

By line is Jenni Ludlow

Softball: A Community Sport

It doesn't get much more American than this: throngs of eager crowds filling out the stands on hot summer afternoons and balmy evenings as the local team hit a few runs to wild cheers while concessions sell their hot dogs and cool sodas. It's a tradition which is as iconic to the landscape of the United States as motorcars, movies, folk music and funfairs, and you know that spring has finally arrived when people start grabbing their gloves and throwing a few pitches. But more than just a great American pastime, it's also one of the best ways to unite a community and [give youngsters something to aspire to](#), as well as enjoy several exciting opportunities to become involved.

A Sense of Community

Whether small town, inner-city or in the suburbs, community is central to the lifestyle of many people, and finding a common passion is something which gives that community pride and inner strength. Amateur athletes and sports enthusiasts make up a part of the fabric which holds a community together, creating an occasion where members have the chance to socialize, get to know one another, and even use it to spread the word on other local events occurring in the community. Softball is the quintessential community sport, [operating on its own philosophy](#) and enjoying a greater inclusiveness than other activities. As players and teams develop, evolve, and change, friends, families, and fans alike watch them grow through the triumph and losses of emotional tournaments and casual games in the park, an event which the whole family can look forward to at the end of every week.

Like many sports, softball brings communities together not only through playing the game itself and camaraderie between teammates, but through the endeavors of individuals and groups who want to help the community. It's a fantastic way to launch a fundraiser, not only for raising money for charitable organizations but to give people the chance to play who may not otherwise have the opportunity to do so. [People with special needs](#) and people from vulnerable communities are able to play on the field at these events, making dreams come true for many children.

Outreach and Development

As this kind of outreach helps to improve the lives of many, those who have the chance to play regularly also benefit immensely from team sports like softball. Cooperation is just as vital as coordination, and not only are individual mental and physical skills increased but players learn to [work together as a team](#). This helps players to cultivate several attributes:

- Socializing and bonding with other members
- Learning characteristics of another person and adapting/compromising/working with them to achieve a set of goals
- Learning to coordinate as a team in both challenging settings as well as simpler ones
- Quick individual problem solving
- Physical fitness
- Setting long-term goals and a plan to execute them successfully
- Learning to support one another through wins and losses; picking each other up and motivating one another

These are skills which hold long-term importance, not only for at school but in the workplace as well.

A Healthy Helper

But softball also provides another outlet for youths especially, and that is giving individuals and friends something to aspire to. In an age where academic pressure is constantly increasing, it's getting more difficult for children, adolescents and teenagers to get outside and get active. Softball is a sport which allows even non-athletic players the opportunity to enjoy a break from other aspects of life as well as increase their fitness by involving a degree of cardio and muscle use [essential for younger age groups](#), expand their social time, and give them something to be excited about. It's a great interventional sport which has been used in programs and [therapeutic boarding schools](#) across the country, useful for its ability to help teens focus and get out some extra energy. Especially for an age group which is [more vulnerable to problems with substance abuse](#), crime, poverty, mental health, and other challenges, a solid team sport can make a huge difference, whether it is working as a rehabilitative method or simply a pleasurable pastime.

Lifelong friendships, [a huge sense of achievement](#), improved physical and mental fitness and a sense of doing good for the community as well as being a source of tremendous fun are just a few of the reasons why softball is a great catch for any neighborhood. They aren't difficult to set up, tremendously enjoyable, and laid-back enough that competitiveness stays at a healthy level. It's one of the best pastimes a community has to give its younger generations, and will continue to do so for many generations.