



Request for Coverage

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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ROCKPORT-FULTON LITTLE LEAGUE OVERCOMES ADVERSITY TO CELEBRATE OPENING DAY, SATURDAY, APR. 7, 2018

WHO: Rockport-Fulton Little League, which includes 350 kids ages 4-14 in six divisions;

WHAT: Will host a special Opening Day ceremony honoring its “Turf Angels,” donors and volunteers who made the 2018 baseball season possible. Participants will include: Sara Flaherty, president of the board of directors, Rockport-Fulton Little League; City of Rockport Mayor C.J. Wax; Rick Martinez, director, Parks & Leisure Services, City of Rockport; Amy Lee, executive director, Associated General Contractors South Texas Chapter (AGC), Corpus Christi; and Wade Ruddock of Rockport and Billy Hooten of Fort Worth, representing the Sid W. Richardson Foundation and the Bass Foundation.

Following the season dedication and introductions of the teams lined up on the field, the Rockport-Fulton High School Navy Junior ROTC will present the colors, and a local student will sing the national anthem. The first pitch of the season will be thrown by J. D. Villa, a Little League alumnus and member of the Rockport City Council, with assistance from his four-year-old nephew and Little Leaguer Zachary Brown (baseball field); Shana Brader of Sun-Kissed Graphics (softball field); and Amy Lee (new junior field).

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WHEN: Saturday, April 7 at 9 am

WHERE: City of Rockport's Memorial Park baseball fields, located at the intersection of Pearl Street/FM 2165 and Enterprise

Running a baseball and softball program for area children is always fraught with responsibilities. There's registration, sponsorships, uniforms, coaches and umpires, and all the other elements necessary to ensure a smoothly run season. But, the all-volunteer Rockport-Fulton Little League had even more to contend with this year – Hurricane Harvey.

The Category 4 hurricane not only destroyed the playing fields at Memorial Park but was also responsible for approximately 25% of the area's population not returning immediately. Some lost homes. Others chose to live elsewhere, so their children could continue their education while the Aransas County schools were being repaired.

Shortly after the initial relief efforts began, a concern arose – what can be done for the children to bring things back to normal as quickly as possible? The first priority was already underway with the rebuilding of the schools. The second was to turn to America's pastime – baseball – to heal and recover.

Just days after the storm made landfall, Pete Geren, president of the Fort Worth-based Sid W. Richardson Foundation, was touring the area with Rockport Mayor C.J. Wax and Aransas County Judge C. H. "Burt" Mills, Jr. to assess the damage. The Richardson Foundation has had a long history in Rockport, dating back to 1936 when its namesake acquired San Jose Island. Since that time, first Sid Richardson and later his nephew and grand nephews, the Bass Family,

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and the Richardson Foundation have donated millions of dollars to worthy causes in Rockport. Most recently, the Richardson Foundation donated \$1,000,000 to the local effort to restore and maintain Cedar Bayou. When the Bass family members learned it might be years before the baseball fields in Rockport Memorial Park would be operational because of so many pressing needs throughout the city, they decided to get involved and made a commitment that the fields would be ready for Opening Day 2018. This vision of helping children return to normal was shared by many others.

“The Bass and Richardson families have an 80-year history with the people of Rockport and Aransas County,” said Ed Bass, Chairman of the Sid W. Richardson Foundation. “When Harvey devastated this community we love, we wanted to help. Mayor Wax and County Judge Mills welcomed us as community ‘volunteers.’ We are thankful that we have had the opportunity to work with the city’s and county’s strong leadership, and to join with the people of Aransas County in their courageous and determined efforts to build a strong future for Rockport and all of Aransas County. Play ball!”

In November 2017, the Richardson Foundation and the Bass Foundation began working with the City of Rockport to develop design and engineering plans for the reconstruction of the Memorial Park fields. In January 2018, a collaborative effort came together and the work began. The Texas Sports Turf Managers Association; Rockport-Fulton Little League; local residents; and volunteers from the Houston Astros, Corpus Christi Hooks, City of Grapevine Parks and Recreation Department and San Marcos Academy began replacing sod and irrigation, laser grading of the infield, mound rebuilding and seeding. Singer-songwriter Charlie Robison, the Nolan Ryan Foundation, the Round Rock Express minor league baseball team, and RS3 Turf

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Services underwrote the cost of the repairs, not covered by the donation of services, products and equipment from other companies.

The City's Parks Department, the Richardson and Bass Foundations and the AGC South Texas Chapter undertook the work necessary to make the fields ready for opening day. This included ongoing maintenance of the turf; installation of new lighting and fencing; construction of dugouts and batting areas for all three fields; and the design, realignment and construction of a new Little League field for junior baseball to replace the senior field destroyed by the storm. AGC mobilized an army of volunteers and donors to build that field.

When the season ends, the Richardson and Bass Foundations will continue their work with the City in construction of restroom facilities, back stops, a concession and storage building and bleachers; and relocating the T-ball field. The Rockport-Fulton Little League will purchase a scoreboard, which will be installed by the Parks Department.

On opening day, 350 children will take to the fields participating in six divisions – Challenger, for boys and girls with physical and mental challenges who are still in school; co-ed T-ball (ages 4-6); Coach Pitch, separate boy and girl divisions (ages 6-8); Minor, separate boy and girl divisions (ages 9-10); Major, separate boy and girl divisions (ages 11-12); and Junior, separate boy and girl division (ages 13-14). Apart from the Challenger and T-ball divisions, all other divisions will offer both softball and hardball.

This year, the Little League association is dedicating the season to the individuals, organizations and government entities that made the season possible. The first pitch of the season for baseball and softball will be thrown by J.D. Villa, a Little League alumnus and member of Rockport City Council, with assistance from his four-year-old nephew and Little Leaguer Zachary Brown. Amy Lee will throw out the first pitch at the new junior baseball field.

Donors

Hall of Famers

Associated General Contractors South Texas Chapter
Bass Foundation
Dick's Sporting Goods
Sid W. Richardson Foundation
Texas Sports Turf Managers Association

All Stars

Ambrose Construction, Ltd.
ATS Construction
B.E. Beecroft Co., Inc.
CBS Rental and Supply
City of Rockport Parks and Leisure Services
Corpus Christi Hooks Baseball Team
Rabalais I&E Constructors
Charlie Robison
Rockport Rotary Club
Round Rock Express Baseball Team
RS3 Turf Services
Nolan Ryan Foundation
Sun-Kissed Graphics

Grand Slammers

ACME Brick
Air2G2, aerification
All Season Turf, sod
Architectural Fence Company of Corpus Christi
Associated General Contractors Masonry Apprentice Program
Barenburger, rye seed
Bayer, Top Choice ant bait
CC Builders Hardware
City of Grapevine Parks and Recreation Department
Ewing Irrigation, packing clay for rebuilding of mounds
Facility Solutions Group
Harrells, fertilizer, and refreshments for volunteers
Helena Chemicals, fertilizer
Houston Astros
Hunter Irrigation, new heads, valves and controllers
Martini Brick Sales
National Association of Women In Construction – Corpus Christi
Professional Turf Products, mowing and field grooming equipment
Quality Concrete
San Marcos Academy
Dale Schuchart
Sports Field Solutions, infield rebuilding
SS Smith and Sons Masonry, Inc.
Stainless Steel Products
Syngenta, chemicals
T L Electric, Mechanical, Plumbing
Texas Corrugators
Winfield Solution, chemicals and financial assistance