

NY CULTURE

Paul Rudd Bowls Against Bullying

Actor Hosts Benefit for Our Time, a Nonprofit for Kids Who Stutter

Updated Oct. 22, 2013 10:21 p.m. ET

Paul Rudd was getting ready to star in "Three Days of Rain" on Broadway when he met Taro Alexander, founder of Our Time, a nonprofit organization for kids who stutter.

The character Mr. Rudd was playing had a stutter, and Mr. Alexander, a performer, teacher and director has dealt with one his whole life. After helping Mr. Rudd prepare for his role, Mr. Alexander introduced the actor to Our Time, which helps kids through a variety of programs including camp, theater and speech therapy. "I was quickly blown away by this organization and what it did for the kids and their confidence," Mr. Rudd said.

On Monday, Mr. Rudd hosted kids and show-business types alike at his second annual bowling benefit for Our Time at Lucky Strike lanes in Midtown. "Stuttering is something people don't think about much; I certainly didn't until I did the play seven years ago. We all know that it's hard to grow up; but it's a hundred times harder to grow up and have a stutter....what that does to their self esteem is brutal. Here they're encouraged to speak their voices," he said.



Paul Rudd bowls while hosting the annual All-Star Bowling Benefit. *Mikiyodo*

Jesse L. Martin, who's best known for his role as detective Ed Green on "Law & Order," was one of several celebrity team captains. "I'm not going to bowl that well, I can tell you that now," he said. "But I certainly don't want to have the lowest score."

Mr. Martin's been involved with Our Time for years. "The minute you meet one of the kids, you're just like, 'OK, I'm in.'"

A shy kid himself, Mr. Martin said "acting was what changed everything for me, the way it's changing

everything for these kids."

Before the bowling kicked off, comedian Judy Gold predicted she'd score about a 90. "I'm a horrible bowler," she said. "I'll get one strike and the rest will be in the gutter. I honestly don't know how to hold the ball right, I can't do the whole run-up thing. I also wear a size 12½ women's shoe, so I just love everyone seeing my shoe size."

Bowling shoes are also problematic for actress Alysia Reiner, who wasn't thrilled to swap her high-

heeled booties for the more traditional red-and-blue bowling shoes. "It's the only thing about bowling I don't like."



Actress Krysta Rodriguez *Mikiodo*

Like the other team captains, Ms. Reiner downplayed her skills. "I'm not afraid of bumpers," she said. Ms. Reiner, who plays the less-than-ethical prison administrator Natalie Figueroa on "Orange Is the New Black." She told us that fans' responses to her character can be visceral. "I have a 4 year old and she learned the word 'bad-ass' much earlier than I anticipated," she said.

Being big fans of the show ourselves, we couldn't resist asking for hints about the next season, which

Ms. Reiner is filming now. "If I tell you anything I'll end up in orange myself," she said. "But I'll tell you this: Every time I read a new script, I go 'No way!'"

Ms. Reiner said she was bullied as a kid, "and anything I can do to help other kids not get bullied, I'm on it."

Mr. Alexander said bullying is something he deals with almost daily. "I'm 41 and I got made fun of today for my stutter," he said. "I'm at a point in my life when I'm OK with that, but there was a long time that I wasn't. I stuttered since I was 5 and grew up not knowing anyone else who stuttered until I was about 26."

Mr. Alexander is dedicated to making sure kids don't feel alone. "Our Time is all about positive peer pressure," said 14-year-old Andrew Carlins. "You're in a group of people with the same issues and that gives you confidence."

That confidence exudes from the kids, many of whom were eager to be interviewed and ran over to us to tell their stories.

"I used to be shy to speak in front of my classmates and now I do it all the time," said 11-year-old Klanell Lee, before taking to the lanes.

"Our Time has changed my life," said his twin brother, Keon.

—Lucy Cohen Blatter

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