



## Minnesota/USA Softball and MYAS expand strategic partnership to include Youth 1st Accredited leagues for 2022.

Open Letter To: Community Association Leaders/Board of Directors

Thank you for investing in your community's youth by providing opportunities to participate in sports! Youth sports can provide us with great learning experiences if we approach them with the proper perspective. Perspective is how we see the world, which then determines our conduct / actions. It is easy for parents and coaches to lose site of the big picture, rather than seeing the youth sports experience as it was meant to be: an extension of the classroom, a piece of the development process.

On October 20, NFHS Executive Director Karissa Niehoff sent a video message entitled: The ongoing national crisis involving a lack of individuals to officiate high school sports. Headlines across the country mention rescheduled or cancelled games due to the shortage of officials. The pandemic heightened a growing problem caused by the abuse of officials. According to the National Association of Sports Officials (NASO), 57 percent of officials say that sportsmanship is getting worse, primarily among competitive youth sports, caused by parents (40%), coaches (30%) and fans (19%). We have some work to do! We can do better!

Minnesota/USA Softball and Minnesota Youth Athletic Services (MYAS) are expanding their strategic partnership with Youth 1st to implement Youth 1st Environments across the state during the 2022 youth fastpitch softball and baseball season. Youth 1st has successfully impacted conduct during youth tournaments across Minnesota by reminding the adults about the purpose of youth athletics.

"We are placing the emphasis on how you play the game, which is ultimately more important than if you win or lose," said Mark Arjes, Director of Youth 1st. "It has become increasingly difficult to find and retain coaches and officials for youth sports because of the abuse they take during games. We believe it is time to model and encourage values-based actions, creating a Youth 1st Environment where the focus is on the kids, competitive energies are kept in check, and officials and opponents are respected."

### Conduct 1st Environment

**REMEMBER...**  
it's about the kids.

**I WILL...**  
keep my competitive energy in check.

**I WILL ALWAYS...**  
treat officials and opponents w/ respect.

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We Put Youth 1st at Youth 1st





"The Minnesota Twins and Twins Community Fund are proud to partner on the Youth 1st Team Awards. Baseball and softball play a key role in the development of young people when the focus is on teaching life skills, developing values, and building character," said Dave St. Peter, President and CEO of the Minnesota Twins. "We are thrilled that the Youth 1st Team Awards program recognizes players, coaches, and parents who model and encourage good sportsmanship and positive conduct in Twins Territory."



"Youth 1st exemplifies what Minnesota Softball is all about," said Tom Bye, Director for Minnesota Softball. "The time is right for this partnership which will benefit our entire platform. We need to reward good sportsmanship and reward it through a fine program like Youth 1st." Bye continued, "We hope this will turn our sport into a positive and fun environment for our kids to excel."

"One of the goals within the MYAS mission is to promote sportsmanship, teamwork and cultural interaction through sporting competition," said Dawson Blanck, MYAS Executive Director. "The entire MYAS team is thrilled to be able to partner with Youth 1st to help us meet those goals within our programs. As a leader in youth sports throughout the great state of Minnesota, we want to be proactive and impact participants (youth athletes, coaches, parents, and officials) in a positive way through a Youth 1st environment at all our tournaments and events. Implementing this initiative with Youth 1st has significantly decreased the number of unsportsmanlike events that took place compared to previous years."



During the 2021 season, the Northwoods League Foundation's Board of Directors provided a grant to Youth 1st. The grant was specific to Youth 1st's partnership in Behind the Mask, an initiative dedicated to fostering the development of umpires at all levels of amateur baseball and softball.

"This is a highly underserved area of sports at all levels, said Northwoods League Foundation's Chairman, Dick Radatz, Jr., we take officiating very seriously and are proud to promote an organization that develops officials."

If your association would like to participate in our Community Accreditation pilot program, contact your league administrator at MN USA Softball or MYAS or Mark Arjes at Youth 1st.

Additional information can be found at [youth1st.com](http://youth1st.com) or by checking out our Social Media sites: @Youth1stMN. Thank you for putting our Youth 1st and for your partnership!

