



IT'S
MORE
THAN
BASE-
BALL!





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MIRACLE LEAGUE ... IT'S MORE THAN BASEBALL!

This is the phrase I hear most in connection with The Miracle League of Arkansas. And from the moment you arrive at a Miracle League ballpark, you'll understand why.

When you step into the Miracle League ballpark, you know that there is something special for everyone here – from the players with special needs to our caring, optimistic volunteers. Miracle League creates unique opportunities to challenge, understand and correct misperceptions about special-needs kids.

Miracle League began with a simple thought: that parents of kids with disabilities should have the same opportunities to create treasured memories with their children as parents of typical kids. We all imagine a long, exciting list of things we'll do as we raise our kids, and many parents' dreams for their children are built around activities like dancing, music recitals, team sports and first trophies. When we learn that our child has a disability, those dreams don't have to be surrendered. Kids who are disabled are kids first. They happen to have a disability, but when our players are first treated and respected as children, fantastic things happen for them, their families and our Buddy volunteers.

Since the fall of 2006, Miracle League has engaged a variety of groups as Buddy volunteers – an integral part of the “Miracle League Moments” on the field. More than 350 Buddy volunteer hours are needed to staff Saturday games – and I have never met a Buddy who wasn’t amazed by how great our players are. Helping someone accomplish something and, as a result, learning that this person is really not very different from yourself is one of the most eye-opening and heartwarming experiences anyone can have.

Miracle League is working with great partners both on and off the field to broaden perspectives. We value your partnership on this journey!

Welcome to the greatest game on turf.

Peggy McCall, Executive Director
The Miracle League of Arkansas





HISTORY

In 2000, the first Miracle League field was built in Conyers, Ga. It was an astounding success that inspired a nationwide initiative.

Motivated by these initial leagues' efforts, the Little Rock Rotary Club 99 partnered with Peggy McCall in the spring of 2005 to bring a Miracle League program to central Arkansas. Club 99 members worked diligently to raise funds for construction of the Miracle League field and, with the help of KIDSource KIDS and community volunteers, design and construction of the first Miracle League complex in Arkansas began.

The unique facility's design included a custom field with cushioned synthetic turf tiles made from recycled tires to help prevent injuries while still providing a surface that was solid enough for wheelchairs and walkers to navigate. Completely barrier-free, the environment was also designed to allow for accessibility inside and outside the dugout by eliminating any obstacles for wheelchair, walker and visually impaired players.

The first Miracle League season opened in the fall of 2006 with four teams and 41 players. The league was opened to anyone age 4 or older with a medical diagnosis. This "Original League" follows special rules: every player bats once an inning, each batter gets on base, all base runners are safe and every player scores a run. Each player is also assigned a youth or adult volunteer to be his or her "Buddy." The Buddy's role is to assist and protect the players as they hit, run and score! Everyone wins every game!

By the fall of 2008, The Miracle League had added two leagues to its lineup: the Competitive League, for players who had played in the Original League for at least one season and understood the rules of baseball, and the Adult League, for players 19 years and older. In the six seasons The Miracle League of Arkansas has been open to participants, we have grown to include more than 375 kids in our Original, Competitive and Adult leagues.



"This is the best part of my week."

Wally Walker
Coach

MISSION

Our mission is to create a baseball league in every major Arkansas community where **all** kids can play, where **all** parents can have memories of their child on a team, and where every “Buddy” in the community wins.

CORE VALUES

- ★ Children who are disabled are kids first and happen to have a disability. We teach and show respect with this philosophy in mind.
- ★ We can show the world how to communicate, engage and experience the simple joys in life with all people – no matter the physical or mental ability of a human being.
- ★ Every child should have the chance to play America’s favorite pastime.
- ★ We never turn a child away.

As individuals in the **community** and **corporate sector** participate in Miracle League as volunteer Buddies, they are positively impacted by our players in fresh new ways. If you accept the invitation to be a volunteer Buddy for a Saturday game, you will get more from the experience than you can imagine!

VISION

The Miracle League of Arkansas shares its successes and the tools we have developed so that Miracle League baseball teams in communities across the country can benefit from our experiences. Our ultimate goal is to provide places across the nation where all kids can play, all parents can have memories of their child on a team, and people who volunteer to be buddies can share the joy of supporting children with special needs as they participate in America’s favorite pastime. We all benefit from this very human connection. We learn that while people are different, there is also a great deal we all have in common. Each person has something special to offer the world.



“Just seeing them with a BIG smile on their face makes it all worth it. It’s a great experience, and I love being here.”

Jennifer
Volunteer/Buddy





NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITY

In 2009, there were more than 1 million disabled people in Arkansas, and 30 percent of them were under age 18. Among this population of disabled children, an unmet need exists for recreational opportunities that help provide a well-rounded childhood and family experience. No other program like Miracle League in Arkansas assures parents that all safety elements are in place to provide a safe, successful game experience for the players. With the growing demand for The Miracle League program, there is an opportunity for us to expand. Miracle League will develop a plan to manage our growth and impact, based on evidence of community need, community capacity to fund the program, community capacity to supply the volunteers needed to support the program, and community leadership committed to implementing MLA's program model.

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

Players:

Children will experience the joy of playing the game, grow in their self-confidence and develop a richer social life by making friends on their team. Miracle League players often don't have the same childhood experiences typical children do. Spending the night with a friend or going to a movie are often not options for kids with physical or mental disabilities. Miracle League provides a place for players and friendships to develop and grow.

Parents:

Parents and guardians will experience the joys of seeing their child have fun, grow and succeed. Parents will also build a community with other parents. For an hour a week, they will be able to sit in the stands and enjoy conversations with other parents who understand the joys and challenges of raising a child with special needs.

Buddies/Volunteers:

Adult and youth volunteers will build relationships and develop empathy that bridge differences. Initially, our Buddies sometimes face challenges in anticipating what they should do and how they should respond to our kids. Fortunately, our players are great teachers! We create an environment for Buddies to learn how to communicate and interact with people who accomplish things differently. The ball field is a welcoming place! This experience positively impacts how volunteers feel about our kids and our program.

Employers:

When people from our community and corporate sector engage in the Buddy experience, they are touched by our players in a rare way. Our Buddies come to the field to help, but they leave lifted up by the courage and joy of our special kids and their parents. The game-day experience positively influences the employees and the businesses that employ them.

"After our first involvement with the kids, I recognized the change in the attitudes of our employees. As we got more people in the store involved, we got more requests about doing it. Eventually it became a part of our dealership.

Once our owner, John Sahene, got involved one Saturday, he recognized the effect that we had on the children (and they had on us!) He then decided we would grow the relationship and got involved in building their playground and their end-of-the-year fundraiser."

Chris Brown
General Manager
Bale Honda



GOALS & OBJECTIVES

First and foremost, we want to protect the quality game-day experience we provide for our players, Buddies and families. We never want to lose sight of the importance of this experience or forget that our **players are kids first**, our **Buddies are priceless** and our **families need to have fun**.

We plan to continue expanding the Miracle League organization and community by building a network of volunteers, community partners and funding partners. These elements are all fundamental to our success. Our goal is to build support for The Miracle League of Arkansas to increase our impact and opportunities.

PERFORMANCE TARGETS

More Smiles are produced by more players on the fields. The Miracle League of Arkansas is actively working to increase the number of our players by at least 20 percent, while preserving a quality game-day experience. As we pursue this expansion, we will maintain our focus of providing an extraordinary experience for our players, our Buddies and our families.

The Miracle League of Arkansas has also set a goal to increase the number of our funding partners – on the individual, corporate and foundation levels – by 20 percent. We plan to achieve this goal by inviting potential financial partners to volunteer as Buddies. Once volunteers participate in The Miracle League experience and share in the miracles of the game, choosing to fund our program will be an easy decision!

“Miracle League gives lots of kids the opportunity to play baseball who might not otherwise ever know the experience of being on a ball team. Team sports teach all kids important life lessons.”

Deborah
Parent





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