

SPORTS-LINK

Recovery Community Activities with Baseball Teams
and Other Sporting Events



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SPORTS-LINK

Introduction

Each September since 2003 people in recovery, their families, friends and allies have partnered with Major League Baseball as part of Recovery Month. SPORTS-LINK was organized by the Johnson Institute as a way to build alliances between the recovery community and employers, health professionals, community-based organizations and government agencies to spread the word about the reality of recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs. It's a celebration of sports fans in recovery and their family and friends. In 2010 SPORTS-LINK is expanding to include all sporting events, including Minor and Major League Baseball.

Different activities can be organized with SPORTS-LINK. There are pre-game picnics, group game attendance, stadium public service messages on jumbotrons, scoreboards and public address systems, as well as formal announcements as part of the opening festivities or 7th inning stretch. It's a great way to partner with well-known and visible community instructions, build new relationships and have fun!

In 2009, the recovery community partnered with the Baltimore Orioles, Cleveland Indians, Colorado Rockies, Detroit Tigers, Los Angeles Dodgers, Philadelphia Phillies, Pittsburgh Pirates, St. Louis Cardinals, Texas Rangers and Washington Nationals in Batter Up! A Home Run for Recovery Month. Over 2,000 people attended the game with the Dodgers in Los Angeles.

SPORTS-LINK can be sponsored by any local or regional organization or coalition of groups – a recovery community organization, treatment provider or Recovery Month Planning committee. SPORTS-LINK is an opportunity for the Major League Baseball or other sports teams in your community to recognize people in recovery and their families and friends and support addiction treatment and other service professionals. While they have traditionally been held in September, SPORTS-LINK activities can be organized year round.

Here are some of the elements of a SPORTS-LINK event:

- General admission tickets during a September home game. We suggest that you target a minimum of 500 seats;
- Participation from your local and state government officials or their designees to attend the game and/or other in-field introductions;
- Recognition of supporters during the 7th Inning Stretch, half-time or other break in the game;
- Materials which recognize your organization, Recovery Month, Rally for Recovery! and your participants at the game. This may include public service messages on jumbotrons, scoreboards and public address systems;
- PSA's to local media outlets to promote the event;
- Media materials to get coverage of the event; and
- Photos, video footage and other materials to document what you did.

Getting Started

Management/Administration

- Recovery Month SPORTS-LINK Committee (Overall strategic plan and management)
- Support Subcommittee (Fund raising)
- Outreach Subcommittee (Ticket sales)
- Program Subcommittee (Program for kick-off event, pre-game entertainment, and game promotional content)
- Event staff (Phone contact, ticket coordination, communications and meeting coordinator)

Activities

- Kickoff Event (A breakfast or lunch for supporters and volunteers)
- Committee meetings (Periodic motivational and report meetings for outreach, ticket sales, tie-in events, etc.)
- Pre-game Picnic (Hot dog meal, music and short program at game site, if possible)
- Ballgame Celebration (Pre-game ceremony, section demonstration, in-game, on-screen promotional time on awareness of addiction and power of recovery)

Budget (for 500 people)

- 500 tickets
- 50 meals (Kick-off event)
- 500 picnic meals and amenities
- Event staff (One person with phone and mail facilities, usually part-time for four months) @ \$1,000 per month or volunteer
- Signage, banner and promotional materials (On-field and in the stands)
- Newsletter (Three issues, can be electronic and no cost)
- Message preparation (Video for ball game – in-kind)

Income

- Ticket Sales
- Sponsorships
 - Gold - \$5,000
 - Silver - \$2,500
 - Bronze - \$1,000
 - Platinum - \$500

Timeline

January – May

1. Contact the Major League Baseball or other sports team in your area and speak with the Group Sales department. Tell them about SPORTS-LINK, the fact that these events are being held across the country at different baseball stadiums as part of National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month. Negotiate any ticket discounts for groups of 500 or more. Schedule a date in September.

Some Recovery Month baseball events are scheduled in conjunction with other team promotions, like getting 1 free ticket with 1 paid ticket, etc. Continue your relationship with team representatives to schedule on-field activities, first pitch, national anthem and other activities that would be appropriate for Recovery Month.

2. Purchase tickets and/or negotiate a contract with the team for tickets on consignment. Some teams' group sales representatives can offer a consignment contract. Be sure that you are clear about the date that unsold tickets must be returned by! Make sure that the date is clearly marked and where they should be returned so that your group isn't responsible for paying for unsold tickets.
3. Find out if there's a place to organize a pre-game picnic or other activity.
4. Set up your committee, plan your first meeting and follow the checklist in the organizing and promotion phase below.

July – August

5. Prepare a flyer to publicize the game (Sample 1) two months prior to game. ***Have the team's group sales representative approve the flyer before you use any team logo or language that implies direct sponsorship from team.***
6. Recruit ten ticket captains who agree to sell 15 tickets each.
7. Prepare letters to invite local, state or national dignitaries to the game. (Sample 2)
8. Prepare a Media Advisory by mid-August to publicize the game and your event. Put together a list of newsletters and news outlets in your area and distribute the advisory. ***If you are working with a professional team, be sure that the Media Advisory is approved by its group sales representative especially if the team's name is used in the Advisory.*** (Sample 3).
9. Prepare a press release about your event and contact local media outlets for interviews before the game or on the day of the game at the ballpark.
10. Pay for all tickets and return any unused tickets by the date agreed to with the team sales representative.
11. Complete last minute details of picnic / pre-game activity, if you're going to have one.

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12. Send script for approval of on-field recognition to team contact at least two weeks prior to game.
13. Contact your team representative to confirm the time and place for on-field recognition. Give your team contact the names of individuals for clearance. (Some teams need to clear people recognized on field prior to game). This should be done at least 7 – 10 days before the game.
14. Contact team representative to confirm signage recognizing your group on the billboard during the game
15. Contact everyone who was selected for on-field recognition two weeks before the game date, confirm their attendance and give them instructions about where to go.
16. Finalize any last minute arrangements.
17. **Game day – Enjoy!!**

SPORTS-LINK Planning Checklist

Organizing Phase

1. Research and meet with team _____
2. Set up committee and subcommittees _____
3. Support Subcommittee (Fund raising) _____
4. Outreach Subcommittee (Ticket sales) _____
5. Program Subcommittee (Program for kick-off event, pre-game entertainment, and game promotional content) _____
6. Event staff (Phone contact, ticket coordination, communications and meeting coordinator) _____

7. Schedule date for game with team _____
8. Meet with potential partners/sponsors _____
9. Treatment providers _____
10. Recovery community groups _____
11. Counselor/professional organizations _____
12. Government service agencies _____
13. EAP Professionals _____
14. Allied agencies (health, welfare, public safety, legal, etc.) _____

Promotion Phase

15. Contact and get commitments to support and sell tickets from affiliate sponsors _____
16. Prepare flyers, packets, order forms, etc _____
17. Solicit and prepare mailing and email lists _____
18. Organize to distribute literature _____
19. Email, mail and hand distribute literature 4-6 weeks prior to event _____
20. Organize "Ticket Captains" by organization, geography, etc. _____
21. 6 weeks prior (10 Captains with 15 tickets each) _____
22. Send out notices for group newsletters, meeting _____
23. Announcements and newspapers. _____
24. Link with websites – Recovery Month (www.recoverymonth.gov), Faces & Voices of Recovery (www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org) and local websites. _____
25. Prepare letters for dignitaries; national, state and local to invite to event. _____
26. Prepare signage and promotional material to use at the game (Recovery Month logo, your and sponsoring organization's logo) _____
27. Prepare media advisory, press releases and press contact lists _____
28. Conduct outreach and work with local media for event coverage _____
29. Coordinate official and/or designated representative to throw out game ball, etc _____
30. Coordinate picnic celebration or other pre-game event _____

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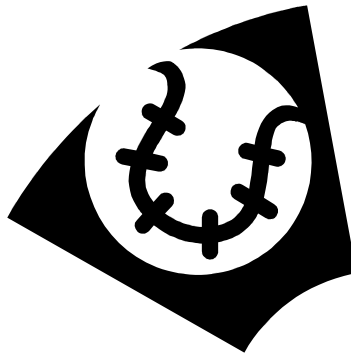
- 31. Retrieve unsold tickets and get firm attendance count _____
- 32. Make a list of people and organizations to be recognized. _____
- 33. Keep track of names and contact information for everyone who attends and add them to your database for future events. _____
- 34. Send a thank you letter to all volunteers, committee _____
- 35. Members and sponsoring organizations _____
- 36. Assess what worked; didn't work for next year and write up an article and publicize what you accomplished _____

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL SPORTS-LINK EVENT

1. Identify 500-1,500 prospects to assure ticket sales.
2. Secure five additional organizations to jointly sponsor your SPORTS-LINK event to help publicize the event and offset the cost of tickets and/or picnic.
3. Allow eight weeks preparation and sales time.
4. Recruit ten ticket captains covering every group opportunity.
5. Hold regular report and motivational committee meetings.
6. Follow up. Follow up. Follow up.

Sample 1 – Flyer

**Join us at the ballpark
for a Recovery Month celebration**



Date

Game Time: P.M.

Home Team vs. Opposing Team

@ Field Name, City

Ticket Price — \$_____

Make the checks payable to *Your Organization* and mail them to:
c/o Contact Name and Address

For further information, contact *Name, telephone number and email address*

Add the logos of other sponsoring organizations here



SAMPLE 2 – LETTER OF INVITATION FOR OFFICIALS

On your organizational letterhead if you have it

Dear [Insert the name of person here]:

The _____ team is collaborating with area volunteers in the addiction recovery movement to celebrate National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month at their game with the _____ on September __, __. This letter is to invite you to join us and participate in what we know will be a fun and important community event.

Most of what we know and hear about alcohol and drug problems is very negative. While addiction is our nation's number one health problem, too few people know about the reality and hope of recovery.

Science and practice have given us proven tools for helping people get well, improving their lives, and the well being of their families and community. Families heal. Money is saved. Life gets better. Recovering people give back. Everyone wins!

This September, all across the country, people will be coming together at thousands of events all across the country as part of Recovery Month. Here in _____, _____ fans will see their friends, neighbors and co-workers who are part of the recovery community stand up and be counted at our Recovery Month game on September ____.

We hope that you will be able to join us at the game. The sponsoring organizations are . We're pleased to be part of this collaboration between _____ team and America's recovery community. As the event's coordinator, I am personally asking you to join us. We hope that you'll be able to come.

Please respond to this invitation by calling me at 000-000-0000. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Event Coordinator

Sample 3 – Media Advisory and Press Release

Additional information on media advisories and press releases and how to distribute them are available online at http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/publications/advocacy_toolkit/media_outreach.php. Please change the samples below for your event.

SAMPLE MEDIA ADVISORY

BATTER UP! A HOME RUN FOR RECOVERY [or OTHER HEADLINE DEPENDING ON THE SPORT]
IN [NAME OF YOUR TOWN]

WHAT: More than 500 *Hometown* baseball fans who are in recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs, their families and friends will be rooting for their team as part of National Recovery Month. The special annual event is in partnership with _____ organizations and _____ team.

The _____ is joining with other sport teams across the country to sponsor Recovery Month celebrations this September. There will be pre-game ceremonies and recognition of fans in recovery to mark the event and let other fans know that addiction disease is a treatable illness with positive possibilities for recovery.

The event celebrates the successes of people in recovery and their families and acknowledges the men and women who dedicate their lives to helping people with alcohol and drug use disorders. People are coming together to have fun and let their friends and neighbors know that recovery from addiction is a reality when people get the help that they need.

Tickets are \$__ each and are available by calling _____ at 000-000-0000.

WHEN: [Date and Time]

WHERE: [Address and Directions]

CONTACT: ABC at 000-000-0000

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date

Contact:

ABC at 000-000-0000

Email address

BATTER UP! A HOME RUN FOR RECOVERY [or OTHER HEADLINE DEPENDING
ON THE SPORT]
IN [NAME OF YOUR TOWN]

Hometown fans partner with _____ to celebrate recovery from addiction

(Your city, date): More than 500 *Hometown* baseball fans who are in recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs, their families and friends rooted for the _____ team today as part of National Recovery Month. “We are joining with teams and fans across the country to recognize people in our community who are in recovery and their families who are giving back and making a difference,” said _____.

“We recognized _____ at a pre-game ceremony,” then headed for the stands and the game,” said _____. The special annual event, in partnership with _____ organizations and _____ team is one of the thousands of Recovery Month celebrations being held nationwide. “We are celebrating the successes of people in recovery and their families and acknowledging the men and women who dedicate their lives to helping people with alcohol and drug use disorders.”

Sample 4 – Script for Game Day

Ladies and gentlemen, tonight is Recovery Night at *Hometown* Field. September is National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month designated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and organized by citizens and organizations across the country. Today, millions of Americans are affected in different ways by alcohol and drug use. Today we're calling attention to our fans and friends who are in recovery and the people who help others to find recovery.

Please direct your attention to the first base line for the introductions of tonight's distinguished guests:

XYZ, Local Community Advocacy Group
ABC, Local Dignitaries

Let's have a hand for all of our guests. Nice to have you with us.