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Published: August 30, 2010

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Buddy Baseball has plenty to cheer for

By **JOYCE McKENZIE**

It's not unusual on any given day to see Zachary Mueller, 15, decked out in his Buddy Baseball T-shirt.

"He loves it," said his mom, Kim. "In fact, we were in the Chicago airport recently when both Zachary and his dad (Dennis) had their matching shirts on and somebody asked us what this Buddy Baseball thing was all about."

The noncompetitive program, set to begin its third season on Oct. 9, is based at the Temple Terrace Family Recreation Complex. It is open to boys and girls with special needs age 7 to 18 throughout the Tampa Bay area. Players are matched with buddies age 10 to 18 who guide, protect and cheer them on by way of hollers and high-fives.

Launched last October, its founder is Russ Oberbroeckling, who got the idea for the league from his sister Sheri White, who started a similar league in Rockford, Ill.

The past two seasons have had six teams of six players each.

While the fee per player is \$45, buddies participate for free. Parents may log on to www.buddybaseball.org for information and to print out registration forms for both players and buddies. For information, call (813) 416-5742.

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