



Serving children and adults with Down syndrome,
autism and other developmental disabilities

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ACDS Preschooler has a Friend in Duke's Justin Guterding

PLAINVIEW, NEW YORK, July 2, 2015 - Ten-year-old Brendan Ryan knows no limits. Since the days he attended ACDS' early invention and preschool programs in Plainview, there's been no stopping him from living life to the fullest.

"Brendan does his own thing and that has a lot to do with the excellent teachers and therapists he had growing up," says Tom Ryan, Brendan's father and ACDS board member.

The occupational, speech and physical therapy Brendan received at ACDS was instrumental in his development and helped give him the confidence he needed to soar. After graduating from preschool, Brendan entered the St. Anne's Parish Respite Program in Garden City, where he continued to bloom.

"At St. Anne's, each child with special needs was partnered with a buddy, where they'd watch movies, eat pizza, sing songs, and engage in other fun activities," Tom explains. As luck would have it, Brendan was assigned a young sophomore from Garden City High School with a knack for lacrosse: Justin Guterding.

The two immediately hit it off. So when Justin invited Brendan to his high school lacrosse practice, Brendan jumped at the chance. "After Justin spotted Brendan on the sidelines, he threw down his gloves, ran over and picked him up," Tom recalls.

Two years later, Brendan's still cheering on his buddy, now a star lacrosse player at Duke University and the 2015 ACC Men's Lacrosse Rookie of the Year. Brendan was in the stands when the Blue Devils played Stony Brook in April. Justin's mother, Pam, spotted him and invited him to the tailgate celebration, setting the stage for a sweet reunion.

"After not seeing each other for two years, it was like no time had passed for Justin and Brendan," Tom says. "College athletes typically get about twenty minutes of post-game interaction but Justin and Brendan spent ten minutes together. It was really heartwarming."

A few weeks later, Brendan moved from the sidelines to the playing field, thanks to a special invitation from a coaching friend in the Garden City Youth Lacrosse League. Playing for Stratford Avenue School, Brendan donned his #19 jersey and took to the field to face North Shore. The referee in the game: none other than Justin's father, Joe Guterding, who immediately called his son, now home on summer break. Justin put on his Duke shirt and rushed over.

As his old friend watched with pride, Brendan scored a goal and the crowd went wild. "I'll never forget that day for as long as I live," Justin says. "Hanging out with Brendan after the goal and seeing the look on his face was priceless."

Athletes inspire kids every day, but for Justin, Brendan is the inspiration. “He never lets you forget to have fun with whatever you are doing and never to take anything for granted,” Justin explains. “Knowing Brendan has made me a better person and lacrosse player. The friendship we have will never be lost.”

Truly a match for life.

About ACDS

ACDS, located in Plainview, NY is dedicated to providing lifetime resources of exceptional quality, innovation and inclusion for individuals with Down syndrome, autism and other developmental disabilities and their families. ACDS has been providing programs and services in and around Long Island since 1966. ACDS currently serves over 1000 children and adults, providing services that include Early Intervention and preschool special education programs, respite and recreation programs for children, teens and adults, adult Medicaid service coordination and eight supervised group homes in Nassau County. For more information, please visit acds.org or call 516-933-4700.

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