

“WE STARTED LOOKING INTO WHAT WE COULD DO TO CUT COSTS, AND ALL SIGNS POINTED TO UPGRADING OUR LIGHTS.”

—Nick White, President, Roseville Little League



New lights shine over Richards Field, boosting visibility, safety, and efficiency.

STEPPING UP TO THE PLATE

Roseville Electric Utility supports Little League lighting project

By Abigail Walker

In Roseville, California, the lights at Richards Field have shined on more than a ballpark; they've brightened the memories of home runs, strikeouts, and team cheers for countless Roseville families.

Since 1958, Richards Field has been the heart and home of Roseville Little League. It is where generations of kids have grown up together, learning teamwork and perseverance through the game of baseball. Charlie Richards, the field's namesake, was a prominent figure associated with the formation of Roseville's youth baseball league. A plaque at the ballpark bearing the inscription, "A diamond is a boy's best friend," honors Richards and the contributions he made to the league.

The construction of Richards Field marked a turning point for youth sports in Roseville, as it was one of the first Little League diamonds equipped with lights to allow for night games. However, after decades of use, the field's lights and scoreboard began to show their age. Installed in 1999, the fading system had begun to dim the excitement of Little League night games under the lights. While they still got the job done, the lights were increasingly costly to operate and no longer met the needs of the growing league.

A dim dream

Replacing the lighting system was a league goal for years, especially with more games being played at Richards Field than at any other city field. Plus, in addition to regularly scheduled games, Richards Field alternatively hosts intra-league championships and all-star games every year, and players practice under the lights six days a week during the season. League officials and the community had long recognized the need for new lights at the league's most popular field, but funding challenges always prevented the project from moving forward.

"The motivation behind making the lighting upgrade project happen came when we looked at our operating expenses and saw that the electric bill was one of the highest," Little League President Nick White said. "With nearly 63% of our players coming from socio-economically disadvantaged households, keeping our costs down is important to ensuring we can serve our entire community. So, we started looking into what we could do to cut costs, and all signs pointed to upgrading our lights."

Casey Bisard, a longtime volunteer and Roseville Little League board member, took on the task of analyzing the old lighting system to help weigh the benefits of an upgrade.



The updated scoreboard at Richards Field complements the improved lighting system, making every game easier to follow.

Bisard’s findings revealed that the power bill represented 80% of the league’s annual non-reimbursable operations and maintenance costs, and 90% of that power consumption came from the lights. It was clear upgrading the lights would significantly cut the league’s electricity costs, and it would include the priceless added benefit of improving visibility and player safety.

The lighting replacement project promised many advantages, but the price tag continued to impede the league’s ability to move forward as it was already stretched thin by its operating expenses.

“The cost for this project was significant, more than a small league like ours could handle on our own,” White said. “Without help from another source, there was really no way for us to move forward with the upgrade.”

Fortunately, Roseville Electric Utility and the league shared a long-standing relationship, and the utility reached out at just the right time to check in and offer support.

A game-changing partnership

When they learned of the league’s situation, the Roseville Electric team recognized the lasting impact the new stadium lights would have on the community, so they stepped in to help bring the project to life. Through funding support provided by its commercial energy efficiency rebate program, Roseville Electric was able to assist the league in getting its new lights and scoreboard up and running by opening night of the 11u District All-Star tournament in July.

“The rebate funding made this project possible,” Bisard said. “Without it, the cost would have been out of reach, and we’d either have to raise fees or go without. Thanks to Roseville Electric, we were able to make an investment that benefits every single player and family in our league. We could not be more thrilled with our new lighting system.”

“As Roseville’s community-owned electric utility, we do more than just deliver power, we’re here to support our community,” said Andrea Blomquist, Roseville Electric’s senior energy services account manager. “Our rebate programs help our customers save energy and reduce costs, and they also allow us to partner with organizations like Roseville Little League to help them complete impactful initiatives that benefit our entire community, like the lighting and scoreboard replacement project.”

A new era under the lights

With projected energy savings of up to 50%, the new system exceeds the expectations of the league’s project team, which set out to reduce energy consumption and control costs. In addition to the increased savings, the overall illumination is substantially better, the infield is over 50% brighter, and the outfield is twice as bright as before. Some added benefits of the project are unquantifiable, helping to enhance the safety and experience of the players. For example, the field is now equipped with modern up-lighting technology that illuminates pop flies, so outfielders don’t lose sight of the ball in the twilight.

Everyone who has experienced a game under the new lights agrees the atmosphere is enhanced not only for the players on the field but also for the fans in the stands. Richards Field has once again become the prime spot for night games. The new lights and upgraded scoreboard offer spectators and players an elevated level of Little League games, unmatched by any other local Little League field.

Powering what’s important

The positive impacts of this project extend far beyond Richards Field. For many in Roseville, the Little League is about more than playing baseball; it’s a community hub where children and parents meet lifelong friends. It’s also an after-school destination many families count on. The anticipated cost savings from the new lights will help the league remain affordable, allowing more children to participate regardless of their household income.

Community was the driving force behind this project. From the players, coaches, and parents in the league who worked hard to recruit resources, to external partners like Roseville Electric and local business sponsors who helped make it happen, everyone involved contributed to a cause larger than themselves for the benefit of their entire community. Thanks to their collective effort, Richards Field is a polished diamond, shining brighter than ever. **NWPPA**

Abigail Walker is the marketing and communications analyst at Roseville Electric Utility. She can be contacted at aawalker@roseville.ca.us or (916) 774-5650.