

Hollywood Indies Little League

Stan Brooks founded the Hollywood Indies Little League (H.I.L.L.) in 1995 to bring Little League baseball back to Helen Keller Park in South Central, Los Angeles. There had been no baseball at the park for over five years. After reading a news report that L.A. County budget cuts forced a cancellation of the baseball program, Brooks, an independent film and television producer and ardent baseball fan, contacted the L.A. County Department of Parks and Recreation. Brooks asked what it would take to bring baseball back to the park, and the answer was simple: money.

Brooks then began contacting friends and associates in the entertainment industry. He sent out 20 letters looking for donations hoping for 4 sponsors. He got 14. \$14,000 later, the Hollywood Indies Little League was formed. The first year saw over 200 boys and girls ages 5-16 take the field. Corbin Bernsen (MAJOR LEAGUE, L.A. LAW) was on hand to throw out the first pitch on Opening Day. Little League baseball was back at Helen Keller Park, a place with a storied youth baseball past. Both Eddie Murray and Eric Davis grew up playing the grand ol' game on the very same Helen Keller Park field.

In 1999, the program expanded to a second location, Jesse Owens Park (Western Ave. & Century Blvd.), which has been revitalized thanks to the dedication of our volunteer staff, children and families. Players continue to participate at no cost, and uniforms and equipment are all provided, free of charge. Since celebrating the Hollywood Indies Little League's 10th Anniversary in 2004, the League has done significant improvements to its permanent home at iconic Jesse Owens Park. Fifteen years later, 2009 saw twenty-one teams comprised of players aged 5-15 hit the field at Jesse Owens Park — with new bleachers, a state-of-the-art scoreboard and a dozen umpires, officials and scorekeepers to support them.

Both Helen Keller Park and Jesse Owens Park have a rich baseball tradition, but before the Hollywood Indies Little League arrived, neither had seen Little League play in over a dozen years. Now they are home to the largest Little League program in all of Los Angeles County.

In 2006, the First Lady of California, Maria Shriver, and Board Of Supervisor member Yvonne Brathwaite-Burke helped to christen two "state-of-the-art" scoreboards overseeing our two biggest baseball fields. In the League's second decade, the relationship with the Los Angeles Dodgers has grown even stronger with famous former players like Wes Parker, Bobby Castillo, Ken Landreaux, Tim Leary and more coming by Jesse Owens to offer clinics or help us celebrate our annual Opening Day festivities.

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The annual field trip to Dodger Stadium has grown every year, with kids and parents filling up our busses and enjoying a day at Chavez Ravine.

In 2012 The Hollywood Indies Little League hosted their first ever Little League Invitational Tournament. Partnering with our friends at L.A. County Parks & Rec, the Hollywood Indies sponsored a two-week tournament with four age divisions and over 20 teams participating. The home field H.I.L.L. All-Star teams finished in the top 3 in all age brackets.

One of the greatest days in our community at Western and Century happened last year in January when fifteen of the most prominent Dodgers came to OUR Park to Dedicate the two newest Dodger Dreamfields. New grass, new fences, new state-of-the-art scoreboards, new bleachers and a full paint job around the field. The first *grass infield* at any park in the County!! All compliments of the Dodgers. The Dodgers unloaded their bus and into our hearts. From Yasiel Puig to Carl Crawford, From Hyun-Jin Ryu to Brian Wilson and Dee Gordon. The blue and white uniforms dotted our fields and ran clinics for all our kids.

Now, with the tragedies and economic losses of the past few years, the Hollywood Indies Little League is being called upon to do even more. More South County programs are in danger of shutting down. Helen Keller Park, the Hollywood Indies Little League's original home, and Athens Park have asked for help, and the Hollywood Indies Little League is hoping that once again they will be able to call on the support of their friends in Hollywood to keep the dream alive.

The Hollywood Indies Little League is now in its 21st season and is still the largest Little League in LA County with 300 kids and a full staff of coaches and umpires and the enthusiastic support from family and thirty sponsors. Each penny raised goes directly to pay for uniforms, umpires, equipment, etc.

Another increase in participation is expected this season, and everyone is looking forward to more skills clinics, more coaches' clinics, as well as the annual trip to a Dodger game for the entire league. The league counts on the support of generous sponsors who understand the value of baseball for the communities we serve.

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