



## OAKLAND FIELD OF DREAMS

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## NEWSLETTER

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Greetings Baseball Supporters.

The Oakland Field of Dreams (OFOD) is a non-Profit organization that manages, maintains, improves and sustains the Rickey Henderson Field (RHF) for Oakland Unified School District (OUSD), Oakland Technical High School (OTHS), and Bay Area Baseball players. OFOD is focused on the promotion of Youth Baseball in Oakland by maintaining Rickey Henderson Field as a pristine, inner city baseball complex.

As a reminder, Rickey Henderson Field was the result of an inspirational, miraculous, volunteer effort by Oakland Tech Staff, Coaches, Parents, Players and Friends to build a High School baseball field. We started in September 2007 and Dedicated Carter Field on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008. Eighteen months after the original field Dedication, on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2009, the field was renamed “Rickey Henderson Field” to honor Oakland native, 1976 Oakland Tech graduate, and 2009 Baseball Hall of Fame inductee, Rickey Henderson.

Oakland Field of Dreams was incorporated in 2009, and has sustained and maintained this field for the last 15 years. In 2015, as part of building out an adjacent turf soccer practice space for Oakland International High School (OIHS), OUSD realigned the outfield fence and made other significant baseball field improvements. Our original (2007) dreams had included plans for a girl’s softball diamond at this same location, but when that space was used for the OIHS soccer practice fields, these plans were transferred to the nearby Emerson Elementary School campus. OUSD started construction of the softball field in May 2020 and the project was completed in January 2021. All our dreams had been realized.

“The Rickey” has now been the home field for the Oakland Tech Bulldogs for 16 High School Baseball seasons. The wave of enthusiasm that created the field in 2008 swept us along for the first dozen years. Oakland Tech won the Oakland Athletic League (OAL) and CIF-Oakland Section Baseball Championship ten consecutive years (2010-2019). During those ten years we also won 5 Trans Bay Series, played between the top OAL and SF-AAA HS teams. Two Tech players have been selected in the MLB Amateur Draft.

The primary users during the High School baseball season (January 1 to May 31 each year) are the Varsity and Junior Varsity baseball teams at Oakland Tech, including opposing teams from the OAL and other Bay Area High Schools. The Oakland Tech teams both practice and play all their home games at RHF, effectively hosting 28 different teams with a roster of 15 players--more than 400 HS baseball players over five months.

In non-HS season months (June through October), RHF hosts the North Oakland/South Oakland Little Leagues (Noll/Soll) Junior and Senior Programs (age 12 to 16) programs, and (until 2021) the Oakland-wide Challenger Division of Noll/Soll, which serves youth with disabilities. Over the years, other users of the RHF baseball complex have included the Oakland Cal Ripken-Babe Ruth Baseball League, and a range of youth travel baseball teams, including the Metropolitan Junior Baseball Team, the Rakers, Cyclones, Junior Bulldogs, Jets, and Prime Baseball, which are all dedicated to the development of urban high school baseball players, ages 13 to 18.

In addition, teams from the Bay Area Men's Senior Baseball League (BAMSBL), the Pacific Coast Hardball League (PCHL), and other adult recreational leagues use RHF on Saturdays and Sundays from April through August.

Just as we were entering the 2020 HS Baseball season, the COVID pandemic brought HS sports to a halt. On March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the Oakland Tech girls Basketball team had just won their way to the State Championship game. The CIF suspended all HS sports. The County suspended all recreational sports. Grass and weeds did not stop growing. Geese did not stop visiting parks and fields and depositing their poop everywhere. Sprinklers and irrigation valves still failed and needed replacing. People still broke into the field and storage containers and stole equipment and tools. For fifteen months, RHF still had to be regularly maintained, even though no-one was playing baseball.

For Oakland HS's there was a weird one-month "season" in April-May 2021. Adult leagues resumed recreational play in June or July 2021. After Oakland schools returned from Distance Learning in August 2021, there was an unhappy 2022 Baseball campaign for Oakland Tech. It seems that Parental enthusiasm for volunteerism has been one victim of the Pandemic, and it will take more than the one Build Back Better year of 2023 to re-create our pre-Pandemic HS Baseball world.

At the end of 2022, the Olympic Club Foundation gave OFOD a \$10,000 grant to upgrade the batting cages at the RHF, and those upgrades were completed by the end of March 2023. In early April 2023 we completed a project to modify the backstop fence to minimize foul balls leaving the park – specifically onto the road, across 45th Street, and onto the roof of the adjacent OIHS Gym. OUSD / OAL paid for the soft netting and the scissor lift to do this work.

Recently, the Oakland Heritage Alliance honored OFOD with a Partners in Preservation Award, for 15 years of Stewardship of Rickey Henderson Field. The award ceremony took place at the Oakland Scottish Rite Center at 1547 Lakeside Drive, on Sunday, October 15, 2023.

<https://oaklandfieldofdreams.org/oakland-heritage-alliance-partners-in-preservation-award/>

That level of Stewardship comes at a price. Our Fundraising was another Pandemic victim, and we still have an extensive "Wish List" of improvement projects.

[https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1lusb73lgKOxyl1ljX6S\\_TAD4HMvqX4rolY6YeAo-a4A/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1lusb73lgKOxyl1ljX6S_TAD4HMvqX4rolY6YeAo-a4A/edit?usp=sharing)

We are writing to ask you to support our 2023 End of Year Fundraiser. Our current and past Board Members are on track to pledge \$12,500 and we're hoping to match that from our many supporters and fans – for a total of at least \$25,000.

We would like to complete several major projects before the 2024 HS season begins ...:

- RHF Backfield and Batting Cage Lights
- Renovation of the double bullpen mound in the backfield
- Renovation of the home plate area bleachers

After more than 15 years of operation, Rickey Henderson Field is the best it has ever been. Each year, the field provides "a place to play" in an urban setting for many hundreds of young players, including at-risk youth in the local community.

Thanks again for your support.

Best Regards.



Philip G. Williams.  
(President, OFOD).

Oakland Field of Dreams (OFOD), is a California nonprofit public benefit corporation. OFOD qualifies as an IRS 501(c)(3) tax exempt charitable organization. (Taxpayer EIN 38-3802277).