

PEOPLE

# Mardy Fish unable to attend own golf tourney

BY MARY SCHENKEL  
Staff Writer

Rain skirted the area but didn't dare fall on the challenging Windsor Golf Course as foursomes took to the fairways for the Mardy Fish Children's Foundation Charity Golf Tournament last Monday morning.

Participants were saddened that Mardy himself was unable to attend, but were unwavering in their commitment to the organization he founded, which continues to make a positive impact on the lives of Indian River County children. Fish, who currently resides in California with wife Stacey and their two-month old son Beckett, has recently been sidelined by health issues.

"He was not feeling well enough to travel," said his father Tom Fish, director of tennis at Windsor. "He's really disappointed that he couldn't make it but he's grateful for all the support from the community."

One of Vero's hometown heroes, Mardy Fish used his fame as a top-ranked tennis professional to create the Mardy Fish Children's Foundation in 2007, which has enabled thousands of local children to participate in after-school and summer camp programs.

From California, Mardy Fish said he appreciated the way the community has embraced the foundation.

"I'm proud of the teachers that help, the kids that love the activities, and the volunteers and staff of the MFCF who give so much of their time to make it such a great foundation," he said. "We had a great vision of how the foundation would be. It has come together nicely and there are many more things we hope to achieve."

He also commented that he is enjoying his new role as a father, saying,



Sally and Tom Fish with Rosanne Susi. PHOTOS BY LEAH DUBOIS

"You cannot overstate just how much love you have for your child, as well as how little sleep you get in the beginning!"

"Mardy's an awesome father – spoken like a true mother," smiled Sally Fish. "He changes diapers, feeds him and swaddles him. He carries him around tucked in his arm like a football."

"This really shows the support we're getting. When you see people coming

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Tom Fish at microphone, with Matt Challenor, Zac Courtney and Rob Stein behind him.



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Joey Pappalardo, Jerry and Lynn Babicka, Joe and Gloria Pappalardo, and Sherm Hotchkiss.



Brad Emmons, Todd Marchant, Alan Temple and John Kramer.



Don and Jean Shropshire with Sheryl and Ken Dowd.

out, supporting kids that are not their own, that's what it's all about," MFCF board member Joe Pappalardo said of the turnout.

"We celebrate and we honor every child that we serve. We also challenge them to strive to achieve the highest in fitness, nutritional and personal standards. A lot of our children are born into poverty and the obstacles are significant."

Pappalardo teaches basketball at Dodgertown Elementary School, as part of their Achievable Dreams Program in partnership with the School District of Indian River County, and has seen some of those obstacles first-hand.

He vividly remembers one little girl

*"It's not just raising money, it's raising awareness. We want to see better outcomes."*

*– Joe Pappalardo*

unable to play because her sneakers were so small her little toes were pushing through. He later learned she was homeless, living with her family in a car.



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PEOPLE



Rob Stein and Joe Pappalardo.

“We took care of her, but that’s when you realize the circumstances affecting these children’s lives.”

The foundation currently partners with the School District for Achievable Dreams and with the School District, St. Edward’s School and the Gifford Youth Activity Center for Kids on

Courts.

Pappalardo said the organization hopes to forge additional complementary alliances with other nonprofit organizations such as The Learning Alliance, the Homeless Family Center, and the Boys & Girls Clubs.

“We’re taking the Mardy Fish com-

ponent of nutrition and fitness, and we’re looking for other partners concerned with literacy. We want to have kids that are fun, fit and literate,” he explained.

“We’re looking for ways to make things better for these kids. It’s our new vision. It’s not just raising money; it’s raising awareness. We want to see outcomes – better grades, better hab-

its like Mardy’s Six Healthy Habits.”

After lunch and before prizes were given out – a difficult task considering the tournament’s three-way tie – Tom Fish offered his heartfelt thanks to everyone for supporting the foundation’s commitment to fitness and nutritional excellence.

“There’s nothing better than helping kids,” said Fish. ■



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