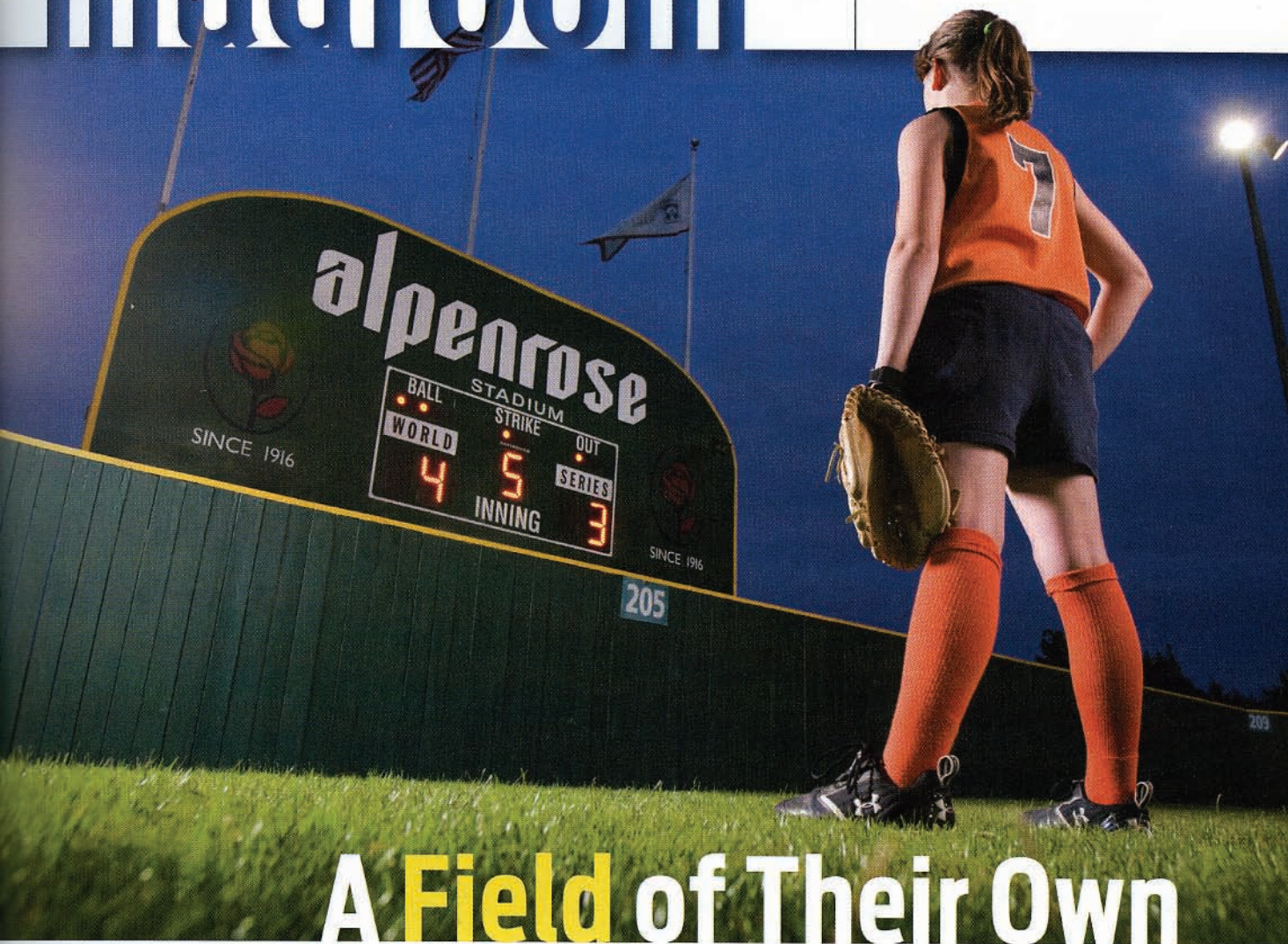


the mudroom



A Field of Their Own

Diamonds
are forever

IT STARTED WITH GRANDMA CADONAU'S ROSES. Tired of watching her grandchildren trounce the beautiful buds as they chased baseballs through the garden, Rosenia Cadonau, the matriarch of Alpenrose Dairy, asked her husband to convert a nearby pasture into a ball field.

That was 1954. Today, the patch of grass has grown into a stadium field complete with sunken dugouts, lights and grandstands that pack in thousands. And this month, those seats will hold fans cheering for the more than 120 pony-tailed girls competing in the Little League Softball World Series.

Snuggled into the Southwest Hills, Alpenrose Dairy began hosting the tournament annually in 1994, when Kalamazoo, Mich., gave up the 11- and 12-year-old series (a choice the city may have regretted when, in 2001, ESPN2 turned its lens on Oregon and broadcast the series live into living rooms across the country). This year, some 2,000 teams worldwide—60 in Oregon alone—vied for the 10 berths to the tournament. Portland, as the host city, always sends one team (the winner of its District 4 All-Star Tournament) to the event, which has drawn crowds of 5,000.

"These kids have come such a long way that to come in second is always hard," says Alpenrose CEO Carl Cadonau Jr. "But later on, it doesn't matter; it's the moment—the time they had—that counts."

Like the moment, on August 9, when the eye-blacked tweens first take the field—uniforms clean, cleats laced tight—and glance up at the centerfield scoreboard, where two hand-painted roses remind them that they will always have a place to play. —Brian Barker