

community matters

Stepping Up to the Plate



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KPMG and Major League Baseball have teamed up in support of Reviving Baseball in Inner (RBI) Cities, an outreach program for boys and girls that promotes participation in baseball and softball and encourages academic achievement.

KPMG is the sole sponsor of the national program for the next three years, but the firm's participation runs deeper than simply handing over a check. Firm volunteers will coach teams, work as "grounds crew" on the fields, tutor children, and serve as mentors.

KPMG will help Major League Baseball further develop the RBI program and expand it to new cities across the country. Over the course of this relationship, the firm plans to broaden its volunteer efforts to most, if not all, cities where KPMG has offices. The firm's involvement with RBI will start in six cities around the country: Chicago, Detroit, New York (Harlem), Philadelphia, St. Louis, and Washington, D.C.

Ron Taylor, director, National Diversity Recruiting, has been involved with the Harlem RBI program for the past three years and sits on the organization's board of directors. He appreciates not only the baseball aspect of RBI but also what the organization does for the kids in the Harlem community, where the New York program is based.

"In Harlem, we run a 'REAL Kids Program' in the summer," he says. "It counters the summer learning loss the kids may otherwise experience."

REAL, which stands for "Reading and Enrichment Academy for Learning," is producing real results. According to Rich Berlin, executive director of RBI, 94 percent of the program's alumni have graduated high school and moved on to college. This is in contrast to the less than 20 percent college attendance rate of East Harlem youth who do not participate in RBI.

KPMG's New York office has been involved with the Harlem RBI program for three years—first as a team sponsor and now as a corporate sponsor, partici-

pating in events the program hosts, like golf outings and casino nights.

In 2006, KPMG also sponsored a team called "Chasing Daylight," in honor of former Chairman Eugene O'Kelly, who succumbed to cancer in 2005. At the end of the season, Gene's wife, Corinne, was presented with a team jersey.

KPMG also has young adults from RBI interning during the summer. Joshua Burgos is an 18-year-old from Harlem who is now doing his second internship in the New York office. This fall, Joshua starts at the College at Old Westbury of the State University of New York, where he plans to study accounting and pitch for the school's baseball team.

"If it wasn't for RBI, I probably wouldn't have heard about KPMG or made a decision about college," he says. "It's all because of RBI."

RBI is the brainchild of John Young, a former Major League player and scout. According to RBI's Web site, Young launched the program in 1989 to provide disadvantaged youth in South Central Los Angeles an opportunity to learn and enjoy the game and to get those same kids more interested in school. RBI started with 180 kids in L.A. the first season and now includes more than 126,000 boys and girls in 206 cities worldwide.

Numerous participants have gone on to play in the Major Leagues, including current stars Dontrelle Willis of the Florida Marlins, Jimmy Rollins of the Philadelphia Phillies, and Coco Crisp of the Boston Red Sox. In addition, 17 RBI players were selected in this year's Major League Baseball draft.

STANDING LEFT TO RIGHT: Jonathan Santiago, Juliet Pagan, Jonthan Rivera, Ron Taylor, Director, National Diversity Recruiting, Daniel Ramos, and Shem Holm. KNEELING LEFT TO RIGHT: Aminata Sessay and Marilyn Hernandez.