

It was a cool, breezy evening on June 18th, the day after school let out. This evening, my sister had a softball game against a team that was hard to beat. Their tough pitches danced into the strike zone, taunting you as you swing your bat and miss. It was entertaining to watch this game, because you could almost see the effort being drained into every pitch. When I play softball, I find that this effort is hard to locate towards the final innings of the game, but somehow my sister and her team had enough stamina to load the bases with one out in the final inning. They were down by one run, and the scorebook looked like it was holding its breath, waiting for something good to happen, waiting for a change. The one-run lead hung in the air, hoping one of the girls on my sister's team would catch it and turn its sad truth to a thing of the past. My sister was on first base, and the best player on her team was up to bat. But a cloud of blinding mist and the growing darkness was unbearable; you couldn't even see the lemon ball coming at you. The umpire had to call the game, and the score resolved as a tie. Maybe if we had lights in our deserving field, the girls could have won the game.

Bellingham, Massachusetts is a fairly small town on the border of Rhode Island, and is packed with fun activities for all ages. The one main thing that I have learned about this town in my eleven years here is that there are tons of people who have spirit, pride, and perseverance for their hopes and dreams. Bellingham Girls Softball Association, BGSA for short, has many people with these spectacular qualities. This organization knows each other very well. Most of the coaches know the names of all the softball players, even if they are not on the coach's team. All of the Board members are phenomenal at making the league fun and fair for us, the players. From Chuck and Terry, who spend practically every day at the fields even if none of their children play softball, to Chris, who inspired me to write this essay, to Sam, who takes her time to make us better players even when she leads a busy life at the high school, BGSA has some amazing characters. These people deserve to have a field that reflects their bright personalities.

Every year, we have Field Clean-Up Day, which is a day dedicated to making the fields look great for opening day. And every year, at least a hundred people show up to do their part in making the fields great for the softball players to use. When I come to help clean up the fields, I see how the effort of a few people can help make a beautiful place for children to enjoy a few nights a week. In just eight or nine hours, the Concession Stand was painted a neutral grey, the foul poles were painted a crisp, majestic yellow, and the forces of a tough New England winter were cleared away. On Opening Day, the softball teams had a great place to battle for a win. The only problem was that we could not see anything when the sun went down.

With a small town comes a small budget, and BGSA has worked for what seems like forever to light up our field. Bellingham is a wonderful town, and many small businesses have donated money and sponsored teams in our league, but even with all of this effort, getting the field to light up at night is almost impossible. BGSA would definitely be honored to have lights to shine on our spectacular players.

As you can see, my town's softball organization deserves to have lights in their fields. Every time we drive by High Street, I can imagine the joy that I always feel when I hold a softball, the excitement of playing the game; this joy is found in hundreds of girls in the organization. This organization deserves to have a stunning field to use every evening, a field that girls can share their love for the game for years to come.

-Corey Umlauf

