

# Press Democrat

**Montgomery High School alum hosting benefit concert  
for Best Buddies prom on Sunday**

***All donations and tips given to the performers Sunday will  
be donated to the club that helps students with  
disabilities form friendships with their peers.***

**Benefit Concert**  
**For Best Buddies Prom 2025**  
**Sunday March 9th**  
**1-6pm**  
**4 Bands ~ Free All Ages**

**COOPERAGE**   
BREWING COMPANY  
DOWNTOWN

1-2pm	2-3pm	3-4pm	4-6pm
 <b>Ryan Woodard &amp; Friends</b>	 <b>Soph N Trey</b>	 <b>HALF-MILE HIGH</b> THE MERCURYVILLE SESSIONS	 <b>RYAN WOODARD BAND</b> RYANWOODARD.COM

Ryan Woodard, a Montgomery High School senior, rehearses at the School of Rock, Tuesday, Sept. 19, 2023, in Santa Rosa. Woodard will be performing twice at the Best

Buddies Prom Benefit Concert on Sunday at Santa Rosa's downtown Cooperage Brewing location on Sunday, March 9. (Kent Porter / The Press Democrat, 2023)

Best Buddies, a national organization that creates student-run clubs at high schools with the goal of pairing students with disabilities with their general education peers, has been steadily growing at Montgomery High School.

The club's leadership students plan holiday outings, fashion shows and weekly meetups.

This spring, they're planning their second annual Best Buddies Prom open to high school students from Montgomery, Analy, Santa Rosa and Elsie Allen.

"Normal proms can be kind of overwhelming — this is more spread out, it's more chilled out. It's more accessible," said Amanda Carlile, the Best Buddies club president. "It's just a safe and welcome space where kids have the opportunity to have a prom that includes all their needs."

The group of students need some additional funding to pull it all off.

Ryan Woodard, a Montgomery High School alum, stepped up to the challenge, putting together a benefit concert Sunday, March 9, at Cooperage Brewery in downtown Santa Rosa to help raise money. He will perform twice during the show, set to go from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Soph N Trey and Half-Mile High also will perform.

Woodard, who has autism, graduated from Montgomery High School in 2024. While a student, he was known for his impromptu performances in the high school quad. Online, [a video of Woodard singing a John Mayer song](#) amassed millions of views.

While he wasn't a member of the club in high school, he was invited to play at the Best Buddies Champion of the Year Gala in Nashville last year. He left the gala feeling inspired.

"I knew I wanted to get involved, and I thought why not get involved with my hometown and help my community," Woodard said. "When I learned of this prom, I knew this is something I wanted to support."

Woodard put together the idea for the benefit concert, invited other bands to play and visited more than 150 Sonoma County businesses asking if they would like to support.

"I really enjoyed walking from store to store asking for donations and telling people about the benefit," he said. "It has forced me to communicate which doesn't come easy and I have had to definitely get out of my comfort zone."

Woodard has received donations from Old Town Furniture in Santa Rosa, Wikiup Tennis and Swim Club, the Community Market in Sebastopol and Old Caz Brewery, to name a few.

Many of the businesses also donated gift cards and other items to be raffled off during the event. Cooperage has donated the space.

All tips from the bands playing on Sunday night and all money Woodard raises independently will be given to Carlile to put toward the funding goal.

She is hoping that with the help of the benefit concert, the group can raise at least \$15,000 for the “under the sea” themed prom on April 27 from 6-9 p.m. at the Epicenter in Santa Rosa.

People who do not attend the benefit concert on Sunday can still [donate online](#) through the Montgomery High School website.

*Report For America corps member Adriana Gutierrez covers education and child welfare issues for The Press Democrat. You can reach her at [Adriana.Gutierrez@pressdemocrat.com](mailto:Adriana.Gutierrez@pressdemocrat.com).*



**[ADRIANA GUTIERREZ](#)**

THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

March 7, 2025

2 minute read

Gift this articleShare this article