

# Kids have a ball at Baker Field inaugural event

**SPECIAL TO FLORIDA WEEKLY**

Fifty underprivileged and at-risk children learned how to play baseball and softball at the Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation's opening clinic at the new Baker Field. The students, who attend programs at the Boys & Girls Club of Collier County, Youth Haven and Grace Place, also took part in a character-building exercise led by Corporal Barry Ardery of the Collier County Sheriff's Office. The clinic, which will be held monthly, is funded by a grant from Naples Children & Education Foundation - founders of Naples Winter Wine Festival.

"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."

During a character-building segment, Corporal Ardery led an exercise focused on teamwork, sportsmanship and respect. Four students who exemplified those qualities each received a certificate of achievement.

"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 to benefit Collier County's underprivileged and at-risk children, whose needs go beyond medical and academic hardships."

The Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation was created by his sons, 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 under-

privileged and at-risk children in Collier County. Through the Naples Winter Wine Festival, NCEF has raised \$107 million since 2001, making it the most 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](http://www.napleswinefestival.com) or call 888-837-4919. ■



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