

“A Message Of Concern To Parents From Your Cooperstown Athletic Association President”

Dear Parents:

As this year’s Association president, and having been involved with several different Little League associations for the past 30 years, I continue to have several growing concerns.

Perhaps of most concern is our Association’s ongoing overall lack of parental involvement, which tends to weaken the infrastructure of CAA (Cooperstown Athletic Association), and therefore counteracts our mission and all of the good things that we attempt to accomplish for our children. As I despise evidently self-defeating and time-wasting inefficiency, I’ve pledged as CAA president that I’ll do everything within my ability to lessen whatever impedes CAA’s ability to function. Lack of parental involvement with regard to volunteering has reached a dangerously high level. For several years in a row, CAA has contributed the most players of any of the MidEast League associations, yet I’ve observed CAA as generally having the least overall parental volunteer involvement. It’s my intent and goal to significantly increase this involvement.

I believe that relatively few parents understand much of the “behind-the-scenes” effort that goes into making any LL (Little League) organization successful. Of course, much of this naturally is either assumed or simply taken for granted, and in some cases not even realized. **How many parents realize that the planning of each LL season begins during the autumn of the preceding year, and that CAA meetings are year ‘round?** As another example, a coach dedicates a minimum of 3 months on the average (4 months if involved with All-Star Tourneys) of his/her valuable time to guide a team through its entire season. Of course, we understand that that many parents do not have the necessary experience or sufficient time to donate at that particular level; obviously some people have more time to donate than others. Yet we see far too many parents that essentially turn their children over to the coach at the beginning of the season, simply come to most of the games as spectators, and are never seen or heard from otherwise with regard to even the slightest parental involvement. **How many parents have ever been to a CAA meeting (which are generally open to the public)? How many parents have never offered to umpire a game that had the ability or basic knowledge to do so? How many parents have never donated a snack or treat to the team after a game?** *I blame much of this on lack of communication, rather than lack of caring or apathy...at least, this is what I want to believe -- and time will soon tell.* If every parent contributed even a few hours during a season when needed, our CAA’s efforts and efficiency would increase tenfold. As this is, after all, your CAA, we simply get out of it what we put into it -- just like the coaches try to teach your children! A few dozen managers, coaches, and CAA officers alone CANNOT effectively give your child the best LL experience possible. I’ve also watched too many dedicated people burn themselves out by having to (or trying to) do all of the work that should have been shared with or delegated to others -- if they would have volunteered. **I want to believe that parents could and would help more often if they knew “what, how, who, where, and when” ahead of time.**

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Right now, we have some of the most knowledgeable and dedicated CAA officers I've ever worked with, for which you should be grateful. Often, their only reward is knowing they've helped and contributed to what they believe CAA should be. Too many times their other reward is getting complaints from generally uninvolved parents who seem to believe they have all of the answers, yet obviously have not taken the time to learn how the CAA, MidEast League, or Little League itself operates. I intend to help prevent our dedicated CAA officers, managers, and coaches from burning out, as they are certainly a rare and valuable commodity these days. The sole purpose of this letter is to: (1) motivate parents into at least thinking twice before declining at least some degree of volunteer work, and (2) suggest how we might better accomplish the "what, how, who, where, and when" that have not been realized over the past years.

To encourage participation and helpful involvement this year, our CAA officers have developed several new proposals and methods to help accomplish this:

WHAT: We have three new tentative subcommittees so far: (a) Fundraising, (b) Field Maintenance & Usage, and (c) Concessions. These subcommittees would help to delegate tasks and consolidate/organize efforts. Even one parent representing each team would probably be effective. Other than with the general direction of the CAA Board, these subcommittees can generally operate on their own, and can then have a reporting representative attend our CAA meetings. These subcommittees are intended to direct the burden of game-to-game or special-event activities away from coaches & officers so they may better focus on their other duties. It also allows even busy parents to participate at a minimal (but important) level. This is also intended to promote interaction between the various divisions (i.e., Boy's LL, Girl's Minor League, etc.), so that teams can share good ideas -- and avoid the bad ones! Together we can accomplish a lot rather easily.

HOW: At our disposal, we have "old-fashioned" technology called the "telephone", and we also have newer technology via our unique CAA website (www.coopathleticassoc.org) and via e-mail. By next year or sooner, I hope to initiate a monthly (at least during the active season) "CAA Newsletter" if even 1 or 2 parents will become "CAA reporters" and would provide small articles, pictures, and stories to publish. I will provide use of postcard, mail list, addressbook, label-making, stationery, and newsletter software to ANY parent who volunteers for ANY of our subcommittees, which will run on virtually any computer running Windows 95 or higher. Our exciting new CAA website will become what we put into it, and holds many possibilities depending on how much volunteer help is received. The bottom line is that "not knowing" about a function or event will become less and less of an excuse.

WHO: Anyone can choose to become involved to whatever extent is possible for that person. **THEREFORE, I AM RESPECTFULLY REQUESTING THAT AT LEAST ONE PARENT FROM EACH FAMILY SIGN UP FOR AT LEAST ONE SUBCOMMITTEE THAT INTERESTS THEM.** It would be far better to have too many volunteers and not need to be called upon, than not enough. Every player will be given this letter and the attached

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volunteer sign-up form to be returned to your child's coach, who will then submit them to our CAA Secretary. A volunteer subcommittee leader will then contact signed-up individuals as needed. As I'm an envoy and representative for CAA in many various situations, I continually examine CAA's strengths & weaknesses vs. other associations' strengths & weaknesses. Only in the interest of learning, I further request that, if you choose to not volunteer (or are somehow unable to volunteer) for any of our subcommittees, won't you please at least provide a one- or two-sentence with as to why you're not volunteering? PLEASE UNDERSTAND THAT YOUR WISHES & PRIVACY WILL BE RESPECTED AND YOU WILL NOT BE FURTHER "HARASSED" TO JOIN A SUBCOMMITTEE. With the sole interest of making better decisions for CAA's future, it would be helpful to examine legitimate reasons for being unable or unwilling to volunteer. Please be assured that we're interested in gathering responses in general...not judging individuals.

WHERE: NOW is the time to take action and to become involved. If you have some time, ability, know-how, or expertise to volunteer, WE NEED YOUR HELP ASAP. The more parents that are willing to donate even minimal time to volunteer, the less we'll hear, "This is hard!" or "This is time consuming!" -- and the more we'll hear, "This is easy!" and "This doesn't take much time at all!". This year, I'm hoping that it will not be only your children that are learning the meaning of "teamwork". NOW is the time to cut costs and increase fund raising to offset rising association costs, and thereby stabilizing or even decreasing overall costs to CAA families.

On behalf of CAA and what CAA represents, I'd like to thank you very much for taking the time to read this "state-of-the-union" letter and for your consideration of volunteering your valuable time. ***CAA will be stronger with you than without you, and we will get out of this what we put into it.*** Perhaps most importantly, your volunteering gives a positive message to your child that becoming as involved as possible is your way of helping the CAA coaches and CAA to fulfill its intended mission.

**** PLEASE RETURN THE ATTACHED FORM TO YOUR CHILD'S COACH
OR OUR CAA SECRETARY ASAP !!****

THANK YOU IN ADVANCE FOR YOUR HELP AND PARTICIPATION !!

**** PLEASE RETURN FORM TO YOUR CHILD'S COACH OR CAA SECRETARY ASAP ****
VOLUNTEER FORM & QUESTIONNAIRE (FOR PARENTS)
(THIS INFORMATION WILL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL !!)

PLAYER'S NAME: _____ TEAM: _____

PARENT #1 NAME: _____ PARENT #2 NAME: _____

HOME ADDRESS: _____ PHONE: _____

2nd PHONE NUMBER FOR MESSAGES: _____

DO YOU HAVE AN ANSWERING MACHINE (THAT WORKS)? ___ Yes ___ No

e-mail Address?: _____ Check e-mail every 2-3 days? ___ Yes ___ No

(1) Would you be interested in being a team scorekeeper (coaches or myself will be happy to assist you!) **Yes** ___ **No** ___

(2) Would you be interested in being a "team-mother/dad" (simply help collect uniforms at the end of the season, collecting/keeping track of fund-raiser money from the players [when we do this], and maybe a few other small tasks of this nature during the season? **(NOTE: LL MANDATORY VOLUNTEER CLEARANCE WILL BE REQUIRED FOR THIS POSITION !!)** (The idea behind this is to free up the manager and coaches to focus on instruction, and centralize these small "extra" duties with one person, which keeps it simple.) **Yes** ___ **No** ___

(3) Would you be interested in umpiring some or all of your child's home games this season? This would probably involve being a home plate umpire. **Yes** ___ **No** ___

(4) Would you be interested in umpiring some or all of your child's away games this season? This would probably involve being a base umpire, rather than behind home plate. **Yes** ___ **No** ___

(5) I would like to register my volunteer efforts (to whatever capacity) for one or more of the following subcommittees. ***I understand that registering does not necessarily mean I will be called upon and I may elect to decline later if necessary!*** -- that the purpose of this form is merely to establish a CAA database.

(PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY:)	<u>PARENT #1</u>	<u>PARENT #2</u>
FUNDRAISER SUBCOMMITTEE	_____	_____
FIELD USAGE/MAINTENANCE SUBCOMMITTEE	_____	_____
CONCESSIONS SUBCOMMITTEE	_____	_____

I cannot or choose not to volunteer, and solely for survey purposes, I am providing the following reason(s): _____

Thank you for your time, support, and for encouraging your child to participate! Feel free to contact us at any time regarding any questions or concerns you may have.