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Paul Rudd on Stuttering, Bullying, and How He Still Uses Humor as a Defense Mechanism

by **Bennett Marcus**

The first-ever Paul Rudd All Star Bowling Benefit on Monday raised funds for Our Time, an organization that helps young people who stutter bolster their confidence and communication skills. So how did this become the “Paul Rudd” bowling benefit?

The actor explained that he found out about the organization six years ago, while doing research for a play in which his character stuttered.

“I got to know the kids, and I came to some of their meetings and learned about the foundation,” Rudd told VF Daily at the event at Lucky Strike in Manhattan. “And I think playing a character who had a really bad stutter, I kind of, for the first time, really approached this affliction from the point of view of somebody who suffers from it,” he said.



BY ILIR BAJRAKTARI/PATRICKMCMULLAN.COM

Paul Rudd.

“I started thinking how hard it is to be a kid anyway, how hard it is to kind of talk with anybody, regardless of how old you are, but then to have a stutter, and have to contend with bullies, and, you know, just general confidence and security, that is also shaky when you’re growing up. I just really was blown away by these kids and was awed by them, really. So much so that I’m now on the board, and the play ended, but I’m still involved with the group.”

While he himself didn’t stutter, Rudd admitted he did get picked on his fair share. “I had moments, I remember, being a kid,” he said. “I moved around to so many places when I was little. I mean, up until the age of 10 I had lived in three different states, I had gone to many different schools, and so I was always trying to acclimate into new scenarios and settings, and I got teased for certain things.” Rudd quickly learned to use humor to win people over. “I think that was probably the way that I kind of tried not to get my ass kicked, or at least make friends, you know, with new kids so I would be accepted. That was probably my defense mechanism. Still is.”

Despite having his very own bowling tournament, Rudd is not an avid practitioner of the sport—although he was a member of a league back in high school—and does not have his own ball or shoes. “I just have my own wrist guard. And my own gallon of Purell,” he told

VF Daily. “Isn’t that the thing they say about bowling balls? They’re literally the filthiest things on earth,” he said, laughing.

The benefit was designed so that celebrities like Mariska Hargitay, Mehdad Brooks, Fisher Stevens, Anthony Rapp, Rachel Dratch, and Eve Plumb each headed up a team of kids from Our Time.

“I’m a crap bowler,” Amy Ryan admitted. “But, you know, I’ve got a lot of gusto, and I’ve got a lot of will power,” she added. She also had a possibly fractured toe. “But I’m still going to bowl, and we’re going to win! I’m going to take Paul Rudd down tonight,” she said.

The Hunger Games’ Alexander Ludwig freely admitted to being horrible at bowling. “My strategy is I’m going to throw the ball down the court [sic], and hopefully something happens. I’m pretty horrendous,” Ludwig said. He thought for a moment. “If I only had a bowling ball in *The Hunger Games*, Cato would not have done as well as he did.” But maybe Cato could have used the ball to whack those wolf Muttations that gnawed him to death.

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