

Grant helps kids with disabilities feel like Major League ball players

WILL COUNTY, IL(November 2, 2012) – When parents sign their child up to play in the Miracle League baseball program, their handicapped child of any ability or disability gets to dress in a uniform, make plays in the field and round the bases just like their main stream peers. For a couple of hours a week in the spring and in the fall, these players come together and feel like big league ball players.



Nestled up against Silver Cross Field, Joliet’s minor league baseball stadium, the Miracle League field is customized for the players and has a cushioned rubberized surface to help prevent injuries, wheelchair accessible dugouts, and a completely flat surface

to eliminate any barriers to wheelchair-bound or visually impaired players.

“We are set up like other youth baseball leagues and play games every Saturday during the season,” said Sharon Ferro, Miracle League Executive Director. “We have 14 teams, 12 non-competitive and this year we added 2 competitive teams.” Miracle League players across the country play by the same rules. Players on non-competitive teams ranging in age from four to their late teens can play on the same team. Every player bats once each inning and at the end of the inning the last batter hits a grand slam and all the players make a home run. “They are all winners,” said Ferro. “For our kids, playing is winning.” Players are assisted by “buddies,” community children and volunteers. “For some parents, when they sit in the bleachers and watch their child it is their only down time,” said Sharon.

Pete Ferro, Sharon’s husband, and Jim Sheldon announce every game. “The players love hearing their names over the speakers,” said Sharon. “We start each game with one of our players singing the National Anthem. He has a gift for singing.” “My son loves it when they sing ‘Take Me Out to the Ball Game’.” said Karl Maurer, whose son plays on the Rockies. “He also has his favorite bat. It has a picture of Lightning McQueen from the movie ‘Cars’ on it.”

One of the things that make the players feel official is putting on their Major League replica hats and shirts. In August of 2011, the Miracle League received a grant from The Will County Community Foundation to purchase uniforms for 165 players. “We really

appreciate the support from the Foundation. The grant allowed us to outfit our players for the 2012 spring and fall seasons which helped keep costs down for the families,” said Sharon.

For more information regarding The Will County Community Foundation visit www.willcountycf.org or reach Michael Trench, the Executive Director at (815) 744-9223.

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If you would like more information contact Marilyn McSteen at (815) 370-8421 or e-mail Marilyn at mmcsteen@willcountycf.org.

Photo Included in e-mail-Photo Caption: Miracle League Braves in their Major League replica hats and shirts funded by a grant from The Will County Community Foundation

The Will County Community Foundation:

With more than \$1 million in assets, and distribution of more than \$823,000 in grant awards through the competitive grant program since 2006, The Will County Community Foundation is actively “Connecting people who care to cause that matter.” As an Affiliate of The Chicago Community Trust, The Will County Community Foundation represents not only the Trust’s interests in promoting and advancing philanthropy throughout the region, but have available the resources and expertise that have made The Chicago Community Trust a philanthropic leader for nearly a century.

The Will County Community Foundation was founded by local residents in 2006 to serve as a resource for donors and professional advisors in the implementation of charitable strategies through Donor Advised Funds and other planning vehicles, to build endowments in special areas of interest that fund a competitive grant program annually and to hold various non-profit agency/organization endowment funds. To learn more, visit www.willcountycf.org.