

# Memo

**To: Village Board**

**Fr: Brad Lange**

**Re: Request to name/dedicate concession building**

**Date: August 1, 2014**

Per a suggestion from one of our residents to name the concession building in Optimist Park after Paul Liegeois, I ask that the Village Board supports this effort.

Paul Liegeois, Founder/ Executive Director of the Miracle League of Green Bay started in Optimist Park in 2006. Paul had a vision and the passion to create a truly unique facility that would become a focal point not only in Allouez, but the Green Bay area. Paul spent many hours developing a team of volunteers to begin a major fundraising campaign to fund the improvements to the park, which included the expansion of the playground, new baseball field and of course the concession stand. Through his guidance and determination, Paul was able to secure major sponsorships for the new "Resch Miracle Field" and the playground "Favre Family Recreation Area" as well as many other businesses, friends, foundations, etc. to construct the concession building. The concession building has not been named after any one individual and I would support the naming of this building: The Paul Liegeois Shelter Building.

Paul's commitment to the continued success of the league is displayed each day of the season. Paul continues to spend countless hours at the park cleaning, fixing and planning. He continues to be instrumental in the hundreds of volunteers that are needed to run the league. Games are played 3 — 4 days a week and it is hard to find a time when Paul is not present the entire day.

I have attached the story of the Miracle League of Green Bay that Paul has placed on the Miracle League website for your information.

Thank you for your consideration and should you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me.



# Welcome to the Miracle League of Green Bay

**Welcome to the Miracle League of Green Bay, made possible largely by the generosity of Green Bay's Dick Resch, after whom our field is named, "Resch Miracle Field", and by former Green Bay Packer Brett Favre & wife Deanna, for whom our recreation area is named, the "Favre Family Miracle Recreation Area". Our thanks to many, many others who are noted within. Photos are proudly included on this site.**

The **Allouez Optimists Miracle League of Green Bay** is a non-profit organization that provides children with mental and/or physical challenges, ages 4 to 19 years, an opportunity to play baseball as a team member, with real uniforms, in an organized league, regardless of their capabilities. Founded in 2006, it is one of only two Miracle League programs in the state of Wisconsin to-date, with the other being in Kenosha.

## **League History**

Dylan can't walk but that doesn't stop him from rounding second base. Jennifer has Down Syndrome, but the Miracle League has given her more self-esteem than her parents ever dreamed possible. Kaliegh can't hear, but the cheers of his teammates have never been louder. These children are among the 5.2 million in our country with disabilities. The Miracle League gives hundreds of disabled children something few dreamed possible, the chance to play baseball. Yet in all their joy and triumph, there's still one thing missing - the ability to play the sport like everyone else.

## **First Ever Baseball Complex for Children with Disabilities opens in Conyers, GA.**

The idea of building specially equipped baseball fields was born in Georgia when a boy in a wheelchair showed up to play in a youth baseball program. One of the coaches took the boy as a member of his team. After that, Georgia's Rockdale

Youth Baseball Association organized games for 35 players with special needs. Soon it became evident that, while the idea was extremely well received by the children and their families, conventional baseball fields were inadequate for children with disabilities.

The grassy turf was very difficult for their wheelchairs, walkers and braces to navigate, and bumps and irregular surface made moving around awkward and dangerous. This spawned the idea to build a field with a special surface that was safe and easy to navigate for those with disabilities. Dean Alford, and the Rotary Clubs of Rockdale County and Conyers, GA. stepped forward to form the Rotary Miracle League Fund to raise money to build a special complex of facilities. A field was designed with a custom synthetic turf and handicapped accessible dugouts, restrooms and drinking fountains. This was the beginning of what is now called "*The Miracle League*".

Physically and mentally challenged children are paired with able-bodied volunteer "buddies" who assist them in batting catching, throwing and running. Every child gets a turn at bat and in the outfield, and every child gets across home plate. The point of the game is less about baseball and more about fun! The benefits gained by everyone involved are tremendous. The child's self esteem grows, they make friends, become less isolated and "just become a regular kid, not a kid with a disability."

### **Our History**

Shortly after his retirement from his electric and gas utility executive job of 33 years, our Founder and Executive Director, Paul Liegeois, and his wife Mary Jo, visited with long-time friends and business associate, Dean Alford and his family in Atlanta, Georgia. Through discussion with Alford, now Chairman of the national Miracle League Association, he learned about the history and efforts of he and his Rotary Club in establishing the Miracle League program, and viewed the HBO video about the project. Intrigued by the concept, Liegeois brought the idea back to his Optimist Club in Green Bay, and in late 2005, decided to proceed to see if he couldn't create the same wonderful program for the children in the Green Bay and surrounding areas.

With the Allouez Optimist Club already having a community park in the Village of Allouez in suburban Green Bay, with a softball diamond that it's Club already supported, Allouez Optimists Park, that park was sought after as the place for the Miracle League to play. A presentation, including viewing of the Miracle League's video, was given to the Village of Allouez Board. Unanimous approval was received in a unique agreement that allows the Green Bay Miracle League use of the ballfield, including reconstructing the field with a Miracle League specification special surface, if funds could be raised to do so, as long as the field would be accessible for other uses. The Optimist Club would cover the annual Association

Fee.

Given the site approval and with the association fee sponsor secured, Liegeois, now with greatly needed support namely from fellow Optimist Club member, Steve Seidl, set up a non-profit fund, The Allouez Optimist Foundation - Miracle League Fund, under the management of The Greater Green Bay Community Foundation, Inc., for the purposes of raising money for the field needed and the operation of the program. A Board of Directors was established. Sponsors were sought, a fundraising committee created, and very good publicity received from the local media about the unique plan. In the summer of 2006, the inaugural season, 65 athletes ultimately participated on 4 teams. Games were played on the existing dirt and grass softball diamond.

Sufficient private contributions were received so that a new rubberized surface field, a shelter with bathrooms, storage, and concession stand, paving of walkways, along with handicap accessible improvements to an existing playground at the park were constructed and ready for Opening Day and Dedication on June 16, 2007. The new field is named "Resch Miracle Field" at Allouez Optimist Park after Dick Resch, locally of Kreuger International, Inc., it's major naming rights donor. Similar naming rights funding was received from the Brett Favre Fourward Foundation. This enabled the immediate construction of the shelter and handicap playground and was appropriately named the "Favre Family Miracle Recreation Area" in honor of Green Bay Packers Quarterback Brett Favre and his wife Deanna Favre. 120 athletes on 10 teams played in 2007, in the first season on the new field. Present, The league had grown to almost 200 participants on 14 teams in 2010. As of 2013, there are now over 200 children on 16 teams in our program. In addition, one of our participating families enjoyed the experience so well that they started another Miracle League program in nearby Appleton, WI, approximately 45 miles away, having 100 athletes in their opening season in 2010. In 2014 Manitowoc is targeting to have a field ready.

Over the course of our 8 seasons of existence thus far, three major expansions have been made to the handicap accessible playground in the Favre Family Miracle Recreation Area. The latest expansion was completed in May of 2013, by community volunteers. That expansion totaled \$120,000 of new facilities. Of particular significance is that the the last \$25,000 needed to complete the funding was contributed by the Green Bay Packers and the Brett Favre 4 Hope Foundation, receiving \$12,500 from each.

Thanks to a separate anonymous donation the entire play area also has a rubber surface installed beneath it.

**League Progress**

Nationally, the concept has taken off so well, that as the end of 2012, 275 Miracle League programs are underway throughout the U.S., with over half of them either having completed a special field or have one in progress. Our field was the 75th to be constructed.