



**WEST VIRGINIA POWER**  
APPALACHIAN POWER PARK  
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Dear colleague in professional baseball,

As you are considering whether to involve the Josh Gibson Foundation in your planning efforts for game-related promotions, special events or community outreach, I am pleased to provide my enthusiastic endorsement of that pursuit. We worked with Sean Gibson with the Foundation and Paul Cartwright of Sports Celebrity Marketing S.M.C., Inc., to host the Josh Gibson Foundation exhibit in honor of the Negro League Centennial on August 7, 2020 at Appalachian Power Park. Even in the midst of the pandemic and without a baseball game attached, it was well worth the investment.

Our connection the Foundation began as we were planning for the 2020 season and had arranged to have the exhibit be the primary, but not only, feature of our second annual African American Heritage Night. The connection was quick and easy. But then when COVID-19 forced cancellation of the season, Sean and Paul were very easy to work with as we explored options for postponement or a revised alternative. Given the national dialogue about the past, present and future of race relations in America, they were eager to seize an opportunity to feature the exhibit, despite the pandemic and yet in keeping with health and safety guidelines.

The result was a very successful event – and the only live, in-person Negro League Centennial Celebration at any minor league ballpark in the nation this year. The event attracted a cross section of our community across generations and ethnic heritage. Several older baseball fans with knowledge about the Negro Leagues and accomplishments of Josh Gibson, Satchell Paige and others enjoyed the chance to learn more and to talk baseball with Sean who was on site for the entirety of the event. Several young people attended who had limited or no knowledge of this important chapter of baseball history, and the exhibit expanded the horizons of all who came through with a deeper knowledge about the game and our nation's history as well.

In addition to the lasting impressions on those who braved concerns over COVID to attend, we made some very positive first impressions well beyond that day. In social media posts and a widespread news media coverage before and after the exhibit, baseball fans and others across the region learned more about our team's commitment to the greater community.

The exhibit can be a tough reminder of how things were in segregated America and how folks had to adapt to open doors when too many were closed. And yet, it also provides an important opportunity for people to gain a deeper understanding of the connections between baseball, culture and social change in our country while presenting a new opportunity for community discussion about what was as we try to figure out what our future together should be. And that could add the most value to your next season and beyond.

Thank you for your consideration, and I hope your event with the Josh Gibson Foundation will be just as successful and meaningful as ours was this year.

Rod Blackstone

Government, public, community and fan relations – and “Director of Fun”

CLASS A AFFILIATE OF THE SEATTLE MARINERS