

Business Quarterly

Youth Baseball/Softball 'cares about players'

By Deborah Rose

Carl Profita has fond memories of playing baseball in his hometown of New Milford.

Today, his four sons, aged 4, 11, 14 and 15, are following in his footsteps through their participation in the New Milford Youth Baseball/Softball organization.

"It's an activity for kids to do," said Profita, president of the group. "Baseball is America's favorite pastime. We make sure the program is run right."

Profita, who has been on the board of directors for six years, praised fellow board members for their dedication and commitment to the organization.

"They do it because they love it, so the kids have something to do," Profita said of the board of directors' involvement.

Registration is currently underway for the season that is scheduled to open April 26. A spring clinic is planned April 5.

The organization has been around for decades and has served thousands of children over the years, evolving from the former Little League program which started in town in the early 1950s.

Today, it attracts about 800 players, including some 550 boys and 250 girls.

The groups' programs include T-ball for youths aged 4-5 and 5-6; rookie for those aged 7-8; Single A for aged 8-9; Double A for aged 10 (and some 11); Triple A for aged 11-12; and Babe Ruth for those aged 13 and older.

Softball programs, including T-softball, is available for girls aged 4

and older.

Profita said each age group averages 10 teams, with about 12 to 14 children per team.

The organization's travel program also is popular, drawing nearly 300 players out of the 800 enrolled in baseball/softball.

Almost one-third of the children who play on a team in the regular season eventually play in the travel program, Profita said.

Rookie and Single A groups draw the most number of participants.

Last year, the league's team of 12-year-olds, the Thunder, were national runnersup in the Cal Ripken tournament.

"They had a great run. ... They were a very successful team," said Profita, who noted the Thunder won the New England regional tournament.

Craig Beyer's son, Sawyer, 8, has been involved with the organization for five years.

"Not being a native to the area, NMYBSB has been a great way for us to meet others and become a part of the community," Beyer said. "We have been very impressed with the sense of family in the league and the dedication by the coaches."

"I feel the league cares about the development of players of all abilities." Coaches and volunteers are gearing up for opening day.

The April 5 clinic is set from noon to 5:30 p.m. for players who want to enhance their skills.

The clinic is run by the organization's travel coaches who "know the game inside and out," Profita said.

"They work on skills



Coach Bob Gillette offers batting tips to T-ball hopeful Anthony Mascolo as New Milford Youth Baseball/Softball gets its 2013 season going in April at the New Milford Farms fields complex along Boardman Road in New Milford.

— hitting, pitching, fielding," he said. "The coaches teach the kids how to do it the right way."

Coaches play an important role in the league, and the group takes pride in its coaches. They conduct screenings, interviews and, as

part of the Cal Ripken Babe Ruth league, do background checks.

At least one or two of the board of directors know potential coaches personally, Profita said.

"The board is awesome. I couldn't do it without them," he said, praising the 17 members.



NORM CUMMINGS/SPECTRUM

Caralyn Anderson, of the U-8 girls' softball Penguins serves up a pitch as New Milford Youth Baseball/Softball gets its 2013 season underway April 27 at the New Milford Farms fields complex.

"We make a good experience for everyone as possible."

Beyer said his son's most "memorable and rewarding experiences was last year's inaugural 8-year travel team and their statewide Friendship League championship."

The Gusta family has made memories through youth baseball/softball, too.

Starr and P.J. Gusta's children, Skyler, 11, and Lucas, 9, have been involved with the league for the past five years, with each of the kids starting with T-ball and continuing on.

In addition, P.J. is a coach.

Starr Gusta said the league has been an asset for her family.

"It's really good," she said. The kids "have

made friends that we didn't know and, for me personally, I got into enjoying the sport."

She said the league evokes a sense of family and community, as evident by the friendships they have made, and the shared picnics and play dates.

An in-person registration will be held next Friday, March 14, from 6 to 8 p.m. at Schaghticoke Middle School on Hipp Road in New Milford.

People who sign up by that date avoid a late fee.

A birth certificate is required for all new players.

For more information and registration, visit www.nmybsb.com or email the registrar at registrations@nmybsb.com. The league is also on Facebook.

Fundraisers help keep youth baseball/softball going

By Deborah Rose

The New Milford Youth Baseball/Softball is a huge program serving nearly 800 youths.

To support the program, several fundraisers are held throughout the year to keep the league up and running.

An annual comedy night draws approximately 450 patrons and raises

about \$17,000.

This year, comedians Johnny Lampert, Andy Pitz and Sherry Davey will take center stage Saturday, March 8, from 7 to 10:30 p.m. at the Connecticut Sports Arena along Still River Drive.

Offerings will include a buffet dinner, raffles, a silent auction and live music.

Tickets are \$35 for gen-

eral admission and \$45 for VIP seating.

Tickets may be purchased at www.nmybsb.com or www.webconnex.com/comedy-night2014.

In addition, registration fees, a percentage of picture day sales, snack bar sales, spring clinic fees and sponsorships for teams, dugouts and banner on fences raise funds for the league.

A good portion of the organization's expenses are related to fields and their maintenance.

Games are played on the fields owned by New Milford Farms along Boardman Road.

The organization takes out a one-year lease on the fields and then oversees their maintenance, which includes mowing, prepping, lining and other

tasks.

"It's a huge expense to keep the fields in shape," said Carl Profita, president of youth baseball/softball. "It's probably close to \$40,000 for maintenance of the fields, plus \$25,000 for umpires."

When the season opens in just more than a month, there will be a new field, Little A, located in the former grassy parking area next to Field A.

Parking will now all be in the lot across the street, Profita said.

Save the dates for these chamber events

March 20: Business Scene informal networking opportunity for business people, 5:30-7:30 p.m. Co-sponsored by the Greater New Milford Business Association and LoStocco Refuse Services at 1st & 10 Sports Bar, 507 Danbury Road (Route 7), New Milford.

March 25: "Solving the Puzzle: Answers for You and Your Aging Parent" panel discussion, 6-7:30 p.m. Co-sponsored by Chamber and Senior Care Resources Group at railroad station, Railroad Street, New

Milford. To RSVP, call the Chamber by March 24 at 860-354-6080 or email nmcc@newmilford-chamber.com.

April 1: Board of directors meeting, 8 a.m. Railroad station, Railroad Street, New Milford.

April 3: "Target Marketing" Lunch & Learn seminar, noon-1:30 p.m. At the railroad station, Railroad Street, New Milford. Lunch provided. For more information and RSVP, call the Chamber at 860-354-6080 or email nmcc@newmilford-chamber.com.

April 17: Business Scene informal networking opportunity for business people, 5:30-7:30 p.m. Co-sponsored by San-P Homes Inc. and Reis Learning Center at Tivoli Restaurant, 7 Main St., New Milford.

April 22: Breakfast Networking Lunch & Learn members only, 8-9 a.m. Railroad station, Railroad Street, New Milford. For more information and RSVP, call the Chamber by April 18 at 860-354-6080 or email nmcc@newmilford-chamber.com.

May 1: Chamber music performance, 5-7 p.m. At the Merryll Center for the Arts, Chapel Hill Road, New Milford. Includes cocktails and appetizers and music by Hank Mulligan. Free.

May 6: Board of directors meeting, 8 a.m. Railroad station, Railroad Street in New Milford. The railroad station is located at 11 Railroad St. in New Milford. For more information, call 860-354-6080, email nmcc@newmilford-chamber.com or visit www.newmilford-chamber.com.



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