A Partnership Between Major League Baseball and The United States Conference of Mayors

2020
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Vice President

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Mayor of Miami
Second Vice President

Tom Cochran
CEO and Executive Director

The United States Conference of Mayors is the official non-partisan organization of cities with each city represented in the Conference by its chief elected official, the mayor.
The 2020 Mayors PLAY BALL year launched during the 88th Winter Meeting of the United States Conference of Mayors (USCM) with remarks from Major League Baseball (MLB) Chief Baseball Development Officer Tony Reagins who this year was accompanied by members of the 2020 USA Softball Olympic Team. Catcher Aubree Munro addressed the plenary luncheon as mayors gave the team a standing ovation and rousing send off as everyone eagerly looked forward to supporting the women during the upcoming 2020 Olympic Games. The 2020 PLAY BALL Booth featured the 2019 World Series Championship Commissioner’s Trophy and the Washington Nationals mascot Screech.

In early March, USCM President Bryan K. Barnett joined Mesa Mayor John Giles and Tempe Mayor Mark Mitchell, for a special PLAY BALL event in Mesa during a Texas Rangers vs. Chicago Cubs Spring Training game. Prior to the game the mayors participated in one of the only 2020 Mayors PLAY BALL events before covid-19 restrictions impacted our nation’s ability to gather for youth sports.

On what would have been Opening Day weekend, when thousands of fans would have been packing the stands and millions more watching baseball on television, USCM in partnership with MLB, released a short film, *The City Behind Us: The Story of the Elmora Troopers.* The film highlights the Elmora Troopers’ journey to the 2019 Little League World Series – a goal never before achieved in the city of Elizabeth, New Jersey. Many of the Elmora Troopers players first participated in USCM’s PLAY BALL program.

*The City Behind Us* gave fans across the country the chance to watch a story that shows how the little league team caught the attention and love of their city, and eventually the whole nation. During the team’s championship run, Major League
players such as Anthony Rizzo of the Chicago Cubs adopted the “Jersey Shake” as a post-home run celebration in recognition of the team and ESPN began airing their games during peak ratings hours.

The short film is currently screening in film festivals and has been featured viewing on MLB.com. Some of the 2020 Film festival’s *The City Behind Us* has appeared and placed are:

- Montreal Independent Film Festival
- Woods Hole Film Festival
- Jersey Shore Film Festival (awarded best documentary short film)
- Monmouth Film Festival (awarded best New Jersey film)
- The Short Films Awards (awarded best documentary short film, nominated for best directing & best editing)
- Venice (CA) Shorts
- Dumbo (Brooklyn) Film Festival
- Seattle Film Festival (Official nominee)

The pandemic has been a turbulent time for cities and youth baseball and softball. When schools closed and parks and recreation programs were limited by stay at home orders, The United States Conference of Mayors PLAY BALL Program pivoted to becoming virtual with the Mayors PLAY BALL Facebook page and PLAY BALL At Home. Throughout the spring and summer mayors turned to social media to share drills for young people and their families to play inside as well as safely outdoors.

Mayors sent a strong message to the young people in their cities on the importance of honoring Negro League baseball legends when the mayors tipped their caps for the Negro Baseball League’s 100th Anniversary on August 16, 2020. As part of the centennial celebration, mayors shared videos of their cities’ historic connections to Negro League players and teams. Additionally, photos of America’s mayors, in collaboration with the African American Mayors Association, tipping their caps was featured on a special mayors section on The Negro League Baseball Museum website.
For the first time MLB post-season had to be held in neutral locations which provided a unique opportunity for San Diego Mayor Kevin Faulconer, Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner and Arlington, TX Mayor Jeff Williams. The Mayors joined Baseball Commissioner Robert D. Manfred, Jr. on a special program to discuss the 2020 Postseason and the neutral locations. MLB and the mayors felt it was important that baseball fans around the world heard how it would work, how each city would be supporting the postseason, and, more importantly, what they believed it meant for baseball fans in these cities and throughout the nation.

Next year, when appropriate safety protocols are set and we resume gathering, PLAY BALL mayors will help lead the charge in bringing back baseball and softball to cities throughout the country with 2021 Sandlot Mayoral PLAY BALL events.
88th Winter Meeting in Washington, DC

Major League Baseball (MLB) Chief Baseball Development Officer Tony Reagins addresses the nation’s mayors during the 88th Winter Meeting.

2020 USA Softball Olympic Team Players help launch the 2020 PLAY BALL Program.

2020 USA Softball Olympic Team Catcher Aubree Munro spoke to the mayors during the luncheon on behalf of the team players.
USCM PLAY BALL Youth Ambassador enjoyed taking photos with mayors and the 2019 World Series Championship Commissioner’s Trophy. Mayors had an opportunity to pose with the team, trophy, and Screech at the PLAY BALL Booth.
Mayors pose with Clark Mascot during the Texas Rangers vs. Chicago Cubs Spring Training game. For the past two years, the Mayor’s PLAY BALL Program has encouraged MLB Spring Training cities to host mayoral events in March to bolster youth impact locally. Due to COVID-19 baseball was halted and this was one of the only official PLAY BALL events held in 2020.
ELMORE TROOPERS MOVIE

YOUTUBE.COM
The City Behind Us: The Story of the Elmora Troopers
For Immediate Release  
Saturday, March 28, 2020  
Contact:  
Sara Durr, sdurr@usmayors.org, (202) 215-1811

**New Baseball Short Film Chronicles Elmora Troopers’ Journey to 2019 Little League World Series**

*The Elmora Troopers, a little league team from Elizabeth, New Jersey, overcame the odds to captivate their city and the nation*

(Elizabeth, New Jersey) – On what would have been Opening Day weekend, when thousands of fans would have been packing the stands and millions more watching baseball on television, the United States Conference of Mayors (USCM) in partnership with Major League Baseball, is releasing a short film, *The City Behind Us: The Story of the Elmora Troopers*. The film highlights the Elmora Troopers’ journey to the 2019 Little League World Series – a goal never before achieved in the city of Elizabeth, New Jersey.

Many of the Elmora Troopers players first participated in USCM’s PLAY BALL program, a joint initiative launched in 2015 with Major League Baseball, which encourages mayors to engage with citizens, families and their respective city departments to organize individual and community “PLAY Ball” events. More than 350 mayors participated in the program in 2019.

Just yesterday in a letter to fans, MLB Commissioner Robert Manfred said, “While we aren’t on the field today, there will still be plenty of baseball for you to watch.” The City Behind Us will give fans across the country the chance to watch a story that shows how the little league team caught the attention and love of their city, and eventually the whole nation. During the team’s championship run, Major League players such as Anthony Rizzo of the Chicago Cubs adopted the “Jersey Shake” as a post-home run celebration in recognition of the team and ESPN began airing their games during peak ratings hours.

The documentary can be viewed here: [LINK]

“I couldn’t be more proud of our team, our coaches, the parents or the entire Elizabethtown community,” said Elizabeth, New Jersey Mayor J. Christian Bollwage. “The Elmora Troopers showed us what baseball is all about, and it’s more than just what takes place on the field. I look forward to being able to watch their continued success, and for the Mayors PLAY BALL Program to continue to grow and inspire young people to take part in America’s pastime.”

Mayor Bollwage has been one of the biggest supporters of PLAY BALL events since the program’s inception. Many of the Elmora Troopers players participated in Mayor Bollwage’s first PLAY BALL event.

“This short film reminds us that baseball still has the unique ability to bring us all together, even during a time when we must be physically apart,” said Tom Cochran, USCM CEO and Executive Director. “The Elmora Troopers 2019 season serves as a light in the darkness during these tough times, and I’m proud that the Mayors PLAY BALL initiative was able to play such an important role in fostering a love of baseball among youth in Elizabeth, New Jersey and across the country. We hope this film will inspire other youth to play baseball and to have a community rally around them as the city of Elizabeth did.”

In 2019, the Mayors PLAY BALL initiative engaged over 37,303 youth in USCM reported events held across the United States. To learn more about the Conference’s PLAY BALL initiative, click here.

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*About the United States Conference of Mayors – The U.S. Conference of Mayors is the official nonpartisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more. There are nearly 1,400 such cities in the country today, and each city is represented in the Conference by its chief elected official, the mayor. Like us on Facebook at facebook.com/usmayors, or follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/usmayors.*
A message from The United States Conference of Mayors President Rochester Hills, MI Mayor Bryan K. Barnett encouraging mayors and kids to stay active and PLAY BALL while we wait for baseball to return!
Check out how Mayor McKinley Price of Newport News, VA has been getting out in the back yard with his family.

Happy Jackie Robinson Day!

"Jackie Robinson is not an abstraction in Pasadena, he is still a presence in this town and his family is still here. We have a lot of Robinsons in Pasadena and they are a valuable part of the community. Jackie's legacy really lives on. We've made sure that kids growing up here know who Jackie was and what he contributed to the nation," said Pasadena Mayor Terry Tornek as he reflected Jackie Robinson's legacy and how he saw Robinson play at Ebbets Field... See More

Watch Elizabeth, NJ's Elmora Troopers "selfie video" about staying safe and staying sharp.
TIPPING YOUR CAP

“I’m tipping my cap in honor of the Centennial of the Negro Leagues
Rochester American Giants

Mayor Lovely Warren
City of Rochester

1920-2020
NEGRO LEAGUES 100TH ANNIVERSARY
Elizabeth, NJ Mayor J. Christian Bollwage

Remembering the heritage and tradition of Negro Leagues Baseball is something all of us in Elizabeth are proud to support. Last month, we recognized three great players, two of which got their start in Elizabeth: Bo Wallace, Don Newcombe and Robert Scott, who settled in Elizabeth. It is their legacy, as well as other players from Elizabeth, that encourages our youth to play America’s favorite pastime - specifically, our Elmora Troopers team, who advanced all the way to the Little League World Series last summer,” said Mayor J. Christian Bollwage. “Each August, we participate in the Play Ball initiative, however due to the pandemic, we cannot gather to play this year, but I still tip my hat to all of baseball players, past and present throughout our nation. Whether you are tossing a ball around at home or playing in one of our City’s or Country’s many great leagues, the sport of baseball has a positive effect on our community; it continues to be a great way to connect and promote a healthy and active lifestyle.”

Huntington Beach, CA Mayor Lyn Semeta

In Huntington Beach, California, we have produced great players, and one of our Little League teams even won the World Series in 2011. But we’re especially proud to know that in 1950, Jackie Robinson, my fellow UCLA alum and Kansas City Monarch, came to Orange County to portray himself in the film “The Jackie Robinson story”. We know that Mr. Robinson’s legacy has and will continue to inspire young ball players in our region for generations to come.

Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti

“The Negro Leagues counted among its ranks so many American greats, including my Dodgers’ very own Roy Campanella and Jackie Robinson — heroes who razed the color barrier and showed us what’s possible when opportunity is extended to everyone,” said Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti. “L.A. is a city of dreamers and doers — and in this moment of reimagining, that legacy of service and sacrifice moves us to dream bigger, swing harder, and run faster toward a more equitable world.”

Nashville Mayor John Cooper

“Tom Wilson, a Nashvillian, was a pioneer for securing baseball for the Black population in our city. He started The Nashville Elite Giants in 1921 which played in both the Southern and National Negro Leagues. The team had six successful seasons. Roy Campanella, Leon Day, and Junior Gilliam wore the team jersey at one point during their legendary careers. I have great respect and gratitude for what the League and its players have done for the sport of baseball and providing a significant economic and cultural influence on the entire nation. Nashville and the country should be proud.”
New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio

“I tip my cap to the Brooklyn Royal Giants, and to the Negro League teams and players across the country who not only changed America’s game, but changed America for the better,” said Mayor de Blasio. “This is not just about our love of the sport of baseball. This is about justice, learning from our shared past and being inspired by those who overcame incredible struggles.”

Mayor McKinley Price, DDS, Newport News, VA

Newport News is rich in its history of the Negro League. James “Poo” Johnson, a lifelong native of the city remembers when he was young, baseball was the dominant sport played, & vividly remembers when the Negro League often played in Newport News & many of its well known players. Willie Mays lived with him after being drafted in the Army while stationed at Fort Eustis in the early 1950’s, calling himself an “honorary Newport Newsian.” Joe Durham, a native of Newport News, & a graduate of my high school alma mater, played for the Negro League & later was a coach. The City of Newport News is proud to have been one of the stops for the Negro League & we send our congratulations on their Centennial.

Toledo Mayor Wade Kapszukiewicz said

“While we recognize the important role the Negro Leagues played in strengthening the sport of baseball and advancing the cause of civil rights, this year’s 100th anniversary is also a bittersweet reminder of our country’s long and troubled history of racial inequality.

Our city is proud that the first African American to ever play Major League Baseball did so in Toledo — when Moses Fleetwood Walker took the field for the Toledo Bluestockings in 1884, he broke the major league color barrier 63 years before Jackie Robinson. But we also understand that many thousands of other players never got their shot at the big leagues simply because of the color of their skin.

The Negro Leagues helped highlight the talents of such pioneers as Josh Gibson, Cool Papa Bell and Satchel Paige, and in so doing, paved the way for greater equality — both on the diamond and in society as a whole.”

Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms

“Atlanta holds great weight in the history of American sports, including serving as home to the National Negro League’s Atlanta Black Crackers and to baseball legends such as Hank Aaron,” said Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms. “Congratulations on celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the National Negro League and thank you for building a path that can make dreams into reality.”
MEDIA ADVISORY
October 5, 2020

MAYORS OF NEUTRAL SITE CITIES AND COMMISSIONER MANFRED USHER IN 2020 MLB POSTSEASON IN SPECIAL VIDEO GREETING TO FANS

Beginning Today, San Diego, Los Angeles, Houston and Arlington Will Be Locations of First Neutral Site MLB Postseason Games in Baseball History

WHO:
- Baseball Commissioner Robert D. Manfred, Jr.
- Hon. Kevin L. Faulconer – Mayor, San Diego (Calif.)
- Hon. Eric Garcetti – Mayor, Los Angeles (Calif.)
- Hon. Sylvester Turner – Mayor, Houston (Texas)
- Hon. Jeff Williams – Mayor, Arlington (Texas)

WHAT:
In association with their long-standing partnership, the U.S. Conference of Mayors and Major League Baseball are sharing a video to commemorate the first-ever neutral site MLB Postseason in baseball history. Commissioners Manfred and the Mayors of each respective host ballpark’s city recorded the video as a special message to fans about the 2020 MLB Postseason.

VIDEO: https://www.mlb.com/video/postseason-gets-warm-welcome?r=most-popular

ABOUT MLB & U.S. CONFERENCE OF MAYORS
Since 2013, hundreds of Mayors from all 50 United States, Washington D.C., and Puerto Rico have organized community-based events to engage youth, parents and families to participate in free, fun, baseball & softball activities in their cities as part of the “PLAY BALL” initiative. Thousands of youth have participated in these activities that are part of the “PLAY BALL” program, which is baseball’s largest collective effort to promote and highlight the many fun, casual, amateur baseball and softball can be played. More information can be found at www.ymca.net.

ABOUT THE 2020 MLB POSTSEASON
Beginning in the Division Series, Cups have shifted to neutral site locations for the duration of the 2020 Postseason due to health, safety and competitive considerations. American League games from the Division Series forward will be held in Los Angeles and San Diego, and National League games from the Division Series forward will be played in Arlington and Houston. In the first venture into Postseason or modern history, Series One of the 2020 World Series on FOX is set for Tuesday, October 20 at the new home of the Texas Rangers, Globe Life Field in Arlington, Texas. A potential Game Seven of the World Series is scheduled for Wednesday, October 28.
- San Diego’s Petco Park will host the American League Division Series, which are presented by Ball, that features the matchups with the winners of the ALDS and ALCS Wild Card Games.
- The Winner of the ALDS will face the winner of the NLDS.
- Both of the ALDS will be scheduled for Mondays, October 5th through October 9th.
- Arlington’s Globe Life Field will host the National League Division Series, which are presented by CapitalOne, that includes the winners of the NLCS and ALCS.
- Houston’s Minute Maid Park will host the NLDS with the winners of the 2020 and 2019 Wild Card Series. Both of the NLDS will be scheduled for Mondays, October 5th through Sunday, October 11th.
- Arlington’s Globe Life Field will host the 2020 World Series Championship Series, which is presented by CapitalOne, from Sunday, October 11th through the end of the Series. The ALCS will be exclusively presented by TBS.
- Arlington will stage the National League Championship Series, which is presented by Camping World, from Monday, October 19th through the end of the Series.
- All games broadcast on FOX, TBS, and MLB Network will be available to MLB TV subscribers who are authorized subscribers to the applicable network through a participating pay TV provider. ESPN Radio will provide live national coverage of all 2020 MLB Postseason games. The 2020 Postseason schedule, subject to change, accompanies this press release and can be viewed in its entirety at MLB.com/postseason.

Contact: Steve Arzech, Major League Baseball, (718) 614-3487, steve.arzech@mlb.com
# 2019 PLAY BALL CITIES

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Please Visit
usmayors.org/play-ball