

Subj: **The Lineup! Kiwanis Miracle League News - Aug 2012**
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The Lineup



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Thursday, August 16, 2012

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Highlight Reel

Buddies Make the Day for the KML Kids!

Seems like we were just announcing Opening Day on May 12...and our 2012 Spring Season is history. It was a fun season, with over 225 kids playing on 14 teams. Player attendance was good. Our "Angel" buddy volunteers abounded. Walking tacos were the number one food attraction. And Mother Nature cooperated--we cancelled a late afternoon game because of rain and the last three games on June 30 because of the heat. One of our Cubs players, Dalton Johnson, hit an out of the park home run! He was so excited he almost forgot to run the bases.

Whether it's a group of school kids, a professional team, a group of corporate volunteers, or just individuals who have gotten involved in helping at the Miracle League - buddies really make the games run smoothly and safely for the players. Here's a sample of some of the buddy groups we've seen this season so far:

Southeast Polk Girls Softball Team: Opening Day on May 15 saw Southeast Polk Girls Softball team come out in force to be buddies with the kids. They formed the human tunnel to welcome KML players on to the field for the first time this season.



Barnstormers: June 2 the KML kids were thrilled to see the Barnstormers come to play with them as buddies. From our observation post in the concessions stand, it sure looked like the Barnstormers were having just as much fun as the kids, as evidenced by the photos below:



West Bank: On June 9 West Bank sent a team of buddies for the afternoon - here they are with the Cardinals:



And a special thanks to the Retail Services Team from Wells Fargo for being our "Angels" the entire Spring Season. The RS Team buddied up with the Cubs, and attended each and every game the Cubs played. Not only did they ALL have a good time, they even celebrated on the last day of the spring season with a pizza party in the pavilion. What fun!

Thanks to all our buddies - your efforts are appreciated by all!



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Volunteers' Corner

Best Seat in the House, by Al Knudsen, our PA Guy

It sounds corny when you hear it, but sometimes people say they enjoy something so much that they would pay to get to do it. I may regret saying this, but that is exactly how I feel about my volunteer job at the Kiwanis Miracle League. When we started the Miracle League in the fall of 2008, we thought we had a "professional" announcer in Scott Pierce from the Des Moines Kiwanis club. Scott has announced the Drake men's football games and the Drake women's basketball games on radio for

several years. Unfortunately that fall, Scott was on the road with the Drake football team, so we were scrambling to find someone to announce the games.

I must have been out of the room when they voted, but somehow I got the job. The rest as they say is history. With no prior announcing experience, they gave me the portable microphone and told me to have fun. I soon found out just how much fun it would be. I quickly learned that the most important part of announcing is just letting the kids hear their names as they come up to bat and encouraging the fans to cheer for them. Unlike every competitive sport you have ever seen, in the Miracle League the fans cheer for every player on both teams. It is not difficult to get the fans to cheer the kids on.

I knew going into the job that the rules in the Miracle League are a little different. Every child gets a hit and every game ends in a tie. I soon found out though, that there really are no rules, other than to have fun. Some kids hit a home run every at bat. Some kids run after the ball once they've hit it instead of running to first. Some kids take a bow and blow kisses to the crowd every time they score. Even though it hurts my knees every time I see it, some kids even slide into home! The term "it's like trying to heard cats" comes to mind. You need eyes in the back of your head to try and see what's going on in the field and at the plate just about every at bat. But somehow it always works out.

You have to remember, there is no script to follow. Just go with the flow. Just like snowflakes, no two kids are alike. I feel like I have the best seat in the house (even if there is no chair). I get the privilege of being on the field and seeing the smiles up close. By the end of the season, I get to know most of the kids by first name. Thankfully, we did put their first names on their uniform fronts just in case I forget! It is impossible to walk away from the Miracle League field and feel sorry for yourself. When you see all the obstacles that have been placed in front of these kids and how much joy they get just from playing baseball, it really is a priceless feeling. I hope the Board doesn't read this and start charging me too much to announce games in the future. But if they do, it will be worth it. After all, it is the best seat in the house and you always have to pay more for those seats!



Al & James

Another Large Group of Volunteers that We Can't Overlook

Ever wonder who those folks are that sell you a hot dog or a bag of popcorn? Or have the cold drinks all ready for selection when the players get those coveted drink tickets after a game? Those special workers are groups in the community who are also giving their time to our KML. Many are members of various Kiwanis clubs around the metro; some represent churches or other non-profit organizations. Whatever the group, they're always available and always ready to help our kids. If you know of a group that would like a shift some time, please contact Jan Burch at burchhr@aol.com. We'll add your group to our list!

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Ankeny Kiwanis members, Gavin Jerome and Larry Wetzel, love to "work" in the KML concession stand. A little birdie said they like to "test" the food as well. The super large Kit Kat chocolate bars always seem to win.

Players' Corner

Want to be an Assistant Coach this fall?

Here's your chance to help coach a team! Our goal is to have two assistant coaches on every team and we're a bit short. We're pretty easy--no practices and no tournaments! If you can commit to 50% of the games in a season, we want to talk to you. You'll be amazed at how good you will feel, working with these very special kids. So if you're interested, contact us! Got questions? Contact any of our current coaches like Kevin Shetler, coach of the Cubs, at kjshetler@mchsi.com, or Rob Baldus, coach of the Twins at robert.baldus@wellsfargo.com. With a coach and two assistants, we can be assured that we'll have

each team staffed properly. Contact Ron Peterson at ronpat103@gmail.com.

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Board Report

From the Board

It's been a busy spring for the KML board. Not only have we had games happening, but we've had the usual and the unusual to look into. The "usual" includes requests to use the ball park or studying and approving our investment policy. The "unusual" includes dealing with the birds who love our ball park as much as our players do, or the wasps who seem to want to call the KML home!

We've also had to deal with two unexpected board member resignations. Pete Hamlin, president-elect of the SE Polk Kiwanis Club, submitted his resignation in March. He and his wife have decided to sell their home in Bondurant and move to the Twin Cities to be nearer family. Not only did he resign from our KML board, but he also resigned from the SE Polk Kiwanis Club. We kidded Pete a lot, especially on volunteer worker days, as he became our chief bird cleaner-upper! His plan was to do so well that he would be promoted to restroom duty, and someone else could be on bird detail.

We also accepted the resignation of Evan Swanson, a member of the West Des Moines Kiwanis Club. Many of you will recognize Evan, as she frequently assisted at the player check-in tent on game days. She was a member of our Players Committee, active in volunteer worker days, and just about anything that came along. Life seemed a bit crazy for her and she realized that she had to give something up--unfortunately, that was the KML board of directors.

We will miss both Pete and Evan, but we wish them the best wherever life takes them next.

News from the KML Fundraising Committee

On May 17, the metro area HY VEE store managers presented a check for \$6,770 to the Kiwanis Miracle League board. This "big check" represented proceeds from the Des Moines Coupon Book sales to date. Thanks very much to HY VEE for their support!



Shown above is Jan Burch, KML board president, accepting Hy-Vee's "big check" at the May board meeting. All the Hy-Vee stores in the metro area sold the coupon books. Hope you purchased yours – there are valuable coupons that can still be used through October 2012.

The Premier Chevy Dealers have donated raffle tickets for the Kiwanis Miracle League. Winner of the Miracle League's drawing will receive an iPad. Everyone who registers for the raffle will have a chance at the regional drawing for the use of a car for a year! The raffle is now closed...and we must wait to see who our winner is. Thanks to all who participated in yet another fundraiser for our Kiwanis Miracle League.



Want to Make a Lasting Gift to the Kiwanis Miracle League?

You know what an impact the Kiwanis Miracle League has had on the kids that are playing ball on a team for the first time in their lives. We Board members have seen the smiles, and the growing confidence that these children exhibit. We want to make sure this League continues to serve the children of central Iowa far into the future.

Toward that end, the Kiwanis Miracle League Board has established an Endowment Fund. Thanks to a couple of very generous donors – we have a great start. Eventually we hope we can grow the Endowment Fund so that the League is self-supporting. Your help is needed!

Kiwanis Miracle League is a 501(c)3 organization and your contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. You can make cash donations now, or consider naming the Kiwanis Miracle League as a beneficiary in your Will. Be sure to note on your donations that you'd like your contribution to go toward the Endowment Fund.

Keep the smiles coming – help grow the Endowment Fund for the Kiwanis Miracle League!

Eagle Scout Chooses KML Again

We are truly blessed to have drawn the attention of young people in the community...young people who want to make a difference through their channels. In this case, earning that coveted Eagle Scout designation. Two years ago, Jeff Pflanz came up with a beautifying landscape idea--the large limestone boulders on the small brick patio as you come up the path to the ball park. Jeff successfully attained his Eagle Scout designation, and has now completed his freshman year at Boston College. This year, we were approached by Drew Yersin. His idea was to even up the playing field, so to speak, by designing and constructing yard signs that players could have in their front yards, announcing their involvement in the KML, just like their peers who play on the football team, the debate team, or whatever. Want a KML yard sign to announce your player's love of the KML? Stop by the merchandise tent at any KML game.



Immediate past president of the KML board, Bob Mitchell is shown with Drew Yersin, Eagle Scout candidate, and his KML yard signs.

Update on the Proposed Ankeny Miracle League

Following a public announcement on May 3, the Ankeny Miracle League/All Inclusive Playground will be a reality. To be located in Hawkeye Park, in central Ankeny, fundraising and facility planning are moving along at a pace quicker than expected. The steering committee, made up of twenty very enthusiastic Ankenyites, including members of the Ankeny Kiwanis Club, has been busy making corporate and individual calls. To date, nearly \$700,000 has been committed. Watch for further details – groundbreaking could happen yet this calendar year!

It's Time for Another Whiffle Ball Tournament



Our good friends from the Young Professional Connection have committed to two whiffle ball tournaments each year – spring and fall – benefitting the KML and other local charities. This event keeps getting bigger and bigger, with 24 teams expected to participate in the fall event. Registration is now open. Put together a coed team and plan to have a good time! Saturday, September 22, Walker-Johnson Park, 9000 Douglas Avenue, Urbandale. Register your team at www.whiffitdsm.com.

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Upcoming Events

August 16	KML Board Meeting
August 25	Opening Day of 2012 Season - 7 games
September 1	League play - 7 games
September 8	League play - 7 games
September 15	League play - 7 games
September 20	KML Board Meeting
September 22	League play - 7 games
September 22	Whiffit Des Moines Tournament, Walker-Johnson Park
September 29	League play - 7 games
October 6	League play - 7 games
October 18	KML Board Meeting
October 21	End of Season Trophy/Pizza Party

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The word "Kiwanis" in a blue, sans-serif font.

Greater Des Moines Leadership Institute
Class of 2007-2008

The Kiwanis Miracle League's quarterly newsletter *The Lineup* is published via **WinM@il**, publisher Kathryn Towner kt@wincommunications.com. Please direct questions or comments to the editors: Carol Stone, West Bank, cstone@westbankiowa.com or Jan Burch, Jan Burch & Associates, Burchhr@aol.com.

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