



# Josh Gibson Foundation Agency Profile

## Overview

Considered one of the greatest home run hitters, most feared sluggers of any era, and called by many “the Black Babe Ruth,” Josh Gibson left an undeniable legacy of greatness and accomplishment. To honor that legacy of achievement, the surviving family members established a private, non-profit foundation in 1994. The goal of the Foundation was initially to provide the type of access that Josh Gibson never enjoyed with the creation of facilities and baseball fields dedicated to the youth of the Pittsburgh community. The Josh Gibson Foundation has evolved into an organization dedicated to providing a variety of academic, mentoring, tutoring, nutrition, and athletic programs that allow the next Josh Gibson to reach his or her potential.

Since 2005, the Josh Gibson Foundation (JGF) has been developing and providing such after-school, in-school, and summer programs for at-risk youth, and recently added the Business of Sports Academy (BOSA). JGF is housed at the Ammon Recreation Center in Pittsburgh’s Hill District in partnership with the City. This facility serves as the location for the Foundation’s many free after-school tutoring, mentoring, and education programs for students ages 7-13. JGF serves approximately 35 students each year in elementary and middle schools, and there is a waiting list for our programming. Among the goals at JGF are to guide at-risk students toward achieving a 90% attendance rate or better, along with a 2.5 GPA to become “Promise Ready” as part of the Pittsburgh Promise program.

Students in the after-school program also receive a meal at Ammon through funding provided by the City Parks & Recreation Department.

## Programs

All education and recreation programs provided by the Josh Gibson Foundation are available free of charge to youth participants. The current program activities of the Josh Gibson Foundation for younger students at the following locations: Ammon Recreation Center, Pittsburgh Langley K-8, and Pittsburgh Classical Academy (PCA) include the following:

**After-School Program** - Children ages 7-13 are assisted with homework and mentored in life skills by tutors provided by Duquesne University. The Foundation’s strong partnership with PPS ensures that the tutors have the appropriate tools necessary to successfully assist students with varying abilities. This program is available Monday-Thursday from 4:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. during the school year.



**Boys2Men Mentoring Program** – Motivational guest speakers are invited from the community to speak with students about their futures, career options, and personal growth. The goal is to show at-risk children a view of a larger world outside of their community which is full of options. As a priority, the speakers encourage education and responsibility as the means of improving oneself.

**STEAM Program** – An on-site after-school program for boy's grades 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> at Pittsburgh Classical Academy (PCA) Middle School with a focus on (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) education.

**Cultural Program** – This program covers many topics including the history of organized labor in southwestern PA, the steel industry, the jazz age culture of the Hill District in Pittsburgh, the history of Homestead and Negro League Baseball, and the plays of August Wilson.

**Josh Gibson Baseball Academy** – Participation in extracurricular sports activities help to develop independence, leadership skills, confidence, a sense of achievement, positive self-image, the ability to make decisions, and acceptance of responsibility for one's actions. The Josh Gibson Baseball Academy hosts summer baseball activities for 250 youth ages 5-12 at the Foundation's renovated complex which features two new grass infields, a restored shared outfield, new pitcher's mounds, four new dugouts (one including a second "press box" level), new bleachers, a scoreboard, sprinkler system, concession stand, ADA-compliant restrooms and a baseball equipment storage area.

In 2008, JGF served as the lead agency and partnered with Pittsburgh Pirates Charities, Massaro Corporation, the City of Pittsburgh Department of Public Works, and Major League Baseball to create Josh Gibson Field (formerly Ammon Field) and offer league programs for young people ages 6 through 12. Pirates Charities, the Grable Foundation and Del Monte Foods also played a significant role in the renovation of the Josh Gibson Field as described above.

**Camp Challenge** – Introduced in 2013, Camp Challenge is a summer program for 50-60 youth ages 6-13 that includes physical activity and also introduces opportunities for field trips, music, crafts, and nutrition. With fun activities to learn about nutrition, portions, and choosing good food, the students also spend time tasting new fruits and vegetables. Also in this phase, the attendees get to try different types of fresh produce prepared in different ways, like cooked, raw, or as part of a recipe. They begin to learn about nutrition and how to read food labels, as well as what happens to that food after we chew and swallow. The youth learn about carbohydrates, fats, and calories, and how foods are turned into energy. Nutrition and cooking classes are conducted by nutrition specialists with significant experience bringing a creative approach to youth. The meals our youth cook follow FDA guidelines and youth will be able to take the things they learn home to their parents to bring healthy eating and lifestyles to their family's youth. The meals our youth cook follow FDA guidelines, and youth will be able to take the things they learn home to their parents to bring healthy eating and lifestyles to their families.



**BOSA Program** – The BOSA Program is an exciting new curriculum that provides high school students with a view to the many career development opportunities in sports including sports management, sports media, sports entertainment, and sports law. JGF is currently working with the University of California PA to add an athletic trainer component to the curriculum.

From the 2012-2016 school year, the BOSA curriculum was provided at no charge to the Pittsburgh Public School District for high school sophomores, juniors, and seniors. JGF provided additional support to the implementation of the curriculum by organizing and funding internships, hands-on workshops, student incentives, and student learning events designed by JGF to enhance the BOSA curriculum and provide practical experience for the students. The response from students over the three years at the District was enthusiastic and confirms our belief that BOSA can encourage students to explore career options they had not considered.

With the addition of BOSA to our roster of programming, JGF has extended its efforts to the high school level and we are actively pursuing the implementation of BOSA in other school districts in western Pennsylvania. BOSA is a unique program designed to engage students and improve high school retention and graduation rates and introduce students to the prospect of career options in sports beyond the playing field. To our knowledge, there is no program of this type in this region.

### **New Program**

In conjunction with the JGF's efforts to provide Josh Gibson Heritage Park to all residents and visitors to this region, JGF has included a significant educational component to the project. Josh Gibson Heritage Park will bring to life the legacy of Pittsburgh's role as both the headquarters and the heart of Negro League Baseball, while serving as a unique cultural, educational, tourist, and sports attraction for hundreds of thousands of local residents, students, and visitors each year.

We plan to work with all regional school districts to organize student tours to the Park on a regular basis to introduce the personal stories and history of eight of the League's most accomplished players – Josh Gibson, Oscar Charleston, Satchel Paige, Buck Leonard, Cool Papa Bell, Cumberland Posey, Judy Johnson, and Vic Harris – depicted in life-size bronze tributes. The most noteworthy years of the Negro League were the result of a meeting in 1933 at the Crawford Grill in Pittsburgh's Hill District. Pittsburgh's two Negro League franchises – the Pittsburgh Crawfords and Homestead Grays – were the most dominant teams for nearly two decades in the '30s and '40s, winning three Negro League World Series championships. In addition, 15 extraordinary players from these two teams are enshrined in the National Baseball Hall of Fame, including Josh Gibson extraordinary players from these two teams, are enshrined in the National Baseball Hall of Fame, including Josh Gibson.



In addition to the visual presentation, a unique element of the project is the interactive component which offers access for everyone to an array of information, but especially for sharing the educational and cultural context of the League's significance with our youth. Using proximity technology, each player's story will be told allowing visitors, teachers, and students to connect through their phones to a more detailed account of each player's accomplishments and place in Pittsburgh history.

The educational component doesn't end, however, when a student or visitor leaves the Park. We are developing a comprehensive website that will combine history, math, science, and sports in a format that attracts students of all ages and encourages them to visit the website on a regular basis. The website will be updated frequently to prompt students to return to see what new and exciting elements have been added. Further, we envision a compact version of the Park that can be used on-site at schools for special presentations.

## **Summary**

The Josh Gibson Foundation is using years of experience working with at-risk youth to: (1) expand support programs for their educational and nutritional needs; (2) to create the potential for improving high school retention by engaging students in an exciting career development options; (3) to provide all residents of this region – but especially students – with opportunities to learn about Pittsburgh's rich history as the heart of the Negro League for decades; and (4) to combine sports with math and science in an active website that will promote learning in ways those students will seek out for years to come.