



## NEWS RELEASE

# EXPEDITION LEAGUE LAUNCHES IN WESTERN NEBRASKA

Contact: Chuck Heeman; [wsummerball@gmail.com](mailto:wsummerball@gmail.com); 623-633-5567

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GERING, NE – The Expedition League, the newest member of the summer collegiate wood bat baseball landscape, today announced the arrival of its Western Nebraska franchise in Gering/Scottsbluff, NE. The team, owned by Chuck and Mayra Heeman, will play at the new Oregon Trail Park Stadium, currently under construction in Gering.

The Expedition League is an elite summer collegiate wood bat league that promotes affordable, wholesome family entertainment, enhances the quality of life in its member communities, provides the tools and experience to optimize collegiate players' development and potential to play professional baseball, while providing the infrastructure and support necessary for the success of the league affiliated team owners.

The teams play a 64-game season beginning in May and ending in early August each year. The 2018 season is scheduled to begin May 25 with 10 member teams.

Chuck Heeman, a 25-year veteran in the professional sports industry, was the founding General Manager of two prior summer collegiate teams in Oregon, the Klamath Falls Gems and Medford Rogues. He also served as General Manager for four professional minor league baseball clubs and as Operations Manager with the Arizona Diamondbacks for four years. From 2015 until August 2017 he worked with the Cleveland Indians and Cincinnati Reds at their Spring Training facility in Goodyear, Arizona, serving as Ticket Sales & Operations Coordinator with the City of Goodyear. Mayra Heeman worked with her husband for five years as a volunteer in Oregon, coordinating host families, social media and game day operations as well as being a leading force in sponsorship and ticket sales.

"Mayra and I are thrilled beyond words to be a part of this new venture," Chuck Heeman said. "Our years running summer collegiate teams together were the most challenging and the most fun I've had in this business. We've been looking for a chance to own our own team and take the leap into that side of the business. The Expedition League came along at the right time for us and we couldn't be happier to be a part of this. We'll have a lot of fun in a beautiful new ballpark and we invite everyone in Western Nebraska, and even across into Wyoming, to join us."

The Heemans visited Gering/Scottsbluff in July to meet with City and business leaders and visit the site of the new ballpark.

"When we got here we didn't know what to expect," Mayra Heeman said. "We only knew what we'd read in doing our research but until you actually see a place you never really know. We were immediately impressed with the region and once we met with Mayor Kaufman and the group the City has put together to build the new stadium and bring in the team we knew we couldn't pass up this opportunity. Everyone we met was so positive and welcoming and we knew this is the place we want to be."

The Heemans have relocated to Scottsbluff from Arizona to begin year-round operation of the new team. Team offices will open in mid-September at Oregon Trail Park.

### **First tenant at the new stadium, just the beginning**

While the Western Nebraska team is the first tenant at Oregon Trail Park Stadium, the City of Gering has a clear vision for the ballpark to become a regional hub for family entertainment and more with an eye on regional tournament dollars.

“Gering is a great destination for outdoor activities,” Gering Mayor Tony Kaufman said. “Our new state-of-the-art field and amenities for the 10-team collegiate wood bat league is a prime example of how cities create facilities to grow the local economy and tourism possibilities with sports recreation. This new field and league will provide our kids with a first class place to learn and play and for Gering to compete with communities in Nebraska and surrounding states for tournament/tourism revenues for years to come”

### **Collegiate player commitments**

“We’ve already received commitments from a number of schools to send players to us next summer,” Chuck Heeman said. “I thank Mayra for that. She’s built a great reputation among college coaches we’ve worked with in the past and they know if they send their guys to us they’ll be in good hands. As we continue to contact the coaches we’ve worked with as they enter their fall baseball seasons, we know we’ll be seeing more player commitments from those schools. Right now the players are just reporting to school and their teams and coaches need to evaluate their guys before they decide who to send where for summer ball. With that, we’ll have news on particular players and additional schools very soon.”

Heeman said that to date, Nebraska-Omaha, the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, Creighton, the University of New Mexico, Northern State University, Tennessee Wesleyan and Western Nebraska Community College have committed to send players to the new team. Per NCAA rules a team may have up to four players from any particular school. NAIA and NJCAA schools can send more than four players.

The team is currently searching for a Head Coach and plans to make an announcement before October 1.

### **Guess-the-team-name contest launched**

The team has launched a guess-the-team-name contest in conjunction with NBC Nebraska, KNEB Radio and the Scottsbluff Star-Herald.

“The team will be called Western Nebraska as we invite fans from the entire region to come out and be a part of the fun,” Chuck Heeman said. “Fans will have the chance to guess what the nickname will be and one will win some pretty neat stuff. The team will be the Western Nebraska ‘something’... we’ll soon see what that ‘something’ will be.”

Fans can participate by going to [bit.ly/expeditionleague](http://bit.ly/expeditionleague), by e-mailing to [wnsummerball@gmail.com](mailto:wnsummerball@gmail.com) or going to the team’s Facebook page, [Western Nebraska Summer Baseball](#) where the link will also be posted. The team also has a Twitter account, [@WNSummerBall](#) and fans can message there as well. The contest will run through September 15 with winning name announced on or about October 1. A random winner will be picked from those who voted for the winning name. That winner will receive season tickets for 2018 as well as a team jersey, cap and a feature in the team’s 2018 official souvenir program. The winner will also throw out a ceremonial first pitch at the team’s opening home game in 2018.

### **Season ticket deposits available now**

Fans can put deposits on season tickets in the fixed-back seating area immediately by clicking [here](#), or by e-mailing the team at [wnsummerball@gmail.com](mailto:wnsummerball@gmail.com). Team officials will contact fans in order of contact received. Seat selection will go in order of purchase. Fixed-back seat season tickets are \$249 (\$7.80 per game) and deposits are \$100 per seat to hold a spot in the selection order.

“The new stadium has about 350 fixed-back stadium seats so these prime seats will go fast,” Chuck Heeman said. “We look forward to meeting our new fans and season ticket holders and getting to know them over the coming years.”

### **Host families needed for players and interns**

The new team is looking for a number of host families to house players and interns for the summer months. Interns arrive in mid-May and players in late May, all stay through early August. Players will be on the road for half the season and at your home when the team is in town. Families need to provide a bed and safe housing. Host families receive free season tickets for members of their household, discounts on concessions and souvenirs, hosted Party Deck nights and many other perks.

“Hosting a player is a great mentoring program for families that have young ballplayers of their own,” Mayra Heeman said. “What better way to show your young ballplayer that they need to stay in school, play fair and be good citizens than having an actual college ballplayer in your home? We screen our players carefully and match them with a family and we’ve found that the players and host families form life-long friendships. It really is all about family and this is a great way to add to yours.”

The team has already received a number of host family commitments and welcome more families to join the program.

#### **All Western Nebraska games will be broadcast live on KNEB**

The team has reached agreement with KNEB radio to broadcast all 64 Western Nebraska games, plus playoffs, live on KNEB.

“KNEB came to us with a plan to broadcast all of our games live and we loved the idea,” Chuck Heeman said. “We know people can’t make it to all our games, so this lets them follow the team, especially when we’re on the road. Broadcasting live also allows our players to have their families, host families and college coaches listen in from all over the country through live streaming. We’ve broadcast our games live in other places and it’s always very popular with the fans and families of the players. We’re very happy to be working with KNEB and we thank them for providing us this opportunity.”

The team will conduct a nationwide search for a play-by-play broadcaster and will announce that hiring when it happens.

#### **Catered party deck nights and concessions from Whiskey Creek Wood Fire Grill**

The team has contracted with Whiskey Creek Wood Fire Grill to cater 2018’s Party Deck groups with an all-you-can-eat buffet for groups of up to 100. Whiskey Creek will also be on site for all 32 home games with their mobile barbeque booth for all fans to enjoy.

“This great new stadium has two beautiful 54-person party decks that give fans the chance to have a real upscale event while watching some great baseball on a gorgeous summer night,” Chuck Heeman said. “Whiskey Creek will be part of our concessions menu, bringing their mobile setup in the concourse with great barbeque for all fans. In addition, Whiskey Creek gives party deck groups a special night out with catered, upscale menus specifically for those groups. It’s a great way to entertain employees, friends, family – really anyone who wants a special experience. It’s a tremendous addition for our fans.”

The team will be searching for other concessions options in addition to the main concession stand and Whiskey Creek Wood Fire Grill for home games with the goal of enhancing the fan experience.

#### **Contact the team**

Those interested in tickets, being a host family or a business sponsor can contact Western Nebraska’s new Expedition League team by e-mailing to [wsummerball@gmail.com](mailto:wsummerball@gmail.com), going to the team’s Facebook page, [Western Nebraska Summer Baseball](#) or the team’s Twitter account, [@WNSummerBall](#). The team opens its office at Oregon Trail Park on September 12 and the team phone number – 308-633-BALL – will be active at that time.

“Our lease is signed, the stadium is under construction and we’re open for business,” Chuck Heeman said “Now it’s time to roll up our sleeves and get to work to make this organization something the entire region can be proud of.”

**Western Nebraska Baseball Club, P.O. Box 23, Gering, NE 69341**  
**Phone: 623-633-5567 (temporary phone); e-mail: [wsummerball@gmail.com](mailto:wsummerball@gmail.com)**

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