

SPORTS

YOUTH BASEBALL

Right: Chris McGourty gets ready to throw a baseball during a clinic at the recently-opened baseball facility at Baker Field in Naples on Sept. 20, 2012.



NEW FACILITY IS PART OF CAL RIPKEN, SR. FOUNDATION PROJECT

By Scott Clair
Citizen Correspondent

Fifty youth, affiliated with local youth organizations such as the Boys & Girls Club, Youth Haven and Grace Place, found themselves safe at home at Baker Field in East Naples on Sept. 20.

In a fundamentals clinic which christened the recently-opened 5,000-square-foot baseball facility, many of the kids slapped on gloves for the first time and ran the base paths. The clinic, which will be held monthly, is funded by a grant from Naples Children & Education Foundation — founders of Naples Winter Wine Festival.

Baker Field is part of the Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation's project to build 50 fields across the country by 2015. Situated behind the Boys and Girls Club of Collier County, near the corner of Davis and Santa Barbara boulevards, Baker Field is among the initial five to be completed.

"The kids had a great time," said Colleen Miller, site monitor for the Boys & Girls Club of Collier County. "We showed them which hand to wear the baseball glove on for starters, as many of them had never played softball or baseball before. They really took to the sport and are looking forward to the next clinic."

A character-building session was also presented by the Collier County Sheriff's Office as part of the clinic.

"Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation's clinic formats are a strong mix of sports and sportsmanship," said Karen Scott, chair of NCEF's grant committee. "We are so pleased to partner with them."

The Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation was created by Cal Ripken, Sr.'s sons — former Major League players Bill and Cal Ripken Jr. — to build character and teach critical life lessons to disadvantaged youth. Their mission is to reach those kids using baseball as a platform.

The foundation and Boys & Girls Club of Collier County will host a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the official opening of Baker Field on Nov. 8.

Since 2000, Naples Children & Education Foundation, which is governed by NCEF trustees, has been dedicated to making a profound and sustaining improvement in the lives of underprivileged and at-risk children in Collier County.

Through the Naples Winter Wine Festival, NCEF has raised \$107 million since 2001, making it the most



Angelina Acevedo, Marc Andre and Serena Frederic enjoy a clinic at the recently-opened Baker Field baseball facility in Naples on Sept. 20, 2012.

SUBMITTED PHOTO (3)

Kids have a ball at Baker Field inaugural event



Sherlay Cajuste sprints to first base during a clinic at the recently-opened Baker Field baseball complex in Naples on Sept. 20, 2012. Baker Field is part of the Cal Ripken Sr. Foundation's project. The clinics which will be held monthly and are funded by a grant from Naples Children & Education Foundation — founders of Naples Winter Wine Festival.

successful charity wine auction in the world. Proceeds have impacted more than 150,000 children through 36 charities. Major initiatives funded in collaboration with other private and public entities have included a pediatric dental clinic and an early learning center.

The 2013 Naples Winter Wine Festival will take place Jan. 25-27. For more information about Naples Winter Wine Festival and Naples Children & Education Foundation, visit www.napleswinefestival.com or call 888-837-4919.