



Dear OYO Families and Friends,

2020 was a year unlike any other year. We have been challenged in ways we never dreamed possible. We have become all too accustomed to face masks, social distancing, six-feet apart, remote learning and Zoom meetings. The Pandemic has affected us all in a very real way. For most of 2020, we have grieved the way things used to be, been more worried than usual, been isolated from our loved ones and support systems and, overall, probably not been ourselves. It has been a year of uncertainties, changes, losses and hardships for many, myself included. 2020, we bid you adieu! Welcome 2021!

There is so much hope a new year brings, no matter the circumstances. I believe the challenges of 2020 will make us all stronger, more resilient, more flexible and more tolerant. I believe, more than anything, there is always something to be thankful for and always something to look forward to. As difficult as 2020 was, there is still much to give thanks for and so much to look forward to in 2021!

**The Path to OYO |** Before OYO, I was a housewife, stay-at-home homeschooling mom of three. We lived in a small town outside of Atlanta, Georgia, and life was pretty slow and simple. I spent my days knee-deep in crafts, Phonics, Play-doh, math flashcards and outside time. As my kids got older, our days were spent of course on academics, but also on real-world experiences. I would not trade that time for anything in the world. I share my past experiences only to say life has indeed changed! My family and I relocated to Indianapolis in 2017 to be near our extended family. In that year, I shared with an acquaintance that I was looking for a great place for my kids to play ball. She shared a great gift with me in OYO. Two of our kids then signed up to play ball here, and I was recruited as a 12U Softball coach. From the very start, I knew OYO was a very special place, far more than just a baseball and softball league. It was a place that brought the community together. It was inclusive. It was a place where kids could learn baseball and softball, no matter the age they begin – my daughter was 12 and trying softball for the first time. It was a place that put character and sportsmanship first, then followed that with quality instruction. It became my happy place instantly. Over the next three years, many, many hours were spent on the ballfields of OYO! My investment in the league grew from coaching softball and baseball to becoming a board member. I served as Junior Rookie Commissioner before being asked to join the executive board as Vice President of Travel, where our full-time player participation doubled in the past year.

One of the greatest blessings for me in 2020 was being given the opportunity to serve as President of Oaklandon Youth Organization. Never would I have dreamed I would go from a stay-at-home wife and mom to the leader of an amazing organization! I am full of excitement and vision for the future of OYO. Along this journey with me is a Board of Directors of 42 wonderful people. They are passionate and invested in this league, and together, along with our support staff of concession workers and umpires and all of our loyal players and their families, OYO is set to have an amazing year in 2021!

**The OYO Way Path |** My visions for the league are simple. The OYO Way, and all it stands for, is at the core of my visions for OYO's future. I am also a coach, which I truly enjoy, so I believe a progression of skills helps to **develop** the players as they move through the baseball and softball program. It is an absolute privilege to coach at OYO, and I intend to continue bettering myself as a coach as I watch my players improve uniquely, as well. As President, it is important to me for OYO to secure excellent, invested coaches who will commit to instruction, help players evolve in their craft and model sportsmanship. I believe **respect** is the basis for all of the unique relationships at the park, from player to coach to umpire to fans to board members to concession workers. We may have differing approaches to life, but modeling mutual respect for one another is paramount to the success of this league. **Life lessons** happen everyday, for every one of us. One of the many special things about this league is it is all about the development of kids, both on the field and off. Our main goal is to teach baseball and softball, but also to help set kids on the right path in life. As parents, teachers and coaches, we have the opportunity to teach kids grace, kindness, sportsmanship, humility and camaraderie. This leads to strong **character** development and the building of a moral compass. Because this is an instructional and recreational league at its core, team balance, the rotating of players and equal opportunities provide the **fairness** we strive for as an organization. This is the OYO Way, my friends. This is what OYO is all about.

It is my absolute honor to serve the families of OYO. I do not take for granted the chance I have to make a positive difference in the lives of so many kids in our community by helping to provide the opportunity for quality baseball and softball experiences. I promise to be the best leader I can be by:

- crafting plans that stand the test of time
- showing a willingness to try new things while staying true to OYO's roots
- being fair and consistent, a good listener and a good steward of our resources
- showing grace
- modeling good character

**Making a Difference Despite COVID-19** | COVID-19 has certainly left its mark on 2020 and everything in it. OYO was no exception. Our Spring Season was cancelled, which was an agonizing decision, but one that was necessary and right. Come summertime, our travel teams decided to make a go of what was left of their season. They jumped at the opportunity to be pioneers amidst the new protocols and the unknown. They were a huge success! Boys and girls came out of quarantine to play the game they love. They paved the way for thoughts of our expanded Fall Ball season. We were not sure if it could happen. A park full of people every Sunday (and many Saturdays) and registration numbers teetering on some of the highest Fall Ball numbers we have ever seen at 585 was very exciting after a long quarantine, but a bit unnerving at the same time. However, as a league, we rose to the challenge. We made our park compliant, created modifications to our game day experience and employed safety measures never used before. Our Fall Ball season, in spite of COVID, was a raging success! In most divisions, we were pleased to get 18+ games in without a single rainout. But best of all, not one of our teams was shut down and unable to play due to COVID. There were certainly times of high tension during the season, some of those times, not our greatest moments, but putting the OYO Way at the forefront of our minds has allowed us to move forward and look to the future, and the future is bright!

**Of Course There's Still Opportunity for Improvement** | In our survey, one of the main areas where we were asked to improve upon was **team balance**. In our rec league, having parity amongst each division is something our commissioners always strive for, but does not always come to fruition for various reasons. We are welcoming several new commissioners to the board, and have retained others with tremendous experience. Our hope is to have all of our commissioners on the same page on how to build fair and balanced teams across the board in our rec league, so every team is coached well, every game is competitive and every team has a shot at the championship.

Another area we are striving to improve upon is **player development**. I am hoping a skills progression model, starting at our youngest age groups and moving through each division until it reaches our oldest age groups, will not only help to create the balance we are looking for, but also take our player instruction to a new level. We have a terrific group of commissioners who are working closely with the rules and training chairperson and the coaches to create a list of skills which will coincide with coach training, practice plans and end-of-season player evaluations. The idea is to equip the coaches with skills to work on and provide fundamental ways to achieve those skills. Once the progression of skills is met for each division, the player feels ready to take on a new set of skills and challenges, while nurturing and building upon the ones previously learned. Our hope is that our league will be one that is fun, fair and fundamentally-sound.

The other area we are largely working on improving is the **condition of fields on practice nights**. I am beyond thrilled to share with you we have a six-person grounds crew at OYO for the first time in a very long time! These dedicated volunteers are sharing their manpower, knowledge of field care, and most of all, their time, to give your ballplayers the very best experience. I have met with this crew, headed up by our exceptional Vice President of Grounds, Justin Sturm. And I assure you, the fields and surrounding areas are in great hands. They have plans to divvy up ownership of the care of the fields and are ready to hit the ground running in the spring. As far as park infrastructure goes, we have made some dramatic upgrades in the offseason. Field 1 has new grass basepaths and has more than 30 tons of new infield mix laid. Field 13 also has new grass base paths. Two of our sheds have been rebuilt, and the other two will follow suit, in addition to a new shed being constructed near Field 5. Batting Cage B is being resurrected, thanks to a generous donation from our outgoing OYO President, Matt Martin. We are working on improving our pitching warm up areas outside of most fields, as well, with better backstops, mounds, and home plates to improve the pitching/catching experience. These are only a few of the projects underway at OYO right now. Little by little, we will make improvements that will add to the overall experience of the players and the aesthetics of the park.

**What's Next** | Friends, I cannot convey enough what this league means to me. I've never been really exceptionally good at anything, never really had a hobby I loved and have never felt like I was really part of something special. I can say wholeheartedly, although I have much to learn still, I have found my happy place at OYO! It's so very wonderful to have found something I am passionate about and have the support of my family to go for it! Nothing makes me happier than to be at the ballpark on a hot, sunny day throwing the ball with my son or seeing my family chilling in their lawn chairs enjoying messy popsicles and hotdogs from the concession stand. I'm also happy to pop my headphones in on a cool fall night when the park is empty and turn circles around the infields on the bunker rake. I am equally happy walking the park on a busy game day during an AOD shift and talking to all of the wonderful people at the park. Obviously, this is what OYO means to me. My hope is OYO is as special a place to you and your ballplayer as it is to me. I know we all have sweet memories there. Memories of close games, fun practices, new friends, awesome plays, fun parades and championship matchups. The life lessons our kids learn through youth sports, especially at a place like OYO, are invaluable and immeasurable. Our kids are resilient, clever, talented and imaginative. And, I am often taught far more about life from my kids, students and players than I will ever teach them. The future is bright, and it's all because of them.

I can't wait to see what the future holds! Welcome, 2021! OYO is ready!

With gratitude,  
Brittany Anderson  
OYO President