



**AMERICAN
PRINTING
HOUSE** 

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For Immediate Release

Baseball for People who are Blind has Louisville Beginnings *APH Museum to host demonstration game*

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (April 24, 2019) – People who are blind playing baseball? Is that a thing? Absolutely! People who are blind or visually impaired have been playing baseball ever since it was invented!

The first recorded game of baseball for people who are blind was actually played here in Louisville, at the Kentucky School for the Blind 125 years ago.

“The boys have modified it somewhat so that they have a right good game,” reported KSB teacher William Frederick at a meeting of teachers of the blind in 1894.

“The pitcher stands about eight feet from the batter and counts one, two, three. At three he lets the ball go, and I think that twice out of five times the batter will hit it. When he hears himself strike the ball he runs.”

Back then, the bases were trees, and, yes, players occasionally ran smack into them.

Various other ways of adapting the game of baseball for athletes who are blind were attempted over the years. In one, the runners kept one hand on a shoulder-high cable that circled the four bases. In another version, the ball was rolled along a brick pathway, and the players swung bats like golfclubs.

Now, the game follows the rules of the National Beep Baseball Association, first written down in 1964. There are 32 registered adult teams nationwide, and every year they compete for the World Series of Beep Baseball. The Indy Thunder (Indianapolis) is the 2018 world champion.

The ball is similar to a softball, with the beeper buried deep inside. Teams number six players. The pitcher is on the batter’s team, and the ball emits a beeping noise once it leaves the pitcher’s hand. The runner runs to base – or rather, directly into it, since the base is made from sponge rubber and is about four feet high. The base buzzes so the runner knows where it is, and the ball continues to beep while it is in play.



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It's a very noisy game, so the fans in the stands have to keep as quiet as possible so the players can hear the beeping and buzzing. Instead of the good hand-eye coordination prized in some sports, these young athletes need good "hand-ear" coordination.

Players score a run by making it to a base before the other team locates the ball. When a fielder focuses on the sound, he or she often dives headfirst onto the ball, trapping it on the ground.

All the players wear blindfolds. Most people who are blind can see a little, even if it's just light and shadows, so wearing blindfolds levels the field.

Gary Mudd, a vice president at APH, who is blind says he "grew up on baseball" and he's looking forward to the game at KSB.

"It's America's game," he says. "Everyone should have an opportunity to experience it."

Too often, people focus on the things people who are blind can't do, or on the precautions they must take. On the beepball field, kids know no obstacles. They're running and swinging as hard as they can, just like any player on a major league team.

Sure, it's a blast to play, but it's also an opportunity for them to show what they can do as athletes.

See Beepball in Action:

The media is invited to attend a demonstration game at 1pm on April 27th. The event will take place in the grass behind the cafeteria at Kentucky School for the Blind (KSB). KSB is located at 1867 Frankfort Avenue.

Interviews will be available with players and event planners. If you plan to attend, contact Jonathan Wahl at 502-216-9075 or at jwahl@aph.org.

About American Printing House for the Blind

American Printing House for the Blind is a worldwide leader in designing innovative lifelong learning solutions for children and adults who are blind or visually impaired. In this fast-changing world, we believe in the power and necessity of learning to open the doors to educational success, satisfying employment, social inclusion, active citizenship, and personal well-being. We level the learning playing field by providing specialized technology, materials, products, and services that are essential for education and life. American Printing House for the Blind is headquartered at 1839 Frankfort Avenue in Louisville, Kentucky. For more information, please visit www.aph.org.

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