

In 1986 Ed Beardsley approached his son's fourth-grade teacher about forming an athletic program after school. The students, not able to play regular baseball, needed an alternative. All had some sort of motor deficiency and disability. The first year five students started this informal version of the Challenger Program. They

played catch with a wiffle ball and eventually added a home plate and bases. By the end of their first season, 14 children were playing baseball with Ed Beardsley. In 1989 the team grew to include 27 children.



*Ed Beardsley, with his son Dave: Pioneers of*

In 1989, Ed Beardsley accepted an invitation from Little League Baseball to join a task force and assist in creating a national program headed by Senator Robert Dole. Thanks to the determination of this one dedicated father, today more than 22,000 players participate in the Little League Challenger Division.

Ed Beardsley was honored as the first Challenger Award recipient in 1998 during the Little League World Series Awards Breakfast. Today he is joined by his son, who now volunteers as a buddy to players needing assistance.

## The Little League® Pledge



For more information about starting a Challenger Division in your area, please contact:

**Director of Challenger Division**  
**Little League Baseball Headquarters**  
**PO Box 3485**  
**Williamsport PA 17701**

Local Challenger Division contact:

Butch Wenrich  
4354 Limeport Pike  
Coopersburg, PA 18088  
  
610-797-8337

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Little League Baseball does not limit participation in its activities on the basis of disability, race, creed, color, national origin, gender, sexual preference or religious preference.

# Little League®



The most fundamental goal of the Challenger Division is to give everyone a chance to play, regardless of limitations.



## The Special Rules of the Challenger Division

- ✓ All Children ages 5 through 18, or who remain in school, with physical or mental disabilities are encouraged to participate.
- ✓ Level of play based upon player's size, age and skill level are recommended where numbers allow.
- ✓ Teams can include as many as 15 to 20 players.
- ✓ Players can participate in one of three levels: Tee Ball, Coach-Pitch, Player-Pitch.
- ✓ Each player in Tee Ball and Coach-Pitch uses the "Buddy" system. "Buddies" can also assist the Player-Pitch participants.
- ✓ Every player on the roster is in the batting order and shall play defensively for at least one-half of every game.
- ✓ No team is scheduled to play more than one game in one day.
- ✓ The side is retired when the offense has batted through the roster, or when a pre-determined number of runs has been scored, or when three outs are recorded.
- ✓ Little League recommends that no score be kept during games.
- ✓ The Challenger Division fee is \$13 per team.
- ✓ Challenger Division players wear the same uniforms, shoulder patches, and safety equipment as other Little Leaguers.
- ✓ Insurance for the Challenger Division is set at the same low cost as other Little League Divisions and is available through Little League Headquarters in Williamsport, Pa.

The Challenger Division of Little League Baseball is a program for mentally and physically disabled youth to enjoy the full benefits of Little League participation in an athletic environment structured to their abilities. However, whenever possible and with reasonable accommodations, disabled youngsters should participate in unrestricted league play provided their participation is possible and fair within the standard rules and regulations of Little League.



More than the skills of baseball learned through the experience, the value of the Little League Challenger Division is found in the proven therapeutic and socialization benefits of participating in sports, the strengthening of participants' self-esteem, the opportunities to mainstream into other divisions of play, and the disciplines of teamwork, sportsmanship and fair play which are hallmarks of the Little League program.

The philosophy of the Little League Challenger Division is to provide the framework so that every Little League program may offer a structured, athletic activity for all youth in the community.

Playing equipment, uniforms, official shoulder patches, umpires and any special event activities provided for existing divisions are to be available for the Little League Challenger participants as well.

Chartered by the United States Congress as an educational program it is incumbent upon every league administration to provide the same organizational structure as is offered the other Little League divisions, and to assimilate the Little League Challenger participants into the structure of the Little League program.

A special group of children, who shun the description "special," can now enjoy all the benefits Little League Baseball has been offering to youngsters worldwide since 1939. Playing with the same equipment on the same fields, Challenger Division participants learn not only the fundamentals of baseball, but also how it feels to be just like other children pulling together as a team, being cheered, and earning awards for their achievements.

