

Grand Opening of Refurbished Oakbrook Park Baseball Field at Oakbrook Homes

On August 3rd, Reading Housing Authority (RHA) , in conjunction with the Reading Fightin' Phils, Olivet Boys & Girls Club and other partners, celebrated the grand opening of the newly refurbished Oakbrook Park Baseball Field, located in Oakbrook Homes. Oakbrook Homes is a 530-unit general occupancy property that is home to more than 800 children.

The ballfield will be used for a new baseball and softball training program for children ages 5 to 9. The program was initiated in effort to provide healthy recreational opportunities for youth and to help reinvigorate the game of baseball in urban centers.

The event opened with the ceremonial arrival of the R-Phils players, who organized attendees into small groups for practice trials, training and camaraderie. Also appearing in his usual uplifting manner was Screwball, the R-Phils Mascot.

Food and drinks were provided by area partners, including Baseballtown Charities. The official program was introduced by R-Phils General Manager Scott Hunsicker, who recognized each organization that contributed to the event with their time and talent. More than 250 attendees enjoyed the comments from RHA Board Chairman Steve Belinski, who thanked those involved for their "commitment and contributions that will allow for Reading Housing Authority to become caretakers of this field" and shared the life lessons he learned through playing baseball and the lasting effect that it had on his life.

Dave Talarico, RHA Director of Capital Improvements, stated that his hopes for the future of the ballfield include sideline and outfield fencing, player dugouts, an electronic scoreboard, lighting, and a concession building.

The finishing touches on the ballfield were performed by Oakbrook maintenance personnel who repainted the curbing and railings, installed benches, and provided concrete and accessibility improvements.

Hopes for the future include blacktop trails, shade trees and picnic tables beyond the fencing to create a picnic grove that will provide space for community events.

"Youth programs are a critical element of RHA's long-standing history of providing services that support health, community and self-sufficiency" said Stacey Keppen, Executive Director of Reading Housing Authority. "We couldn't be more excited about this partnership and are sincerely grateful to our friends at Olivet, the Fightin' Phils and all the partners who have committed to this initiative."

