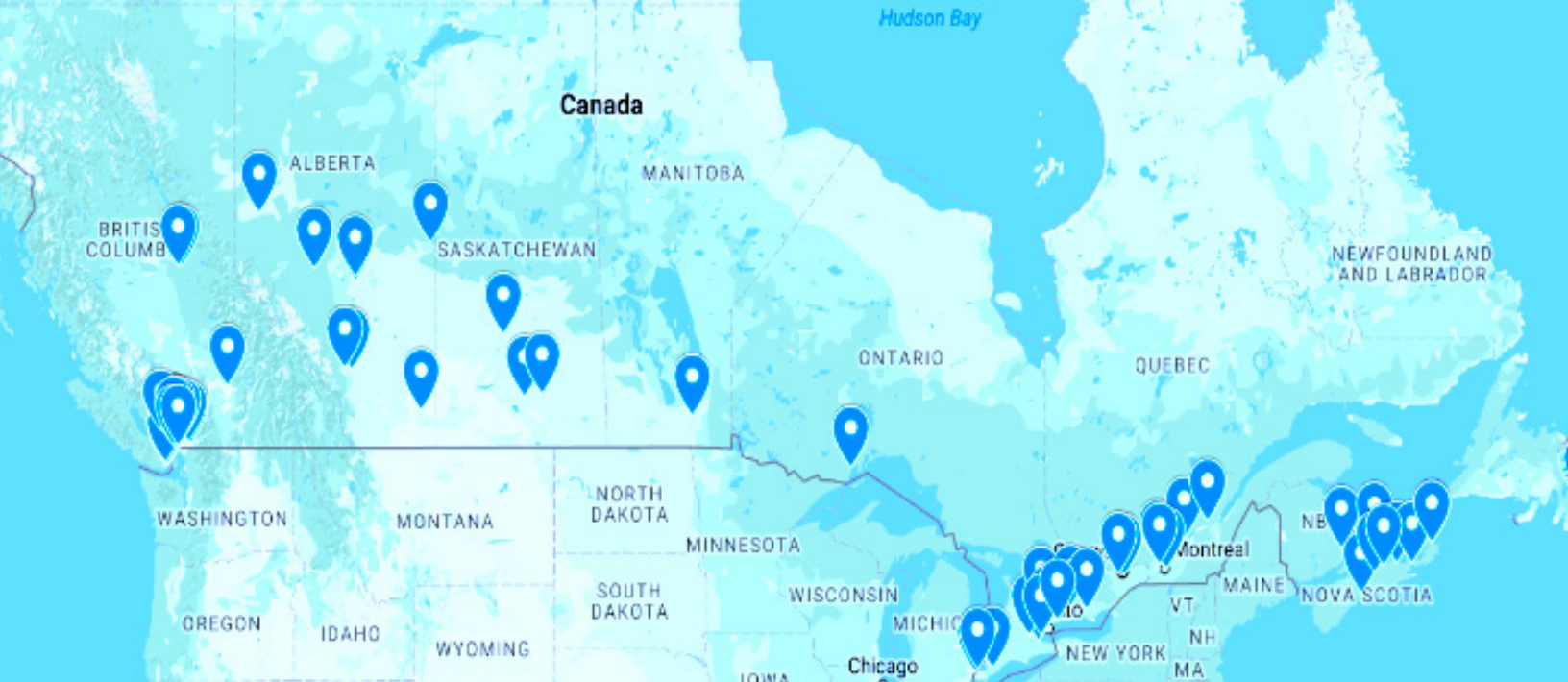




JAYS CARE™ FOUNDATION

CHALLENGER BASEBALL PROGRAM REPORT APRIL - AUGUST 2017





HERE'S WHERE THE CHALLENGER BASEBALL PROGRAM TOOK PLACE THIS SUMMER:

- A.B.J.H. de Laval Challenger League, QC
- Abbotsford Angels Challenger League, BC
- Ancienne-Lorette/Val-Bélair Challenger League, QC
- Antigonish Challenger League, NS
- Brossard Challenger League, QC
- Burlington Challenger League, ON
- Burnaby Challenger League, BC
- Caledon Challenger League, ON
- CBS Challenger League, NL
- Challenger Laval-Nord, QC
- Challenger Mauricie (Trois-Rivières), QC
- Chatham Challenger League, ON
- Cloverdale Challenger League, BC
- Cochrane Little League, AB
- Cold Lake Challenger League, AB
- Des Laurentides Challenger League, QC
- Diamond Baseball Little League, QC
- Dieppe Challenger League, NB
- East Nepean Little League, ON
- Erindale Lions Little League, ON
- Estrie Challenger League, QC
- Etobicoke Challenger League, ON
- Glace Bay Little League, NS
- Gordon Head Challenger League, BC
- Grand River Little League, ON
- Grande Prairie Challenger League, AB
- Hamilton Challenger League, ON
- Hammonds Plains Challenger League, NS
- Hampton Little League, BC
- Hespeler Challenger League, ON
- Highlands Little League, BC
- Inverness/Richmond Challenger League, NS
- Ivy Challenger League, ON
- Kamloops Challenger League, BC
- Kanata Little League, ON
- Langley Little League, BC
- Layritz Challenger League, BC
- Little Mountain Little League, BC
- LL Alberta District 3 Challenger League, AB
- London Challenger League, ON
- Medicine Hat Little League, AB
- Mission Challenger League, BC
- Moose Jaw Little League, SK
- Mount Pearl Challenger League, NL
- Mount Seymour Little League, BC
- North Delta Challenger League, BC
- North Langley Challenger League, BC
- North Regina Little League, SK
- North York Challenger League, ON
- Oakville Little League, ON
- Ontario District 6 Challenger League, ON
- Paradise Challenger League, NL
- Peninsula Challenger League, BC
- Peterborough Challenger League, ON
- Pictou County Challenger League, NS
- Port Arthur National Little League, ON
- Prince George Adult Challenger League, BC
- Prince George Challenger League, BC
- Quinte Challenger League, ON
- Richmond City Challenger League, BC
- Ridge Meadows Challenger League, BC
- Saskatoon Riversdale Kiwanis Little League, SK
- Sechelt Challenger League, BC
- Spruce Grove Challenger League, AB
- St Alberta Challenger League, AB
- St. James Assiniboia Challenger League, MB
- St. John's Challenger League, NL
- Stratford Challenger League, PEI
- Sydney Mines & District Little League, NS
- Tri-City Challenger League, BC
- Trout Lake Little League, BC
- Truro Challenger League, NS
- Tsawwassen Challenger League, BC
- Whitby Challenger League, ON
- White Rock/South Surrey Little League, BC
- Whitecourt Challenger League, AB
- Windsor West Little League, ON
- Winnipeg South Challenger League, MB

THE PROGRAM

Challenger Baseball is an adaptive baseball program designed specifically to empower children and youth living with cognitive and/or physical disabilities. The program is designed to teach children and youth the core life-skills inherent to baseball including teamwork, communication, determination, resiliency, inclusion, support and courage. Challenger Baseball is a fun and inclusive league that ensures every participant can play in a safe environment in which they learn to become more independent, build confidence and self-esteem, and set and achieve their own personal goals.

THE GOALS OF THIS PROGRAM ARE:

TO INCREASE
SELF-ESTEEM AND
CONFIDENCE

TO INCREASE
PHYSICAL LITERACY
AND BASEBALL
SKILLS

TO INCREASE
COMMITMENT TO
REGULAR PHYSICAL
ACTIVITY

TO ENHANCE
RELATIONSHIPS
WITH SELF AND
OTHERS

WHAT MAKES CHALLENGER BASEBALL UNIQUE?

The unique partnership between Jays Care Foundation, Baseball Canada, Little League Canada and Little League International has created infinite opportunities for more children to be a part of a team on and off the field. On the field, there are four ways any passerby can identify an outcome-based Challenger Baseball team apart from mainstream baseball leagues:

- 01 Each session is designed and delivered using the “WAVE” method that includes: opening discussions, warm-ups, specially-tailored games and activities, adapted skills and drills, game play, cool downs, and closing discussions;
- 02 Athletes who want or require additional support use “Buddies” for 1-on-1 coaching to help each athlete work towards their unique goals;
- 03 Each activity is adapted or modified to suit each athlete’s different abilities while weaving in a life-skill theme, such as teamwork, communication, or friendship to help foster independence both on and off the field; and
- 04 Each session begins and ends with a or team cheer.



PROGRAM REACH

PROGRAM UPDATE: BY THE NUMBERS



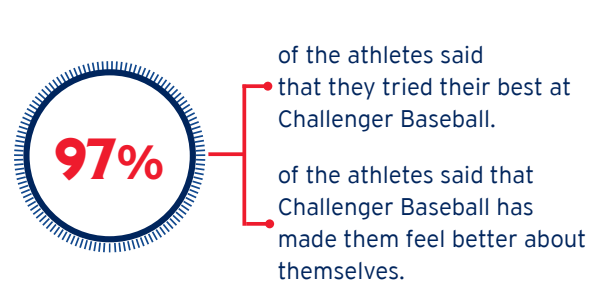
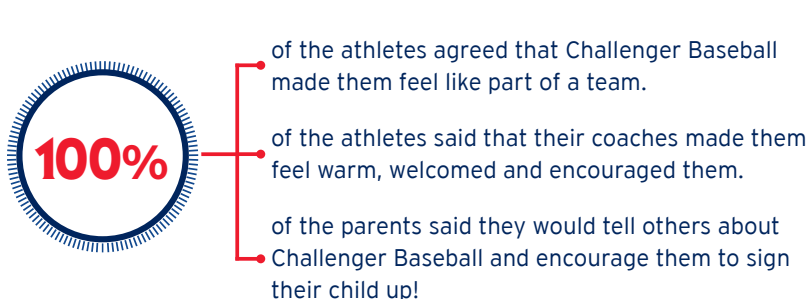
HOW DO WE KNOW IT IS WORKING?

This year, we collected information from coaches, buddies, athletes and parents. Below is a summary of our program impact in numbers:

98% of the coaches said they built positive relationships with athletes and buddies at Challenger Baseball.

95% of the coaches said they feel like they made a difference with the athletes at Challenger Baseball.

"I decided to be a buddy four years ago because I thought it would look good on a resume. I fell in love with it instantly. It is not about the resume anymore." - Challenger Baseball Coach



"Our team has become like a family over the many years my son has participated in Challenger Baseball. His teammates are his peers. Everyone accepts each other's differences and abilities. My son can be himself." - Parent of Challenger Baseball Athlete

"She smiles constantly when she is at the field. That is all any parent could ever ask."

- Parent of Challenger Baseball Athlete

WINNIPEG SOUTH CHALLENGER BASEBALL

(WINNIPEG, MB)

This year, the Winnipeg South Minor Baseball Association (WSMBA) and St. James Assiniboia Minor Baseball Association (SJAMBA) joined forces to form the Winnipeg South Challenger Baseball League - one of our most thriving programs yet! This 'double threat' is constantly growing in both size and triumph. In only its second season, the league achieved a 30% higher participation rate compared to last year, and constantly pioneers creative approaches to Challenger Baseball. Whether it is an innovative tracking system (e.g., exclusive lineup cards) or entertaining events (e.g., Bud, Spud & Chicken), the Winnipeg South Challenger Baseball League is always a leader by example.

UNIQUE APPROACHES:

BUDDY CARDS

At the Challenger Baseball Season Opener Event, players and their families were asked to complete a simple questionnaire and take the player's picture. The collected information was then compiled into a special "Player Card", laminated and given to each player's assigned buddy. The buddy cards give a snapshot of personal player information to help the buddies learn how they can support their player to experience the most success at Challenger Baseball! Many players are proud of their personalized trading card and will often ask their coach if they can be the ones to hand it to the buddies!
BONUS: Players get to take their buddy card home as a memento at the end of the season!

JAYS CARE FOUNDATION

2017

NAME: _____
POSITION: _____

BATS: _____
THROWS: _____
BIRTHDATE: _____
GENDER: _____

PARENT/GUARDIAN NAME: _____

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATION NEEDS: _____

YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT: _____

MY GOAL FOR THIS SEASON IS: _____

EXCLUSIVE LINEUP CARDS

The Winnipeg South Challenger Baseball League created special lineup cards to track program attendance for both players and buddies throughout the season. Coaches are required to submit the lineup cards to the Coaching Coordinator after every game. These cards help coaches to plan batting order, report any incidents that may require attention—but most of all they help players feel like they're playing in a professional baseball setting.

CHALLENGER BASEBALL Line-Up Card

Date: _____ Coach: _____ Aft: _____

Team: _____ vs. _____ Home or Visitors

Order	BATTING ORDER		POSITION (PER INNING)								
	Name	WT	Buddy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
1											
2											
3											
4											
5											
6											
7											
8											
9											
10											
11											
12											

POSITIONS: P1 CA 1st 2nd 3rd SS LF RF CF

Notes: _____

DUGOUT BOARDS

Coaches used magnetic whiteboards with vinyl cut outs, referred to as 'dugout boards,' as a visual aide during practices and games to explain drills and lineups. Each player's name was printed on a magnet. Coaches could call out a name and place the corresponding magnet in position for the players to see. Each game, the player who was selected as team 'captain', leading cheers and the coin toss, had their name displayed on the board in the jersey pictured below. The player who was selected to lead equipment set-up and cleanup was featured on the helmet pictured.



INNOVATIVE EVENTS:

SEASON OPENER KICK-OFF EVENT

Players and their families came out to finalize registrations, pick up jerseys, take photos for "Buddy Cards", and meet teammates and coaches! Players were invited to participate in skills and drills as well as a "pickup" game led by the Challenger Baseball coaches.



DASCH WALK'N'ROLL & ABILITIES AWARENESS CONCERT

Manitoba's provincial Challenger Baseball committee set up a promotional tent at this event and facilitated a baseball mini-game at the Scotia Bank Stage to spread the philosophy of "No Barriers" to playing baseball, which aligns with DASCH's goal for the event. The Provincial Coordinator was also interviewed by local radio to "spread the word" about Challenger Baseball.



THE GREAT TRANSCONA CAMPOUT

In support of The Tim Hortons Children's Foundation, Manitoba's provincial Challenger Baseball committee had a promotional tent set up at the Great Transcona Campout event. Challenger Baseball players were invited to join several local "celebrities" (CWE wrestlers, Mascots, area MLA, Costume Alliance, Dancing Gabe, etc) in a mini-game held on a special 'concrete field.' Families in attendance were also invited to stay after the game to watch a special CWE Wrestling match with hot chocolate and donuts!



MID-SEASON WINNIPEG GOLDEYES GAME OUTING

Challenger Baseball players were invited to take a seat and enjoy a Sunday afternoon game with their family and teammates! Winnipeg Goldeyes Field of Dreams Foundation provided tickets to the game for all players and their parents. Each player received autographs and a meal coupon during the game; and several players were granted the opportunity to stand on the field with their Buddies and the Winnipeg Goldeyes Players during the National Anthem.



SEASON WINDUP LOCAL CELEBRITY GAME

Players and their families gathered to celebrate a Grand Slam of a season! Three members of the Costume Alliance and three Winnipeg Goldeyes players joined in activities as local celebrities, and the Kinsmen Club of Winnipeg provided a hot dog lunch. All Challenger Baseball athletes were rewarded with participation trophies as well as individual award certificates, which were nominated and personalized by their coaches.

INNOVATIVE BUDDY & VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT



The Winnipeg South Challenger Baseball League has started a chain reaction with their unique solution for volunteer (i.e., buddy) turnover. They capitalized on their strong existing partnership with their PSO and began recruiting competitive teams (ages 15 and older) from local baseball leagues to act as buddies. Winnipeg South Minor Baseball Association (WSMBA) and St. James Assiniboia Minor Baseball Association (SJAMBA) have since made it a mandatory requirement for their AA/AAA teams that they volunteer as a buddy with the Challenger Baseball program, incorporating timeslots into their team's regular schedule as they would a game or practice. Other leagues within the city of Winnipeg are following suit in 2018. This buddy program has been a win-win for everyone involved. Challenger Baseball players get the mentorship from buddies who are very successful in the competitive baseball world and competitive teams have the opportunity to hone in on basic baseball skills while participating in a team bonding experience and learn important life skills, such as leadership and how to promote inclusive environments.



ANTIGONISH CHALLENGER BASEBALL

(Antigonish, NS)

Antigonish, Nova Scotia, is a small town of about 8,000 residents with only one elementary school, one high school and one university along a single street. Right in the middle of it all is the town's baseball diamond, where the Challenger Baseball program thrives. The community is large enough that there are plenty of resources to support its Challenger Baseball League, but small enough that everyone knows one another. Every resident in the town takes pride in the 'team feel' that is the Antigonish Challenger Baseball League.



INNOVATIVE EVENTS:

"We're doing baseball but baseball is probably the least important thing that we're doing... at first it was a baseball program, but now it's a program that uses baseball to be able to build life-skills, confidence and self-esteem to try other things and improve elsewhere."

- Program Coordinator

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

One of the many things that the Antigonish Baseball Challenger League is highly regarded for is their community involvement. From local school initiatives to public events, the Challenger Baseball League offers infinite support to their community, and their community is always there to cheer them on. This cheery exchange gives a "family feel" that is spread across the entire town. Challenger Baseball athletes and their families attend birthday parties and play dates together. Program coordinators and parents of athletes have an ongoing group chat throughout the year, even during the off-season, in order to keep everyone in the loop. The Antigonish Challenger Baseball League is one big family affair!

COMMUNITY OUTINGS

As part of their commitment to community involvement, the Antigonish Challenger Baseball League supports other local sports teams. One community member has charitably donated tickets for athletic events, including soccer, hockey, and basketball games at the local university, St. Francis Xavier. This generous donation has allowed Challenger Baseball athletes and their families to attend various fun events together as one big family. Another memorable outing for Challenger Baseball League participants was when athletes and family members gathered, not only to attend the Antigonish Highland Games, but were part of the parade!

TEAM CELEBRATIONS

Just as families do, the Antigonish Challenger Baseball League makes a genuine effort to come together for special occasions. Perhaps the biggest celebration they participate in is the Nova Scotia Provincial Challenger Baseball Jamboree. The Nova Scotia Challenger Baseball League is unique in that, not only do all seven leagues within the province attend, but both the Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick Challenger Baseball Leagues are also invited. In total, about 500 people participated in this year's Provincial Jamboree, including buddies, coordinators, athletes and families. It was truly one-of-a-kind.

BUDDY RETENTION:

"I grew up playing competitive sports, and Challenger Baseball is the most fun I've ever had on a ball field." - Program Coordinator

Challenger Baseball's notable role in the Antigonish community has meant that the league now spends \$0 on promotion tactics to recruit coaches and buddies. Rather, the program is sustained primarily through word of mouth and social media. Community members want to volunteer as buddies because they want to have their name attached to Challenger Baseball. According to Randy Crouse, Nova Scotia Provincial Coordinator and Antigonish Challenger Baseball Coach, "if you provide the quality program, you get people that want to come back. We listen, and we provide the support and education they need." It is no surprise that the Antigonish Challenger Baseball League is renowned for its buddy retention and lasting buddy-athlete relationships.

LITTLE MOUNTAIN CHALLENGER BASEBALL

(LITTLE MOUNTAIN, BC)

Little Mountain Little League has one of the most influential Challenger Baseball programs in history! Sitting right in the heart of Vancouver, British Columbia, Little Mountain is one of the longest-running Challenger Baseball programs, which launched more than 25 years ago. It was also the first international Challenger Baseball League to play in a Challenger Baseball exhibition game in the Little League World Series located in William's Port, Pennsylvania! Furthermore, Little Mountain is one of the smallest programs in size. While other tri-cities may have up to 100 athletes registered in the program, Little Mountain has only 25 athletes. Small but mighty, Little Mountain Little League remains one of the most well established Challenger Baseball programs to date.



INNOVATIVE EVENTS:

EXHIBITION GAME AT FIELD OF DREAMS LAUNCH

Initially, the idea of a fully accessible baseball field in the heart of Vancouver was just that - an idea. A partnership between Jays Care Foundation, the Vancouver Canadians Baseball Foundation and Variety Children's Charity made it a reality. In addition, organizations such as Little Mountain Little League and the Vancouver Parks Board helped to build the accessible diamond within the existing infrastructure. The diamond is conveniently located at Hillcrest Park, right beside the Canadians home field, Nat Bailey Stadium. Little Mountain Little League hosted a Challenger Baseball exhibition game to showcase the new field, where neighbouring teams were invited to come out and play ball. Trout Lake Challenger Baseball League, a neighbour league that has several athletes who use wheelchairs, found the accessible field to be a game-changer. Everything felt lighter; the wheelchairs glided more swiftly on the turf and there were no hazardous bases to trip over. Now, Trout Lake busses their teams to the new diamond for each practice and every game. All of BC Challenger Baseball is benefitting from the fully accessible field and it does not stop there. Next, Little Mountain is planning to build a new accessible batting cage to continue to support adaptive baseball throughout the province. **[The field has] "transformed the way that Challenger Baseball is played. It creates the most optimal environment for Challenger Baseball."** - Program Coordinator



'CHALLENGER BASEBALL NIGHTS OUT!' AT THE SCOTIA BANK FIELD AT NAT BAILEY STADIUM

The Vancouver Canadians Minor League Baseball Team, a large supporter of Challenger Baseball, dedicates time during a number of their game nights to highlight the program. At these 'Challenger Nights at the Scotia Bank Nat Bailey Stadium,' you will find Little Mountain Little League coaches, buddies, athletes and their families rallied together to cheer on their local team.

END-OF-SEASON CHALLENGER BASEBALL EVENT

At the end of the season, Little Mountain Little League gathered as a team to celebrate with a party. Coaches, buddies, athletes and their families enjoyed complimentary pizza and drinks, generously provided by Little League Baseball. This event was a way to spend quality time together, continue to get to know one another, and celebrate the successes of the season.

BUDDY TRAINING PROCESS

"We can't have a program without buddies - players and buddies are one and the same." - Program Coordinator

Anyone who has been part of Challenger Baseball will agree that the special bond and partnership formed between athletes and their buddies is critical to program success. For that reason, the primary goal of the Little Mountain Little League is to provide a buddy for every child that comes to play, and program coordinators follow a step-by-step process to do so. First, they aim to recruit volunteers within the community to increase the likelihood of regular attendance and retention. The next step includes a pre-program meeting during which experienced buddies inform new buddies about their role, expectations and guidelines, etc. Training is then provided to enhance buddies' knowledge about Challenger Baseball programming. In particular, the buddy training is run in practice stations which are focused on adapting and creating opportunities for athletes to play and learn baseball skills in the most enjoyable way. Following training, program coordinators work closely with the buddies to ensure that they feel supported throughout the entire season. The coaches and buddies of Little Mountain Little League will be the first to tell you that they are **"forever changed by Challenger Baseball. It's magical."** - Program Coordinator

FEATURE STORY

PATRICK MARCH & LAUCLIN DELOREY



Patrick March and Lauchlin Delorey are a dynamic duo! The summer of 2017 marked Pat and Lauchlin's fourth summer together as an athlete and buddy twosome in Nova Scotia's Antigonish Challenger Baseball League. The friendship they have formed through the game of baseball is nothing short of magical. Words cannot do justice to their special bond, as Pat has said,

“lucky does not even begin to describe how I feel about getting to know [Lauchlin] over the last four years. Challenger Baseball has to be one of the best programs I have ever been a part of, largely because of Lauchlin, but every kid in that program is incredible in their own way”.

It is easy to see that being a part of the Challenger Baseball program has had a profound impact on both Pat and Lauchlin. Throughout his past four years with Pat, Lauchlin has accomplished so much—from an increase in baseball skills and confidence in himself, to a deeper understanding of what it means to be a friend and a great teammate. Randy Crouse, the National Coordinator for Challenger Baseball in Nova Scotia and the League Coordinator for Antigonish Challenger Baseball says, “When it comes to partnering players and buddies together, we were very lucky with Pat and Lauchlin. They have played together each week [over the last 4 years] and they’ve become buddies outside of the ball field as well. The friendship rolled over to life in general, and that’s the special part of it.” Pat always takes the opportunity to talk about his experience with Challenger Baseball, and values his time as a buddy, aptly summing up his experience by saying,

“if I didn’t meet Lauchlin, I wouldn’t be where I am today. He, and everyone involved in Challenger Baseball, are inspirational and I’ve never felt more fortunate to be a part of a program like this.”

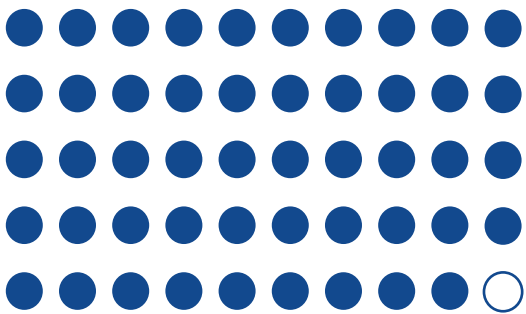
Challenger Baseball is excited to see what next season brings for Pat and Lauchlin!

SPECIAL EVENTS

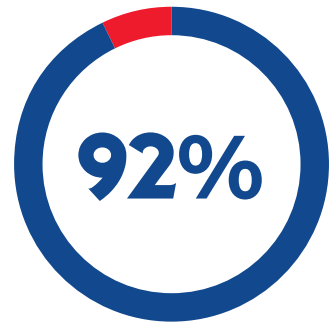
CHALLENGER BASEBALL COACHES' TRAINING

Three separate trainings were held to support Challenger Baseball programs from across the country:

1) Vancouver, BC; 2) Toronto, ON; and 3) Halifax, NS. Coordinators, Coaches and volunteers were invited to attend a 2-day training led by Jays Care Foundation. The training weekend was active and enjoyable, as attendees participated in a variety of different games and activities that helped them to learn how to use baseball as a vehicle to achieve positive change in individualized programs. Every session was fun, play-based, and required attendees to work with others and share their ideas.



98% of participants agree the Challenger Baseball Coaches' Training was a **valuable experience**



of participants said their understanding of Challenger Baseball was enhanced during this training

94%

of participants said they **feel more prepared to plan and lead** a Challenger Baseball Program.

97%

of participants said the training helped them **improve their knowledge and skills** in running an adaptive baseball program.

PROVINCIAL JAMBOREES

Four provinces (British Columbia, Manitoba, Newfoundland, and Nova Scotia) hosted a Provincial Challenger Baseball Jamboree to bring together participants from programs across each province. Attendance ranged between 30-800 athletes, and 50-100 staff and volunteers. The days were filled with celebration, special guests, and, of course, baseball. For example, the Provincial Jamboree in British Columbia boasted special guests, such as the Honourable Minister of Sport and People with Disabilities, Carla Qualtrough, along with The Man in Motion, Rick Hansen, and the incredible musician Jim Byrnes to help make the day extra special for everyone in attendance.



NATIONAL JAMBOREE

This year, Jays Care Foundation and the Toronto Blue Jays hosted the National Challenger Baseball Jamboree at the Rogers Centre on Friday, July 7. Participants had a chance to play on teams alongside athletes from other organizations and moved through modified skills and drills before playing a game of baseball on the same field as their favourite Blue Jays heroes. Our very own heroic Blue Jay, Kevin Pillar (aka. Superman) flew in just to play alongside Challenger Baseball athletes and their families. Weaved into eight baseball stations focusing on baseball skills and drills (i.e., hitting, catching, fielding and throwing) were four underlying themes of the National Challenger Baseball Jamboree - teamwork, confidence, sportsmanship and community. These four themes helped to create a lasting and positive impact for all participants, making the Jamboree more than just baseball. Below is some of the participant feedback about this year's National Challenger Baseball Jamboree:

88%

of parents agreed the Jamboree made their child feel like he/she was a **PART OF A BIGGER PROGRAM** across the country



92% of parents agreed the jamboree **MADE THEIR CHILD FEEL SPECIAL**

KEY LEARNINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

2018

2017 WAS ALL ABOUT HAVING THE COURAGE TO TRY. WHERE CAN WE TAKE IT FROM HERE?

While the program was deemed a huge success this year, there are still many areas in which we can improve. Below are some of the key recommendations that came from coach, volunteer, athlete and parent surveys:

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Develop Challenger Baseball toolkits, including training manual, session builder prototypes, goal-setting activities, and a monitoring and evaluation handbook for coaches, buddies and volunteers.

TRAINING

Expand training workshops to include Challenger Baseball buddies. Schedule evening events during training workshops to allow for more networking opportunities between participants.

PROGRAMMING

Develop strategies to recruit more buddies, coaches and athletes to participate in Challenger Baseball. Introduce points system for incentives to promote monthly themes and less traditional baseball skill-development sessions. Provide additional funding for Provincial Jamborees as an incentive for more provinces to host.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Together with Baseball Canada, Little League Canada, and Little League International Jays Care Foundation is thrilled to continue to celebrate the Challenger Baseball program through exciting events while we aim to make 2018 Challenger Baseball even BIGGER and BETTER.

Thank you to all of our implementing partners and funders who helped make Challenger Baseball 2017 a huge success:

Little League International

Rawlings Inc.

Little League Canada

Variety Village

Baseball Canada

Canucks Autism Network

Flaghouse Inc.

Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital