



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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MiLB President Mike Moore's Opening Session Speech

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla.--"The best way to predict the future is to invent it." That observation was made by renowned computer scientist, Alan Kay. In many ways our industry has done just that. Invented itself. This past season, MLB and MiLB together drew the combined population of the United Kingdom and France. Our MiLB attendance the past six years is greater than our total for the 80s and greater than our total for the 70s. We have drawn over a half a billion in the last 16 years. But I ask you, how many of those are we making long term fans?

Minor League Baseball is a leader in providing family entertainment in markets across the country. Our ballparks are recognized as fun and safe places for mom and dad to bring the kids. Collectively, millions of kids come to our stadiums every year and we keep them entertained with playgrounds, inflatable obstacle courses, and video games. We do a great job of keeping them occupied and entertained, but are we capturing their imagination and turning them into life-long fans?

As we gather here this week in Orlando on the doorstep of Disney's Magic Kingdom, I want us to challenge ourselves to find ways to make the experience of coming to our ballparks not just fun, but magical for the kids that are the next generation of fans for Minor and Major League Baseball. I challenge each of you, as Alan Kay so eloquently put it, "to predict the future by inventing it."

Create in your ballpark experiences, opportunities that will make kids fans for a lifetime. This goes beyond a child just throwing out a first pitch on their birthday. It involves opportunities that allow kids to interact and create a real bond through their experiences at the ballpark. This can be the magic. The stuff dreams are made of that will make kids a fan for a lifetime.

And so today I announce the establishment of the "Fan For Life" program and during the next few months we will ask for input from the membership to design the details of the program and implement it in 2008. You have heard the saying, "Kids are our most valuable natural resource." Well they are! They are our future, the future of our society and the future of baseball. Baseball and the family-style entertainment provided at MiLB parks represents the "good ole days" that many of us will always remember from our childhoods.

An American journalist and author, Hodding Carter, once observed "There are only two lasting bequests we can hope to give our children. One of these is roots, the other, wings." Baseball is coined as the National Pastime. It is in the roots of this country. It is our opportunity to make it part of the roots of every child that visits your ballpark. Baseball also represents our hopes and dreams. It teaches kids that hard work, perseverance and determination can earn you your dreams and give you wings, whether that dream is making it to the big leagues or making it on the honor roll.

We've all heard stories of how baseball has inspired magic in young hearts. Paraphrasing from a story written by Charlie Reese, and published in the *Tampa Tribune*, entitled "Baseball Inflames Heart and Soul."

Decades ago, I found myself in the last game of the World Series, bases loaded, a fragile lead and nothing standing between my team and a win but three strikes. I made my wind-ups and hurled two fastballs and a tricky curve at the strike zone, and each time the ball made a satisfying smack against the side of the house precisely where the imaginary batter missed my perfect pitches.

(Over)

Inside, a mother called her children in when it was time for the real World Series to start. She watched the games with as much intensity as her boys. When the Orioles lost to the Mets in the 1969 Series, she comforted us as only someone could who truly understood our pain. Her smile in the face of our colossal disappointment was sweet salve for our wounded young souls.

Baseball should be where children break their hearts first. It makes the unbearable events later in life more bearable. The losses in a stadium are, in the grand scheme of things, meaningless but not without a lesson or two.

Oh, how I am indebted to baseball!

Charles Reese wrote what most of us have lived as children ourselves. Our future is with those young fans of today and I know you will join us in our endeavor to make them fans for life.

Those of us around in 65
Wondered how MiLB would survive

Fans stayed home to watch TV
And ballparks were almost empty

New visions were needed in our towns
And from new thinkers they were found

Focus on the fans became the cry
And some saw fun was where the answer would lie

We built new parks and made them fun
And parents came with daughters and sons

Your hard work made it all a success
And for the future I wish you the best

Remember the kids are the future of the game
Remember that and success will remain

Keep the game in their hearts burning bright
And you'll make them a fan for life

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