FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE   **Contact: Jack P. Marschall**
Tuesday, May 20, 2008   **(440) 885-8181 or (216) 346-9935 (cell)**

Parma Pride Spreads Cheer to Special Athletes

(Parma) – The expression *Proud of Parma* will take on ever greater significance this summer during the city's first-ever baseball program for children with special needs.

Parma Pride will offer special adaptive sports and recreational activities beginning June 17 at Pleasant Valley Elementary School. There is no cost for the young athletes who sign-up for the games that will be played on Tuesday and Thursday mornings.

"This is one of many examples as to how your community is geared toward inclusion, not exclusion," says Parma Mayor Dean DePiero. "We want all parents and their children to have the opportunity to 'play ball' when summer rolls around. This is a great concept by Recreation Director Mickey Vittardi and the city school system."

The Parma Pride partnership program is geared towards children with special needs who may be intimidated by traditional recreational programs. The unique three week program features T-ball games and fun activities for young people from pre-school through 6th grade. The sessions will last about 90 minutes.

"The name of the game is family fun," says Recreation Director Mickey Vittardi. "We'll wind up the season with a special awards banquet for our special athletes and their families. It will be their moment in the spotlight."

Parma Pride will be directed by special education teacher Greg Karaffa who says the games are designed for learning, motor skill development and above all, enjoyment. Registration forms can be obtained at the Parma Recreation Department located near JC Penney's at Parmatown Mall.

"These young athletes will all be recognized for outstanding effort, regardless of their team's record," says Director Vittardi. "In this league, they are all winners."

For more information, please contact the Parma Recreation Department at 440-885-8144.

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