

“Do you believe in Miracles?.....Yes!”

As Rebecca Wagner stepped to the plate, at Saturday’s Chicago White Sox Miracle Field of Lemont Opening Day game, a beeping sound began to filter through the playing area. People lining the fence line were asking what’s that sound? The question was innocent, these on lookers had never experienced this sound, why, they had never experienced a Miracle League game.

Chesterton, Indiana’s Rebecca Wagner is blind, and that beeping sound was her baseball. For us to watch this young lady get her first hit and to see the absolute joy she experienced as she ran the bases with the help of our “Angels”, and the ear to ear smile she had as she became the first person to cross home plate at our new field.

As Chesterton’s Curtis Allen was introduced he sprinted up to home plate and gave me a hug and said thank you.

Watching Elijah Carli place his walking cane in the batter’s box in order to take his turn at bat, getting his hit and running towards first base, leaving his cane in the batters box.

For Alyssa Wood, with cameras clicking, getting her first hit and watching the intensity in her eyes as she steered her motorized wheel chair around the bases.

For Dennis McCaffrey, the Director of Little League’s Challenger Division taking his at bat.

And Marcia Wood, walking alone on the new Alyssa Wood Way, and stopping to take in the new honorary walkway sign.

These images will last a lifetime.

Last Saturday was not about building swimming pools, parks or fitness centers. It was about building a legacy. A legacy for all children to be able to compete barrier free.

A legacy that would not have been possible without the generosity of: the Chicago White Sox Charities, Jerry Reinsdorf, Scott Reifert and Christine O’Reilly. Joe & Peg Madden and all of the employees of Abbey Paving, Orange Crush, Ozinga Concrete, Lemont Sertoma, Callahan Plumbing, Thrivent Financial, America’s Backyard, M&M Orthopedics, Ed Steffan, EPS Rehab Inc., John Kalinsky Family, Guy Maniscalco from CarStar of Elmhurst, Brian Ferguson from Metropolitan Fire Protection and Halsey-Taylor for the donation of an accessible water fountain.

Thank you to: Brian and Linda Pepich for sharing this dream, Dan Lipowski, Amy Kramer, Mike Colaizzi and Jack Williams for their support. Brian Sullivan for his dedication and enthusiasm, Dave Carlson for writing an eloquent grant request, Mike Slonski and the entire maintenance crew for their 48 hour whirlwind commitment leading up to opening day. Mayor John Piazza, Trustees Peter Coules, Ron Stapleton, Brian

Reaves, Cliff Miklos, Debby Blatzer, Building Commissioner Ed Buettner, Fire Chief Churulo, Police Chief Shaughnessy, Kathy Hendrickson for their attendance and continued support. Randy Earnest and the Public Works department for help in the creation of Alyssa Wood Way.

Scott Linebrink, Toby Hall, Laina Myers and of the White Sox, to Comcast Sports Network for filming the event, the Lemont Little League organization, Pete Pope and the compassionate members of the Tri-County SRA, Trish Sexton, Dan & Colleen Ganzer, Beth Gulczynski, Kaleb Looper, Toby Driscoll, Judy Smyth, Tim Sovereign, Aubrey Lally, Adam Weck, John Young, the Lemont Indians Cheerleaders, Cynthia Pearman, Nancy Uher, Cathy Davis, John Koys, Heather McDonald, Bill Louis from Playscapes Inc. for building the first seamless Miracle Field in the United States and to our neighbors in EagleCrest, thank you for your patience and understanding during this project.

And most importantly, to our players:

Elijah Carli, Nick Lata, Scott McAleavy, David Miller, Dylan O'Dwyer, Duncan Polaski, Taylor Roth, Aric Schieman, Matthew Simon, Kevin Springer, Alyssa Wood, Michaela Tauer, Ashley Pepsnik, Eric Thorstad, Richard Newton, Curtis Allen, Rebecca Wagner and Mikelia Smith and to their families, thank you for letting us share in your special day.

Patrick Sexton
Lemont Park District