



“FROM THE DUGOUT” ...

Greetings,

The 2009 summer and fall baseball and softball seasons are over and what a great success they were! Whether you were at Richland Park, Pine Park, Richland Elementary or Wexford Elementary you were certain see one of our 800+ kids participating in all levels of softball and baseball throughout the Pine-Richland community!

When I became President of PRBSA in 2007, it was my vision to build upon the good work of my predecessor, Tim McCarthy, and develop PRBSA into an organization that has programs for all age groups and abilities with a continuum of products that could compete with the continually changing market for youth baseball. As a Board, we have made great progress on that vision and have realized many accomplishments the past two years. Several of the key accomplishments include the following:

- With funding of 50% from the Friends of Pine Park, 2 new batting cages were installed at Pine Park at a total project cost of over \$22,000;
- Richland Township agreed to pick-up 50% or \$7,000 of the cost to renovate the Pony Field at Richland Park. In addition to the new playing surface, the pitching mound was removed and base pegs installed at various lengths for maximum playing flexibility. We have been informed that a similar agreement will be in place for 2010;
- Field Turf installed at Richland Park Batting Cages. The turf was donated by the Pine Richland School District and installed by Richland Township;
- Working in conjunction with PRSD, PRBSA added Wexford Elementary as an additional field for its softball and baseball programs;
- In-house Fall Ball is a huge success with over 250 kids participating in both 2008 and 2009. This is a 100% increase over 2007;
- A new website was developed: www.prbsa.com ;

- Training and development was implemented throughout PRBSA. Since 2007, the training staff have trained hundreds of player via clinics and organized programs. Training has occurred for both the more serious player and those players who approach baseball more recreationally. Over 36 have also been trained on the fundamentals of youth baseball. Not only is this a truly unique program for a community organization but it is a revenue center for PRBSA that helps us to invest in our kids and facilities;
- In-house uniforms were updated to represent major and minor league teams;
- Girls softball expanded their winter training program in 2009 and competed in several summer tournaments;
- A record number of tournaments in 2009 (six) were held at Pine Park and Richland Park;
- In 2008, 11 and 12 year old tournaments were held at Pine Park for the first time in PRBSA history and continued in 2009;
- Open tournament team try-outs were implemented with a standard rating criterion, and blind rating process throughout the organization for 9-12 year olds;
- Every 11 and 12 year old player who tried out the last two years for a tournament team made a team resulting in a record number of 10 tournament teams representing PRBSA in 2008 and 2009;
- PRBSA 2008 Palomino team (18 and 19 year-olds) came one game shy of making it to the World Series last summer;
- For the first time in the history of PRBSA we had four teams of 13 and 14 year olds playing in an in-house league in 2009. In addition, we had two federation teams and a North Suburban team-a total of 7 teams;
- The first Mother's Day tourney was held at Pine Park this past Mother's Day attracting 15 teams through-out our region. This was a financial success as well as a baseball success with our 12 year-old team winning first place!

Perhaps the most significant accomplishment is that in spite of the economy and competition from other youth sports, PRBSA has maintained its registration base. This is in comparison to nearly every other local baseball/softball organization whose numbers have decreased dramatically in 2009. One area we are particular strong in is registration for boys 13+ who are playing baseball in record numbers!

I attribute our ongoing success to several factors. Foremost, PRBSA is blessed to have hundreds of volunteer who give of their time to ensure that interests of all kids are being met. The core group of these volunteers is my fellow board of directors. Collectively, we spend thousands of hours over the course of a year planning and preparing for the season. Once the season begins we are responsible for all aspects from uniforms to umpires to concessions stands!

Another factor to our success is the products and programs we are offering. The PRBSA Board has made it a priority to ensure kids with all abilities are able to play baseball or softball. Today's youth has many choices when it comes to playing sports. Years ago sports such as lacrosse, field hockey, inline hockey, competitive cheerleading, to name a few, did not exist. Further, the world of AAU athletics has become pervasive in nearly every sport and baseball is no different.

As an organization we have responded to these competitive challenges by ensuring that we are providing programs and opportunities for the very talented player to a child who is a first time participant to a child who has a physical or mental disability. Unlike other organizations, we have not split our in-house leagues into "competitive and recreational" levels. Rather, we prefer kids of all abilities to play together and avoid the use of labels at a young and formidable age. In addition to in-house, we do offer programs that provide challenges to the most talented and serious of our players. This includes winter training, fall leagues and tournament baseball.

Lastly, our financial position is strong as finished the 2009 Fiscal Year with an \$11k net income and reinvested nearly \$45k in capital projects. Also, we have established mutually beneficial relationships with Pine Richland School District, Pine Township and Richland Township. This has resulted in us maximizing our resources together!

As we look ahead, we are excited for the future of PRBSA. However, we need your help on the Board to ensure that PRBSA is a vibrant member of our community for decades to come! We have open positions in all age groups and would welcome your participation. If interested, please contact one of the members of the nominating committee, David Jeter (djeter@alleghenyfinancial.com), Mike Flynn (drmike@aol.com), or Lou Schneider (coachlou@zoominternet.net).

Please look for announcements on registration for the 2010 season on the PRBSA web-site (www.prbsa.com) and all Pine Richland School District media sites. Also, please check back on the website or "FROM THE DUGOUT"... for periodic baseball, softball, and financial updates. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or any member of the PRBSA Board. Thanks and GO RAMS!

Very best,

Gary

Gary C. Hitechew
Board President