

Poway Girls Softball League

Early Years: A New Opportunity for Local Girls

In 1967, the League was first formed by Ellen Lopshire, as a way to provide opportunities for local girls to play organized sports. For two years, it remained as an informal group of girls who played teams from other local communities. In 1969, Janet Ibach, a former semiprofessional softball player for the San Diego Slick Chicks, had a strong vision to formally organize the Poway Girls Softball League as an official organization.

1980s: Emerging as a League

Originally an unincorporated community of San Diego County, Poway officially became a city in December 1980. Just like the city, PGSL was just emerging as well. “Things were very simple back then,” said John Mullin, PGSL president from 1989-1990 and current Poway City Councilmember. “Games were played on 4 grass fields at Midland and we only had two fundraisers, the snack shack and a sock hop dance.” As Snack Shack Coordinator for many years, Mullin organized parent volunteers to help prepare food and drinks to sell at the Saturday games. “Every weekend, we made the hot dogs and coffee at my house,” explains Mullin. “We would pack it up, pull an old trailer that was barely street ready to the fields, and open up for business,” said Mullin, “That was the snack shack for many years.”

PGSL also continued to remain as a recreational league for local players. “We wanted to make it easy for everyone,” explained Mullin. “The registration fees were kept as low as possible so all families had the opportunity to participate.” Mullin added that the notion of being more competitive when playing other leagues began to emerge in the late 1980s. “We were very concerned about decimating the talent pool if everyone went to travel ball,” said Mullin. “So we felt it was in the best interest of the league and ultimately the girls to remain as a rec league in the spring and then continue an all-star season in the summer for the more experienced players.”

Early 1990s: First Wave of Expansion

As PGSL entered the 1990s, Poway’s total population had increased nearly 35% to 43,516 from 32,263 a decade ago. Because of high demand and growing interest, the league had nearly 400 registered players between the ages of 5-18. PGSL also sponsored several travel teams comprised of girls who played at a more competitive level at local, regional, state, and national tournaments. In 1994, under then PGSL President Ray McKay’s leadership, the first Summer Heat Classic All-Star Softball Tournament was hosted at Tierra Bonita Elementary School raising much needed income for the league—and still continues today—and improvements were made at Midland Elementary School by removing grass and creating two dirt diamonds in the back fields and building backstops, dugouts, and batting cages.

Late 1990s and Early 2000s: Field of Dreams Becomes a Reality

During the early years, PGSL utilized fields located at Midland Elementary School, Valle Verde Park, Lake Poway, and Garden Road Elementary. In 1998, the PGSL board members

officially recognized that the league needed new fields. The Midland site was being outgrown and there were early rumblings of a new reconstruction project that would eliminate the fields at the school. At the urging of Sharon Ward, current PGSL Equipment Manager, a New Fields Search Committee (NFSC) was appointed with initial membership comprised of Gabriel Sanchez, Gregg Brandalise, Roger Moyer, and Mike Snell. In addition, a New Fields Account was earmarked to hold monies collected that would fund the development of new fields. Meanwhile, efforts spearheaded by Gregg Brandalise were started to educate the City Council and garner support for the League's needs.

In 2002, two key events helped elevate the priority of new fields for PGSL. Jim Bowersox, City Manager at that time, notified PGSL that the City of Poway acquired 8.5 acres of land in the Old Poway Park area where Aubrey Park now stands. In addition, Proposition C, a bond measure for rebuilding schools was approved, meaning that Midland would be demolished and rebuilt beginning summer 2004 so PGSL needed to come up with additional fields immediately.

PGSL stepped up its efforts to raise nearly \$1.5 million through fundraising and obtaining in-kind donations for planning resources, grade development, and engineering for the fields. In May 2004, in front of nearly 1,000 people at the Poway Center for Performing Arts, the Poway City Council agreed unanimously to build Aubrey Park. Construction began that summer and Aubrey Park was built in time for the start of PGSL's Spring 2005 recreational season.

"Even though many of us on the committee were no longer a PGSL board members, we were all committed to finding new fields for the girls and seeing it through to the end," said Moyer. Moyer added that his role in helping to build Aubrey Park is one of the proudest accomplishments in his lifetime. "If you look at the park now, it truly is a contribution to the City of Poway," said Moyer. "Aubrey Park has added lots of character and value to the community and it ensured that our girls (nearly 450 at that time) had a place to play ball."

Looking Ahead

PGSL remains committed to providing an opportunity for girls ages 5 through 14 to play fastpitch softball in a fun, inspiring, and supportive environment. For more information, visit www.pgsl.or or like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/powaysoftball