

BABE RUTH SOFTBALL HOST HOUSING PLAN

Why is the Babe Ruth Softball tournament trail experience the best in youth sports? Players *love* the host housing experience! In the nearly fifty-year history of the host family plan under Babe Ruth League, Inc., we have found the program provides experiences and memories that the players carry with them for the rest of their lives.

Host housing is a requirement for tournament play per Babe Ruth Softball rule 11.06, paragraph 9. It was implemented to protect the league, ease the financial burden of tournament competition, and most importantly, to enhance the tournament experience for our participants.

Host families are selected by the tournament host organization. They take pride in selecting caring people who provide supervision in a family atmosphere. For those children whose parents cannot attend the tournament, host parents are there to share the thrills of winning and offer encouraging words after a defeat. For all players, the tournament becomes a cultural and educational experience. The child learns how different or similar their communities and families are. Bonds are formed that very often last well beyond the tournament. When Major League players are interviewed about their childhood experiences in Babe Ruth, invariably what comes up most often is not the tournament games, but the great times and warm memories they have of their host families.

Two to three players from the same team stay in each home. The manager determines the player pairings. Every effort is made to keep a team together in the same neighborhood. The manager will also notify in advance the Housing Chairperson of any allergies or special needs a player may have so she may be properly accommodated. The host family will provide the player with three square meals a day, comfortable sleeping arrangements, laundry, transportation, and entertainment.

Players' parents and families are encouraged to meet and socialize with the host family as well. Parents continue to have contact with their child during the tournament and are provided the great experience of getting to know the local people and culture.

The host family program is a hit with coaches, parents and players. A tournament coach announced in a State Workshop, "Before we joined Babe Ruth Softball and had host housing, our coaches were up half the night keeping the girls in their rooms. Host housing is a great relief for the coaches and chaperones. The host parents really treat them right. The girls don't want to leave their host families at the end."

The mother of a World Series participant wrote "I never expected to experience what we experienced. I realize now how important it was for our girls to stay with host families. They were truly the nicest people I have ever met. They have very special people living in their town. Thank you from the bottom of my heart." In fact, we hear these kinds of comments from every tournament.

An Eastern North Carolina player spoke to a group of league representatives from around her state and said "Our host parents were as excited as we were. They made posters to welcome us when we arrived. They took us to the grocery store and told us to point out what we liked to eat. We had cookouts. They were our biggest cheerleaders. Now, months after the tournament, we talk all the time to them on the phone. I've been back twice to visit them since then."

A player from California wrote, "I was a little nervous at first. But once I arrived there and met my host family all my worries disappeared. My host family was wonderful. By staying with a family, we got a really good taste of Louisiana and Southern culture. We learned the local lingo. We met a lot of very nice people and made great friends. I'll keep the memories and experience with me forever."

That's what host family housing is all about.