

INTRODUCTION

Welcome.

Even if you never played baseball, or watched Willie Mays, Willie Mays wanted you to have a shot at the life he had. And that is what this event is all about. Every item in it is going back to the fans who lifted him up. And every dollar that it raises will go to the kids who he devoted himself to lifting up as well. The Say Hey Foundation that he created is honored to carry out his lifelong wish with you.

This is the story he wanted everyone to know.

Willie Mays, the greatest baseball player of all time, might never have been “Willie Mays.” He started out in a segregated school that could not even afford a baseball team. He was trained for a technical career as a dry cleaner. Abandoned by his mother as a child, impoverished, he seemed fated to press clothes for a living. And if that had been Willie’s life, no one, except the people of Fairfield, Alabama would know the name Willie Mays, and the history of baseball and America would be altered for the worse.

Willie Mays’ life changed not because of his amazing abilities, hard work, and charisma alone. He would have still had those pressing pants. Willie credited the life he actually lived to the people who helped him when he was young — who taught him, coached him, helped him grow strong and healthy, treated him with respect, saw his potential, sacrificed for him, and showed him how to be the man he became.

Willie never forgot that. He made it his life’s mission to honor the kindness of those who gave him his chance, by paying their kindness forward to other kids growing up as he did. He wanted to see the greatest treasures of his amazing life go back to his fans, and to raise money to help those kids reach their own potential. Willie said his ultimate legacy was not going to be his performance on the field or the honors he racked up, but what he did with all that success to help the next Willie Mays. “You can only play baseball for so many years,” he said. “But you can help many people every day that you’re alive and even after you’re gone.”

You don’t have to be born a legend, Willie said, to have a good life. You just need to work hard at what you’re good at and have good people around you to help. And you don’t have to be famous to change a child’s life. His dad, Willie “Cat” Mays, Sr. and Cat’s teammates in the industrial leagues, Willie’s aunties in Fairfield, Mrs. Rice who tutored him, the veterans on the Black Barons club, and coaches — many of whom led simple lives — changed his life forever.

All of the money raised from this auction will go to support kids through the Say Hey Foundation: building safe spaces for kids to play and develop their skills; giving kids the equipment and coaching they need to bring out their talents; supporting Boys & Girls Clubs and Big Brothers/Big Sisters to make sure those young people have loving adults in their lives; and reminding all of us that you don’t have to be a star to be a hero. Everyone of us can be one.

On behalf of the Say Hey Foundation Board, we thank you for joining this one of a kind auction to fulfill Willie’s dream. As Willie said, “the nicest thing folks can do for me to say ‘thanks,’ is set the all-time record for this auction so that we can help the most kids possible.”

Say Hey,



Hon. Jeff Bleich
Chair, Say Hey Foundation

