



The ALL-STAR Newsletter

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Jefferson County Board of Developmental Disabilities

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Jefferson County BDD

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Steubenville, Ohio
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Everyone's a Winner at Unified Game

The Jefferson County All-Stars and Franciscan University Barons took to the hardwood and proved everyone's a winner during the "Going All In(clusive)" unified basketball game at the Martin Luther King Jr. Recreation Center.

Members of each team were blended into two new groups for a scrimmage on March 31, which capped off Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month and focused on the message of inclusion. The event was organized by Steve Forte, activities coordinator for the Jefferson County Board of Developmental Disabilities as well as Special Olympics coordinator. A similar activity held last year with the Steubenville Big Red girls' basketball team proved to be very successful and he hoped more matchups would occur in the future.



Jefferson County All-Star basketball player Brandon Filby cheers after scoring for his team during the "Going All In(clusive)" unified game with the Franciscan University Barons on March 31. The event capped off Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month and included mixed teams of All-Stars and Barons players in a scrimmage on the court. It ended with a 41-39 score but officials said it was all about inclusion.

(Continued as WINNER)



Coach Joe Thomas Retires after 18 Years with All-Stars

Joe Thomas was recognized with a plaque after retiring as coach of the Jefferson County All-Stars basketball team. He led the team to the state championships twice during his 18-year career and completed his tenure during the "Going All In(clusive)" unified basketball game in March. He is pictured with, from left, Josh McAlpine, Christopher Sims, Brandon Filby, Special Olympics Coordinator and Jefferson County Board of Developmental Disabilities Activities Coordinator Steve Forte, Jared Vojvodich, Melissa Vargo, Thomas Huggins and Tom Pitts.

Photo/GABBY BODO

The home team was led by All-Stars Coach Joe Thomas, who also ended his 18-year career leading the team at the latest matchup, with All-Stars donning gold home-game jerseys and their Franciscan teammates sporting green Barons T-shirts. Joe Wallace, Franciscan men's basketball coach, helmed the guest team with four All-Stars wearing their blue away-game uniforms and Barons members in grey shirts.

At halftime, Thomas was honored with a plaque while Hills Elementary student Ivy Anderson received a certificate and cash prize for her winning essay on inclusion through a contest by the JCBDD and Special Olympics. Anderson was among two other recipients in the elementary division, which included Sy'rai Robinson of East Garfield Elementary and Noah Gray of McKinley STEM Academy, as well as Ava Christian of Indian Creek High School in the high school division.

The basketball players duked it out on the court and concluded with a 41-39 "win" for the guest team in overtime, but Forte said the event had nothing to do with the numbers.

"It's less about scores and more about inclusion," he added. "This was a tremendous success."

The game was bittersweet for Thomas, but he was pleased to see everyone gather for a great cause.

"I love this," he said. "It's hopefully just the beginning of

things to come for the All-Stars. I love these guys."

Wallace was equally grateful for the opportunity and said he looked forward to more collaborations in the future.

"It's a wonderful opportunity for both of us to spend time on the court together and have some fun, plus we share commonalities over basketball. This is a partnership we can have moving forward."

Even participating teammates were excited about the chance to play together.

"This was less about scores and more about inclusion."

-Steve Forte

**Jefferson County Board of Developmental Disabilities
Activities Coordinator/Special Olympics Coordinator**

"Anytime we can come into the community, it's a great opportunity to give back to people who have supported us," said Alan Wood, a Baron basketball player and junior at Franciscan.

"It was very fun," said fellow Baron Josh Zimmerman, who is also a junior at Franciscan. "It was more rewarding seeing them

have fun and it was a great experience."

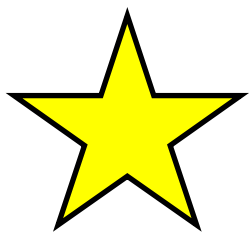
"It's fun," said All-Star Melissa Vargo, noting that she and her fellow players were all on good teams.

"I like playing with somebody different," added All-Star Tom Pitts. "It's good to get out and play with other people."

JCBDD Superintendent Michael Zinno was thrilled with the event and thanked the Franciscan Barons and Coach Wallace for being part of something special.

"This is just the beginning and we're looking forward to more inclusion," Zinno said.

Getting to Know You...



**Alasha
Huff**



Alasha Huff loves to give back.

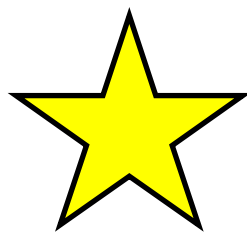
The Steubenville resident has served as a direct service provider, or DSP, at Shaffer Plaza for the past nine months but has also spent time helping kids learn.

"In the summertime, I host a learning day at my home a few times a month where I teach the kids in my neighborhood and feed them lunch."

Huff has aspirations to further herself as well, saying she hopes to return to college and study psychology.

"I have a passion to learn more about the human mind," she added.

In her spare time, she enjoys baking and decorating and sharing moments with her large family, which includes parents Debra Jones and Nathan Huff, four brothers, eight sisters and a bevy of nieces and nephews.



**Thomas
Huggins**



Thomas Huggins, of Mingo Junction, has been employed through PALS for four years, where he has performed janitorial work and grass cutting on the property. He has also worked with the Jefferson County Board of Developmental Disabilities for 10 years at the former Jeffco Workshop.

He is grateful for his JCBDD Service and Support Administrator and said the SSA has helped him figure out new goals and interests as his life has evolved. He is also an avid sports fan and enjoys basketball, both playing for the Jefferson County All-Stars as well as watching games. He also enjoys watching movies.

Better known as "Huggie" to his family and friends, he likes to be helpful and even cuts grass for them in his spare time. His family includes brothers Gary and Dave, sister Virginia, cousin Nick DiCarlo and aunt Essy DiCarlo, in addition to three dogs.