior analysis. My daughter Lauren is a person who stutters and the Friends organization has been so important to our family. We are so happy to be here.



Albert Bushala is a person who stutters and a Southern California entrepreneur and recent Chapman University graduate who studied Business Administration with an emphasis in Real Estate. Currently, he is building The Bank, a music venue and podcast studio in Fullerton, California, centered on creating spaces where people connect, express themselves, and feel heard.



Jason Cassell, LCSW is a licensed psychotherapist, currently practicing in New York City where he treats adults, adolescents, and couples, including many clients who stutter. In the past he has conducted workshops for Friends, the National Stuttering Association, the American Institute for Stuttering, and New York University. He is married to Kristel, a lovely speech therapist who stutters.

Meet our 2026 Workshop Facilitators, Speakers, and Volunteers



Catey Easters is a wife and mother of two teenage girls named Lauren (18) and Mackenzie (16). Mackenzie is a person who stutters. Catey worked in Human Resources for over 20 years until recently retiring. In her free time she likes to hang out with family and friends, travel, go on long walks, play pickleball and watch college basketball. This is her fourth Friends Convention.



Mackenzie Easters is a teen who stutters. She likes watching hockey, listening to rap music and playing the drums. She enjoys art, traveling and film creating/editing. She recently got her first job and is enjoying meeting new people and learning lots of new skills. This year will be her fifth convention.



Julie Gasway is a speech language pathologist and an ASHA Board Certified Specialist in Fluency and Fluency Disorders. She has a passion for working with people who stutter and their families and friends. She has a private practice specializing in fluency and fluency disorders. She had the pleasure of working with Lee Caggiano at several Friends conferences and U of Iowa Speaks Camps. Julie is a mother of four and grandmother of three, and she loves to cook Sunday dinners for them!



Adam Giannelli is a person who stutters; the author of Tremulous Hinge (University of Iowa Press, 2017), winner of the Iowa Poetry Prize; and an Assistant Professor of English at the United States Naval Academy. He deeply values his involvement in stuttering communities.

Meet our 2026 Workshop Facilitators, Speakers, and Volunteers



Ben Goldstein is a speech-language therapist and stuttering consultant for Prince George's County Public Schools in Maryland and an associate clinician at the Sisskin Stuttering Center in the Washington D.C. area. He is also an adjunct professor at Gallaudet University, teaching the graduate level stuttering course. Ben has presented on Avoidance Reduction Therapy for Stuttering (ARTS®) at international and national conferences, speech therapy graduate school programs, and to school-based speech therapists in the Mid-Atlantic region.



Chaya Goldstein-Schuff, MA, CCC-SLP, is a person who stutters and a speech-language pathologist at the Sisskin Stuttering Center, specializing in trauma-informed stuttering therapy across the lifespan. Chaya is passionate about educating speech therapists about trauma-informed principles and practices. She is researching stuttering as a complex trauma to illuminate the lived experiences of those who stutter. Chaya lives on the Space Coast in Florida with her husband and baby boy.



Speech-language pathologist by training, entrepreneur by accident, teacher by nature. My favorite thing to do is help people discover that they can do something they never thought was possible. This might be clinically, one-on-one: how do you become a more confident speaker, when you have a communication disability? It could be organizationally, figuring out the ins and outs of managing a team or navigating a crisis. And societally, how do create a world that is inclusive and affirming of those with different personal stories and brains and communication styles?



Heather Grossman is the Executive Director of the American Institute for Stuttering. She has extensive experience in graduate teaching and clinical supervision and frequently presents at professional conferences. Passionate about supporting the stuttering self-help community and fortunate to have been inspired by Lee Caggiano early in her career, she has been actively involved in Friends for over 25 years.

Meet our 2026 Workshop Facilitators, Speakers, and Volunteers



Jack Henderson MS CCC-SLP (he/him) is a stutterer and owner of Henderson Stuttering Therapy, PLLC. Jack is a co-leader of the Nashville NSA chapter. Jack is on the board of SPACE, an international arts-oriented stuttering advocacy organization and Unscripted, a non-profit focused on empowering people through equitable access to improv. He is an adjunct professor at Austin Peay State University and Portland State University. He lives in Nashville, TN with his spouse and two children.



Ana Hernandez, is honored to be recognized as SLP of the Year by the NSA. As the owner of Adult Stuttering, she is the creator of Green Social and the Safe Spaces of Stuttering approach, and is a proud Global Partner of the Blank Center for Stuttering. Ana is an international speaker who provides professional training for schools and businesses. Her work is centered on prioritizing quality and dignity for those who stutter.



Anna Hertsberg is a retired cardiologist from the Chicagoland area and the parent of an adult who stutters. Through witnessing her daughter's journey—and her work as a speech-language pathologist and stuttering researcher—I have come to deeply appreciate the strength and potential of people who stutter. Volunteering with Friends allows me to support other families, share what I have learned, and affirm that stuttering should not limit a child's opportunities or sense of belonging.



Doreen (Dori) Lenz Holte authored two books on the topic of childhood intervention including *Voice Unearthed: Hope, Help, and a Wake-Up Call for the Parents of Children Who Stutter* (2011) and *VoiceS Unearthed: The Impact of Childhood Intervention on Those Who Continue to Stutter* (2023). Dori advocates through university presentations, guest podcasts and blogs. She founded the Voice Unearthed Facebook group which has 4,200+ members. Most importantly, Dori is Mom to 29-year-old Elias who stutters.

Meet our 2026 Workshop Facilitators, Speakers, and Volunteers



Dr. Eric S. Jackson is a speech scientist, speech-language pathologist, and associate professor at NYU. Broadly, he studies the variability of stuttering, or why people stutter sometimes in certain situations but not other times. Dr. Jackson's team has recently started focusing on using neuromodulation and classic psychedelics to improve therapy outcomes for stutterers. Dr. Jackson draws on his experience as a person who stutters to inform and inspire his research, practice, and teaching.



Cole Johnson is a PWS based in Brooklyn, originally hailing from Alaska. He currently works as a Design Manager at the New York Times, supporting designers in making software for one of the biggest newsrooms in the world. He's been an advocate and a client at the American Institute for Stuttering for over 8 years.



Elizabeth Kapstein wears many hats: clinical social worker, psychotherapist, community builder, and person who stutters. She co-founded two landmark organizations — Passing Twice, a network connecting LGBTQIA people who stutter, and the Manhattan Stuttering Group, NYC's first stuttering self-help community. Her advocacy has earned recognition from NPR and the Chicago Tribune Magazine. She sees clients in New York City through her practice at ektherapy.com.



Julia Kerrigan is a PhD Student in the Iowa Stuttering Lab and the Assistant Director of SPACE Community and Arts. They are not a person who stutters, but love being part of the community.

Meet our 2026 Workshop Facilitators, Speakers, and Volunteers



Joel Korte is a person who stutters and the owner of Chase Bliss, a Minneapolis based company that designs and manufactures guitar pedals.



Kristel Kubart is our keynote speaker for this year's convention! She is a SLP who stutters and has cerebral palsy. Her goal is to help people who stutter embrace their stuttering and learn to trust their voice. Kristel has also worked as a school-based speech therapist for 15 years. She has presented seminars and workshops on neurodiversity and stuttering therapy both nationally and internationally, published research on stuttering, has a chapter published in the book, "Stammering Pride & Prejudice: Difference, not Defect", and developed a disability pride club in her school.



Allison Ladavat is a person who stutters, a former speech-language pathologist, and a mom of 3. She lives in Pittsburgh, PA, where she works as a student accessibilities coordinator at Point Park University. Through the Friends organization, Allison helped to develop a partnership with the Pittsburgh Penguins Foundation, coordinating unique experiences at each Penguins home game for local children who stutter. In her free time, Allison enjoys biking around the city with her partner, watching hockey, going to comedy shows, and picking up whatever new hobbies find her.



Allegra Ludwig is a speech-language pathologist and performing artist based in Boulder, Colorado. She specializes in stuttering therapy through her private practice, Cadence Speech Therapy, and as a clinical supervisor at CU-Boulder. She also authors the Cadence Speech blog, sharing the stories and experiences of people who stutter. As an actor, writer, and musician, she regularly performs on camera and on stage. She believes in the power of storytelling and the arts as a path to personal transformation.

Meet our 2026 Workshop Facilitators, Speakers, and Volunteers



Tim McCarren, MA, CCC-SLP is a speech language pathologist for Hopkins Public Schools in Hopkins, MN. With a bachelor's degree in theatre arts, Tim has a special interest in blending stuttering acceptance with elements of theatre. Tim is a chapter leader for the National Stuttering Association. He also co-leads two summer camps for kids who stutter, Star Lake Out Loud and the Sioris Family University of Minnesota Camp for Kids Who Stutter.



Riley McDermott is a person who stutters and has been active in Friends since 2011. They studied Fashion Design and Technical Design at both Nassau Community College and Fashion Institute of Technology. They are active in the NYC Fashion community, recently collaborating with Redbull and Electrix Vintage.



Jenny McGuire is a PWS and an art therapist turned stuttering community advocate. She lives in Lafayette, CO, and unlike literally everyone around her, she is not an avid skier. When not working and volunteering with stuttering non-profits, Jenny can be found hanging out with her wonderful husband Seth and two amazing daughters, Danby and Grace. She also enjoys playing with her dog Pancakes, getting together with extended family, and laughing her head off with dear friends.



Grace McMahon is a person who stutters and has been involved in Friends since 2010. She studied Psychology and Sociology at SUNY Geneseo, and currently works as an assistant teacher at The Goddard School in New York City. Her favorite pastimes are playing video games, painting, and enjoying live music.

Meet our 2026 Workshop Facilitators, Speakers, and Volunteers



Liiiam McLaughlin is a dance artist and sound creative based out of Brooklyn, NY, USA. His artistry roots itself in “stutter/dancing”, a movement exploration that weaves the deeply embodied experience of stuttering into choreographic and pedagogical frameworks. He revolves his practice around two overarching questions: What can stuttering teach movement? What can movement teach stuttering?



Ryan A. Millager, PhD, CCC-SLP, is an assistant professor in the Department of Communication Disorders and Sciences at Rush University. He completed his PhD in hearing and speech sciences at Vanderbilt University. He has a clinical background in stuttering and fluency disorders in non-profit and university settings, as well as in medical speech-language pathology. Millager leads the STAR Lab at Rush University, where his research interests include (a) multifactorial contributions to stuttering in young children and (b) technologies and methods (e.g., automated speech recognition) to improve the efficiency and impact of speech-language research.



Hallie Mintz, M.S. CCC-SLP is the owner of Philly Speech Services, a private practice in the greater Philadelphia area, where she works with children of all ages and abilities. She is also the social media coordinator for Friends! Hallie has a passion for supporting children and adolescents who stutter to be confident communicators. In her free time, Hallie enjoys yoga, skiing, tennis, crafting, cooking new recipes, and spending time outdoors with her husband and dog.



Hi, my name is Liam, and I am a person who stutters. I will be going into junior year of high school. This will be my second annual convention. In my free time, I enjoy going to the beach and playing soccer.

Meet our 2026 Workshop Facilitators, Speakers, and Volunteers



Nora A. O'Connor is a long-time member of the stuttering self-help community and a licensed clinical social worker. Through her work in addiction treatment and co-occurring disorders, she recognized parallels between the trauma experienced by her clients and her own lived experience as a person who stutters. This insight into the impact of cumulative trauma on people who stutter shaped her clinical focus, leading her to work with people who stutter in private practice for over 10 years using trauma-informed, somatic, and behavioral approaches. She is the author of the workbook *Navigating the Emotional Response to Stuttering* (to be published this year). She lives in San Pedro, California with her wife, son, and two black cats.



Mark O'Malia, M.S., CCC-SLP is a speech-language pathologist and person who stutters. He is a full-time clinician at The American Institute for Stuttering (AIS) in NYC, working with people who stutter across the lifespan.



Gianna Parisi is a person who stutters and the child of a parent who stutters. A long-time client of Lee, she has been actively involved with Friends since 2010. She studied environmental policy at Boston University and Columbia University and currently works at the New York City Mayor's Office of Management and Budget, where she oversees the Department of Environmental Protection.



Hello everyone! My name is Lauren and I'm 19 about to turn 20. I'm a person who stutters, and I'm going into my second year of college. I can't wait to see everyone this year at Friends!

Meet our 2026 Workshop Facilitators, Speakers, and Volunteers



Morgan Roberts is a rising junior in high school who stutters from the Little Apple, Manhattan KS, and this is going to be her 5th year of Friends! In her free time, she is involved in theatre in almost every single way. In the last 4 months, she's been a Newsie, Nun, and Police Officer in Newsies, a Teacher in School of Rock, Schroeder in You're a Good Man Charlie Brown, Jan in Grease, and has gone to a performing arts camp at Kansas State University! She is so pumped for Friends 2026!



Naomi H. Rodgers, PhD, CCC-SLP is an assistant professor at the University of Iowa. She directs the Iowa Stuttering Lab examining the psychological and social aspects of stuttering. She teaches courses in stuttering, counseling, and clinical methods. Her work is inspired by her experiences as a pws, clinician, and advocate in the stuttering community. She is deeply committed to the mission of Friends and is honored to be working towards greater understanding and acceptance of stuttering.



Emily is a speech pathologist and college professor in New Jersey and knows that she is incredibly fortunate to work with people of all ages who stutter. She is proud to be the daughter of a mother who stutters and Emily is passionate about stuttering acceptance for all. Emily loves to travel, run, and attend 80's concerts. She also loves spending time with her husband, two adult children, rescue dog, and two cats.



Aidan is the co-Founder and Executive Director of SPACE, a Canadian nonprofit creating a world that listens better to people who stutter, and everyone else. As an ally, he has worked with the stuttering community for over a decade, and is particularly interested in the intersections between stuttering and the arts. Aidan lives in Vancouver, BC and loves gardening and the rain. Attending Friends is his favorite weekend of the year.

Meet our 2026 Workshop Facilitators, Speakers, and Volunteers



Bennie Storey

My name is Bennie Storey, and I am a person who stutters. I am 18 years old, and I am from Washington state. I have been to a few local one-day conventions, and this will be my sixth national annual convention.



Reuben Schuff, MS, P.E. is an aerospace engineer, space exploration enthusiast, traveler, speaker, author, juggler, parent, and person who stutters. He contributes to the stuttering community in a variety of ways as an advocate and volunteer, including Friends, NSA, Stuttertalk, CampSay, Sisskin Stuttering Center, and ASHA. Reuben, his wife, and their baby son live in Florida on the Space Coast. Reuben's long-term vision is to start a school on the moon.



Jeff Shames is a psychotherapist who has been active in the stuttering support world since the early 1990's. Jeff co-founded the Manhattan Stuttering Group in 1994, and co-produced the award winning personal documentary film Spit It Out. Jeff is an avid baseball fan. He enjoys writing, both memoir pieces and poetry. He likes taking walks, especially in city environments. A native of Tulsa, Oklahoma, Jeff lives in New York City with his wife, Elisa DeCarlo.



I am the proud parent of a young boy who stutters. Our family found Friends in 2018 and attended our first annual convention in 2019. My husband, 3 children, and I live in Columbus, Ohio, and both my husband and I work at Ohio State University. I am a SLP specializing in adults with acquired neurogenic communication disorders. We love Friends and I am excited to be a part of helping Friends continue to flourish!

Meet our 2026 Workshop Facilitators, Speakers, and Volunteers



Dougie Storey is 18 years old and is going into his Freshman year of college. He has stuttered nearly his whole life, and hopes to have a positive impact on the lives of other people who stutter by being open about his experiences and letting people know that they are not alone. In his free time, Dougie likes to play and write music.



Mary Tesh, MA, CCC-SLP is a speech therapist who works in public schools. Mary builds meaningful relationships with students and families, collaborates with SLPs across the world about best practices for stuttering, engages deeply with the stuttering community, and supports other SLPs in her school district and beyond to provide helpful services to students who stutter. Mary's passion for stuttering originates from how the stuttering community inspired (and continues to inspire) her own personal growth.

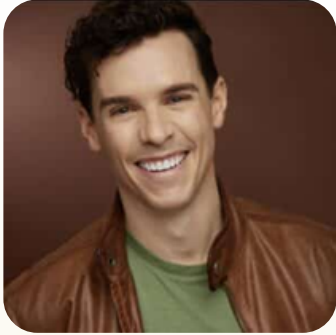


Kendra Wagner, M.S., CCC-SLP is a parent to a son who stutters and a school-based speech-language pathologist passionate about supporting and advocating with and for children who stutter. She and her son attended their first annual convention in 2023 and have loved being part of the Friends community ever since. In her free time, Kendra enjoys spending time with her family, running, and traveling.



Stephen Wilkins is currently an SLP graduate student at Montclair State University. As a person who stutters, he is passionate about being involved in the stuttering community. Stephen enjoys running, reading fantasy novels, and playing soccer with friends.

Meet our 2026 Workshop Facilitators, Speakers, and Volunteers



Marc is a professional actor/singer/dancer in NYC and a person who stutters. Recently, he was the voice consultant on HBO's THE PENGUIN. As an actor, he is currently striving to give a voice and be an advocate for people who stutter in theatre/film/media/television. Using a large social media following (400k) as a bigger platform, he continues creating content and spreading stuttering awareness with wit and creativity for the stuttering community, a group of people who often go (quite literally) unheard and unseen in our culture. Follow for more @marcwinski



Luke Wyland is an Oregon-based composer, interdisciplinary artist, and cultural organizer. As a person who stutters, his work centers disability justice and speech diversity. In collaboration with arts nonprofit SPACE, he curates the Library of Dysfluent Voices, a living archive that reimagines stuttering as an expressive, generative form. Through live performances, immersive installations, and community exchange, he explores the textures of voice and the politics of fluency, inviting new ways of listening. lukewyland.com



Barry Yeoman is a proud stutterer who has been in the self-help movement for most of his life. As a freelance journalist, he writes articles that put human faces on complex political, environmental, and social issues. He also teaches journalism at Duke University. Barry lives in Durham, N.C. with his husband and a goofy dog.



Tricia Zebrowski is a long-time volunteer with Friends and has been a presenter and facilitator for many annual conventions, one-day workshops and virtual parent groups. She also organizes the Friends Graduate Student Training Program. She is a speech-language therapist and Professor Emerita at The University of Iowa, where she focused on the nature and treatment of stuttering, particularly in adolescence. For over 20 years Tricia directed UISPEAKS, a summer residential program for teens who stutter.

Meet our Board of Directors



Tricia Zebrowski
Chairperson of the Board



Eric Jackson
Vice Chair



Arin Sheeler
Secretary



Brad Steinberg
Treasurer



Rick Arenas



Adannaya Brown



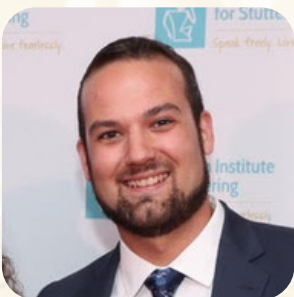
Evan Kestenbaum



Joel Korte



Roisin McManus



Mark O'Malia



Ryan Pollard



Anthony Selah

Meet Our Committee Coordinators



Noura Embabi
Director of Operations



Nic Brow
One Day Event Director



Jenny McGuire
Annual Convention
Manager



Amanda Johnson
Event Planner



Mike Bauer
Videographer



Hallie Mintz
Director of Content
and Engagement

Graduate Student Training Program (GSTP)

At Friends, we believe the next generation of speech-language pathologists should learn not just about stuttering, but from people who stutter. Through our Graduate Student Training Program, graduate students join us for the full convention, volunteering in children's workshops and learning directly from kids, teens, and families.

With the guidance of experienced clinicians and the insight of the stuttering community, students leave with deeper understanding, lasting connections, and a more human-centered approach to their future work.

GSTP Directors:



Tricia Zebrowski



Julie Gasway

2026 GSTP Participants:

**Jordan Deutsch
Reese Elledge
Samiksha Gaur
Camryn Griffin
Hiam Kashlan
Hannah Krengel
Krittika Kunda
Wen Lai**

**Malina Paley
Kira Reed
Monika Surowiec
Gloria Vasquez Mazariego
Michelle Villa
Isabel Villagomez
Maya Zolnik**

Kids Programming Team

The Friends Kids Programming Team focuses on creating and leading engaging experiences that help children connect with others, learn about stuttering, share their own experiences, and have an amazing time at Friends.

Throughout the convention, please feel free to direct any questions about kids' programming, supervision, or participant support to a member of the Kids Programming Team.

Much like counselors at a summer camp, our Kids Programming Team serves as a consistent group of trusted adults whom our young people can turn to throughout the convention. Their primary goal is to ensure that every child experiences a safe, supportive, inclusive, and fun environment where they can build friendships, grow, and simply enjoy being themselves.

We look forward to creating an unforgettable convention experience for the incredible young people of Friends!



Jenny McGuire



Nic Brow



Kristel Kubart



Stephen Wilkins

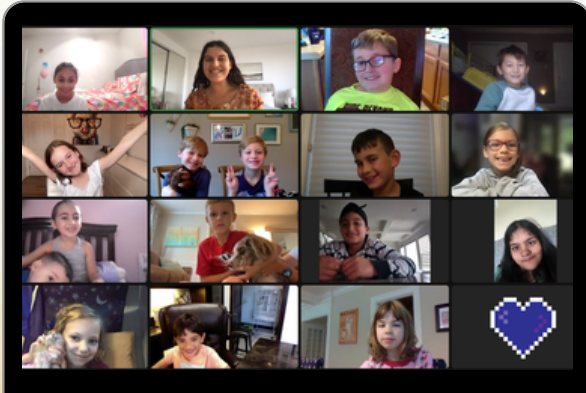


Mandy Rodstrom

Virtual Support Groups

No matter where you live, you have Friends!

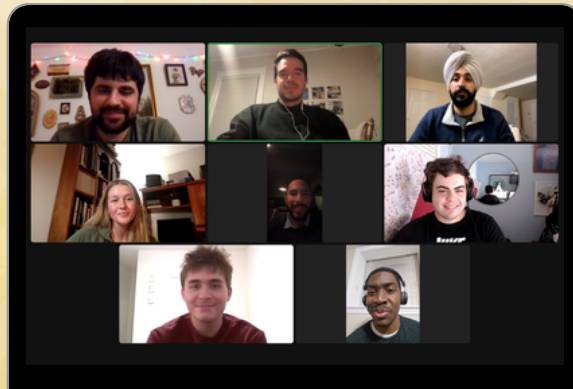
FREE monthly groups for people to connect, support, and inspire in a caring space



Kids Group
Saturdays at 11am



Teen Group
Wednesdays at 7:30pm



20s and 30s Adult Group
Thursdays at 7:30pm



Parents Group
Saturdays at 12:30pm



Spanish-Speaking Parents Group
Thursdays at 8:30pm

Visit friendswhostutter.org/virtual
to learn more and sign up for upcoming dates!

One-Day Events

No matter where you live, you have Friends!

Friends One-Day Events are a wonderful opportunity to connect with others, learn about stuttering and build community.

Friends programming is activity-based and focuses on exploring attitudes and emotions, increasing understanding of stuttering, and instilling a greater sense of confidence — while making Friends!

SLPs and students will learn more about stuttering, therapy, and support available for those who stutter - all while earning CEUs.

This Year's One-Day Conference Participants



49

Pittsburgh

September 25, 2025



102

Seattle

November 8, 2025



68

Minneapolis

November 28, 2025



73

San Francisco

March 7, 2026



69

Raleigh

March 7, 2026



54

Philadelphia

March 28, 2026



81

Dallas

April 18, 2026



496 ODC Attendees



138 Scholarships Awarded

For more information please visit: friendswhostutter.org/one-day-events

For information on how to host a ODE in your city,

email: friends@friendswhostutter.org



Upcoming One-Day Events

No matter where you live, you have Friends!

All the fun of the annual convention,
in one day in your city or state!

Pittsburgh, PA
Fall 2026

Minneapolis, MN
Fall 2026

San Francisco Area, CA
Spring 2027

Chicago, IL
Spring 2027

Raleigh, NC
Spring 2027

Philadelphia, PA
Spring 2027

Dallas, TX
TBD

For more information please visit: friendswhostutter.org/one-day-events
For information on how to host a ODE in your city, email: friends@friendswhostutter.org



Announcing the Friends 30th Annual Convention

Our 2027 Annual Convention will be in.....

Dallas, TX

July 22-24, 2027



Thank you to Our Donors!

Every workshop, every support group, every scholarship, every shared meal, every new friendship, and every moment someone realizes they are not alone is made possible because of the generosity of people like you.

Whether you made a one-time gift, sponsored a scholarship, or support Friends through monthly giving, thank you for believing in our mission and in every child, teen, adult, and family we serve.

We are especially grateful to our monthly donors, whose ongoing support provides a dependable foundation that allows Friends to plan programs, respond to community needs, and ensure that if you stutter, you have Friends!

Our Donors

Thank you to the following individuals, families, and organizations whose generosity has supported Friends over the past year.
(Monthly donors are marked with ★)

Anaheim Ducks Foundation
Marion Askins
William Aston-Reese
Michael Barton
Nan Bernstein Ratner
Lisette Betancourt
Jia Bin
Will and Carolyn Blodgett
Stefni and David Bogard
Richard Bondi
Lawrence & Mary Bovich
Amy Brechter
Evelyn Brow
Shelley Brundage
Angelina Bruno-Metzger
Alexander Burke
Courtney Byrd
Keith Cadigan
Tom Caggiano
Ernie Canadeo
Laura Cashion
Barbara Cashion
Lucy Castellano
Joshua Cobert
Jeremy & Katherine Cohen-Preston
Dan Colbeth
Alison Conn
Christopher Constantino★

Edward Conture
Nathaniel Cornell
Council Rock School District
Lori Cox
Vicki Crafton-Zinn
Kathy Curran★
DAF Giving 360
Daffy Charitable Fund
George Daquila
Joseph Diaz★
Valerie Dillard
Katherine Doorley
Evan Doyle
Christine Dzwolak
Catey Easters
Ken Easters
Michael Einbinder
Noura Embabi
Meg Ethridge
Robin Estrin
Fidelity Charitable
Herbert Flemming
Kevin Ford★
Melissa Fortunato
Abby Foster
David Friedman
Gabrielle Falco
Karla Garcia

Jackie Gartner-Schmidt
Julie Gasway
Hope Gerlach-Houck★
Angela and Steve Gibbs
Jared Gilman
Florence Goldberg
Randi Goldberg
Michael & Lindsay Goldberg
Katie Gore
Lauren Green
Rebekah & Jonathan Grob
Barbara Gronowski
Nanci & Richard Gulbrandsen
Ashish Gupta
Jackson Hankins★
Aubrey Hart★
Priscilla Helen
Pat Hendershot
Ceil Hendrickson
Terri Herring
Sarah Hershey
Anna Hertsberg
Carolyn Hirshenhorn
Beverly Hogan
Scott Horejs
Martha Horrocks★
Amber Horvath★
Jewish Communal Fund (JCF)

Thank You to Our Donors

Thank you to the following individuals, families, and organizations whose generosity has supported Friends over the past year.
(Monthly donors are marked with ★)

Amy Johnson★
Chelsea Johnson
Tanya Johnson
Johnson & Johnson
JPMorgan Charitable Giving
JPMorgan Chase Charity
Charles Kaufman
Evan Kestenbaum
Joel Kestenbaum
Brett Kestenbaum
Brian Klafta★
Jerome and Laurie Klafta
Mitch Krzyzek
Margaret Laube★
Lexi Liljenquist
Jonathan Litton
Juan Litvak
Kenneth Logan
Rachelle Loir
Sara MacIntyre
Leor Manelis
Miranda Marlapudi
Ann McLean-Muse
Beth McMillen
Katie Mehall
Justin Ross Meyer
Pratik Mhatre
Ryan Millager
Lindsay Miller
Julia Mintz
Hallie Mintz

Van & Julie Mitchell
Will Nading★
Nora O'Connor
Omaha Community Foundation
Kate Ostroff
Sorcha O'Sullivan-Murphy
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Charles E Peters
Kim Pitcher
PNC Foundation
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Carole and Doug Rawson
Nathan Relles
Renaissance Charitable Foundation
Naomi Rodgers
Amanda Rodstrom
William Rosenthal
Jon Rosenwasser
Valerie Roy
Tara Rumph★
Nolan Russo
Katharine Ryan
Erin & John Samenuk
Ed & Kathy Walsh Samp
Dan Sampson

Reuben & Chaya Schuff-Goldstein
Ashley Schwandt
Jeffrey Shames
Emily Sharpe
Arin and Scott Sheeler
Sisskin Stuttering Center★
Barb Snyder
SofterWare, Inc.
SPARQ Data Solutions Inc
Ellen Stiefel
Suzanne Stone Williams
Jeffrey Stortz
Keith Swartz★
Jaclyn Thomas
Rita & Wally Thurman
Emily Tofel
Geri and Daniel Towvim
Annick Tumolo
Mary and Andy Turak
United Way of Northeast Florida
United Way of SE Pennsylvania
Rachel Valmonte-Zapata
Vanguard Charitable
Taylor Vaughan
Kendra Wagner
Veronica Washington
Samantha Wasserman
Steve Wilkins
Benjamin Wolff
Kathy Wright

Become a Monthly Donor

The impact of Friends doesn't end when the convention is over. Throughout the year, we offer virtual support groups, regional one-day events, family resources, scholarships, and much more.

By becoming a monthly donor, you help ensure that these life-changing programs continue to reach people who stutter and the families who love them.

No matter the amount, your recurring gift creates lasting impact and helps more people discover the magic of Friends!

**To become a monthly donor or make a gift today,
visit friendswhostutter.org/donate or scan the QR code:**



29th Annual Convention Survey and Feedback

Thank you for being part of our 2026 Friends Convention in Chicago! Your presence, energy, and openness are what make this community so special and bring the magic of Friends to life, year after year.

We'd love to hear about your experience. Your feedback helps us grow, improve, and keep creating a space that is supportive and enriching for everyone. Thank you for taking a few moments to share with us!

Scan for survey:



Photo Sharing

Share your favorite convention moments with us. We're gathering photos for a community album, and we'd love your participation! Simply upload 5-10 of your favorite photos or videos from the weekend to this Dropbox album. Please know that we may feature your photos/videos in future Friends materials. Thank you for contributing!

**Scan here to
upload pictures**

