



The Line Up

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Wednesday, December 30, 2015

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Highlight Reel



Kiwanis Miracle League Players at the Big League!



Our Kiwanis Miracle League players had a great time hitting and catching with the **Wounded Warrior's Softball** team at Principal Park on September 26th.



Fall 2015 Season Recap

Our Fall Season came to an end on October 10th. We had fabulous weather with only three canceled games due to the heat. All players and families enjoyed the cooler weather we encountered in October.

On October 17th, we officially ended our 15th Season of KML. 540 people attended our End-of-the-Year Pizza Party at HOPE Church, the largest number of attendees ever!

All the Players, as well as their family members, were able to view the 2015 DVD and shout as each Player came to bat and ran to 1st Base. Trophies were handed out by each of the Coaches. (If you were unable to attend, please contact your coach to receive your trophy.)

2015 DVD's will be available for \$5 at our spring opener.

Thanks to all who participated this past year. Our Spring/Summer Season will begin on May 7th. After the new year, you will be hearing from Joyce Byrne regarding the start of Registrations and the dates for our Registration/Clinics. Until then I hope each of you have a *happy and healthy holiday!*

Sponsors

A Big Thank You to Our 2015 Team Sponsors

Ann McGowan (In Memory of Terry McGowan)
Capital Sanitary Supply
Danish Brotherhood Lodge #15
Iowa State Bank
Marcia Munger/Keller Williams
Merrill Axle and Wheel Service, Inc.
Quester (Knowledge Technology Solutions)
Quick Supply Company
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Baldus Consulting
Kiwanis Club of Des Moines
Kiwanis Club of Des Moines FDN/Firestone USW310
Des Moines Golden K (TRIPLE)
Kiwanis Club of West Des Moines
Ankeny Kiwanis Club
Kiwanis Club of NW Des Moines



Team Sponsorships for 2016 Are Available Starting January 1st!

Ever wanted to own your own baseball team? Now you can...become a 2016 Team Sponsor!

Your contribution of \$500 will go a long way in helping the Kiwanis Miracle League continue to be available to all of our players free of charge.

You or your company will get a vinyl banner that will hang on our dugouts throughout the 2016 seasons. You'll be listed on our web site, social media and in the many brochures we make available throughout the year. But best of all, you'll be helping our players realize their dreams of playing baseball on a real team and on a real field!

Contact Jan Burch, board president, for more information at 515.457.7691 or burchhr@aol.com.

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Community Outreach



Nadine Kastner and Ian represented Kiwanis Miracle League at the first Wells Fargo Diverse Abilities Experience on October 21st. They shared information about our league and volunteer opportunities available to Wells Fargo team members.

If you know of an event or opportunity to promote our league, please contact Nadine Kastner at 515-360-0043 or Nadine.kastner@meredith.com.

Whiff-It Does It Again!



2015 Whiff-It was another great success! A picture perfect Saturday last June saw 13 teams compete for the much-coveted 2015 Whiff-It trophy! In a first for Whiff-It, the 2014 champs successfully defended their title. We made the decision to cut Whiff-It down to 1 annual tournament instead of 2, which helped us consolidate our costs and turn Whiff-It into a can't-miss event. We added several sponsors this year - Sammons Financial, West Bank, Willis Auto Campus and Zac Bales-Henry Real Estate. Together with our sponsors and 115 participants we were able to donate a Whiff-It record \$6,000 to the Kiwanis Miracle League!

2016 Whiff-It is scheduled for Saturday, June 11th at Campbell Park in Clive. Whiff-It is a co-ed, easy to play version of wiffle ball: nobody runs the bases, teams are co-ed and you pitch to your own team. Registration will open March 1st. If you're interested in fielding a team or would like to be a sponsor of Whiff-It, please contact Doug Vinsand at dvinsand@deezee.com or 515-954-0449.

Board Corner



2015-2016 BOARD OF ANGELS

Officers:

President—Jan Burch

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Mike Schneider

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*Ron Petersen

*Thom Wierenga

Many thanks to our outgoing board members Daryl Peitersen and Nick Foster. *New Dec 2015

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Players' Corner



In the fall of 2008, our family came out for the opening day of the Kiwanis Miracle League field. Our little boy, Reuben, has Down syndrome and we anticipated being involved when he was old enough. We were surprised when we were asked if he would like to play since he was only 4.5, but happy to have him join the Cardinals team. As a 5th generation Cards fan, there just wasn't any other choice! Reuben was the tiniest player that season and so cute! Miracle League baseball has been wonderful for Reuben and our family. I love that the kids are accepted no matter what. Where else can kids play baseball and no one bats an eye when a child sits in a stroller during a meltdown, plays barefooted, strips down in the outfield, and

stops, drops and rolls on the way to first base?

Reuben has come a long way from that tiny non-verbal boy, he's played every season since that opening season. We've met great people on this journey, the players and their families, the buddies that volunteer so that the parents can sit and enjoy the game. The coaches who donate their time every week, the volunteers, and board members, we know none of this would be possible without you. Thank you, Kiwanis Miracle League for providing our children the opportunity to play baseball.

Laurie and Wayne Benefiel

Coach's Corner



WHO: Will Sales, Coach of Kiwanis Miracle League Brewers, Board Member of Kiwanis Miracle League, Dad of Kiwanis Miracle League Baseball Player, Author of this article

WHAT: I offered to write an article for the newsletter in 2012, after first joining the Board. I started an outline, fleshed it out a bit, and didn't like what I wrote. I took a second crack at it and nothing came together that seemed quite inspiring or insightful enough. So, without intending to renege, I sort of abandoned the project and the final result looked a lot like dropping the ball. Eventually the deadline passed and nobody asked me "how is that article coming?" but I never really forgot that I had failed to deliver. So this time around when I was asked to help out with an article for the newsletter, I saw an opportunity for some small glimmer of redemption. Of course, now that I made a big deal out of the fact that I failed to deliver the first one because I thought it wasn't good enough, I will have artificially inflated your expectations that this is going to be some amazing article. Sorry about that. At this point, I just wanted to contribute.

WHEN, WHERE, HOW and WHY: I'll start with how I came to be involved with the Kiwanis Miracle League. In the spring of 2008 my son was five years old. He was in Kindergarten and

due to his various special needs, he was involved in a number of activities and services outside of school. Like many kids involved in Miracle League, he qualifies for certain services that are tracked by a caseworker. His caseworker always has her finger on the pulse of activities and opportunities in what I will call the special needs community. So one fine day in early spring I received an email from her about sign-ups for Miracle League baseball. I was interested in what this could be for my son, so we showed up for the registration event and got properly excited about the whole thing. For the first time, I met those central figures that we all see down at the field and they welcomed us warmly. So warmly were we welcomed that I put my name down on the volunteer coach list. At the time, we were hopeful to get started playing baseball that very summer. Alas, it was not meant to be. Locals will recall that 2008 was a big year for precipitation around these parts. So, construction of the ball park was delayed. Opening day was right at the end of September, and so began the first fall season of Des Moines Kiwanis Miracle League Baseball.

In the years since that day, my (now thirteen-year-old!) son has outgrown many Brewers jerseys and I have stayed on as coach. I have learned much about how to interact with players of many varying degrees of ability. At the start, my experience was narrow and I knew only how to interact with my own child. Like all involved with running the program, I look for ways to make participation enjoyable. I have found that it sometimes takes almost a whole season to get to know a new player well enough to do that. Like the hovering parent that I am, I also carry some of my overprotective nerves with me into a game- constantly keeping count of all my players on the field or in the dugout since some of them have a habit of trying to run off and others of them take breaks to check in with mom or grandpa.

The ball park has changed and grown. Our first short season in 2008 required walking across a span of mud and gravel to the actual ball field. Soon mud was poured over with concrete and brick and the building that houses concessions and restrooms appeared. Many a walking taco has been enjoyed in the years since. Other features emerged: the scoreboard, the lights, the pavilion, the memory garden, and that beautiful sculpture. Like a giant heart stuck in the ground, carrying a globe covered in stars, bearing handprints like a child's art project and lit at night with color-changing lights.

And also a number of inscribed paving bricks.

One such brick is very special to me. One paving brick bears the name of my dad, who passed away in early spring of 2011. In total, my dad did not have many years to enjoy what our Miracle League has become, but in the time he was here, he positively glowed with pride whenever he came to a Brewers game. He even helped me out with some assistant coaching for a couple games. I'll never forget how he called me one day out of the blue to tell me that he had bumped into one of our Brewers out in the community. He had recognized the player and said hello to him. And the player had recognized him. It wasn't any big deal, really. And my dad wasn't one to get mushy or emotional easily, but when he called me, I could hear the giant smile on his face. In that moment, he felt that his participation had mattered because a kid gave him a high-five in the supermarket. And the fact that my dad was touched by that moment is a gift that I will always cherish.

I guess what I am trying to say is that this ball club has become an important part of my life. I continue to find myself amazed by it. Amazed by its existence. Not the national organization necessarily, but by the physical structure and the actual people who breathe life into it. I am amazed as I find myself asking... why? Why do they do it? Why did they undertake to build it? Why was their time and energy sacrificed to create it? A massive amount of time. A massive amount of energy.

Let me try to explain my question differently. I know why I participate. I participate because Miracle League offers an open invitation to my son to come and play. More than that, Miracle League seeks my son out to come and play. I have a personal stake in the endeavor. My son is a child with special needs who could not play baseball in a competitive league with children his own age. Or soccer. Or football. Or participate in martial arts. Or ice-skating. Or bicycling. And the list goes on. Frankly, I'm not that bothered by the list of things he can't do. But when something like Miracle League comes along that offers him a place on the team, it's impossible not to take that list into account. It's impossible to ignore the invitation.

So here I am.

But why are the founders of the League here? Why did they build it? Why do they dedicate some four-months of Saturdays during the nicest Iowa weather to host games? Maybe a few of them have a personal stake like my own. I truly don't know. I haven't asked. But to be honest, I didn't really realize the question was rattling around in my head until I started to write this article. I certainly don't question their motives in the least. It is more of a philosophical question. The age-old question about charitable acts and altruism lingers on.

But I'm pretty sure I know the answer. That big sculpture of a heart jammed into the field is the answer. Des Moines Kiwanis Miracle League is all about heart. It is all about love. Love of children. Love of baseball. Love of high-fives.

On the field and in the supermarket.

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Year-End Giving Opportunities



Do you shop online at Amazon.com? Whether you're a casual or frequent Amazon shopper, your purchases can help the Kiwanis Miracle League!

The next time you hop online at Amazon.com, simply enroll in AmazonSmile and name the

MIRACLE LEAGUE OF DES MOINES KIWANIS as your charity of choice. Why? Because .05% of your purchases will be donated to the Kiwanis Miracle League! First time shoppers should go to <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/26-11079> to set up your account naming the KML as your charity. Frequent long-time shoppers can designate just as easily. It's a one-time thing—and will benefit Des Moines' favorite ball park! Thanks!

Save on Your Taxes While Helping The Kiwanis Miracle League

The *Kiwanis Miracle League* Board has established an *Endow Iowa Fund* with the *Greater Des Moines Community Foundation*. This is an exciting new opportunity for our friends and families to help us secure the financial future for the league and, at the same time, save big dollars on their income taxes.

Donors who give to an Endow Iowa Fund not only can deduct the gift on their federal income tax return, but can get credit against their state income taxes in the amount of 25% of their gift. Instead of a state tax deduction, which might result in a tax savings up to 8%, donors get a credit of 25% - regardless of whether they itemize deductions or not! Here's an example:

	\$1,000 Gift to <i>Miracle League</i>	vs	\$1,000 Gift to <i>Endow Iowa Fund</i>
Federal tax savings	\$ 280		\$ 280
State tax savings	\$ 50		\$ 250
Net cost of gift	\$ 670		\$ 470

*Assumes 28% tax bracket for federal and 5% tax bracket for state.

Donations to an *Endow Iowa Fund* must be made to the *Greater Des Moines Community Foundation* for the benefit of the *Miracle League of Des Moines Kiwanis Endow Iowa Fund*. Principal amounts donated to the fund are held and managed by the community foundation, and the *Kiwanis Miracle League* can draw as much as 5% from the fund annually to use in whatever way best benefits the league.

So now our donors have choices — they can make donations directly to the *Kiwanis Miracle League* for use in covering operating expenses and capital improvements — and deduct those gifts as charitable deductions on their state and federal tax returns, or they can contribute to the *Greater Des Moines Community Foundation* for the *Miracle League's Endow Iowa Fund*, and get a 25% tax credit against their state income taxes, in addition to their usual federal charitable deduction.

State tax credits are allocated to donors on a first come, first served basis annually — until the total amount of credits allowed by the state are used up. This year \$6 million in tax credits are available!

Help the *Miracle League* continue to offer a special place for special needs children enjoy playing baseball on a team — donate to the *Miracle League* or to the *Miracle League's Endow Iowa Fund*. Talk to your tax advisor about how these choices might affect your personal tax situation.



Our KML Calendar of Events

January 21	KML Board of Directors
February 18	KML Board of Directors
March 5	Players' Clinic/Registration (9:30-11:00) Coaches' Meeting (11:00)
April 21	KML Board of Directors
April 2	Players' Clinic/Registration (9:30-11:00)
May 7	Coaches' Meeting (11:00)
May 19	Opening Day

Keep up with us via

our website: www.kiwanismiracleleague.org

Twitter: [@kiwanismiracle](https://twitter.com/kiwanismiracle)

Our Facebook page: Facebook.com/kiwanismiracleleague

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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: Nadine Kastner, nadine.kastner@meredith.com, Carol Towner, cstone625@aol.com or Jan Burch, Jan Burch & Associates, Burchhr@aol.com.

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