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COMMISSIONER GOODELL JOINS HOUSTON TEXANS WHITNEY MERCILUS TO DINE WITHMERCIFOR DOWN SYNDROME

*Texans DeShaun Watson and DJ Reader to be honored for their
philanthropy work!*

MEDIA - Please arrive by 6:45 PM for red carpet interviews. Media will be allowed to stay during the program, but only be allowed to speak to VIP guests and players during the red carpet hour (6:45 PM to 7:45 PM). Due to security it is important that you confirm your attendance by Friday 3 PM.

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HOUSTON, TX- Houston Texans' Whitney Mercilus, a champion for community empowerment, known for showing **NO MERCI** on the field, but off the field, he is known for utilizing his platform to give hope and touch lives. Founder of the WithMerci Foundation, Mercilus work is focused on providing advocate services and financial support to families of children with disabilities and special needs. In an effort to continue to provide fiscal assistance while giving a "hand-up" to those in need, the WithMerci Foundation presents its' fourth annual fundraiser, ***Dine WithMerci*** on **Monday, October 21, 2019 at Mastro's located 1650 W. Loop South Houston, Texas 77027. The red carpet and Cocktail Hour is set for 6:45 p.m. -7:45 p.m. with the dinner and program immediately following from 7:45 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.**

This year Mercilus will recognize two of his teammates who are making a difference, Quarterback **DeShaun Watson** and Nose Guard **DJ Reader**; along with two Houston Independent School District students from Westbury High School with disabilities who are leaders among their peers. Dine WithMerci will be emceed by **ABC 13 Anchor Gina Gaston, Original Texan Chester Pitts and Down Syndrome advocate Kayla McKeon**. Mercilus will also be joined by **NFL Legend and Vice-President of NFL Operations Troy Vincent, NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell, Houston Texans owner Cal and Hannah McNair, teammates DeAndre Hopkins, Justin Reid, Jon Weeks and many more.**

Whitney Mercilus and the WithMerci Foundation have donated over **\$375,000.00** since its inception to support organizations servicing children with special needs. In the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, Mercilus and his foundation were champions on the road to recovery. During their post-Harvey back-to-school bash "Returning 2 Learning," students within the Houston Independent School District (HISD) received FREE haircuts, hairstyles, school supplies, backpacks and meals and were able to continue this event since offering the same services and so much more. In 2017 the foundation focused on assisting children with autism, in 2018, the foundation placed its' focus on Cerebral Palsy. This year the focus is Down-Syndrome. Mercilus and the WithMerci Foundation will announce their new partners and present each with a cash donation during the event. Each organization that is chosen provides advocate services and support to families with children with Down Syndrome.

Down syndrome is a chromosomal condition that occurs when an error in cell division results in an extra chromosome 21. **Down syndrome** can affect a person's cognitive ability and physical growth, cause mild to moderate developmental issues, and present a higher risk of some health problems. October is National Down-Syndrome Awareness month.

"This is one of my favorite events because we get to not only have fun, but to really educate our donors about the heart of the WithMerci Foundation and down-syndrome. I can't believe this is our fourth year, I love working with children, and it makes my heart smile when I see the smile on the kids faces," said Mercilus.

For more information about The WithMerci Foundation or to purchase tickets to Dine WithMerci, please visit www.withmerci.org. You can connect with the foundation on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter @withmerci.

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