

An American Legion Baseball Centennial Celebration Toolkit





Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----------|
| History of American Legion Baseball | 1 |
| Sample Press Release | 2 |
| Sample Media Advisory | 3 |
| Sample Proclamation | 4 |
| Sample Social Media Posts | 5 |
| Big League Testimonials | 6 |



Legion Baseball: A Century of Diamonds

It was a big vision from a Big Ten commissioner. On July 17, 1925, the collegiate athletic executive spoke to The American Legion Department of South Dakota convention.

“There is nothing in our national life which stresses certain qualities that are expressed in our athletics,” said John Griffith. “Intelligent courage, fighting instinct and cooperation are some things which I believe are visibly expressed in our athletic games... American Legion posts, as a matter of citizenship training, could easily carry on such athletic activities throughout the United States.”

Just seven years after World War I, the former Army major understood the need for physically fit patriots to answer their nation’s call if needed. After Griffith’s address to the convention, a resolution was passed and American Legion Baseball was born.

The program was a hit. By 1926, more than 52,000 players participated. Legends and war heroes such as Yogi Berra, Ted Williams and Bob Feller would comprise some of the 87 Hall of Famers who have played American Legion Baseball over its first century. By 1947, none other than Yankees-great Babe Ruth would serve as a national spokesman and consultant for the program. In 2010, the National Executive Committee selected Shelby, N.C., as the home of The American Legion Baseball World Series. Coverage of the games by ESPN soon followed. Over its first century, conservative estimates are that more than 10 million young people have played American Legion Baseball.

During its meeting in May 2021, The American Legion National Executive Committee unanimously passed a resolution calling for Legionnaires to raise awareness about amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), a terminal disease that took the life of baseball great Lou Gehrig. The resolution encourages a moment of silence on June 2, which also marks the date that Gehrig died in 1941. Lou Gehrig’s disease is a condition that has disproportionately impacted veterans. Informing the public about the tragic consequence of ALS can lead to additional research, funding, therapies and a still undiscovered cure.

One hundred years of American Legion Baseball is truly a milestone worth celebrating. Departments, districts and posts can publicize this great program with observances at baseball games or other community events in 2025. Use the examples offered in this toolkit as an outline for telling the story of how The American Legion is able to turn the national pastime into a healthy community activity for young people.



Sample Press Release

American Legion Post ____ Celebrates Centennial of Baseball Program

(CITY, Date) –American Legion Post ____ in (city or town) announced that it will observe the 100th anniversary of the founding of the national youth baseball program prior to Thursday’s (or other date, day) game between the Post __ team and (opponent).

Former major leaguer and American Legion Baseball alumni (name of ball player or other notable alumni) will speak prior to the national anthem and throw out the first pitch. (Town) Mayor (name) will also read a proclamation in honor of American Legion Baseball. An information booth will be open during the game for any veterans and family members interested in the programs and services provided by Post ____.

“Millions of young men and women have played American Legion Baseball since its founding in 1925,” said Post Commander _____. “Greats such as Yogi Berra, Ted Williams and Albert Pujols have played American Legion Baseball. Players in our program are taught good citizenship and a code of sportsmanship that includes keeping the rules, keeping faith in teammates, keeping their tempers, physical fitness, a stout heart in defeat, keeping pride under in victory, a sound soul, clean mind and healthy body. Post ____ is proud of our team and our association with American Legion Baseball. We hope the community can join us in cheering for the players and celebrating this remarkable program.”

About The American Legion

The American Legion, the nation’s largest veterans organization, is dedicated to the motto of “Veterans Strengthening America.” Chartered by Congress in 1919, The American Legion is committed to mentoring youth and sponsoring wholesome community programs, advocating patriotism and honor, promoting a strong national security and continued devotion to servicemembers and veterans. It has made veteran suicide prevention its top priority through its Be the One mission. Approximately 1.5 million members in more than 12,000 posts across the nation and regions overseas serve their communities with a devotion to mutual helpfulness.

Media contact: Name, email address, cell phone number



Sample Media Advisory

MEDIA ADVISORY

American Legion to Remember Lou Gehrig in Upcoming Baseball Game, Raise awareness for ALS

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| WHO | American Legion (NAME) Post (POST NUMBER) Chaplain (CHAPLAIN'S NAME) |
| WHAT | <p>Chaplain (CHAPLAIN'S NAME) will lead American Legion Baseball fans in a moment of silence to remember Yankees legend Lou Gehrig, who tragically died on June 2, 1941, from Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) at age 37. ALS is a terminal disease that takes the lives of approximately 25,000 Americans each year, many of them military veterans.</p> <p>The moment of silence will occur immediately prior to The American Legion Baseball game between (TEAM) and (TEAM).</p> <p>During the baseball game, American Legion Post (POST NUMBER) will have an information booth with materials about programs and services offered by the nation's largest veterans organization. American Legion Baseball is celebrating its centennial anniversary in 2025. More than 10 million young people have played American Legion Baseball since the program's founding. Alumni include Hall of Fame Major League players such as Yogi Berra, Ted Williams and Joe Morgan. Current Major League stars Bryce Harper, Corey Seager and Justin Verlander also played American Legion Baseball.</p> |
| WHEN | (DAY /DATE /LOCAL START TIME) |
| WHERE | (ADDRESS FOR EACH EVENT) |
| BACKGROUND | <p>The American Legion , the nation's largest veterans organization, is dedicated to the motto of "Veterans Strengthening America." Chartered by Congress in 1919, The American Legion is committed to mentoring youth and sponsoring wholesome community programs, advocating patriotism and honor, promoting a strong national security and continued devotion to servicemembers and veterans. It has made veteran suicide prevention its top priority through its Be the One mission. Approximately 1.5 million members in more than 12,000 posts across the nation and regions overseas serve their communities with a devotion to mutual helpfulness.</p> |

Media Contact: (NAME, PHONE NUMBER, E-MAIL)



Sample Proclamation

American Legion Baseball Centennial Proclamation

Whereas, On July 17, 1925, The South Dakota American Legion held its annual convention and passed a resolution proposing American Legion Baseball; and

Whereas, American Legion Baseball was organized in 1925 to teach practical lessons in sportsmanship and citizenship by emphasizing such qualities as loyalty, respect for the rules, fair play, courage and physical fitness; and

Whereas, More than 10 million young people have played American Legion Baseball; and

Whereas, 87 members of Baseball's Hall of Fame have played American Legion Baseball, including war heroes such as Yogi Berra, Ted Williams and Bob Feller; and

Whereas, Many national security experts have expressed alarm that an increasing proportion of American young people lack the physical fitness required to be eligible for military service; and

Whereas, More than 50,000 young men and women continue to play American Legion Baseball across the country; and

Whereas, Participants in American Legion Baseball are expected to adhere to a high code of sportsmanship; and now therefore be it

Resolved, that I,(NAME of OFFICIAL), Governor of the State of (STATE), do hereby declare July 17, 2025, as American Legion Baseball Day.

Editors Note: *The governor is used as an example of who might sign such a proclamation. This example can be revised and other signature options might include mayors, town managers or post commanders.*



Sample Social Media Posts

Sample Facebook Post or Radio Announcement

We invite our entire community to attend this week’s baseball game between Post (POST NUMBER or NAME) and (TEAM). American Legion Baseball is celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2025. Throwing out the first pitch at the game will be (NAME OF FORMER MAJOR LEAGUER or OTHER DISTINGUISHED LEGION BASEBALL ALUM). The game will be (ADDRESS/DATE/TIME). Post (POST NUMBER or NAME) will also have an information booth available with information about American Legion Baseball and other services offered by the nation’s largest veterans organization.

Sample X Post 1

Join us for tonight’s game between Post (POST NUMBER or NAME) and (TEAM) at (TIME & ADDRESS). (NAME OF FORMER MAJOR LEAGUER or OTHER DISTINGUISHED LEGION BASEBALL ALUM) will throw out the first pitch and Mayor (MAYOR’S NAME) will proclaim today “American Legion Baseball day.” American Legion Baseball is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year! #AmericanLegionBaseball

Sample X Post 2

The American Legion is celebrating 100 years of great AL Baseball! (NAME OF FORMER MAJOR LEAGUER or OTHER DISTINGUISHED LEGION BASEBALL ALUM) will be throwing Thursday’s first pitch and Post (POST NUMBER or NAME) will operate an information booth for all who are interested in the Legion and its services. Join us at (TIME & ADDRESS) as Post (POST NUMBER or NAME) plays (TEAM). You’ll discover Legion Ball is a hit! #AmericanLegionBaseball.



Big League Testimonials

“We had some good (American Legion) teams... I think The American Legion helped me advance because it was better than Babe Ruth league and every step I went to a higher league and I was playing against better players. And it helped me progress.”

Joe Morgan, *Baseball Hall of Fame, Back-to-back National League MVP (1975-1976)*

“When I was 14 or maybe 15 years old, I played American Legion ball, which was really big back during my teenage years. The post I played for was (the) Cudworth post (449, Wisconsin). American Legion ball led to a lot of careers for guys who turned out to be pretty good ball players. It’s still going now. As a matter of fact, we still have tournament play at American Family Field.”

Bob Uecker, *former MLB player and Hall of Fame broadcaster, Milwaukee Brewers*

“I appreciate the stand that The American Legion (Baseball) has taken. They have each of the boys go out before every ballgame and repeat the rules. Not just rules for baseball but rules for life. ‘Keep the rules. Keep faith in your teammate. Keep a stout heart in defeat. Keep your pride under in victory. Keep a sound soul. A clean mind and a healthy body.’ So I learned that these Legionnaires have been my friends. They not only love baseball but they have meant so much for our country.”

Bobby Richardson, *N.Y. Yankees (1955-1966), World Series MVP (1960)*

“I played in Evansville (Ind.) Funkhouser American Legion Post 8. It was a great experience for me. I love Legion. It really kind of got me ready for pro-ball...because you played a lot of games during the summer break and there were no true practices because you played so many games...When I was a freshman, I ended up playing against a guy who was the number 1 pick the next day...As far as myself, Legion was great (and) for my boys it was good.”

Don Mattingly, *6-time All-Star, N.Y. Yankees (1982-1995)*



Big League Testimonials *continued*

“On Legion diamonds across the country, these young men are learning not only the skills of baseball but the valuable lessons of sportsmanship, self-discipline, teamwork, courage and integrity.”

Bowie Kuhn, *Commissioner of Major League Baseball (1969-1984)*

“If you wanted to play good baseball, it’s American Legion. It was a great experience. I loved my time in American Legion.... It was good baseball...It was nice uniforms...It was real grass... The competition was real good. Everything was an upgrade in American Legion.”

Brian Snitker, *Atlanta Braves manager*

“I enjoyed American Legion Baseball as much as I did my high school seasons because of the level of competition... There’s a rich baseball history in Tampa as we all know and certainly American Legion had a lot to do with that back in the day.”

Kevin Cash, *Tampa Rays manager*

“We loved winning for Post 170 (Midwest City, Okla.). It was a big deal to make that team. It was a big deal to play on that team and once you did, you wanted to pay it forward by playing well and representing the region the best you could.”

A.J. Hinch, *Detroit Tigers manager*