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West Michigan Sports Commission Luncheon Address, delivered on November 16, 2011

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West Michigan Sport Commission Luncheon
November 16, 2011
By Arend D. Lubbers

We live in West Michigan, we like living in West Michigan, we like sports, and now we have an opportunity to contribute positively to the economy of our community while we enhance the sport of baseball in West Michigan. The West Michigan Sports Commission was founded to bring and create sporting events in our community, and in so doing increase participation in those events from people throughout the upper Midwest and from our home towns. It's working beyond our expectations. From the beginning the Sports Commission set as a goal the construction of a baseball complex to draw young players to tournaments from throughout the Midwest and locally from Memorial Day through Labor Day, and before and after for local teams.

Each year athletes, teams, families, and spectators spend \$6 billion on youth and amateur sports. We want a bigger part of that business. The Sports Commission brought the USA Table Tennis U.S. Open to Grand Rapids, estimated economic impact \$731,250; also the MIAUU Junior Volleyball Tourney, economic impact \$1,281,750; The Meijer State Games of Michigan with athletes participating in over 20 sports, a greater economic impact than both combined. Using the best available statistical projections we believe the baseball complex in its first five years will bring 135,000 visitors, \$7.5 million in hotel and motel revenue, and have a total economic impact of \$20 million. We cannot afford to fail in this project. The executive committee of the Sports Commission designed, with the help of professionals, a campaign to raise the money for the baseball complex; a campaign where everyone wins. We need 6 million dollars to build phase one; eight baseball fields, and a Miracle Field for special needs athletes,

with parking, seating, and concessions on land that Kent County purchased at 10 Mile Road and U.S. Highway 131.

We need your contributions and the help from public commissions, councils, and boards to make this happen. For the last few months some of us have been quietly seeking pledges and we have raised nearly 4.3 million of the six million dollars needed. We ask all of you here and others throughout our West Michigan community to give toward that last \$1.7 million. No gift is too small, just as no gift is too large. A list of present donors is available if you want to see who has already expressed their belief in what the Sports Commission is doing. Information about the project and campaign is in the brochure at every place. It lets you know how to make your gift. Read it, cherish it, do what it asks. There is a proverb that fits our present engagement in the baseball complex. "An occasion lost cannot be redeemed." The time is now. We want to break ground in 2012. Help us! Everyone wins!