

The Glengarry News

It's a home run for children's T-ball and baseball leagues in Martintown

July 10 2018 BY TARA MACDONALD News Staff

South Glengarry's T-ball and baseball league is well-underway with children, parents and grandparents flocking to the Martintown Community Park every Tuesday evening between 5 pm and 8 pm.

"They come all the way from Alexandria and even Cornwall to play," said Tammy Kenny who has been volunteering with the league for the past three years.

Launched in 2016, the league was founded by Ms. Kenny's niece Ashley Savoy. "When my daughter was three, she was interested in starting to play baseball, but when we started looking around, there wasn't anything locally especially for her age," said Ms. Savoy. Undeterred, she decided to approach the Township of South Glengarry to rent the local baseball diamond for her daughter and their friends to play.

Little did she know that her actions would spark a popular new children's league. "When I called Anne Ward at the Township she convinced me that there was enough interest if I wanted to consider starting a league," recalled Ms. Savoy.

With Ms. Ward's support, Ms. Savoy launched the league three years ago with 40 players and has grown by more than 20 new players each year. "The response has been overwhelming, there's even a waiting list," said Ms. Savoy who currently has 20 new children on the wait list. The league also attracted sponsorship for the first time this year with eight area sponsors helping to pay for new team jerseys.

One of the reasons for the league's success is its focus on accessibility.

"When I first started looking into it, it was going to cost more than \$300 to register my daughter to play," said Ms. Savoy. "We wanted to make it affordable." At a mere \$20 per child, more parents are able to afford the registration costs. "We didn't want it to be a super competitive thing and more of a fun, learn the basics kind of league that any family could afford to try out and if their kids did not like baseball, they didn't waste hundreds of dollars figuring it out."

In order to keep costs low, the league was formed on the backs of a dedicated group of volunteers who've worked hard to make it a success. "My aunt Tammy Kenny has come to the park with me for the last three years every Tuesday night for three hours," said Ms. Savoy proudly. "The rest is all coached and helped by parents that just either volunteer to coach or just come onto the field when they see a need to help."

"My son Angus loves it," said Coreena McKenna who travels in from Green Valley. "He didn't know any of the kids when we first started, but now he's making new friends and learning a lot about teamwork." Ms. McKenna was also quick to highlight how well the league is organized and how friendly people are. "The coaches are awesome and it's great to see people step in and help out," she said.

The league, divided into two divisions, offers t-ball for children between the ages of four and six as well as baseball for children aged seven to ten years old. Tee-ball teaches children the

fundamentals of baseball, such as hitting off a batting tee and fielding before entering the baseball league which includes pitching. Unlike other sports leagues, the Martintown league doesn't count scores and focuses more on the value of having fun, gaining skills and learning about teamwork.

The league also offers parent and grandparents a chance to enjoy the sport while soaking in sunshine and making new friends. "The park is full with parents and grandparents," commented Tammy Kenny. Ms. McKenna agreed. "The park is usually full every week," said Ms. McKenna who enjoys being able to sit back and relax while her children play. "It's a great atmosphere." For league founder and organizer Ashley Savoy, it's all about community: "I've learned that community is one of the most important things in a child's life and Martintown probably has the best one out there," said Ms. Savoy. "I have met so many wonderful families with such great children. I don't give up four hours a week and many hours before the year starts for anything but those kids. I've loved watching the kids grow and get better and more confident from year to year and how they are all so comfortable."

The league runs from mid-May until mid-July with registration opening in late February. Plans for next year's league include a further expansion which will see the t-ball and baseball being run on different nights to allow for more children to play. Ms. Savoy also hopes to bring on another organizer to help run the T-ball league. "I had agreed to myself that I would run T-ball and baseball until my daughter ages out and then I will pass on the torch," explained Ms. Savoy. "She is finishing T-ball this year and going into baseball so I will be looking for a parent to help me take over T-ball."

For more information or to volunteer your time, please contact Ashley Savoy at 613-362-5825.