

EPHRATA AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
803 OAK BOULEVARD
EPHRATA, PA 17522



MEDIA RELEASE

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EPHRATA HIGH SCHOOL STARTS NEW PROGRAM TO SUPPORT STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

March 19, 2008 – Tim Hubach, who has Down syndrome, has always been friendly and fun, but since entering Ephrata High School in the Fall of 2007, he has also become more self-confident and outgoing. His mom, Steph Hubach, attributes a significant part of Tim’s change to his *Pit Crew*, a support group of eight Ephrata High School 9th and 10th Grade students who are helping to build a natural support system for Tim in his first year of high school.

“Tim’s *Pit Crew* is helping him expand his circle of friends. He is really enjoying the social life of high school,” said Mrs. Hubach. “In many ways Tim is not that different from his *Pit Crew* friends, who are learning that teens with disabilities have their own gifts to share.”

The idea of *Pit Crews* sprouted nationally a few years ago as a way to create personalized learning opportunities for students with disabilities through building community, friendships, and possibilities. While building natural support for the *Driver*, the *Pit Crew* also allows the entire group to help enhance the climate of the high school while supporting a diverse population. It is the goal of the Ephrata Area School District for Tim’s *Pit Crew* to stay with him throughout high school.

“This program is fabulous. It allows natural peer relationships and is mutually beneficial for the Crew and the Driver,” said Patrice Laboranti, a Special Education teacher at Ephrata High School. “The Driver learns important community skills, while the Crew creates natural supports that will last a lifetime.”

The first *Pit Crew* began this past fall at Ephrata High School. Tim’s *Pit Crew* committed to meet bi-monthly to try to help Tim establish peer connections, which will help him build a community within and outside the school walls.

“You can see Tim’s mental and physical joy at trying to meet someone new,” said Joel Reichard, an Ephrata High School 10th Grade student who is part of Tim’s *Pit Crew*. “I think Tim is enjoying spending time with a big group of friends doing fun things,” added Brian Lynch, another *Pit Crew* member.

At each meeting the *Driver* and his *Pit Crew* discuss problems and solutions to allow Tim to be included and accepted in the world around him. Recently the group met at Pizza Hut for a night out and is planning to go bowling.

Tim recently celebrated his 16th birthday with his *Pit Crew*. “I had a rock and roll party that was fun,” said Tim, who is known as the *Driver*.

The District plans to create additional *Pit Crews* in other District buildings. Several other schools in Lancaster County are working to form similar groups to provide support for students with special needs.

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For additional information or to schedule an interview:
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***Driver* Tim Hubach (yellow T-shirt) celebrates his 16th birthday with his *Pit Crew* and several other friends.**

Photo courtesy of Steph Hubach