



Best of the Ballpark Awards Program

Cactus League Annual Luncheon

The Cactus League Best of the Ballpark Awards celebrate the innovation, community impact, and exceptional fan experiences that define Spring Training in Arizona. This program recognizes the facilities and the dedicated individuals who transform spring training venues into year-round drivers of tourism, economic activity, and unforgettable moments for millions of fans.

Award Recognition: The Best of the Ballpark Awards will be recognized at the Cactus League Annual Luncheon presented by Gila River Resorts & Casinos.

Cactus League Annual Luncheon

Date: April 23, 2026

Registration: 11am / Program: 12pm

Venue: Wild Horse Pass Resort

Address: 5040 Wild Horse Pass Blvd,
Chandler, AZ 85226



Cactus League Baseball Association

Best of the Ballpark Awards

Submission Materials

- Complete the official Best of the Ballpark nomination form for the selected award category.
- Provide a summary describing the nominee, event, program, or food item and how it meets the award criteria.
- Submissions may include links to videos, photos, employee headshot, social media posts, or other digital assets; however, the written submission should not exceed two standard pages in Word or PDF to keep participation simple.
- Include any relevant results or impact highlights, along with a minimum of 1–3 high-resolution images.
- Optional supporting materials such as media coverage, testimonials, or additional documentation is encouraged.
- Eligible programs need to have occurred between April 1, 2025 - March 31, 2026.



Submission Timeline

Program Launch / Nominations Open	March 18, 2026
Submission Deadline	April 10, 2026
Judging	April 13, 2026
Awards Ceremony	April 23, 2026

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Spring Training Categories



Award #1: Heart of the Cactus League Award

Spring Training Staff Member of the Year – Pick Your MVP of the Spring

Each of the ten Cactus League facilities will select one outstanding staff member as their honoree. In total, **10 individuals will be recognized** for their dedication and contributions to making Spring Training a success.

A signature part of the Cactus League Annual Luncheon will be the recognition of the people who power spring training. Each Cactus League facility will have the opportunity to treat its MVP to a well-deserved day out of the ballpark, celebrating the individual whose dedication, professionalism, and teamwork helped define a successful season. Honorees will be recognized on screen and in the room among league leadership, partners, and their peers. They will be invited to attend the luncheon as special guests with the opportunity to dine with their leadership team for a memorable lunch. More than an award, this moment serves as a league-wide tribute to the heart of the Cactus League and the staff who bring the season to life.

This award celebrates an individual who goes above and beyond in their role, demonstrating exceptional dedication, professionalism, and teamwork throughout the spring training season. The honoree is someone who consistently elevates the ballpark experience, represents the spirit of hospitality and service, and contributes in a meaningful way to a successful season for fans, teams, and fellow staff members.

Everybody is eligible who works in the ballpark for game day. Eligible honorees may include staff such as parking, ticket sellers, ticket takers, ushers, guest services, merchandise sellers, medics, security, housekeeping, concessions, vendors, catering and other behind-the-scenes team members who make spring training possible.

Submissions should tell the personal story of the honoree, their impact on the fan experience and/or workplace culture, and the qualities that make them indispensable to their organization and the Cactus League as a whole.

The honoree is selected internally by the submitting facility. However, supporting documentation should highlight the individual through the following lens:

- A consistent commitment to excellence that goes above and beyond the expectations of their role.
- A direct and memorable impact on fans, guests, players, or colleagues.
- Demonstrated leadership, teamwork, and a positive, solutions-oriented attitude.
- The trust and respect of supervisors and peers.
- A clear passion for the Cactus League and pride in their facility.
- The ability to create moments that define the Spring Training experience.
- A personal story that reflects the heart, hospitality, and spirit of the Cactus League.



Spring Training Categories



Award #2 – Fan Favorite: Best Bite in the Ballpark

Open to all 10 Cactus League Spring Training facilities

One facility will be selected as the winner through fan voting on social media.

This award celebrates the food item that has become a signature part of the Cactus League fan experience. From bold culinary creativity to a unique local favorite, this honor recognizes the item that fans seek out and associate with their 2026 spring training experience.

Each facility may submit one featured item per team that represents its ballpark's flavor, creativity, and connection to its community. The winning selection will be determined through a public fan vote, creating a league-wide celebration of the Cactus League's culinary experience.

Strong Entries Will Demonstrate

- A unique and memorable food concept that reflects the personality of the ballpark and its region.
- Strong fan engagement and popularity.
- Visual appeal and in-park buzz.
- A connection to the MLB club, its fan base, its hometown flavor or the local culture of their spring training city here in AZ.
- Sales performance and repeat purchase demand.
- The ability to serve as a signature item that enhances the overall fan experience.



The winner will be determined by total fan votes, with the campaign serving as a digital engagement opportunity that amplifies the Cactus League's brand and the in-ballpark experience.

All submissions must include high-resolution photography for use in Cactus League promotional and event materials.



Facility Categories



Award #1 – Off-Season Event of the Year

Open to all 10 Cactus League Spring Training facilities, event must take place within the facility itself. A total of one facility will be awarded.

This award recognizes a non-MLB event that successfully activates a Cactus League ballpark outside of the spring training season while generating a measurable impact for both the facility and its destination. It honors the creativity, strategic partnerships, and operational excellence required to transform a baseball venue into a year-round driver of visitation, revenue, and community engagement.

Submissions should tell the story of how the event reimaged the use of the ballpark, the role it played in attracting visitors and supporting the local economy, as well as what makes the concept innovative and how it advances the facility's overall economic impact.

Strong Entries Will Demonstrate

- *Clear, measurable results such as attendance, hotel night generation, revenue performance, earned media, or social reach.*
- *A compelling tourism impact and contribution to the local and regional economy.*
- *A new or uniquely executed use of the ballpark that extends the life and relevance of the facility beyond baseball.*
- *Meaningful collaboration with destination marketing organizations, community partners, teams, promoters, or commercial stakeholders.*
- *Innovation in programming, operations, or fan engagement that sets a model for other Cactus League facilities.*
- *Long-term value through repeatability, scalability, or the ability to inspire future events.*
- *A positive enhancement of the ballpark's brand and its role as a year-round community and economic asset.*



Judging will evaluate each nomination on its overall impact, including the ability to draw overnight visitation, introduce a new or uniquely executed use of the facility, and strengthen the brand and relevance of the ballpark beyond baseball.

Consideration will also be given to the event's long-term value, its scalability, and its contribution to positioning the Cactus League as a year-round economic and community asset.



Facility Categories



Award #2 – Outstanding Community Program of the Year

Open to all 10 Cactus League Spring Training facilities including corresponding non-profit partners. A total of one facility will be awarded.

This award recognizes an initiative that creates meaningful, year-round impact in the community the CLA facility calls home. It honors programs that extend the reach of the Cactus League beyond the game, demonstrating leadership in areas such as sustainability, youth development, health and wellness, education, workforce development, access and inclusion, and nonprofit engagement.

Submissions should tell the story of how the program serves the local community, the partnerships that make it possible, and the measurable difference it creates for residents, organizations, and future fans. Entries should reflect how the ballpark is positioned as a trusted and essential community asset

Strong Entries Will Demonstrate

- *Clear, measurable outcomes such as participants served, funds raised, volunteer hours, environmental impact, or program growth.*
- *A meaningful and sustained benefit to the local community.*
- *Innovative or uniquely executed programming that can serve as a model for other Cactus League facilities.*
- *Strategic collaboration with nonprofit organizations, schools, civic groups, or community-based partners.*
- *Alignment with the values of the Cactus League and its commitment to Arizona communities.*
- *Long-term vision, continuity, and the ability to grow or expand the program over time.*
- *A positive enhancement of the ballpark's role as a year-round community resource*



Judging will evaluate each nomination on its overall impact, depth of community engagement, and the strength of its partnerships and outcomes. Consideration will also be given to the program's sustainability, its potential for replication across the league, and its contribution to strengthening the connection between Cactus League facilities and the communities they serve.



Nomination Form

Deadline to Submit: April 10, 2026 by 5PM



Spring Training Categories:

<input type="checkbox"/> Heart of the Cactus League	Nominee Name	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Best Bite in the Ballpark	Submission Title	<input type="text"/>

Facility Categories:

<input type="checkbox"/> Off-Season Event of the Year	Submission Title :	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Outstanding Community Program of the Year	Submission Title :	<input type="text"/>

Contact Information:

Full Name

Company

Phone No Email :

Address

Included Submission Materials:

- Completed Nomination Form
- 1-2 Pages of Nomination Summary and Details
- Nomination Supporting Links Containing Images, Video, Media Coverage, Etc.

Signature

Cactus League Annual Luncheon and Awards Presentation

Register Today

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