

June 7, 2005

Good Morning:

When I first caught sight of a gentleman wheeling himself on a pathway to our door, I thought to myself, this must be Joe Tompkins.

I had been told that Joe was a disabled athlete who would travel from Washington to participate in the Abilities Foundation's Updegraff Celebrity Golf Challenge—the proceeds from which fund the emergency health, housing, and employment needs of people with disabilities.

Athletic, confident, and with a 1,000-watt smile, Joe made a lasting first impression on me that only improved as we became better acquainted.

He began his visit to Abilities of Florida by speaking to our trainees and staff, inspiring all in attendance with his up-tempo enthusiasm and determination. Later, Joe willingly accommodated local media representatives, allowing them to chronicle his life and educate viewers and readers about his achievements and mission. His impressive run continued on the golf course, where he competed at a very high level with nondisabled golfers and athletes, underscoring his commitment to a healthy, productive, and contributory lifestyle.

Joe had fun and was fun to be with.

As a nonprofit organization serving people with disabilities, we could not have scripted nor choreographed a better visit by an accomplished individual with a disability. Joe Tompkins epitomizes everything the Abilities Foundation stands for—hope, self-actualization, and dignity. It was a distinct pleasure to make his acquaintance and to share his unique outlook on life with our constituents and benefactors.

Sincerely,

Frank De Lucia
President and CEO