

## Blake living his dream, helping others live theirs

By Pat O'Neill

Thursday, April 28, 2005

**E**very new accomplishment by Jay Blake seems more amazing than the last one.

The Centerville resident's latest was April 10 in Houston when his National Hot Rod Association racing team captured the O'Reilly Spring National Championship outside Houston.

"This will be tough, but if they can pull it off there won't be a dry eye in the house when they accept their trophy," said the ESPN announcing crew just prior to the race.

As driver David Ray zoomed to the finish line, Blake was mobbed by his racing team with giant hugs. For this was the Follow a Dream team and crew chief Blake's first title.

For the 38-year-old Blake, the past eight years have been full of challenges. In 1997, while working as a mechanic for a transportation company, an industrial accident blinded Blake and took away his sense of taste and smell. After recovering, Blake began a mission to prove that anything is possible if you are motivated and put your mind to it.

In 1999, Follow a Dream was founded. Blake served as a motivational speaker to schools and businesses on the power of following your dreams. Part of Blake's dream was the racing team. He had always been a mechanic and this was his passion.

"I never followed my dream. This is my heart and soul and I have shown if you're determined and keep a positive attitude, anything is possible. I think it can be very motivating for people to see that a guy without his sight can work on a 3000 horsepower engine," says Blake.

That is one of the things that sets Blake apart from other motivational speakers - he can physically show people what a positive attitude can overcome; he's not just a talking head.

"I don't just stand behind a podium; this is my love and I want to show people all the things they can do if they put their mind to it," says Blake.

Prior to the O'Reilly Nationals, Blake was on an eight-city tour in places like Indianapolis, Chicago, Denver and Houston. Upon arriving in Texas, Blake and his team decided they would give the nationals a try. The team performed well in March at a Florida race and hoped to follow the momentum. They got off to a rocky start and qualified 11th out of 16 teams, leaving Blake frustrated.

"This was our worst performance ever. We knew we had a good car, but it had a shaking problem we couldn't solve," he said.

The poor preliminary performance left the team pitted against world champion Cy Chesterman and the dream looked to be dashed. In a stunning upset Blake's team downed the champ and won the next race to make it to the final four.

Fittingly, however, the dream team was left scrambling as the car burnt a piston in the quarterfinals. After rushing through alterations, they came through again, qualifying for the finals.

"Against Chesterman we thought let's give it a shot and do our best, we were so excited to make it to the finals and felt so good to know the worst we could do is be runner up," says Blake.

The dream was finally accomplished and an ecstatic Blake ran around the infield waving his cane, hugging his crew and kissing the finishing line. This victory was the pinnacle for Follow a Dream's racing crew and another in the long list of Blake's successes.

Blake's goal now is to continue to use the racing team as his way to show people anything is possible and expand the dream even farther.

"We want to continue to look for corporate sponsorship and hope someone sees what we are doing and decides their company wants to be a part of it. We have the car, the driver and the crew, now we need the finances," says Blake.

Meanwhile the motivational speaking continues to thrive and Blake hopes to extend his message of determination and hope.

"We want to take our message West to California and continue to get more publicity for people who want to live their dreams," says Blake.

### Herald Interactive Tools



[Recent articles](#)



[E-mail article to a friend](#)



[View graphic version](#)



[Search site](#)



[Sign up for home delivery](#)