

IN THE COMMUNITY



PEPSI REFRESH PROJECT

BREWERS PARTNER WITH THE MIRACLE LEAGUE



The Milwaukee Brewers and Pepsi go above and beyond the call when asked to help those in need.

The Miracle League of Milwaukee strives to do the same thing when addressing the needs of mentally and physically challenged kids. So, it seems that a joint effort between the three organizations would be as natural as combining baseball, brats and beer.

The Miracle League of Milwaukee, which is part of a national organization, intends to bring the first universally-accessible baseball league to the community. While the Miracle League of Milwaukee venture is still in its infancy stages, the League has already hit a home run – thanks to the Brewers and Pepsi. Specifically, the Brewers have nominated the Miracle League of Milwaukee as an MLB Pepsi Refresh Project idea for a \$200,000 grant. The Brewers, who are

one of 15 teams across Major League Baseball competing in the five-week long campaign (which began on July 13), are asking its fans to join them in making a difference in the Milwaukee community.

“The Pepsi Refresh Project is akin to All-Star voting,” said Brewers Director of Business Operations, Teddy Werner, who is also one of the co-founders of the Miracle League of Milwaukee. Fans can submit up to 10 votes every day between now and August 17 by either texting ‘Brewers’ to 76462 or by visiting MLB.com/PepsiRefresh and voting for the Brewers.”

Time is of the essence if the Milwaukee Miracle League is to find itself in the running for the Pepsi funding.

“We have five weeks to drive the vote,” said Brewers Vice President and General Counsel, Marti Wronski, who joined Werner as a co-founder of the Miracle League of

Milwaukee. “Admittedly, the fact that the team was on the road for the first 10 days of the campaign presented some challenges, but we are confident that Brewers fans – who have been historically successful at throwing their support behind our ‘VOTE BREWERS’ efforts – will get out the vote for the Miracle League of Milwaukee.”

What exactly is the Miracle League of Milwaukee?

The Miracle League was created in 1998 by the Rockdale Youth Baseball Association in Conyers, GA and now has more than 100 completed fields around the country – including Miracle League fields in the Fox Valley, Green Bay, Kenosha, and LaCrosse. The Miracle League of Milwaukee was assembled in 2009 by a group of friends with able-bodied children who love kids and baseball and were looking to give back. Over the past year, the group has identified a site

PEPSI REFRESH PROJECT



Proposed Site / Aerial View



and begun work on permits and construction designs for the complex.

“To this point, we have been very deliberate about this project – we simply need to get it right for these kids!” said Wronski.

The Miracle League of Milwaukee will be an organized, non-competitive baseball league for children, ages 4-19, with physical and/or mental disabilities. The League, which will have organized teams and a summer-long schedule with multiple games per week, will fill an important need in Milwaukee by providing a recreational opportunity for

youth with special needs and their families. Not only will the athletes make new friends, be part of a team, and look forward to the excitement of weekly games; they may experience improvement in their motor skills, attention and interest span, social skills, and self-esteem. Yet, due to the physical (and competitive) barriers of playing on the uneven surfaces of natural grass fields, children with special needs cannot participate in conventional youth leagues. Thus, the Miracle League of Milwaukee will require a custom-designed, rubberized turf field that is handicap-accessible, accom-

modating wheelchairs and other assertive devices (while helping to prevent injuries). Further, the League requires other amenities unique to the circumstances, such as larger dugouts (with protection from the heat) and equipment. Miracle League of Milwaukee athletes will be recruited from throughout the region.

“This league will be open to kids with a vast array of disabilities,” said Wronski. “We will have staffing, accommodations and programming in place to make this league accessible and fun for nearly all children, regardless of the struggles they may face.”

Integral to the Miracle League concept is its buddy program, through which able-bodied kids are paired with Miracle League players during the entire game.

“There is no doubt that all of the kids involved in this program will benefit in ways that cannot be captured in words,” added Wronski. “What better way to create an understanding of those who may seem a bit different, while forging new friendships for everyone involved.”

If the Miracle League of Milwaukee wins the \$200,000 grant from Pepsi, the money will go toward building the field, which will be located off Brown Deer Road on the John C. Cudahy YMCA site.

“Not only are we looking to build a baseball field,” said

Werner. “But we plan to build an entire complex, with a concession stand, handicap-accessible restrooms, and a handicap-accessible playground. We want the Miracle League of Milwaukee to be a destination for families in our community who may not be able to participate in your ordinary little league.”

The first phase of the facility will cost approximately \$1,000,000 to build and the funds will generally be raised by the Miracle League of Milwaukee Board through conventional fundraising mechanisms.

“Despite the long fundraising road ahead,” said Wronski, “we are thrilled to have

received a donation in the amount of \$250,000 over two years from the Werner Family Foundation. The Werner family shares our love of kids and baseball and demonstrated that love, together with their dedication to giving back to one’s community, through this donation. Our great hope is that other organizations will be excited about this donation and follow the Werner’s lead.”

“The more we do this, the more we learn how very real and dire the need is in the Milwaukee area for a facility that meets the needs for those with disabilities,” Werner said. “There’s a need to create a place where they can be ‘regular kids’ hanging out and having fun with their friends

and family.”

So, don’t forget to vote NOW – Text BREWERS to 76462 or go to www.mlb.com\pepsirefresh and click VOTE NOW for the Brewers. Fans can vote 10 times each day for the project.

With your vote, Milwaukee will be that much closer to building a true field of dreams for thousands of members of this community.

To learn more about the Miracle League of Milwaukee, visit the League’s website at www.miracleleaguemilwaukee.org. 