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### Buddy Baseball founder is honored

By JOYCE MCKENZIE | jmckenzie@tampatrib.com

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TEMPLE TERRACE - Russ Oberbroeckling, the founder of Buddy Baseball, a league for children with special needs, took home the top honor at the Aug. 27 Greater Temple Terrace Chamber of Commerce's annual awards and officer installation dinner.

From a field of three finalists, which included Mel Jurado and Grant Rimbey, the financial adviser and father of two daughters was named 2010 Citizen of the Year.

The award was in recognition of his formation last October of the noncompetitive program open to boys and girls age 7 to 18. Each child is matched with a buddy who guides and supports his every move on the playing field.

Coming up on its third session, Buddy Baseball has earned the praise of parents and children, and captured the attention of many others.

"If you really want to see what's right in the world, come out some Saturday afternoon to see one of our games," said Oberbroeckling, who got the idea of the league from his sister Sheri White, who started a similar program in Rockford, Ill.

Earlier this year the Temple Terrace resident was named a Community Quarterback by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and received an Excellence in Action award from the Hillsborough County school district.

"I'm calling this award the Triple Crown," said Oberbroeckling, who gave thanks to his wife, Deanna, and daughters Kelsey, 13, and Hannah, 11, for their help and support in his endeavor. The girls' primary contribution has been as buddies.

"You know what they say - behind every good man are three good women, my wife and my two daughters," said Oberbroeckling, who also that evening turned over his reign as president of the chamber to Kathy Miley.

Deanna Oberbroeckling said their family has always made community service a central part of their lives.

"We are a team and I was thrilled that Russ was recognized for all of his hard work," she said.

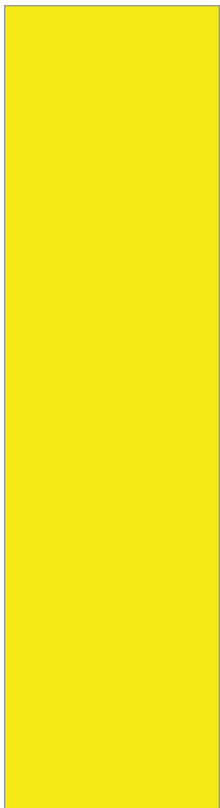
Kelsey said she is proud of her dad and that "he deserves it so much."

Hannah is equally delighted. "I am so glad that he got it because he has done so much for the community," she said.

Kelly Jackson, whose 14-year-old adopted daughter Holly has development delays due to being confined to a crib for the first 18 months of her life in China, nominated Oberbroeckling. She did so because of the significant progress her daughter has made since she joined the league at its inception.

"I was just so impressed with Russ. I've seen how awesome he is with the kids and the parents," Jackson said.

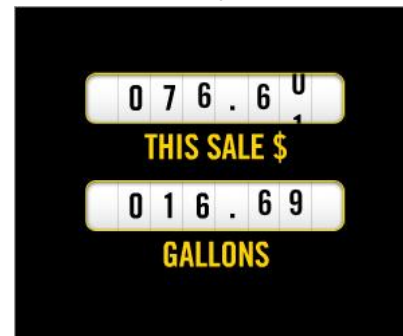
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"We have Russ to thank for the changes in these children's lives," Jackson said.

In addition, Al Latina was given the inaugural 1925 Award in recognition of his volunteerism in Temple Terrace despite the fact he lives outside the the city. Barbara Sparks-McGlinchy, the chamber's director, also announced the award being renamed the Ann Simmons Award, in honor of the longtime Temple Terrace resident's 40-plus years of community service.

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