

APPLICATION



City Name City of Picayune

Population Under 10,000 Over 10,000

Category Public Safety Planning & Economic Development
 City Spirit Public Works

Title of Entry Buddy Ball

Description of Project Buddy Ball is a league formed for children and adults with intellectual and/or physical disabilities that have a desire to play organized, non-competitive baseball. Each player has a Buddy to help them play ball. Buddy Ball is offered at no cost to the players. Picayune Kiwanis Club and other sponsors pay for the entire program.

Project Summary (use additional pages if necessary) Buddy Ball is now entering into a fourth season in our City and participation continues to grow each year. Kiwanis Club of Picayune started this Buddy Ball league in Picayune in 2016. Buddy Ball is a baseball league formed for boys, girls, and active adults with intellectual and/or physical disabilities.

Signature of Chief Elected or Appointed Official 

Please provide the following information in case of questions about the application.

Contact Name Christy Goss

Title Special Projects Administrator

Address 203 Goodyear Boulevard

City Picayune Zip 39466

Phone 601-798-9079 Email cgoss@picayune.ms.us

Why the project/individual/group was initiated?

Buddy Ball is a baseball league formed for boys, girls, and active adults with intellectual and/or physical disabilities that have a desire to play organized, non-competitive baseball. We believe that every child and adult have the right to participate in the games of baseball and softball, regardless of their physical or mental disabilities. Throughout the years at the City Sports Complex Friendship Park, we've seen kids with disabilities watching their siblings play ball and they didn't have the same opportunity. Now with Buddy Ball they do have that opportunity to shine under the spotlight and be a part of a ball team.



How it accomplished the goal?

Buddy Ball is now entering into a fourth season in our Community and participation continues to grow each season. Kiwanis Club of Picayune started this Buddy Ball League in Picayune after the idea was brought to them by the City of Picayune Parks and Recreation Director Trevor Adam. Trevor had previously worked teaching Special Needs students in Bay St. Louis, MS. So, with the help of Kiwanis Club and support from the City, the Picayune Youth Athletic Association President Corey Dorn, and the Community, Buddy Ball was started. The Community support has been wonderful. We have people and businesses sponsoring snacks and drinks after each game, different school groups have signed up to be a "Buddy" to an athlete, and the year-end banquet has been paid for by sponsors. Athletes are driving from an hour away to participate in Buddy Ball.



Who Benefited?

The impact each year that Buddy Ball makes on and in the community is incredible! We have watched our athlete participation numbers increase each year by approximately 25% and our volunteer numbers increase by approximately 50%. This year there is over 75 participants/athletes. Buddy Ball has athletes from a tri-county area encompassing Pearl River County (our home County), Hancock County, Lamar County, and St. Tammany Parish, Louisiana. It has been said that our growth and expansion each year has occurred due to the players and volunteer Buddies telling others how much fun they are having being a part of such a unique ball league.



What was the level of cooperation/feedback/interest/participation in the City?

The concept behind Buddy Ball is that each player plays the game with a Buddy helping them. We didn't want the Buddy to be the parent of the ballplayer. The idea was for the parents and family members to be able to watch and enjoy their ballplayer playing baseball. During games, each player will be assigned a Buddy. If he or she is unable to swing the bat, the Buddy will help them. Buddies will also provide assistance in the field with throwing balls. If the player is wheelchair bound, the Buddy will roll them to the bases.

The Buddies are our City of Picayune Firefighters, Police Officers, MS State Troopers, ballplayers from other ball leagues, Pearl River County Sheriff Deputies, members of school dance teams, and local residents. Before Buddy Ball was established there wasn't any recreational activities or leagues for children or adults with special needs in our Community. With very few organized leagues in our state, it is our understanding that we are one of two programs south of Jackson, MS that offer a baseball/softball league for children and adults with special needs.

What were time and money savings/costs?

Buddy Ball is offered at no cost to any of the participants, thanks in part to donations from the Kiwanis Club of Picayune and other donations from the Community of approximately \$500.00. Kiwanis Club sponsors the cost of the uniform shirts, trophies, and the necessary insurance. The cost of the trophies is approximately \$600.00 and the t-shirts and insurance is approximately \$3,000.00. The City of Picayune allows Buddy Ball teams to use and play on the ball fields at no cost to the Buddy Ball League. Personal donations are made from individuals, civic clubs, and businesses to cover the costs associated with an end of the year banquet which costs approximately \$700.00. Captain Theresa Milar with the Picayune Police Department is the Resource Coordinator for the Buddy Ball League. She gathers the donations, buys and schedules the snacks, and helps schedule Buddies to play with each ballplayer.



What was the improvement to quality of service or livability of the City?

The real blessing for us, in providing Buddy Ball, has been the joy and excitement we have witnessed from the participants and their families. One important goal of ours is that we always strive to give "our best" and to make sure the ballplayers feel "the best" every time they come out to play ball. We would have to say the entire community has greatly benefited from Buddy Ball, by forming partnerships with the public, private, non-profit, and civic organizations, we can all work together to better the City we live in. We feel like Buddy Ball has moved Picayune a step forward and set a precedent for sports. The number of donations and volunteers has been amazing and continues to grow each year as the number of participants grows.



What is the future impact on the City?

The Greater Picayune Chamber of Commerce awarded the Kiwanis Club of Picayune with Civic Club of the Year, due in part for starting the Buddy Ball League. Our Community involvement is second to none and the Buddy Ball League is a vivid example of our commitment to those who serve! Buddy Ball will continue to touch the lives of the volunteers, "Buddies", and athletes/ballplayers and continue to bring people of all abilities together to live and support each other. This Buddy Ball League teaches the players more than just teamwork, it helps with social and language skills. It allows everyone to be active and focus on having fun playing the game of baseball.





