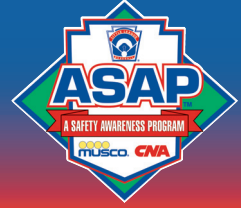


ASAP news



Continuing the Little League tradition of making it "safer for the kids."

Congratulations West Virginia!

The first state in the country to reach 100 percent participation has done so through hard work and a strong organization, with just a flavor of neighboring rivalry.

West Virginia this summer became the first state in the country to reach 100 percent of its leagues having and implementing a safety plan to make it "safer for the kids."

West Virginia has a strong state organization, helping underscore the importance of safety with its districts and leagues. West Virginia and Virginia, the next highest participating state at 95 percent, both have a state director and state safety officer, and hold state DA meetings to promote Little League's efforts, including safety.

"We're very proud to be first in the country in a positive area," said Paul Flanagan, District 4 DA and chairman of the West Virginia Little League Association. "We as a group of DA's about three years ago set out

WEST VIRGINIA'S ASAP GROWTH

1999 - 38%	2002 - 79%
2000 - 39%	2003 - 97%
2001 - 54%	2004 - 100%

to reach 100 percent participation." Now, with the help of Little League International and Southern Region staff and others, they have accomplished their goal, Paul said. "It will be our goal to maintain (their safety participation), now that we have achieved this."

Some districts created a "master safety plan" that their local leagues followed and implemented, while other districts provided assistance to league safety officers in creating their own, unique safety plans. But persistence and hard work were needed throughout, to ensure that every league developed a safety plan.

Flanagan stated each district had a safety officer, and then "It's been a tremendous effort, and a lot of people are responsible for this: DA's, DSO's, the safety officers and league presidents throughout the state."

"I would be remiss if I didn't thank the DA's in

Virginia who helped us with great safety plans to share, ideas and support when we started this, and I want to congratulate them on the many years they've led the program."

"Our primary focus in getting to this goal was the children who did not get hurt," because the West Virginia Little League Association members were improving safety awareness, Flanagan stressed. "The national statistics show that the incidence of injuries has gone down since ASAP was implemented," he noted, and West Virginia will now benefit from that effort for their children and volunteers.

"We're very pleased to have the first 100 percent state in our region," said Southern Region Senior Assistant Director Jen Colvin. "This is a testament to the collective efforts of this state, and shows when people set their minds to something, what they can do."

Flanagan praised the "great synergies" that allowed this accomplishment. West Virginia has proven an entire state *can* have every league working together toward improving the safety of the players, volunteers and spectators in Little League.



Congratulations! Congratulations! Congratulations! Congratulations!



Who Will Be Next?

Congratulations!

Learning from Al & Al

Take a tip from some of the best coached leagues around, and begin training your coaches to make kids successful at all levels of play. One of the best seminars at the Little League Congress showed attendees that no matter what approach they take, doing anything is better than doing nothing, when it comes to preparing players through prepared coaches.

"The coach is the determining factor in whether children have a positive experience and continue in the sport,"
– Little Al

Al & Al, as they are commonly called, have been involved in Little League for 8 years now, and have provided training resources to over 1 million people through the "Know Your Baseball/Softball" materials. The program is a growing library of resources, from books and CD's to a new video just coming out.

But the need for the materials has never been stronger. ASAP has supported Al & Al's efforts for several years, since a player using proper fundamentals is much less likely to be injured in playing, and the coach is the core for each team's development.

"Baseball is the toughest sport for children to learn," began Al Herbeck, or "Little Al". "It's not a team sport, it's an individual sport that's played as a team." When a batter stands in, can his or her teammates help that player get a hit? No, it's up to the individual to put into practice the training they have learned. And without solid fundamentals, that player will strike out, get discouraged, and never experience the thrill of beating out a double that motivates the better players to stay with the sport. And the same is true for fielding.

From Little Als to Big Als

Al & Al put players in three groups, along lines similar to themselves:

- "Little Als", the Level 3 players who are smaller or less skilled and the most at risk to leave the sport due to lack of playing time or fun;
- "Medium Als", the Level 2 players who are also vulnerable to leave, although they possess some skills to succeed; and
- "Big Als", the Level 1 players who are the starters and All Star players.

Little Al stressed that coaches need the resources that will help develop all levels of players, not just the All Stars.

"Many players aren't getting the experience they need to learn the game," Little Al explained. "You have to look after the Little Al's – they pay the same and the playing time should be similar. You can't play baseball sitting on the bench, and if that's what's happening, they're better off playing a different sport.

"The coach is the determining factor in whether children have a positive experience and continue in the sport," Little Al stressed.

Hold Al & Al Clinics

Jeff Werne, from Miami, Fla., gave the first example: Have Al & Al come to your league, district or area and put on a clinic for coaches and managers.

"For about seven years I'd received the mailings from Al & Al," Werne said. When he finally decided to have them do a clinic, he couldn't believe the results. "I've never in my life seen grown men rolling around on the ground and having a good time like this. They've sold me on the program and we're having them back. I'm totally sold on the program," He stated. "Make your coaches go and learn how to teach children because (Al & Al) taught our coaches how."

Little Al related how DA Bud Vandenberg, from Michigan, had them put on a clinic in his area. "Bud Vandenberg said it's the greatest thing that's ever happened in baseball and softball there. He said he had tears in his eyes going around the different fields and seeing the way the coaches were working with the kids," Little Al said.

Use Al & Al materials

Several examples were given where leagues have purchased "Know Your Baseball/Know Your Softball" for their coaches. Rich Gilleland, from Irvine, Calif., said they purchased manuals for every single team in their district, they



Herbeck & Al Price

are so convinced this will help improve the coaches' effectiveness in working with the players, and improving all players' experience. One coach stated he'd had the privilege of attending three World Series with his teams, and he attributes it all to AI & AI.

Dave Wetmore, from Livermore, Calif., said they've distributed "over 7,000 player manuals and hundreds of coaches manuals. Player development is a top priority in our league. We've seen a tremendous uniformity in our program all across our valley. We market the crud out of it."

Train the trainers

The third example combines the live clinic with local people who will be available as resources throughout the year. This approach uses AI & AI as a resource to train their coaching coordinators, who then train the coaches. AI & AI are now giving more regional clinics, but the one-on-one experience for coaches is restricted by the relatively few number of weekends available

Get More Info Online:

Visit the Coaching Coordinator Center at AI & AI's web site at: www.alandalbaseball.com to learn more about "Know Your Baseball." Contents include:

- Coaching Coordinator Program and CC Network,
- Live AI & AI Clinic Dates,
- League Packages, and more...

during the pre-season for AI & AI to visit specific areas in the country. So having trainers go to a regional clinic and bring back the information is a great way to bridge the gap for traveling to a regional center, or trying to bring AI & AI to your area.

DA Stan Brown, from Danvers, Mass., explained they use coaching coordinators to provide training for the coaches who are training the players. Dennis Ren, from Calgary, Canada, has had six teams in the past 10 years attend the Little League World Series, and has used AI &

AI to prepare their coaches.

Little AI pointed to statistics that show enrollment in Little League is flat or slightly down over the last 10 years, so more and more leagues and districts are focusing on Tee-Ball and Coach-Pitch to build back the younger players. They aim to give them a quality experience and strong fundamentals so they will enjoy the game, and be good enough at it to stick with it over the years.

Joe Shea, president of Little League Canada, gave this advice: "Too many leagues spend all their time, effort and money on the All Stars issues. We need to spend effort and resources on the grassroots of the program," he said, the young players and the "Little AI's".

Little AI concluded the presentation with a video clip of their new video, which will help coaches teach kids, have fun with the kids, and use stations to break down the skills so players can grasp each skill. The fundamental approach is to "give coaches a chance to make a difference in the life of a child," Little AI concluded.

Training the Trainers: A Case Study

Syracuse, New Yorker Danny Cavallo knew a good thing when he saw AI & AI's program. But he wanted something to do every year in his area. So he adopted the philosophy and manuals, and added live training with coaching coordinators.

Cavallo's trainers use the "Know Your Baseball/Softball" materials, but do the training themselves. "I've tried to gear our program to the lowest level of player," he said. "We need to change the way we do (training). It needs to be fun."

Cavallo said, "we're losing the building blocks of our program." So this program is aimed at those basic levels of Tee-Ball and Coach-Pitch players, who are dropping out due to not having the skills needed to advance.

Cavallo's approach for implementing a program like this is to "sell it to the executive board," then outline coaching coordinators' responsibilities and outline the players' and parents' responsibilities.

For the parents, it means a lot more hands-on experience. In the approach used in Syracuse, "you have a youngster and you have a volunteer." The players throw to an area, but not to a player, to teach them throwing, as players feel inadequate if they can't catch. Instead, moms and dads chase the balls the players throw, and encourage them. Different stations require different assistance, but the parents learn what the players do, so they can help at home.

In their program, every coach gets a "Know Your Baseball" manual, and every player gets the Player Passport (player manual), so everyone knows the

expectation – and how to meet it. In the early season, they use gyms and players wear tennis shoes to gain a jump on practices. Cones and different zones break up the floor space.

They rely on a triangle of communication between coaches, coaching coordinators and players. The coaching coordinators work with the coaches and the players, making sure the message is relayed accurately all along the way. The coaches in turn move between the coaching coordinators and the players, learning the approach and implementing it.

"We're just helping kids learn a different way," Cavallo said. "The coaches and managers like it because it works. But you have to trick players into learning the game — make it fun and get them involved."

Michele Smith — Oly

This summer's Olympics are putting the spotlight on the world's best athletes in Athens. But these top-flight athletes all know that performance is determined by preparation before ever stepping on the field.



Michele Smith, two-time Gold Medal winner with the USA Softball team, follows some of the best training regimens and shares that knowledge.

“It is just as important to take care of your body off the field as on it,” Michele said. “If you’re in good condition, you have better reactions to hit the ball faster and farther.”

Being in shape is just good sense for playing your best. But did you know recent studies also show that athletes that are in good physical condition experience fewer injuries than those who aren’t?

Keys to conditioning:

- Fitness conditioning
- Weight conditioning
- Pliometrics
- Agilities drills
- Core strength training

But Michele notes you should not get too serious too early with conditioning for the younger players. Most kids 5-8 years old are getting all the exercise they need to build their muscles to play by playing, and don’t need conditioning workouts.

Graduate the amount and intensity of workouts for the age of the participants.

Again, just developing good, moderate training habits with the players will help them as they grow.

Fitness conditioning

For fitness training, Michele stresses fundamental exercises that everyone can do like jogging, biking, aerobics and anything that gets the cardio-vascular system pumping blood. Sustaining elevated heart and lung functions helps the body prepare for hard

exercise, like games, and increases the body’s ability to function at this increased activity level for longer periods. Fitness training also is beneficial for weight management, for more sedentary players.

Weight conditioning

Weight training should be undertaken only for those 12 years of age or older, as younger bodies are still growing and developing. Placing too much stress on growth plates and other fragile areas through weight training can cause developmental injuries.

For the older athlete, weight training offers increased lean body mass for higher metabolism and healthier, stronger muscles. All major muscle groups should be worked: chest, arms, shoulders, back and legs.

Examples:

- Chest — bench press, flies
- Arms — biceps curls, triceps extensions
- Shoulders — military press, dips, shrugs
- Back — rows, pull-downs
- Legs — squats, leg curls, leg extensions

Pliometrics

This is explosive training to increase the player’s bounding abilities, and overall speed and energy. While many weight programs train the muscles for slow, strong movement, pliometrics trains the muscles to have faster, explosive force, especially important in the pitching motion.

Examples:

- Single leg bounds — hopping up and down on one leg
- Standing broad jumps — jump forward
- Lateral jumps — jump to the sides
- Vertical jumps — jump straight up
- Jump-tucks — jump up and pull knees to chest

Agilities training

These are important to strengthening connective muscles, those around ankles and knees especially. Agility drills help develop “fast twitch” muscles, which allow changes in direction, quick hands, and also “builds body awareness in spatial

Olympic Training Ideas

relationship,” Michele explained, meaning the player understands better where they are on the field and where to move to reach the ball or tag a base.

Examples are foot drills like running a dual line of tires, doing the karaoke step (cross-over step running sideways), as well as hand drills for catching and tossing the ball quickly.

Core strength training

“The core (abdominals and back) is important for body strength in playing ball since players push off the ground in throwing, fielding, running and especially hitting and pitching,” said Michele. “The player is transferring their strength and movement from the upper body to the lower body and vice versa in all these movements.”

Good basic exercises for the core are: sit-ups, crunches and leg elevations, and “super-mans” or hyper-extensions for the back (reverse sit-ups).

“If you’re in good condition, you’re going to be better able to play late in the game,” Michele stressed. “Or when you hit that deep triple, you won’t gas going around second and get thrown out.”

The seasons of conditioning:

- Off-season: Have them hit the training and/or weight room 3 days a week, combined with cardio-vascular workouts more extensively to build strength and endurance. Do the core training workout every day, and combine the plyometrics workout with weight training for older athletes.
- Pre-season: Getting ready — workout off field two times a week. Michele points out that if you are practicing with your team three days a week, you will want to have the players do some aerobic activity two additional days, to build endurance.
- In season: The team is playing more, so you want them to stay consistent and maintain their fitness level, so exercising one to two times a week is sufficient.

“It is just as important to take care of your body off the field as on it,” – Michele Smith.

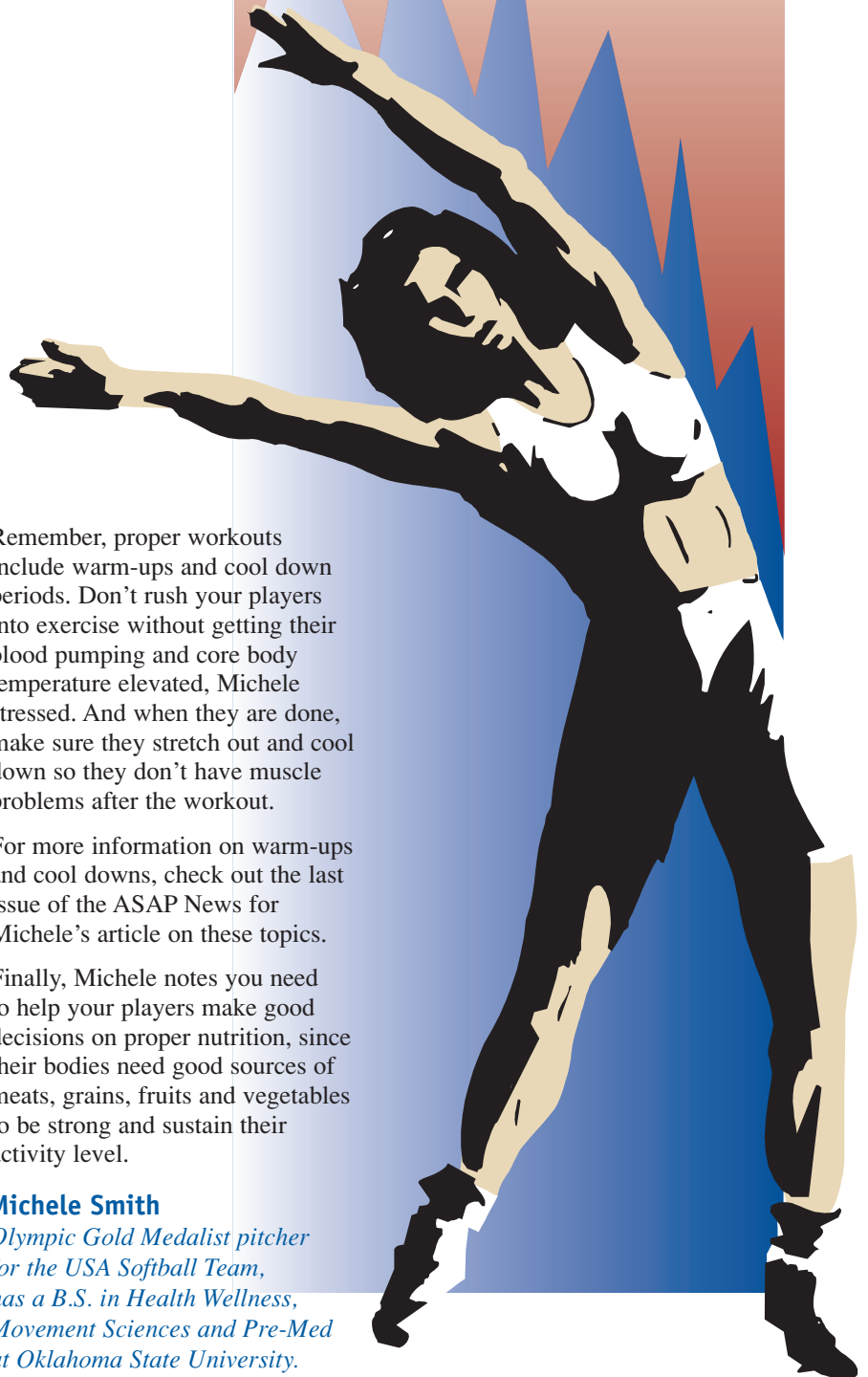
Remember, proper workouts include warm-ups and cool down periods. Don’t rush your players into exercise without getting their blood pumping and core body temperature elevated, Michele stressed. And when they are done, make sure they stretch out and cool down so they don’t have muscle problems after the workout.

For more information on warm-ups and cool downs, check out the last issue of the ASAP News for Michele’s article on these topics.

Finally, Michele notes you need to help your players make good decisions on proper nutrition, since their bodies need good sources of meats, grains, fruits and vegetables to be strong and sustain their activity level.

Michele Smith

Olympic Gold Medalist pitcher for the USA Softball Team, has a B.S. in Health Wellness, Movement Sciences and Pre-Med at Oklahoma State University.



You've Got Questions

'Why Are You a Safety Officer?'

Answer this simple question and be entered in a drawing for ASAP "Safe" caps, the same ones given to DA's for their participation in A Safety Awareness Program.

Do you have a background in health care, insurance, risk management, or safety? Or are you just a concerned parent that's doing something to keep your kids (or grandkids) safer? We want to hear from you!

We're looking for the motivation that gets you going. We want to hear your "I care because" story, when so many people seem to be asking "why care"? We want to share your stories with others, about how you're making a difference and helping your community.

**Call 1-800-811-7443
or email asap@musco.com**

Every person who calls or writes will be entered for a chance to win one of 10 ASAP "Safe" caps from a past year. So call in today, and sport a cap like your DA!



Spread the E-News!

Don't miss out on any of the latest Little League news and information! The ASAP News is available several weeks earlier online than in print, and if you are signed up for E-News, you'll be notified within hours of its being posted at www.littleleague.org.

Whether it's rules changes or breaking Little League news, everyone can use E-News to stay on top of all the important updates:

- League Officials
- Managers, Coaches
- Umpires
- Parents
- District Officials
- Any Volunteer!

So pass on this web address to all your volunteers who want to stay connected: <http://www.littleleague.org/common/enews/index.asp>.

Information available by E-News:

Little League News

Receive notices of news and announcements, as well as changes and updates to the Little League Web site.

ASAP Safety Newsletters

Packed with Little League's best safety tips and ideas, this newsletter will bring your parents, volunteers, team or league to the forefront of the safety movement.

ActiveSports.com Updates

ActiveSports.com is working hard to make sure your team has the best web site possible. This is where you'll learn to take advantage of all the ActiveSports.com features.

Little League Merchandise Updates

Information on new merchandise, clearance sales, and special discounts for E-News subscribers!

2004 Little League Summer Camp Information

Make sure you've given us your current address above so we can send you a summer camp brochure.

Changes and updates to Little League Rules and Regulations.

Here is an issue to think about in your own league. How do you handle ball retrieval? Are you considering the safety issues of children chasing after foul balls, even if you don't give rewards for returns? If you have any ideas to share, please call the ASAP Hotline at 800-811-7443, or email asap@musco.com.

To whom can help:

Our league will be hosting some post-season tournaments next week and as most of you know, tournament baseballs are limited. So, most leagues request that all out-of-bound balls be returned ASAP.

Does any other league reward for returning out-of-bounds balls? If so, do those leagues deal with a busy street nearby, and if so, do they consider liability situations if someone gets hurt by a passing car? What are the feelings from other leagues in this situation? I would like to receive a response to this situation ASAP because we will be hosting our tournaments. Our league does not want to incur any liability

We've Got Answers

issues by rewarding for unsafe actions. Should we not reward for out-of-bounds balls near a busy street (with a speed limit of 25 mph)? Thank you for any suggestions or comments.

Linda Orozco,
Safety Officer
Rocklin, Calif.

Hi Linda,
Our league does reward for foul ball return, with a ticket good for \$1 in the concession stand (which is much less league cost). We do establish a “no retrieve zone” which includes the parking lot and adjacent street, but this is hard to monitor. We have in the past said that balls that go in the street do not get a finders fee, but also hard to monitor.

Valerie Linke
Nevada District I SO
Carson Valley LL SO

Most of the leagues that I call at are not located near busy streets so I cannot comment on that. However, in the leagues that I have done, yes, there is a reward for returning a foul ball, usually a drink of some sort (at most leagues they use bottled drinks like Coke or water or Gatorade.

Calvin Kidwell

Baseballs are less expensive than someone getting hurt, or much worse... Buy an extra box of balls! Put up the portable nets along the road. Ones like you see behind the goalposts at football games or driving ranges along roadways. These can be raised and lowered for game time.

J. Stevens

“At a board meeting the board passed a local option that coaches could warm up players and pitchers since each team had only ten players. I realize this is in violation of Rule 3.09 and as Umpire In Chief I was wondering what I should do in this situation.”

Bob Bishop

Any local league rule MUST be authorized through the Charter Committee in Williamsport, and must further the safety of participants and volunteers. NO local rule may go against the Official Rules and Regulations of Little League Baseball, and authorizing such a rule places your league in jeopardy of lawsuits and loss of your charter from Little League. You should immediately discuss this with your board, and if that does not resolve the issue, take it to your District Administrator.

“Has anyone seen a copy of the attached letter? Being the District Safety Director, I am concerned about how to interpret this so-called blanket letter from Rawlings. It sort of leaves the liability issue wide open, and the wording in the letter can be misconstrued any way someone would like. Please review and give me feedback would you?”

Doug Atkinson
ADA/Safety Director
Calif. District 64

“Thank you and your league on your purchase of Rawlings helmets and Rawlings MLB helmet decals this year.

“We have tested the adhesive used for these decals and have determined that the proper use of these decals do not degrade the shell of the helmet. Approved Rawlings decals are as follows:

- Authentic MLB® Helmet Decal Kits
- Replica MLB® team decals applied in our warehouse
- MLB® batter icon decal applied to back of helmet

“Our return warranty and NOCSAE approval will remain valid with the proper use of these approved decals.

“We wish you a safe and enjoyable season and thank you again for your purchase of Rawlings equipment.”

Best regards,
Dan Cullinane
Marketing Manager

“I do not see a problem with the letter — as long as the league follows the letter — only use those decals listed and not modify the decals with any other or additional adhesive.”

So as long as you're using the specified decals on the specified helmets, it sounds like your leagues would be covered.

Daniel P. Kirby
Director of Risk Management
Little League Baseball, Incorporated

“I wanted to ask you if this safety packet to be put together is mandatory?”

Carla Hosier
Burkesville, Ken.

While the ASAP program is voluntary — except for the background checks of applicable volunteers, which was made mandatory for all leagues last year — why would you not want the best possible environment? Developing and implementing a safety program is something that your league can choose not to do, but why would anyone knowingly choose to allow an unsafe environment for their kids? Also, your district may have set requirements for leagues to have safety programs that wish to host district or state tournament games or special games. But the short answer is leagues are not required to participate.

Have a question or tip to share?

Call the ASAP Hotline:
800-811-7443
or email: asap@musco.com

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You've Got Questions?

We've got the answers. PLUS, enter to win ASAP hats!

“Safe kids know who they can ride with. The ‘magic word’ is a code that you share with your parent(s). No one is to know this word other than you and your parent(s). It’s used as a code word in different ways. For example, if your parent can’t pick you up from ball practice, they may send someone else to bring you home. You should only go with that person if he or she knows the magic word. If a person tries to pick you up who doesn’t know the magic word, you should run from them, find help and call 9-1-1.”

Tucson International Little League
District 12, Arizona

“Each of our fields is equipped with a large first-aid kit with various accessories, including ice packs, bandages, synthetic gloves, goggles, hydrogen peroxide, and CPR/Ambu masks. In addition, an AED (automated external defibrillator) is located at the Bel Aire Field. Emergency contact numbers are attached to the inside lid of each of the TPLL first-aid kits. These are stored in the equipment boxes at each field and are replenished on a regular basis. Portable first aid kits are issued to each team manager. These should be brought to all practices and games located outside the TPLL.”

Tiburon Peninsula Little League
District 3, California

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