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Press Event

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A New Inning for Baseball Begins in Modesto

Modesto, CA, September 16, 2025 - The Modesto City Council last week approved an agreement with Main Street Modesto, LLC, for a new Pioneer Baseball League team to play at John Thurman Field. The new team, which has not yet been named, is expected to start play when the Pioneer League's 87th season kicks off in May, 2026. The team is planning to hold a "Name the Team" contest and plans to invite fans to suggest a new name for the Modesto club.

The Pioneer Baseball League is one of four MLB Partner Leagues and is uniquely focused on developing young future Major Leaguers. As a player development league, PBL players may only have up to three years of professional experience. Since 2021, more than 75 PBL players have had their contracts purchased by MLB clubs.

Dave Heller, the owner of the new Modesto club, also owns a Pioneer League team in Billings, MT, as well as two affiliated teams, the Wilmington Blue Rocks, Advanced-A affiliate of the Washington Nationals, and the Quad Cities River Bandits, Advanced-A affiliate of the Kansas City Royals. Heller's company, Main Street Baseball, earned *Ballpark Digest's* coveted "Minor League Baseball Organization of the Year" award – one of the industry's highest honors. His Quad Cities team, the River Bandits, was named *Ballpark Digest's* 2021 "Team of the Year" and one of *Baseball America's* "Most Accomplished Franchises of the 2010s." That club remains the only club in Midwest League history to win four championships in 10 seasons (2011-2021).

"From our renowned candy drops to our tattoo nights, giveaways, and numerous promotions, we intend to have fun, win games, and create lasting memories for people of all ages," said new team owner Dave Heller. "We're thrilled to be here and to build on Modesto's great baseball tradition with our unique brand of fantastic, fun, affordable family-friendly entertainment. I can't wait until our season opener next May!"

“The Pioneer League remains baseball’s foremost player development league and provides extraordinary, affordable fan experiences in all our local communities,” added Pioneer League President Mike Shapiro. “In 2025, we attracted over 1 million fans to our charming ballparks throughout the Mountain States and California, and we look forward to bringing our exciting and fun brand of baseball to Modesto and other new communities in California over the next few years.”

To welcome Main Street Baseball and the Pioneer Baseball League to the City of Modesto, the City will host a press event on September 18, 2025.

Press Event details:

Date: September 18, 2025

Time: 10:30 am

Location: In front of City Hall at 1010 10th Street

Agenda for the press event:

1. Opening Remarks, Sonya Severo, City of Modesto
2. Announcement, Mayor Sue Zwahlen
3. Mike Shapiro, Pioneer Baseball League President
4. Dave Heller, team owner
5. Closing Remarks, Mayor Sue Zwahlen

End