



THE *Heart* OF THE TRIANGLE

Sharing the vision and supporting the mission of the Triangle area non-profit community.

The Miracle League of the Triangle

Creating an Inclusive Baseball Experience for Families

by Judy Liu, MPH

All children, regardless of their ability, benefit from physical activity. The participation of children with disabilities in sports and recreational activities promotes inclusion, minimizes deconditioning, optimizes physical functioning and enhances overall well-being. Despite these benefits, children with disabilities are more restricted in their participation, have lower levels of fitness, and have higher levels of obesity than their peers without disabilities. (Pediatrics Journal, May 2008).

Fifteen years ago, Robin Rose and Tony Withers were inspired to establish the Miracle League of the Triangle. The goal was simple—provide children with special needs the opportunity to play America's favorite pastime. Their hope was to have 40 children and at least 100 volunteers for Opening Day.

On September 16, 2006, The Miracle League of the Triangle, a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization, opened its first season at Andy's Foundation Ball Field with more than 100 players and 200 volunteers from throughout the Triangle. Less than eight

years later, a second field was built in north Raleigh. Between the two locations they serve nearly 400 players with special needs each season on 30 teams. In the spring of 2015, they expanded the program by offering an Adult League age-group and a competitive camp. Approximately 4000 volunteer opportunities exist each year. There are about now 250 Miracle League organizations across the United States, Puerto Rico, Canada, and Australia, serving more than 200,000 children and adults worldwide.

The Miracle League Vision is that "Everyone deserves to experience joy and community through baseball." Their mission is to create positive life experiences for children and adults with special needs and for their families. The Miracle League believes that all players with special needs, regardless of race, religion or economic ability, should have the opportunity to participate. There are various ways to support this organization. They partner with corporations for sponsorship opportunities. There are also several volunteer

opportunities throughout the season.

Hundreds of special needs children have participated over the years. By experiencing sports in a non-judgmental and inclusive environment, their confidence and self-esteem have grown, enabling many to increase their ability to make meaning positive contributions back to their communities.

New teams, expanded leagues and more players for the upcoming spring Miracle League baseball season mean they need coaches! The Miracle League of the Triangle is looking for Assistant Coaches to help the Adult Leagues in Cary and Youth Leagues in Cary and north Raleigh. Dedicated individuals with a heart for the players and a compassionate, enthusiastic spirit must be at least 15 yrs. old and must agree to attend a minimum of six of their team's games. A pre-season meeting will offer training and a chance to learn about your team. The opportunity to participate has grown since they hold games throughout the week and weekend.

If you are interested in volunteering, please email Cyndy Vagle at leaguemanager@miracleleagueofthetriangle.com for information.

Individuals who are interested in having family members participate in the games should register at <http://miracleleagueofthetriangle.com/play/register-to-play/>. Email any questions to playball@miracleleagueofthetriangle.com.

For information about the organization, visit <http://miracleleagueofthetriangle.com>.

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