



2019 Save Texas History Essay Contest

4th Grade Winner

Texas General Land Office
George P. Bush, Commissioner



George Vernau III
St. Clare of Assisi Catholic School
Houston, Texas

NALL: The Space Baseball Community

One day I want to be a professional baseball player. So far, I have played for the Red Sox, the Angels, the Giants, the Indians, the Diamondbacks, and the Mariners. Of course, I am only ten years old, so these are all Little League teams. My love of baseball started when I was four years old and played T-ball with NASA Area Little League (“NALL”) in Clear Lake, Texas. NALL is a historic, non-profit organization in my community that is worth saving. Let me tell you why.

NALL was established 54 years ago in 1965 and has a mission statement, “Building Character, Courage, and Loyalty that will last a lifetime”.¹ This organization allows kids aged 4-12 to play on a baseball team. The teams are divided up by age and division (e.g. t-ball, coach pitch, machine pitch, Texas (“kid-pitch”), minors, and majors). The coaches are parents of the players and are volunteers. Kids can play in the fall and/or in the spring. I have played every fall and spring season with NALL. To kickoff the spring season, NALL hosts an Opening Day. Every team creates a float, and the players throw candy in a parade through the neighborhood. After the parade, there is a presentation on the main field of all the teams by division. Then, everyone plays in bounce houses, eats lunch, does a cake walk, and participates in various contests such as a homerun derby and a sprint. This past spring, retired Astros legend José Cruz was there to sign autographs. This organization is special to my family and me. My father has been my team’s assistant coach, head coach, and All-Star coach. My grandfather has filled in as the coach sometimes. This role has been special to my grandfather because he used to coach my dad on the very same NALL fields.

Another reason why NALL is special to my family as well as my community is its association with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (“NASA”). In 1961, NASA formed the Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center (“JSC”) in Clear Lake, Texas, which served as the Mission Control Center for the U.S. space program.² NALL was established four years later and is the only Little League in the Clear Lake community. 1989 was a memorable year for NALL and my father. That year, astronaut Michael Coats coached my dad’s





2019 Save Texas History Essay Contest 4th Winner

George Vernau III
St. Clare of Assisi Catholic School
Houston, Texas

NALL Minors team, the Rangers. During mission STS-29, Coach Coats waved his Rangers cap up in space live on NASA TV. Who else can say that his baseball coach missed a game or two because he was in space?! From 2005-2012, Coats was Director of the JSC.³ He may be known around the world as “Commander”, but to the NALL community he is known as “Coach”.

In conclusion, we should strive to save NASA Area Little League. When I make my Astros debut, I can say it all started with NALL in Clear Lake, Texas. Maybe my son will play at NALL one day. Play ball!

¹“About NALL”. <https://leagues.bluesombrero.com/Default.aspx?tabid=886869>. December 4, 2019.

²“About Johnson Space Center”. <https://www.nasa.gov/centers/johnson/about/index.html>. December 4, 2019.

³“Nasa Former Astronauts”. https://www.nasa.gov/sites/default/files/atoms/files/coats_michael.pdf. December 4, 2019.

