

GREENFIELD

Buddy Baseball celebrates 30th year

Final game of the season
to be held today

By **SAM FERLAND**
For the Recorder

GREENFIELD — Buddy Baseball will conclude its 30th year with a final game on Saturday as one of the Recreation

Department's most successful and "heartwarming" programs.

This year, the season started on May 11, with games occurring every Saturday until the final game this Saturday, June 22 which will include a trophy presentation and pizza party at the Green River Swimming Area to celebrate the players and another successful year.

Buddy Baseball is run by the Greenfield Recreation Department for children and adults with disabilities ages 6 and up to participate, practice and play in baseball and softball games. Prior to each game the players partner with a 'Buddy' or coach and partake in an icebreaker followed by warm-ups, throwing and catching practice, then

playing in a scrimmage.

"This is by far my favorite program that we run," Program Supervisor Shayla Demers said in an email to the Greenfield Recorder. "It's so rewarding and heartwarming to see the smiles on everyone's faces."

The program was started in

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Baseball

FROM D1

1994 by Pam Roberts and her son, Thomas Roberts-Wierzbowski, who was a participant in Buddy Baseball until his death seven years ago at the age of 34, according to Roberts. For the first year of the program, Thomas' Buddy was his sister Victoria Roberts-Wierzbowski, who was 7 years old at the time, and who participated in Buddy Baseball for several years.

"We say that my son is the founder of Buddy Baseball, we give him all the credit," said Roberts.

"When he was about 10 he started to use a wheelchair because of a progressive neurological

condition that he had and saw a photo in a newsletter of a boy in a wheelchair holding a trophy and Thomas said, 'I want that.'"

"It feels great and it's really fun," said player Oliver Odwazny-Beebe, who participates with his father Chad Odwazny. Both emphasized the opportunity Buddy Baseball provides to have fun while meeting new people.

Pam emphasized the impact Thomas had on the program and the joy she feels seeing players and families enjoy it.

"It is so heartening to witness so many kids and families continue to enjoy it. I see Thomas' joy in their faces and feel his presence on the field," Pam said in an email to the Recorder.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Oliver Odwazny-Beebe playing at Buddy Baseball in 2021.