MARK POPKIN

At a very early age growing up in the Los Angeles area I was very fortunate to have the opportunity to be taken under the wing of baseball agent Eric Goldschmidt. Eric became my mentor and taught me the intricacies of the baseball business and what it took to represent professional baseball players with their contracts. Eric's client list included Eric Davis, Barry Larkin, David Justice, Daryl Strawberry and more then a dozen others. The RBI program had just begun in Southern California and several of the players got involved in this program. To see first hand the positive impact that professional athletes could bring in changing the lives of at risk kids made a tremendous impression on me as a young man. When Daryl Strawberry signed a contract to play baseball with the Los Angeles Dodgers, I got the opportunity to learn about sports marketing in a newly formed company Daryl Strawberry Enterprises. I assisted the President, Michelle Wolder with public relations and in acquiring endorsements for Daryl . All of Daryl's negative publicity provided for many challenges, but it helped give me a strong skill base in marketing and problem solving. I continued these jobs while I attended the University of Arizona and Portland State University where I received my degrees in Communications and Sports Psychology.

Life took a different course for me several years later when my brother told me he needed my help with his real estate business. I decided to leave baseball and I partnered with my brother and my uncle and we developed one of the top companies in Oregon. I utilized my acquired skills of representing clients, negotiating contracts, and marketing into a successful company. I later developed several subdivisions, and redeveloped historic commercial buildings. I really enjoy and have become proficient in making something viable that has not been utilized. My passion for helping at-risk kids did not dissolve during this period of my life either. I created a mentoring program in my community called Lunch Buddies. The program places adults from the community one on one with the student at school during lunchtime. Over 800 kids have benefited from being a Lunch Buddy. In order to maintain the financial strength of this non profit it required me to become very skilled at fundraising.

I relocated to Virginia, so that my wife could go back to school. I decided this would be a good time to get back to my baseball roots. I was hired by the Metropolitan Junior Baseball League which is the oldest inner city baseball league in the country. MJBL has teams from 20 states and over 10,000 kids nationwide. I served as the national public relations director and market development director. I was planning MJBL's annual Inner City Classic and Black World Series to be held in Orlando when I met Rickie Weeks Sr. We developed a very strong bond. He along with others convinced me to get involved in the planning and creation of an MLB Urban Youth Academy facility for downtown Orlando. I am extremely excited for this opportunity because it combines 3 of my passions, helping kids, real estate redevelopment, and of course baseball.