May 22, 2020

**Dear Santa Monica Little Leaguers and Their Families,**

Now that the city of Santa Monica has begun to reopen its doors, bike paths, and beaches, we on the Santa Monica Little League Board of Directors feel it is time for another update on the status of our interrupted season.

To be clear, SMLL and its loyal team of volunteers would be happy to reopen our season tomorrow. Based on our commitment to providing a safe and fun outlet for all our players, aged 4 to 16, we feel it is imperative that our boys and girls get back out and play as soon as possible. I was on a call this morning with over thirty of our coaches, and they feel the same!

However, the reality is that the fields upon which we rely are not controlled by our league alone, and it has been made clear to leadership that any opening of permitted field space for youth sports organizations will not be happening any time soon. While some reports of a return to field use by July 4th have been hinted at, even this news comes with a complicated set of "ifs" and no actual commitments permitted field use have been made.

It is therefore our great regret to announce that **we will be suspending the rest of our Spring SMLL season indefinitely, with no plans to return until this fall.** This announcement has come with some frustration and deep disappointment on all our parts, and we assume with all of our families as well.

**Looking Ahead**

That said, we are now pursuing plans to bring baseball back this fall with *a renewed purpose and vision for our* **Fall Ball** **season**. As such, we are now inviting *every single SMLL family* to consider a return to baseball starting this August and September, and we hope you are all ready to play.

Our current hope is that we will not only bring back most of our players, but we are in the process of wooing back our entire roster of spring coaches as well. After all, we never really got to get going, and playing baseball in the fall is at least as fun as it is in the spring. Kids need to know that while we are not in normal times, they are still important parts of a community of players, coaches, and teammates- and this has not changed.

With this in mind, our hope is that the league will partner with the city and- pending confirmed permits for fall field usage- open up a schedule for practices and games on the traditional Fall Ball timeline. These tentative start dates will be sometime the **first week of September** for practices, with games starting as early as September 14; more on this as we learn more from the city. Again this is our collective target goal for organized baseball's return.

Our Board is strongly considering this Fall Ball season to be *a continuance of the teams we fielded this spring*, and are communicating with the District about several factors, including the eligibility status for the many 12 and 14 year old players on our current spring Majors and Juniors division rosters. We will share more on any Little League International or District 25 exceptions in the coming weeks.

In the meantime, should field permits become available in July and August, we are committed to offering **clinics and post season** play for those families who are interested. We are also partnering with local leagues to participate in a district All Star tournament for our 12's some time in July.

Coaches have been urged to reach out to you in the coming days, and once we regain access to the city fields of Memorial, you can be sure there will be opportunities for our players to go out and have a catch. More information on these short term programs later this month, again, as information becomes available.

**Little League Fees**

Finally, for families inquiring about a refund, we will now be handling these requests on an individual basis. The financial reality is that many of the costs of our spring season were up front in terms of uniforms, permits, insurance, and the like; a refund for even our truncated season based on remaining permits, trophies, and umpire usage would net out to less than $100.

With this in mind, the Board asks all SMLL families to **consider making this amount a donation to the league rather than a refund**. These dollars will go a long way to ensuring the short term financial health of our league; with permit prices sure to rise, every donation helps keep our overall costs low for the future. In addition, we anticipate corporate donations to be down this year at understandably unprecedented levels. SMLL provides baseball scholarships to dozens of families every season, a key attribute of our mission to make sure **every child has a chance to play baseball** on the very best fields in LA, so we ask your support.

As a parent, I would pay nearly anything to get my kids back in uniform, and I hope you feel the same. However, we also realize that for several families in our community right now, every dollar counts. You can email us at treasurer@smll.com for a refund or credit request.

**Continued Youth Sports Advocacy**

Finally, for all the Santa Monica youth sports leagues, including Girls Fast Pitch Softball and AYSO, we need to stand united in our aim to make sports accessible to our kids this fall. Along with prudent safety measures and health considerations clearly at the forefront, we must all stand together to clearly and forcefully articulate that city cutbacks should not come on the shoulders of our kids.

**Thank you all for your continued optimism and hope for a return to baseball these past three months**. The clock may have run out on this season, but it will begin anew for the next one soon. Our board has shared in that spirit of optimism, but it is time to turn our eyes to the next season together.

I hope to see you on the fields, with gloves, hats, bats and smiles again this fall.

Very best regards,

**Michael Balsley**

President, Santa Monica Little League



**PS** For many of you parents, this may be the best time to search for hitting coaches or take to the city fields for some time out doors. Please follow the [Santa Monica Little League Facebook page](http://send.bluesombrero.com/ls/click?upn=LrlABuFI61qGLObXkZAQpotLpXNcdcercvYBe48fQBf46rPsrZf4lC3tJxAFcD2P-2BS0cmCtNs-2FR0cIONRg5g6g-3D-3DVXuy_k2EIOrW3pOHHppbnb3KV6TOftuC-2F5C6XNzf9E8rL46xDbDY1mhgjrZ8xAla7hrP0j9rCRqDj0oEK3uyceu0nfiAczoWhYemheYkVTBW8BJazVt-2FqERFlwBsOSYLXeJt20myzuc21sDwAUcn-2FsbvFF8vSXEwQLeCUOCa9ADd0Iuo-2F15AvRIYdk8mr68fvSbm1C189jJicjoAFKWgswDcfRFxcaZ19P7AbNykYZM-2Fl1KBD6fQkryViQIHtmGTiP7dzz-2FmGeNasTSMjau0SbKM6dCEO60KtidzUJZCGatiCp4A-3D) for resources and updates to the city field use guidelines.