



ALUMNI, FAMILY & FRIENDS

DFRC NEWSLETTER - 2011 EDITION

Reflections on the DFRC Blue-Gold experience



An Interview with DFRC Blue-Gold Alumnus Dr. Mehmet Oz



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In 1978, Dr. Mehmet Oz was selected to represent Tower Hill in the 23rd Annual DFRC Blue-Gold All★Star Football Game. He contacted DFRC this year in an effort to reconnect with his Buddy, John Madanat. Below Dr. Oz provides us with his reflections about his experience with John and the Game.

- ◆ **Were you aware of the DFRC Blue-Gold Game prior to your selection and the fact that it was more than an all-star game?**

It was a great honor to be selected for the game, but I knew little else about the DFRC charitable endeavors, which is where its soul is reflected.

- ◆ **What were your feelings when you were chosen for the game?**

I was thrilled as an athlete, and honored as a human being to be allowed to interface with so many wonderful people.

◆ **We believe that the added elements of education and sensitivity training provided in today's Hand-in-Hand Program have made the experience very different from what it was in 1978. Can you tell us a little bit about the Hand-in-Hand program when you were part of it?**

The Hand-in-Hand program was very informal and focused on allowing me to take John on day trips. We would swim, play sports, see events, and drive around Wilmington so both he and I could see a life from a different perspective. We were earnestly curious about each other. I also got to meet John's family and see what joy he brought to their lives, and how they were able to cope with the challenges that he encountered.

- ◆ **Do you have any exceptional memories about camp? It sounds like it was a hot two weeks in August.**

The three practices per day ensured that everyone slept well at night. I loved playing with rivals from high school, including Tom Bartoshevsky from A.I. duPont. We became stronger as a team, which culminated in a strange morning

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(Above left) Mehmet Oz with his Buddy, John Madanat, at the 1978 DFRC Blue-Gold All ★Star Football Game. (Above right) Pure joy radiates from Dr. Oz and his Buddy when they are reunited in April 2011 after 33 years.

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practice halfway through where everyone (coaches included) went into a frenzied pre-game-like state and started cheering and chanting as we hit the blocking dummies. It was a turning point and we ultimately won the game the following weekend.

♦ **Any reflections on the game itself?**

I loved playing in the stadium with high quality athletes who were great competitors. The game was clean and powerful and prepared me superbly for my own pre-season in college, only a week away.

♦ **What made you reconnect with DFRC?**

I was watching a Special Olympics piece and missed John and wanted to see him again. I am close friends with the Shriver family (mother started Special Olympics and Tim runs the organization) and have always respected their philosophy that we are judged on how we take care of the weakest among us. Children with intellectual disabilities will not be "cured" of their condition, so our resolve to continue to play a role in making our society supportive of their desire to live maximally fulfilling lives is tested. We learn so much from kids like John that any investment we make is returned with great benefits.

♦ **Were you aware of DFRC's other endeavors and programs?**

Not as much as I should have been but it plays an important role in bringing together the best players in Delaware; celebrating kids with learning disabilities is well known even outside of Delaware.

♦ **Any advice to current DFRC Blue-Gold All★Star players?**

Focus on the lives you touch during the experience - other players, coaches, families, and especially the kids.

♦ **Do you have any feelings on why DFRC should continue?**

For the same reason the Special Olympics is so critical to our societal health. We focus for a day on kids who need us; and we need them also.

Dr. Oz, Daytime Emmy Award-winning host of "The Dr. Oz Show," is Vice-Chair and Professor of Surgery at Columbia University. He directs the Cardiovascular Institute and Complementary Medicine Program at New York Presbyterian Hospital. His research interests include heart replacement surgery, minimally invasive cardiac surgery, complementary medicine and health care policy. He has authored over 400 original publications, book chapters, and medical books, has received several patents, and performs more than 100 heart surgeries per year.

A COACH'S REFLECTION

By Fred Johnson

In 2008, as an assistant with the Gold squad, current Gold Head Coach Fred Johnson (Lake Forest) witnessed firsthand the impact DFRC has on the participants of the DFRC Blue-Gold game. The 2011 game has added meaning for him since his daughter, Reily, is a first-year Buddy in the DFRC Blue-Gold Hand-in-Hand Program. We asked Coach Johnson to share some thoughts on what it's like to be the parent of a child with an intellectual disability, and how it has changed him as a coach.

From the days of sleeping with my middle school football helmet at night as a twelve year old kid to working as an assistant coach my freshman year of college under my own high school football coaches; football was always a passion of mine. So in the summer of 2006, when I was chosen to become head coach to my alma mater, Lake Forest High School, I was full of excitement and anticipation of living my dream. In addition, my wife was expecting our third child and I remember thinking that all my dreams had come true that year. Little did I know what this dream entailed, the journey it would take me through, and how I would evolve along the way...

My dream of being a head football coach and the reality of it were vastly different as I struggled to get my athletes to buy into my football program built on self-discipline, respect, commitment, and hard work. And the excitement of expectations for my newborn baby slowly waned as I secretly struggled to understand and accept that my daughter Reily was not progressing as a typical baby should.

We began to realize that Reily was introducing our family to a "new world" - one that I always knew existed but was relieved to never have to live in - that is, until she was born. Like many others, I thought that those who lived in this world were burdened with a lifetime of disappointment, grief, and helplessness. As a result, I had an underlying sense of pity for them. However, much to my surprise, Reily showed us that this "world" is truly made of strength, perseverance, joy, and recognition of life's tremendous gifts, both big and small.

Reily, now 4 years old, has been classified as both visually and hearing impaired with cerebral palsy, global developmental delays, and seizure disorder. She does not walk, talk, or even sit independently - but she has eyes and a smile that will melt even the toughest lineman's heart. She gets joy out of cuddling with her big brother and sister, gets excitement from a spinning toy she's had since she was a

month old, and belly laughs at the sound of a snorting dog or crinkling paper.

Reily has taught us to celebrate the moments that most take for granted. Like the time she held eye contact with my wife for over 10 seconds, bringing tears to my wife's eyes. And the first time Reily sat for over a minute without toppling over, which we were sure to catch on camera and share with all who love her. Reily has taught us to truly appreciate the complexity and wonders of the human body and to revel in the beauty of her excitement and joy in the things we typically overlook.

And the lessons that Reily has taught do not just apply to home but, for me, on the field as well. She has taught me patience and the understanding that not everyone thinks or learns the way I do and, as a result, to recognize the unique needs of my athletes. She has given me more drive to work harder, demand more, and push my players because they can't always recognize or appreciate their own personal gifts and talents. She's taught me endurance and determination that a series of small successes can result in big accomplishments although it may just take a little more time than anticipated.

Without these life lessons that Reily has taught me, I'm not sure I would've made it past my first year as head coach when the season was cut short or even past the second when we barely had enough players to field a team. She has been my inspiration to keep going everyday and not to give up.

I am so proud to be a part of this year's DFRC Blue-Gold All★Star Football Game and witnessing how understanding, compassion, and the appreciation of life's little gifts will present themselves to all the Blue-Gold participants as a result of the lessons their Buddies will teach them. Being invited to be part of this special "world" is an honor - one that I am so lucky to have received from my little girl Reily but also to share and witness with the participants in this year's DFRC Blue-Gold events.



2011 Gold Head Coach Fred Johnson
with his daughter, Reily



The DFRC Family: Teamwork Making the Dream Work

by Georgia Ritter, 2011 Game Chair

Sometimes people are involved with groups because their family has been involved. Sometimes you fall in with a group and it becomes like a family. DFRC is like that, a big diverse family where everybody is accepted for who they are. A family who loves first and asks questions later.

DFRC has touched my own family several times in the last thirty-five years. Although I was a member of the Blue-Gold Club at St. Marks High School, my earliest memories of Blue-Gold go back to the summer of 1975

***“Although there are two teams
on the football field, Blue and Gold,
there is only one family, one team;
TEAM DFRC.”***

when we took my sister Amy (Anderson) Whetham (Christiana) to events and practices when she was a Gold Cheerleader. My husband Dan Ritter, was a Gold player in 1989, the Blue Head coach in 2007, and currently serves as an Assistant Camp director. My nephew, Daniel Anderson (DMA) was an Ambassador in 2006. But I think the thing what means the most to me,



is that my family has been embraced by this big diverse family, accepted and celebrated for who we are and what we bring.

The DFRC family gets together throughout the year to put on many events and activities. Each event is planned and executed with the common goal of raising awareness and funds for people with intellectual disABILITIES all over our small state. This family lives in all three counties, they are of all races and religions, and they all love DFRC. Whether they are planning a golf outing, an evening at the theater, or a football game, they put their heart and soul into each and every detail. They work as a team, with each family member bringing their strengths and talents to the TEAM.

That is why *Teamwork Making the Dream Work* seemed like the most appropriate theme for this year's DFRC Blue-Gold All★Star Football Game. Although there are two teams on the football field, Blue and Gold, there is only one family, one team; TEAM DFRC. So we invite you, too, to become a part of this family. Share our love and our vision. Join TEAM DFRC and your life, like so many up and down the state, will never be the same.



One small touch that lasts a lifetime ... your gift makes this possible

DFRC, Delaware Foundation Reaching Citizens with Intellectual disABILITIES, has touched hearts and enriched lives for over 55 years.

Your support helps DFRC create opportunities for all Delawareans with intellectual disABILITIES to maximize their potential, independence and enjoyment of life.

Please join the DFRC in continuing our mission by making your tax-deductible gift today!



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Visit our website at www.dfrcblue-gold.org.



BENEFICIARY SPOTLIGHT

DSA of Delaware



For over 30 years, the Down Syndrome Association of Delaware (DSA of Delaware) has provided support and resources to family, friends, community members and professionals who touch the lives of individuals with Down Syndrome across the state of Delaware and the surrounding area.

Some of these programs include: New Parent Outreach, the Lending Library, play dates, family dances, holiday events, teen and adult dances, bingo and karaoke. In addition, DSA of Delaware recognizes the importance of educating teachers and healthcare professionals through programs such as monthly Parent Education Meetings, sponsorship of Grand Rounds speakers at area hospitals, and support and promotion of the Down syndrome Clinic at AI duPont Hospital. With the backing of its members and benefactors, like DFRC, the DSA of Delaware is able to provide these supports and



DSA provides valuable support and outreach to new parents statewide.

resources. The DSA of Delaware attributes a number of their successful programs to the initial and continued support of DFRC.

The DSA of Delaware is most commonly known for the annual Buddy Walk - an awareness walk promoting the understanding, inclusion and acceptance of people with Down syndrome. In 2004, with an initial DFRC grant of \$2,900 in seed money, the DSA of Delaware held the first walk with 360 walkers raising \$30,000. Since then, the walk has grown and in 2010 had over 1600 walkers and raised \$98,000. Since 2007, the DSA of Delaware has partnered with DFRC to host the Blue-Gold Hand-in-Hand Picnic as part of the Buddy Walk celebration.

The DSA of Delaware scholarship program, which began as a DFRC funded "Exercise for Life" grant, is primarily funded from the Buddy Walk proceeds and has evolved into an enhanced scholarship program providing funding for recreation and art programs for members of all ages, as well as conferences and seminars for parents and self-advocates.

DFRC provided seed money to help fund a Professional Education Seminar in 2008. With the partnership of Easter Seals of Delaware, the DSA of Delaware now hosts annual professional education seminars. These seminars offer informative sessions focused on topics that directly affect individuals with Down syndrome and other disabilities, are presented by experts in the area of focus, and provide continuing education credits to participants.

Project Literacy, a new program partially underwritten by DFRC, will package resource materials within specific educational groups for parents and professionals attending the Buddy Walk to take back to their schools and use in their homes. The DSA of Delaware plans to use the success of the Buddy Walk, with its built in audience of parents, supporters and professionals from all three Delaware counties, as a vehicle to move Project Literacy into the hands of those with the greatest need.



The 8th Annual DSA Buddy Walk is an awareness walk to promote the understanding and inclusion of people with Down Syndrome. It will take place on Sunday, May 15 at the University of Delaware and will be held together with DFRC's Buddy Picnic.

The DSA of Delaware thanks DFRC for their initial and continued support and partnership. As a result, the DSA of Delaware has been able to make significant strides to provide support and resources, educate, advocate and help create life-long opportunities for individuals with Down syndrome and their families. To learn more about the DSA of Delaware, become a member, join the 2011 Buddy Walk or volunteer; please visit www.dsadelaware.org, email info@dsadelaware.org or call (302)995-1004.

SUPPORT THE DFRC BLUE-GOLD PROGRAM

As we celebrate 56 years of the DFRC Blue-Gold All★Star Football Game, here are three ways that you and your family can give back to the game that means so much to so many. Alumni, family and friends can support DFRC's Blue-Gold program using either the form in this newsletter or by going online to www.dfrcblue-gold.org. Thank you for your support!



- 1 SPONSOR A BUDDY OR PARTICIPANT.
- Each year there are more than 300 high school participants and more than 100 Hand-in-Hand buddies who participate in the DFRC Blue-Gold program. As always, there is never a charge or a fee to participate.
 - DFRC encourages our alumni, family and friends to join other donors by supporting this most unique program.



- 2 BE A DFRC BLUE-GOLD YEARBOOK PATRON.
- Since the first game in 1956, thousands of individuals, businesses, and other organizations have assisted in our fundraising by becoming DFRC Blue-Gold Patrons. Patrons will be listed in the 2011 Game Day Yearbook.

- 3 PURCHASE TICKETS TO THE DFRC BLUE-GOLD ALL★STAR FOOTBALL GAME ON JUNE 18th.
- Alumni, family and friends are encouraged to attend. General Admission Tickets are only \$10, and there are discounts available for groups of 10 or more.
 - Tickets may also be purchased through our website. There is no extra charge to buy and print tickets online. DFRC thanks Grotto Pizza, the official ticket sponsor of the 56th DFRC Blue-Gold All★Star Football Game.
 - Call the DFRC office at 302-454-2730 for reserved box seating information.
 - Visit www.dfrcblue-gold.org to purchase tickets online and for more details on the DFRC Blue-Gold All★Star Football Game.



DFRC BLUE-GOLD ALL★STAR FOOTBALL GAME
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In 2010, DFRC provided 25 Delaware-based agencies and organizations with grants totaling of \$170,000.00

Since 1956 DFRC has provided over \$5 million in funding to programs serving Delawareans with intellectual disabilities.

Arc of Delaware
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Best Buddies Delaware
Wilmington/Statewide

Brain Injury Association of Delaware
Dover/Statewide

The CENTER for Therapeutic and Educational Riding
Townsend

Collaborative Effort to Reinforce Transition Success: (C.E.R.T.S.)
Newark

Delaware State Program for Children and Youth with Deaf-Blindness
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Delaware Theatre Company
Wilmington

Delaware Developmental Disabilities Council
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Special Olympics Delaware
Newark/Statewide

Variety/Delaware Division
Rockland

VSA arts of Delaware
Dover/Statewide

Waggies by Maggie and Friends
Wilmington



Annual DFRC fundraising events include:

DFRC Blue-Gold All*Star Football Game, DFRC Holidazzle, DFRC Blue-Gold All*Star Golf Classics in Kent, New Castle and Sussex counties, DFRC Sussex Auction and the DFRC Blue-Gold All*Star Run/Walk. Visit DFRC on the web at www.dfrblue-gold.org.

**THANK YOU TO OUR 2010
ALUMNI, FAMILY & FRIENDS SUPPORTERS
who generously donated funds last year in support of our
2010 DFRC Blue-Gold buddies and high school participants:**

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**Please complete information
on page 6 to sponsor a
Buddy or Participant,
be a Yearbook Ad Patron
or to order Game Tickets
- OR- go online at
www.dfrblue-gold.org!**

The Magic of the Blue-Gold Program

By Alli Kennedy, 2010 Senior Blue-Gold Ambassador



Remember watching Disney movies and something very magical happens when you sit and watch in awe? You think “wow the magical lamp has come alive!” I can honestly say that through DFRC, the magic has come out right in front of me! DFRC Blue-Gold is truthfully more than *Just a Game!* I say this because the entire program has truly changed my life. As I joined the DFRC family in 2006, I didn’t realize how much the entire organization worked and how much Blue-Gold would truly impact me.

This seemed simplistic, but as a freshman at my alma mater, Smyrna High School, I thought it would be fun to see what the DFRC program was all about. I joined the band and found the experience to be very heart warming. When I first stepped into the parade line the day of the Game, my eyes were opened to a whole new breathtaking experience. Everyone in the Blue-Gold program - the participants, volunteers, and most importantly, the buddies - are just an amazing sight to see. There are really no words that could sum up what I saw the day of the Game.

As a leader in my school I was also asked to represent Smyrna High School and the Gold team as a Junior and Senior ambassador over the next two years. One of the greatest memories I have and will always cherish is the time spent with my buddy and seeing everyone become friends. Not too many people get the chance to participate all four years of high school, but I am very blessed that I had the chance to see and experience the wonderful love and support that DFRC Blue-Gold has for all people, especially our buddies.



Alli Kennedy (top:Left) represented Smyrna High School as a Senior Ambassador in the 2010 DFRC Blue-Gold All★Star Football Game

As a freshman now at the University of Delaware, I know in my heart how much being included in such a great organization means. For those of you who have been involved, there are no words to describe the amazement and joy that comes from such a great organization.

I am now lucky enough to be a part of the DFRC Blue-Gold Committee. I am bringing my knowledge to the Ambassador program by helping current Junior and Senior Ambassadors become leaders in their schools and in their communities. Some of the nicest people in Delaware are a part of DFRC, and I am extremely fortunate to say that I am included in this family.

SAVE THE DATE

SUNDAY, MAY 15

DFRC Blue-Gold Hand-in-Hand Buddy Picnic at the DSA Buddy Walk
South Campus athletic complex
University of Delaware, Newark, DE

MONDAY, JUNE 6

DFRC Blue-Gold All★Star Golf Classic – New Castle County
White Clay Creek Country Club
Wilmington

Visit dfrcfoundation.org/golf for all Golf Classic registration information.

THURSDAY, JUNE 9

DFRC Blue-Gold All★Star Golf Classic – Sussex County
The Peninsula Country Club, Millsboro

SATURDAY, JUNE 11

DFRC Blue-Gold All★Star 5K Run/ 1-Mile Walk
Irish Eyes in Lewes - 8:00 am

Visit dfrcfoundation.org/run for registration information.

SUNDAY, JUNE 12

Media Day and Picnic - 1:00 pm
University of Delaware Football Stadium

MONDAY, JUNE 13

DFRC Blue-Gold All★Star Golf Classic – Kent County
Maple Dale Country Club, Dover

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 15

DFRC All★Star Football Scrimmages
Open to the public – free admission!

- * Gold Squad Scrimmage
Milford High School - 5:30 pm
- * Blue Squad Scrimmage
Tower Hill School - 5:30 pm

SATURDAY, JUNE 18

56th ANNUAL DFRC BLUE-GOLD ALL★STAR FOOTBALL GAME

Gates open at 5:00 pm.
Ticket information on page 6

SEPTEMBER 2011

DFRC BLUE-GOLD KICK-OFF CLASSIC
Exact date and location TBA

DFRC
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Join us in supporting the hundreds of high school students, volunteers and community members who make this game happen every year!

SATURDAY, JUNE 18, 2011 at 7pm
University of Delaware Stadium
In Newark

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS:

Parking Opens - 3:00 pm
Kids' Games - 4:00 pm
Stadium Gates Open - 5:00 pm
Opening Ceremonies - 6:00 pm
Game Kickoff - 7:00 pm

56 
Years of Teamwork
Making the Dream Work • June 18, 2011

DFRC THANKS OUR 2011 DFRC BLUE-GOLD ALL★STAR FOOTBALL GAME SPONSORS

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