



JAMESTOWN MIDDLE SCHOOL

JAMESTOWN, NORTH CAROLINA

SINGLE SERVICE PROJECT

BUDDIES WITH SPECIAL NEEDS BASEBALL PLAYERS

AT



## SERVICE NEED:

### **Explain how you discovered the need your project is addressing.**

Bradley Blizzard is a Builder at Jamestown Middle School, as well as a baseball player. He found out about Miracle League of High Point and told our Kiwanis advisor that he thought the Builders should volunteer to help the players at their baseball games. The advisor then visited a game to see how it was done. He then went to the Builders Board about this opportunity.

### **Explain the actual need the project is addressing.**

The purpose of Miracle League is to provide opportunities to all children with special needs to play baseball regardless of their abilities. The Builders served as volunteers by being "Buddies" for the players; helping them to hit the ball, run the bases and field the ball. Our volunteers also replaced staff by working the concessions, ran the score board, did the play by play, performed the DJ duties including the seventh inning stretch, and two Builders got to sing the National Anthem before each of the games. Miracle League relies heavily on volunteers to do the things required to run the day of games.

## PROJECT PLAN:

### **Explain the planning process. Was a committee formed? Did club members meet and write out the plan together?**

To get our service project started, our Kiwanis advisor, John Gibbs, contacted the head of Miracle League, Ms. Theresa McKeon. Ms. Theresa McKeon gave Mr. Gibbs a copy of the schedule of games, including when the Miracle League needed

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'buddies' and the number of buddies required for each of the games. There were five games; they started at nine a.m. and ended at two p.m. They needed some talent to sing the National Anthem, a DJ, people to sell concessions, a student to keep the scoreboard, and Buddies. Once the needs of the Miracle League were understood, Jamestown Builders Club board members planned the project. After planning, the Board gave the details about what we will do, how we will help, and when the project will take place. The advisors made out a permission slip and downloaded the waiver form required by Miracle League of all volunteers. These were copied and distributed to all Builders at a general meeting.

#### PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION:

**Explain how club members implemented the plan. What was done during every day of the project?**

In the morning, the Builders arrived at the Miracle League field eager to help the kids. We started by setting up the field with the American flag, batters helmets, bats, balls and bases. Then the ladies in charge took 15 minutes to instruct us about rules and safety. We were assigned to different job positions such as buddies for the players, scorekeeper, concessions, announcing the players, score keeping and being the DJ. As buddies for these students with special needs, we helped them hit the ball, run the bases, and cheer them on. We were there for all five games for the day, from 8:30 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. We rotated among the volunteer opportunities so everyone got a chance to volunteer for the jobs needed. Two Builders even sang the National Anthem to start each game.

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Kiwanis helped to Build the Field



Getting the Ballfield Ready



Gate City Kiwanis joined us to play ball  
with the Miracle League



We helped in the Concessions



'Play Ball'

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Opening with the National Anthem



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Great Hitters of the Ball



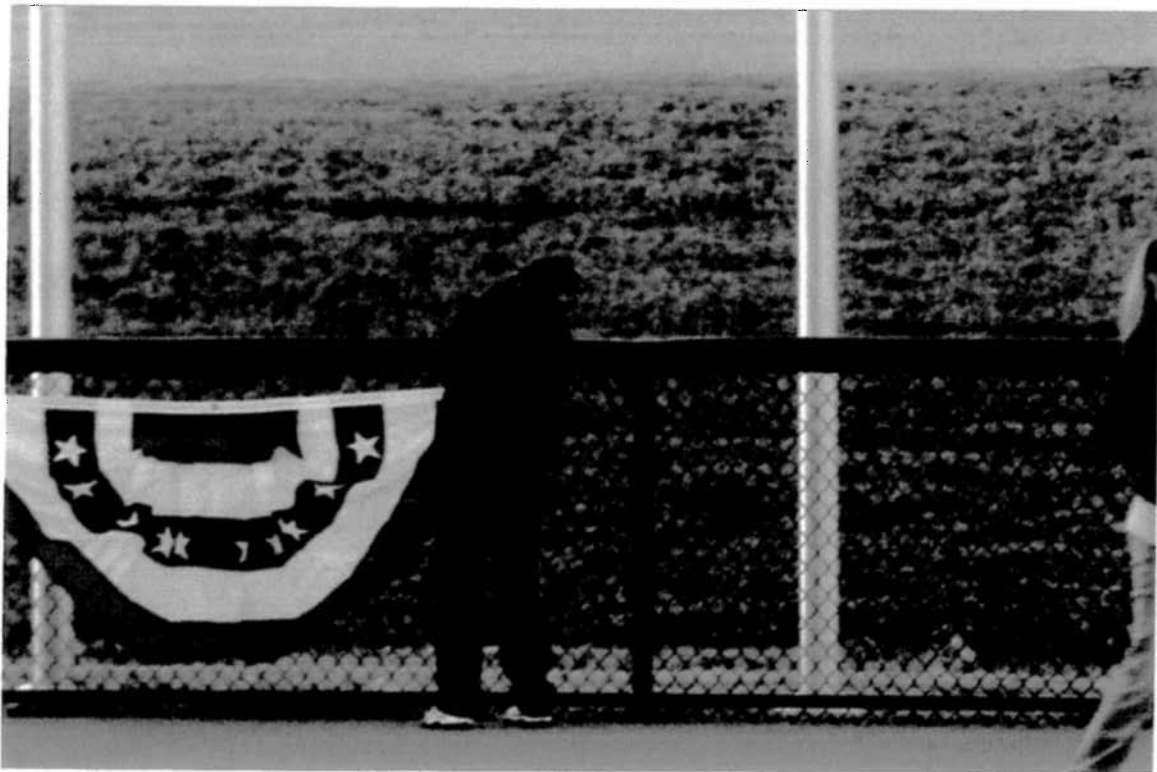
Every Batter Crosses Home Plate



Good batting - Runners with Buddies



Buddies having Fun



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SHAKE HANDS-SCORE WAS TIED

## FINAL RESULTS:

**What impact was made as a result of conducting this project? Who was helped? What was improved?**

After a long but fun day of helping others, the day came to a close. The JMS Builders Club encouraged and assisted more than 100 disabled kids with their dream of playing baseball. All of the kids got to enjoy playing baseball and we got to help them make it special. Twenty-six JMS Builders and nine members of the Gate City Kiwanis, including our two Kiwanis advisors, participated with our club that day. The total volunteer hours were around 200. We improved their self-esteem and their happiness. As a club, we impacted the lives of these disabled kids, and are so glad we got to help out at this prestigious organization.

## PUBLIC AWARENESS:

**What did the club do to inform the school, community and Kiwanis family about the project? Were community members or Kiwanis-family members invited to participate?**

Jamestown Middle School Builders undertook several methods to inform the community about Miracle League. Our club informed the school by live morning announcements and a message that scrolls on the school television throughout the day. Our principal even planned to attend the event, but was called away on a family emergency. After the event, two newspapers published articles and photographs of the Jamestown Middle School Builders Club volunteering with the Miracle League of High

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## JMS Builders Club continues to grow in size and service



Builders Club members helped at the Miracle League baseball tournament.  
(submitted photo)

**I**n only four years, the Builders Club of Jamestown Middle School has become a very popular club at the school and within the community. The Builders Club, under the banner of Kiwanis International, focuses on teaching leadership to middle school students through service.

In the past, the members met at the old JMS media center but this year's club of 90 members is so big they have to meet in the multi-purpose room.

"It's interesting to see the different dynamics of the group from year to year," said JMS teacher advisor, Julie Galuski "but the club keeps getting bigger and better."

In just three months, the Builders have answered the call to help at the Horsepower Wild West fundraiser and the Jamestown Elementary School Fall Festival, collected supplies for The Newcomers School students, worked as buddies, announcers and singers at the Miracle League baseball league in High Point and are still counting the

money collected for UNICEF (their goal was \$300). Next they will make cards for troops serving overseas, sell wreaths to fund a retreat at Camp Weaver and ring bells with the Salvation Army along with members of their sponsors, The Gate City Kiwanis.

In her second year as a Builder, 7th grader Xandria Shields had the opportunity to sing the National Anthem with her friend Ilinca Scalco at the Miracle League baseball games on Oct. 23.

"I enjoyed working at the Miracle League," said Shields. "Ilinca and I sang the National Anthem for five games and some of the players even sang with us. I also got to play ball with some awesome kids and that made me feel good."

The vision of the Kiwanis International Builders Club is to develop competent, capable, caring leaders through the vehicle of service. The members of the Jamestown Middle School Builders Club certainly seem to have embraced that vision. ♦



(Submitted photo)

*Builders Club members helped at the Miracle League baseball tournament.*

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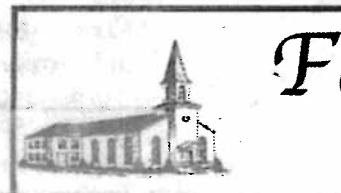
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Point. We posted pictures of the event on our Facebook page and it was shared with Builders Club of Kiwanis International.

**MEMBER IMPACT:**

**What did members learn as a result of participating in this project? Explain how perceptions about self and others were changed.**

At Miracle League we didn't just impact those kids...they impacted us too. We no longer feel just sympathy for those with special needs but empathy as well. We realized these kids are just like us and will grow up to be great people and leaders. Jim Burgio, a Kiwanis advisor who came out to Miracle League, said, "I have routinely given my money to support Kiwanis causes but being out there with the children and seeing their faces filled with joy has changed my heart. I think in the future I will find more of my time to give in support of our work." It made us feel good; we helped these kids play a game that they couldn't have done without our help. We Builders were overcome with joy to see the smiles on their faces. Afterwards, we felt like we've known these kids forever and will always have a special place in our hearts.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

**Share any additional information you feel is important to educating others about this service project.**

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

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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. 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."

The Miracle League" is a charitable organization that provides children with mental and/or physical challenges an opportunity to play baseball as a team member in an organized league. There is something about playing the game of baseball that lights up youngsters' eyes, but for children facing physical and mental challenges, that opportunity can often be a difficult first step. The Miracle League gives these children the opportunity to get out in the sunshine, and enjoy playing the game of baseball in its purest form.

**"EVERY CHILD DESERVES A CHANCE TO PLAY BASEBALL"**

Downloaded from <http://www.edpricetriad.com/MiracleLeague/History.html>

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