

Mike Errico Award Cranbury Baseball

This year's recipient of the Norwalk Old Timers Athletic Association's Mike Errico Award celebrated its 50th anniversary this summer.

The Cranbury Baseball program enjoyed another successful season in 2010 as nearly 350 players ages 4 to 12 experienced the thrill of playing the National Pastime while learning sportsmanship, citizenship, discipline, teamwork, self-esteem and physical well-being.

Those have been traits identified with Cranbury Baseball ever since it was established in 1960 by a group of men concerned that all children in town did not have the chance to play baseball. There were four Little Leagues in Norwalk back then, but only a limited amount of teams. Once those teams were filled everyone else was turned away.

Cranbury's philosophy right from the start, however, was that every child who signed up was given a uniform and a chance to play. No one was turned away. This was the mindset of some of the founders, people like Robert Devine and Larry Anastasia, Bill Zachary and Ed O'Shaunassey, and Arnie Weiss and Dave Forcier, one of the first presidents.

The league started with two divisions for 9-10 year-olds and 11-12 year-olds. In 1965, a 13-14 year-old league was added, and in the early 1980s an 8-year-old division was formed. As youngsters began learning the game even earlier, Cranbury established a 5-6 year-old division in 1984. Finally, in 2005, a T-Ball League for four year-olds was developed.

Cranbury Baseball also took a major step forward in the early 1990s when the league became affiliated with PONY Baseball and began playing in district all-star tournaments.

But throughout its history, instruction, fair play and having fun have always been top priorities at every level. A number of players who have come through the Cranbury League have gone on to play in high school and college, and a select few even signed professional contracts. Cranbury's most famous graduate is Maurice Vaughn, the American League MVP in 1995.

Fifteen years later, Cranbury Baseball in Norwalk continues to flourish and it seems only fitting the local league is recognized on the same night the Norwalk Old Timers is dedicating this program in the memory of Tom Corbo, a longtime coach and Board member who was known as "Mr. Cranbury."

Under the leadership of people like Tom Corbo and past presidents such as Forcier, Vin DePanfilis, Tim Devine, Bob Longmuir and now Dave Scarpone, Cranbury Baseball has been a model youth program for a half-century.

Tonight, it can add the Norwalk Old Timers' Mike Errico Award to its list of laurels.