**BECOMING A SOFTBALL UMPIRE IN ILLINOIS**

 *The* **first** *step in becoming a softball umpire in Illinois is to register with the* **Illinois High School Association (IHSA).** *IHSA provides a rule book and a case book, which are valuable tools in learning about and applying softball rules.*

 **Second,** *contact a local softball officials association, such as the* **Athletic Officials Association (AOA).** *AOA softball can provide new officials with lower level high school games, as well as spring, summer, and fall softball tournament games.*

 **Third,** *attend the* **AOA softball clinics** *held each March. These clinics provide instruction in basic and advanced rule and situation knowledge. There is also a “hands-on” session with live pitching and base running.*

 **AOA softball also assigns a mentor** *to each new official. Mentors can provide support and encouragement for new officials by watching games and giving feedback and constructive comments to help the new officials improve their umpiring skills.*

 *New umpires are also encouraged to contact their local park districts to work “in-house” park district games. These games are usually at a much slower pace than high school and tournament games. Park districts will often pay more per game for* **“patched”, IHSA registered umpires** *than non-registered umpires.*

 *Many officials start working varsity games after just a couple of seasons of lower level softball. Umpires are strongly encouraged to go for promotion with IHSA to become* **“certified”** *umpires. IHSA will use only certified umpires for state contests.*

 *In summary,* **register with IHSA**, *join a* **local officials organization** *such as* ***AOA softball,*** *and be willing* **to work hard and know the rules!**