



GOOSE CREEK

CONSOLIDATED INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

The YMCA Miracle League's Astros and Yankees finished up their season with a game at Ronnie Kluch Field at Ross S. Sterling High School.

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Teaming Up for Success

With all the excitement of the Major League Baseball World Series, the YMCA Miracle League's Astros and Yankees finished up their season with a game at Ronnie Kluch Field at Ross S. Sterling High School.

No one knows who actually won, but judging by all the happy smiles from the players and the spectators, everyone was a winner!

The Miracle League adaptive baseball program was made possible through a partnership between Goose Creek CISD and the Baytown Family YMCA and is part of a national program. The idea came from a conversation between Lee Brillhart, YMCA associate community executive director, and Dr. Tom Kelchner, Goose Creek CISD special education director, about the need for programs for special needs children.

Before long, Brillhart was coordinating the Miracle League with assistance from YMCA staff and volunteers from the district. Ariel Reitmeier, a YMCA lead staff member, handled the "buddy" training. Each player usually has more than one "buddy" to assist him or her during the games and to ensure the safety of the players.

The 14 athletes typically play at a field at the Baytown YMCA, which was renovated last spring on A Day of Caring by volunteers from ExxonMobil and Covestro.

"They built dugouts, put in a sprinkler system and made the field adaptable for special needs children," said Blake Knight, YMCA community executive director.

For this closing day game and ceremony, however, it was a special treat for the kids to play at the RSS field, and since RSS head baseball coach Adam Shibley and many of his players had helped out at every game, this



Miracle Team Astros player Adam Powell prepares to hit the ball with help from "buddies" Ivan Preciado Lee High School baseball player Lexi Lorentzo.



Keaton Kohler and "buddy" Makaylah Stephens round the bases during the Miracle League closing day baseball game at the Ross S. Sterling High School baseball field.

Andrew's aunt, M.J. Soriano, teacher at Horace Mann Junior School, loves to watch them play and hasn't missed a game. Andrew, a kindergarten student at Stephen F. Austin Elementary, even took a break from the game to discuss what he likes about this baseball team.

"My buddies, Josh and Cooper!" said Andrew. "I hit the ball so hard!"

Vickie Bookout, grandmother of player Landon Bookout, Carver Elementary fourth grader, has enjoyed watching her grandson, who hits the ball almost like a pro.

"This is a marvelous program. They're learning the basics of baseball, and I think some of them in the future will be able to be on community and school ball teams," said

was a special day for them, too. Players from the Robert E. Lee and Goose Creek Memorial high school baseball teams as well as other community members also volunteered during the season, so the Miracle League players have had plenty of attention.

"The district has been fantastic to work with," said Knight. "We've been overwhelmed with volunteers!"

Parents, grandparents and other family members have enjoyed the games as much as the players, since they have had the opportunity to watch from the sidelines or the stands.

"I think it's awesome. It gives him an opportunity to participate in sports that he would not have otherwise," said Linda Rye, vocational adjustment coordinator for Goose Creek CISD, about her son Andrew, who wears Number 2 for the Yankees.

Bookout. "I don't think we could do it without the 'buddies.' They make it so organized."

Kathie Smith, special education clerk for Goose Creek CISD, was pleasantly surprised with the progress her grandson Adam Powell, a second grader at Carver Elementary, has made during the season.

"The first few games, we had trouble getting him on the field, so the whole family went out there with him," said Smith. "At the end of this game, he didn't want to come off the field!"

No baseball season is complete without certificates, trophies, pictures, and, of course, hot dogs - and the Miracle League's seven-game season was not any different. Each player was recognized, and proud family members snapped pictures with cameras and cell phones. Several grabbed a hot dog to go.

Although the Miracle League baseball season has ended, other sports will be offered, and the baseball program will begin again in March or April. Until then, the young athletes will have their trophies, their pictures and the happy memories of when it was their time to shine on the baseball field.

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