



Virginia District 7 Little League Umpire Association
Hampton – Newport News – Poquoson – York County

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Dear League President,

As the new President of the District 7 Little League Umpire Association, I wanted to share with you my thoughts with making the decision to contract with a paid umpire association to cover your games. I realize that, in some cases, it is unavoidable but every effort should be made to use volunteer umpires for your games. You, as League President, know that Little League is a volunteer organization and using volunteer umpires should be an integral part of your leagues and our District.

If you do contract umpires, you should know that:

- contracting with a paid umpire association does not guarantee your game will be worked by an umpire who is trained to the Little League rules and standards. In fact, due to poor game management, there were numerous issues last year concerning paid umpire associations. There were several unpleasant interactions with parents and players as well as umpires walking away after reaching an arbitrary time limit.
- these umpires typically do not conduct equipment/safety checks.
- these umpires do not take the time to work with managers, coaches, and players to ready them for tournament play.
- the overall quality of paid umpires are usually not as good as a volunteer umpire because they are in it to get paid and not in it for the kids,.

There are several reasons that volunteer umpires are harder to find these days. A big reason is because of the behavior of some parents and the implied or tacit acceptance of this behavior by League Board Members who do nothing about it. I have seen way too many games where parents are allowed to verbally abuse umpires (who are parents themselves!) and **THERE IS NO RECOURSE FOR THIS BEHAVIOR NOR IS THERE IS ANY EXCUSE FOR IT EITHER! THIS MUST CHANGE!** We should not expect our volunteer parents to tolerate this as a normal way of doing business. I find it difficult to find another organization where volunteers are treated as poorly as Little League Volunteers are. We all should expect and demand better.

There are many ways that Volunteer Umpires can be successfully used in all of our leagues. Providing a positive, enjoyable atmosphere for the kids and parents who play are in line with the Little League Player and Parent Pledges which encourage fair play, doing your best and respecting volunteer managers, coaches and umpires. League Board of Directors must adopt and enforce a positive environment for game play. Instead of paying for contract umpires, Leagues should create and follow through with incentives to keep parents and volunteers umpiring games. These incentives include paying for equipment, providing shirts and hats, providing relief for costs incurred for training including travel and for those that have concession stands', providing fantastic food and drink following their game always works!

In the end, I realize that each league has to do what is necessary to provide umpires for their games. I hold out hope that you and your leagues develop creative ways for parents and volunteers to umpire little league games. I, along with the Association Board of Directors will do what we can to help! Please take advantage of the training our association is willing to provide. Again, we plan on conducting classroom and field mechanics sessions this year to include mechanics sessions for softball and 90 foot baseball.

Please contact me with any concerns or questions you have!

Sean Belfry
President
District 7 Little League
Umpire Association
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