



# The Line Up

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Jan Burch, Editor | Article submissions always welcome. | June, 2026

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## 2026 SUMMER ISSUE

### **This Issue's Topics:**

- KML Field Gets a New Name
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## KML Field Gets a New Name



The Bob Mitchell and Jan Burch Miracle League Field.



May 9th was a special day at the Kiwanis Miracle League as two of our own were recognized for 20+ years of love, devotion, vision, and guidance in making our ballpark one of the best Miracle Leagues in the country. After the 8:30 AM game, announcer Jeff Pierson provided spectators with some history as well as some insights into the decision of the KML board of directors to name the field. Vice

President Bob Syroka unveiled the permanent outfield fence sign as the crowd cheered. Our field is hereafter known as the **Bob Mitchell and Jan Burch Field**.



Jan & Bob were recently recognized by Compass Financial, KML Foundation's financial advisor, with an artist's rendition of the field with its new name. Pictured above are Justin VanHouten, Jan, Bob, and Hannah Wilson.

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## Donation Recognition



Board member Tim Askland and Sue Askland (both are White Sox coaches) were on hand to accept the “big check” from Jeff and members of the American Family Insurance staff.

Special thanks to Jeff Shaw and American Family Insurance for their gift of \$6,000 last month. Jeff, a long-time Des Moines resident, sought out the KML as a possible recipient of his annual giving. Jeff's contribution of \$3,000 was matched by his employer, turning his gift into \$6,000!

Do you work for an employer that has a matching donation program like this? So many in the central Iowa area have such programs. Contact any KML board member for more information if needed.

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## 2026 Opening Day



**Opening Day Spring 2026**

Opening Day is always special! Thanks again to the SE Polk Softball team for taking on the ZaGaZig in another epic “exhibition game”. Cubbie Bear, always a crowd favorite, tried to intervene in the fun several times. Players paraded through the canopy of bats. Heather Mitchell sang the National Anthem flawlessly for the 19th time! Her singing has become an annual tradition! The SE Polk team served as buddies for the 8:30 and 9:30 games. Thanks also to several buddy group volunteers including Beaver Creek Youth Group, Jamie Paige’s team, and numerous individuals throughout the day. The concession stand was always busy. AND Mother Nature cooperated with a beautiful day. What could be better?

**Enjoy this photo collection from the 2026 Opening Day:**



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## Who is HOMER?



Red Sox coaches Kim Burch and Robin Kadner welcomed HOMER to the KML ballpark.

Many have asked that question. And the simple answer is: **HOMER is the Miracle League mascot.** Yes, the national Miracle League association has a mascot. And now we have HOMER, too! Be sure to get some pictures of HOMER with your players—these pics would look really good on your year-end holiday cards.

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## Iowa Cubs Staff/Players Make Great Buddies!



Shown above (l to r) Julian Medina (staff), Jason Kempf (broadcaster), HOMER, Casey Opitz (catcher), and Tyler Beede (pitcher).

We welcomed two staff members and two I Cubs players on June 6<sup>th</sup>. They made great buddies during the Royals and Red Sox game. And also a surprise—Cubbie Bear popped over! Everyone had a great time.

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## Our Growing List of Team Sponsors 2026



**Golden K Kiwanis members, Steve Dunn, Mike Timmons, and Dr. Bob Railey are proud of their club's QUADRUPLE team sponsorship contribution! Many thanks to ALL DM Golden K Kiwanis members!**

Yes, our list of 2026 Team Sponsors is growing. And thank goodness for that! We rely solely on donations from individuals, corporate contributions, memorial gifts, just to name a few. Our \$500 Team Sponsorship program has been the bedrock of our financial wellbeing. And the list of 2026 contributors is growing with many being annual repeaters! Perhaps your name or your employers could be added?

Thanks to...

### ***Kiwanis Clubs of***

Des Moines Golden K (quadruple) and Metro West.

### ***Corporate/Individuals***

Ann McGowan in Memory of Terry McGowan

Christ the King Knights of Columbus #13159

Danish Brotherhood Lodge #15

Fidelity Bank – West Des Moines

Iowa State Bank

Marcia Munger, Keller Williams Realtor  
Mary Langdon  
McAninch Corporation  
Sally Ehlert

Donors are recognized by a listing on our web site, in various brochures, and, of course, those banners you see on our dugouts! Additional team sponsors are always welcome!

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## Game Day Volunteers

We talk a lot about our many volunteer buddies—those “angels in the outfield” who assist players as needed in batting, fielding, running the bases, etc. But we rarely recognize all the loyal volunteers who are with us every Saturday, making sure that all runs smoothly, efficiently, and safely.

**Concession Managers** - Bill Keck, Carol Towner, Thom Wierenga, Jim Sanders, and Wendy Eckhardt. Hats off to these folks. Without their coordination in ordering supplies, coordinating the volunteer workers, stocking the shelves, etc., there would be no popcorn and no walking tacos!

**Our Player Check-in Crew** - Jenn Anderson, Bob Anderson, Christy Nelson, Deb Buse. These are the friendly faces that players and families first see when arriving at the ballpark each Saturday.

**Volunteer Check-in Crew** - Jan Burch, Deb Buse, Jenn Anderson. Not only do they make all the arrangements for our hourly volunteers, but they provide a friendly face to large and small groups, orienting them in the “angel” process, assuring that all volunteers are comfortable in their new roles.

**Scoreboard Crew** - Bob Syroka, Mike Musich, Ron Peterson, Bob Mitchell. These are the guys with the quick fingers, not only keeping score, but also showing the right pictures on the video board at the right time, queuing up the National Anthem, arranging for individual singers, etc.

**PA Crew** - Jeff Pierson, Tom Pflanz, Bob Syroka. What would we do without our announcers? They make the games run smoothly, make general announcements about KML happenings, and provide a bit of levity in the games as well.

**Merchandise Crew** - Robin Kadner, Jan Burch, Kim Burch. Need a KML sweatshirt when the weather unexpectedly turns chilly? These folks can probably help. Much of their work is behind the scenes, selecting/ordering merchandise and stocking. Don't forget, our "merch" makes good birthday presents.

**Opening/Closing Crew** - Bob Syorka, Scott Decker, Bob Mitchell, Kim Burch, Bob Anderson. These are the tried-and-true volunteers, especially early morning on Saturdays. Someone has to hoist the flags, clean off the bleachers, and clean up the field and total area of leaves and debris to make the grounds look ship shape, setting up tables in the pergolas, etc. And then putting everything away until the next Saturday. Exhausting? Yes Exhilarating? Yes Fun? Yes!

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## A Parent/Caregiver's Testimonial



**The Nationals LOVED their buddies from the Dowling Catholic HS Baseball team!**

*Good afternoon,*

*My children are both adult players with the Kiwanis Miracle League “Washington Nationals” team in Des Moines. Last Saturday, members of the **Dowling Catholic** baseball team were volunteering as buddies on the field, pairing up with the players to help with the hitting, fielding, baserunning, and to provide encouragement throughout the game. In the ten-plus years I have been coming to the Miracle League field and watching these athletes play, I have never seen a volunteer group show up with the positivity, sense of camaraderie, and genuine energy of inclusion that was shown by the **Dowling Catholic** baseball players. Your team brought tears to my eyes with the way they exuberantly cheered on the teams and individual players’ successes. The celebratory yells and high-fives when home run hits went flying over the fence echoed through downtown Des Moines! What a day.*

*Thank you for sending these incredible young men out to the field last Saturday—I hope it made a positive impression on them. Their service to the Kiwanis Miracle League will not soon be forgotten.*

*So much appreciation,  
Liz Johnson, KML parent*

Editor’s Note: This is why we do what we do. Kiwanis is a global organization of volunteers improving the world one child and one community at a time. The smiles say it all.

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## **Calendar of Events**

June 6 KML Games All Day

June 9 Iowa Barnstormers Event, Games 6 & 7 PM (youth only) - -POSTPONED  
DUE TO HEAT

June 13 KML Games All Day

June 13 ML Night at Iowa Barnstormers, game time 7 PM

June 20 KML Games All Day & Team Picture Day

June 22 Iowa Barnstormers Event, Games 6 & 7 PM (youth only)--NEW DATE

June 23 KML Board Meeting

June 27 Final Games of 2026 Spring Season

July No KML Board Meeting  
August 29 Fall Season Begins

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**Athletics & Yankees**

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🏆 KML NEWS! 🏆