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We just owe him the world'

By JOYCE MCKENZIE
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Published: April 21, 2010

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TEMPLE TERRACE - His cheerleaders describe him as a selfless humanitarian who has given an incredible gift to parents of youngsters with special needs.

Jenny and Jim Carlstedt of Wesley Chapel and Kelly Jackson of Temple Terrace say that without the extreme effort of Russ Oberbroeckling, their developmentally delayed children would never have had the opportunity to play organized sports.

Oberbroeckling is the founder of Buddy Baseball, a league for children with disabilities that began last fall at the Temple Terrace Family Recreation Complex. The league has drawn boys and girls ages 7 to 18 from throughout the Tampa Bay area and paired them with volunteer buddies, ages 10 to 18, who encourage and assist them on the playing field.

In tribute to him, they nominated Oberbroeckling, a Temple Terrace resident and financial adviser, for the 2010 Tampa Bay Buccaneers Community Quarterback Award. It is given annually to five people who have made exceptional and lasting volunteer contributions to the community.

From a field of more than 50 nominees, Oberbroeckling has been selected as one of the winners who will be honored at a dinner at One Buccaneer Place on Tuesday. He and the others will each receive a commemorative Community Quarterback football and a \$2,000 check that will be donated to the charity of each winner's choice.

"Because of all the help from the coaches, parents, volunteers, sponsors and the Temple Terrace recreation center, my efforts were rewarded," said Oberbroeckling, the father of two daughters, Kelsey and Hannah, who volunteered as league buddies. "And the Buddy Baseball treasury will be in good shape for the start of the next season."

The Carlstedts said their son Andrew, 11, has benefited beyond measure, and their nomination of Oberbroeckling was just a small token of appreciation to him for starting the program.

"It's refreshing to see how these kids are welcomed and given a chance, and to see our son run around the bases and to be successful has really touched us," Jim Carlstedt said. "Andrew had a blast with it, and we videotaped the games so he could watch them when we got home."

Jackson, a single parent who adopted her daughter Holly, now 13, from an orphanage in China where was confined to a crib the first 18 months of her life, is also grateful to Oberbroeckling.

"Buddy Baseball has been such a great fit for her and we just owe him the world," Jackson said.

Other Community Quarterback winners are Alycia Bower, Alex Cooks, Jennifer Frances and Labrawn Saffold.

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