

BROADSIDE

SPRING
1994

THE LITTLE LEAGUE OF WEST WINDSOR

Researched and written by Joan Parry, whose only connection with Little League is the love of baseball only a Brooklyn Dodgers fan can have. My grateful thanks for the help of the following who searched their memories and basements for the information included in this brief history: Sal Baldino, Bill Bleacher, John Bowker, Carol Carson, Mary and Lee Cassidy, Michael Corio, Joan and Dick Druckman, Rob Fraser, Mike Gallagher, Joe Glassmacher, Nancy Guilbault, Don Hoffman, Peter Hanos, Lorraine Kapp, Andrea "Andy" Kelley, Arnold Kelly, Penny Kovacs, Sue Levine, Tony Manna, Phillip Maurer, Steve Oberheim, Mary Raybuck, Mel Sanders, Warren Schenck, Carl Simkins, Bruce Taylor, Maggie Thiel.

It has often been said that in the spring a young man's (today, young person's) fancy lightly turns to thoughts of BASEBALL! So it has been in West Windsor.

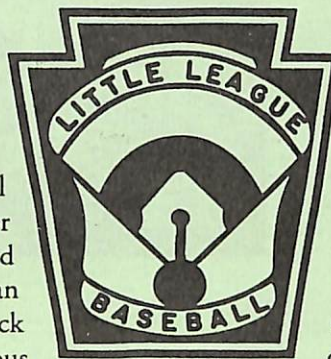
In pre-development West Windsor, baseball was not an organized recreation, but rather casual games among groups of friends and classmates whenever chores, school and an empty school yard allowed. Warren Schenck recalls many games between boys from various WW villages, such as Dutch Neck vs. Princeton Junction. Boys played in their regular clothes using whatever balls, bats, mitts, etc. the group could provide.

In an article in the Summer/Fall 1985 Broadside, Michael Corio recalled baseball games played by local boys at a typical Fourth of July family picnic and swim at the "Sheepwash," a West Windsor recreational area now on RCA land.

It was not until 1956 that the need for more organized baseball teams and games was realized. The following section consists of excerpts from John Bowker's 10-year history of the Little League (LL) published in the 1966 yearbook:

The First Ten Years - 1956-66

On this warm summer's evening in June 1966, we are looking out from the press box of the newly constructed club house and refreshment stand at the Richard J. Ward Field of the West Windsor Little League, Incorporated. From here, the spacious cinder block dugouts located behind protective fencing along the First and Third Base lines are momentarily quiet; the American flag has been removed



from the pole at the Center Field scoreboard; and the 185-foot outfield markers are barely visible in the waning daylight. Dick Ward, Bill Bleacher, Ray Phillips and Warren Froehlich have remained behind to piece together the tale of Little League baseball in West Windsor Township.

"We had four teams here for several years sponsored by the YMCA before any thoughts of organizing these activities came up locally," Ray

Phillips started. "It seems that an All Star Team of boys had been formed in Plainsboro in 1956 and, according to their press releases, they were invincible! Some of the local boys found this hard to believe and were anxious to answer the challenge, but pointed out that they would be playing in brightly colored tee shirts and old caps if something weren't done about it."

The West Windsor Lions Club, stimulated by Ray Phillips, purchased the needed uniforms and the new West Windsor Lions Baseball Team for Boys was ready to play! No record of the wins of our local team has been maintained. During the fall of 1956, cries of "Wait'll next year!" are vividly recalled by the four gentlemen who remained tonight to recount the story.

The West Windsor Newsletter (which took the place of a local WW newspaper at this time), December 1956 states, "A serious effort is being made to bring Little League baseball to West Windsor Township. So far this effort has produced a field just north of the Alexander Road overpass made available by Conover and Emmons (lumber and hard-

(cont on page 3)

The first teams: 1957



Penns Neck Community Club:

Manager Joe Cox; Coach Tony Zuccarella. Team Members: Bishop, Dean; Bock, Richard; Campbell, John; Cox, Joseph (Capt.); Ficcaro, Frank; Matarese, Ralph; Mathis, Richard; McClanahan, Bill; McIntyre, Jerry; Peckham, Earl; Rentor, Bill; Reynolds, Gregory; Stives, Richard; Wiley, Richard; Zuccarella, Joe.

First National Bank of Princeton:

Manager Jack Ward; Coach Bob Dilatush. Team Members: Beck, Tom; Carson, Tom; Cooper, Barry; Dilatush, Richard; Ellsworth, Richard (Capt.); Ellsworth, Barry; Hulick, Barry; Poccino, Edward; Reed, Nelson; Reneger, Courtney; Slayback, John; Smith, Roy; Thomas, John; Tuck, Orrie; Ward, Kenneth.



West Windsor Lions Club:

Manager John Fisher; Coach Bob Schach. Team Members: Anderson, Scott; Bensinger, John; Cawley, Wesley; Coleman, Kip; Fisher, Val; Lippman, Paul; Lippman, Jerry; Mey, Karl; O'Kane, Michael; Seitz, Kenneth; Seitz, Gregory; Thompson, Alphus (Capt.); Tindall, Mel; Tindall, Gary; Wasserman, John.

Princeton Junction Fire Co.:

Manager Clarence Cartright; Coach Lane Smith. Team Members: Bleacher, John; Budny, Roger; Christiansen, Jon; Clauser, Andre; Dey, Alan; Froehlich, Edwin; Grover, Tom; Oleniczak, Leonard; Pierson, Gary; Smith, Dennis (Capt.); Tindall, Jack; Turlington, Henry; Wert, Barry; Wright, George.



(cont from page 1)

ware company which became Lucar Hardware), grading and seeding by the Township road crew, backstop materials donated by the Pennsylvania Railroad, special rough seed donated by Conover and Emmons, and offers from others to help put the field in shape.”

In February, 1957, a franchise had been granted to West Windsor by the National Little League headquarters in Williamsport, PA and the first local Board of Directors had been elected. The first four teams were sponsored by: the West Windsor Lions Club, Princeton Junction Fire Company, The First National Bank of Princeton (now United Jersey Bank) and the Penns Neck Community Club (a club dedicated “to aid the civic, moral, intellectual and social welfare of the community” which operated from 1922 until the 1960s on Route 1, in the building now owned by Techne, Inc.).

Dedication! Memorial Day 1957! Ray Phillips, Commissioner, standing on the newly graded pitcher’s mound before a packed house, opened the ceremonies with an introduction of each manager of the four teams, and then guest speaker, Ed McMillen, Captain of the Princeton University baseball team. Mayor Russell Mount threw out the first ball, and organized Little League Baseball was formally underway in West Windsor!

In 1960, the League expanded to five teams with the introduction of C. Page Oil Company and American Cyanamid. Improved facilities for refreshments and for the general comfort of the spectators were provided. Tony Cusumano was responsible for the construction of the club house behind home plate. The two-story club house measured 10 ft. by 10 ft. with the refreshment stand downstairs and room for two people upstairs to keep score and to announce the action over the public address system.

This was also the first full year of operation for the Ladies’ Auxiliary. The desire of fans to nibble on goodies had assumed proportions too great for informal preparations. The efforts and direction of Mrs. Lawrence Dey, Mrs. Jack Reed, Mrs. Sigmund Oleniczak and the experience of many others made the Auxiliary click from the very start, not to mention much-needed funds.

Two other sources of income were advertisements in the Yearbook produced from 1957 up into the 1970s, and the outfield fence advertisement signs. Most of the photos in this article come from various Yearbooks.

1962 brought Craft Cleaners to the League, and the introduction of the sixth team, the Cubs. Sponsorship of the last team was provided by 17 interested parents and some financial help from the Auxiliary. Thorne’s Pharmacy be-

came a team sponsor in 1964; that same year, the Cubs became the Ellsworth A.C.’s and the minor league was formed ... But our story is not chronological.

1962 was a banner year for the local League! The town was continuing to grow, and it was obvious that larger and even more complete facilities would be required if the needs were to be met. A friendly chat on the subject of Little League needs with a local landowner brought about 13 acres on North Post Road being purchased for Little League fields.

With the help of many of those listed on the Honor Roll Plaque in the new club house, the field took shape during one summer, one fall, one winter ... and frantically the next spring! Finally the new Richard J. Ward Field was ready! New dugouts, equipment, storage garage! Just about everything new! Except the club house.

Tony Cusumano came through again with drawings for a new, greatly enlarged club house. Under the supervision of Sal Baldino, construction started almost before the final 1965 game was over-willing hands and borrowed equipment moved the old club house out of the way (intact for use at our proposed second field) and more willing hands and donated materials and long, long hours provided a new level foundation.

The 1966 season started on Monday, May 2; on the night of the first, there was much scrambling to finish the wiring, plumbing, installation of refrigerators, dugout telephones and public address facilities. At dawn on the second, Dick Ward was mowing the lawn and painting the scoreboard ... and at 6 o’clock that evening, boys appeared in full uniform to play baseball!



Richard Stritch, Player Agent, presents Bill Bradley (then an All Star Basketball player at Princeton University), with a “Guest of Honor” award. In background (L-R) Dick Ward, Tony Cusumano, Sal Baldino. Memorial Day, 1963.

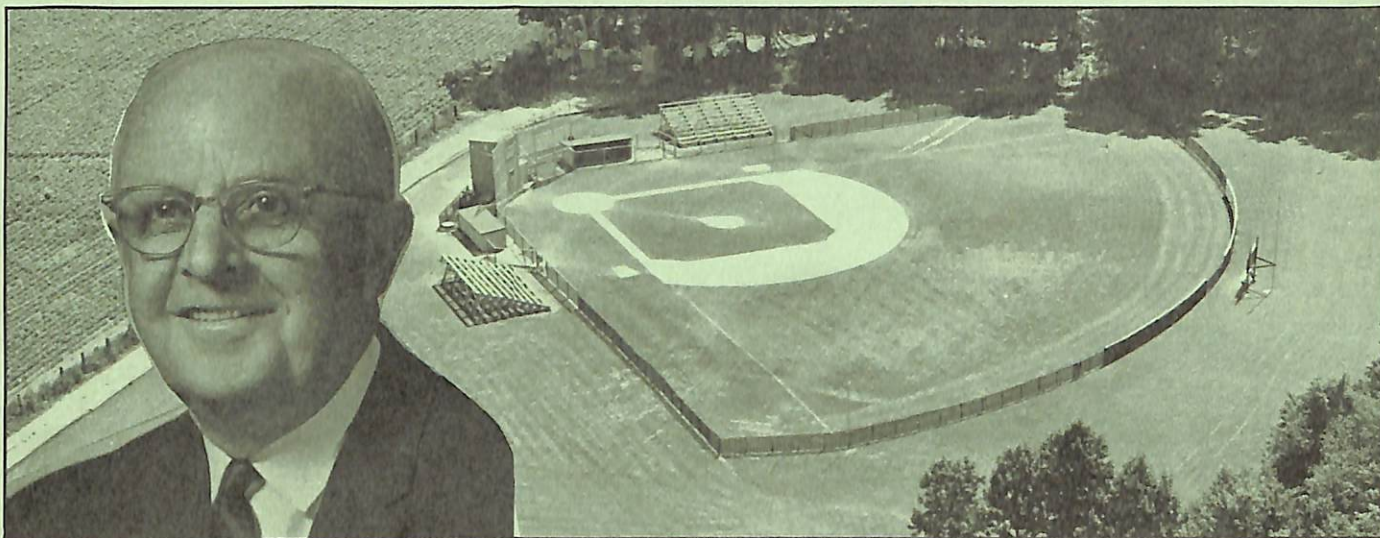
No historical commentary would be complete without a look to the future. During 1965 and 1966 work has begun on leveling, grading and seeding a new playing field on the Little League property just south of the present field. As this is being written, the field is by no means ready for regular season play, and Dick Ward looks forward to continued efforts by fathers and friends of the League to prepare that field by next year. Additional landscaping is needed over much of the property, and if we are to keep pace with the growing population of West Windsor, we must anticipate the needs at least a year in the future.

In an editorial prefacing the 1958 yearbook, President Warren Froehlich wrote, "the character building and physical benefits that our Little League offers our children, encourages all the people who devote so much time and effort to the program. The satisfaction we adults experience, and the excitement of Little League baseball that we all enjoy will be reflected in the spirit of our children, while acting as a constructive alternative to delinquency."

In WW all was fairly calm. Girls were allowed to try out along with the boys and several were accepted. The concerns expressed turned out to be groundless. Stacey Godnick was the first girl to play major league LL as a regular team member. Other early girl Little Leaguers were Kimbra Layton, Loretta Gittens, Judy Guzy, Rochelle Stives and Wendy Lockhart. All-girl teams were also begun in softball and baseball in the late 1970s.

In March 1974 a Gala Dinner was held to commemorate the final mortgage payment on the 13-acre R. J. Ward Field. At the dinner Roman Charydczak, who made the LL land available at extremely reasonable terms, was given a plaque for his support since 1961.

By 1974 there were three fields on the 13 acres. One of the fields was lit to allow games to go on until 9:30 p.m. The number of LL players had increased from 50 in 1957 to 300 in 1971.



Richard J. Ward, President of LL 1957-1972 (with exception of 1958 and 1959). The R. J. Ward Little League Field on North Post Road was named after Mr. Ward because of his devotion to Little League and all it stands for.

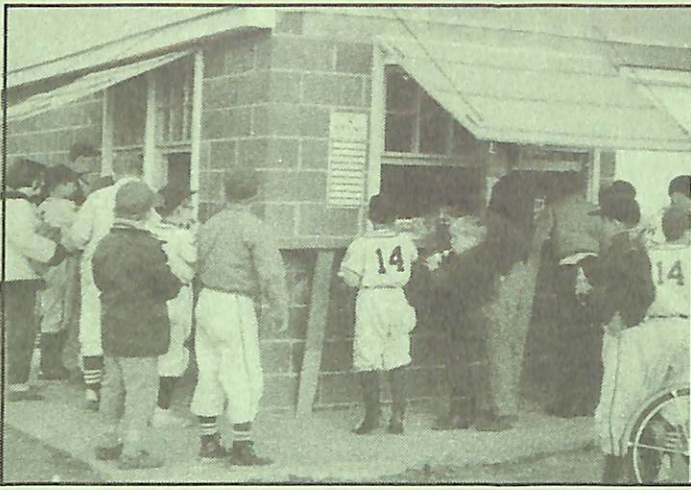
Highlights of 1970-1980

The major highlights of the 1970s, according to Tony Manna, president from 1972-1975, were the inclusion of girls into LL, the final payoff of the mortgage on Ward Field, and the lighting of the field.

In 1973, the National Organization of Women (NOW) sued the national Little League for discrimination by not allowing girls to play on LL teams. NOW won the case, causing great upset in LL districts all over the country. There were fears of physical injury, antagonism against the girl players by the boys, higher insurance rates. Some LL districts suspended operation in protest.

During the 1970s well into the 1980s, a major fund-raising event was the Pancake Breakfast held each spring at the Christian Education Building of the Dutch Neck Presbyterian Church. Arnold Kelly described his designing an enormous aluminum griddle to fit over the burners of the stove in the kitchen. During the 4 to 5 hours of the Breakfast, as many as 800 pancakes were made and eaten. An article in the West Windsor-Plainsboro Chronicle of March 28, 1974 describes the menu of juice, coffee or milk, sausage, unlimited pancakes with melted butter and syrup for \$1.75 per person (\$1 for children under 12). However, by 1985, the cost went up to \$3.50 per person.

Tickets for the Breakfast were sold by Little Leaguers with prizes given to those selling the most. Registration for the League also took place during the breakfast for several years.



Little League's refreshment stand, one of the major projects and fundraisers of the Ladies' Auxiliary.

The event was organized by the Ladies' Auxiliary and involved almost all the League parents in one way or another.

Team's sponsors remained pretty much the same during the 1960s and 1970s. The 1968 summary listed: 1st National Bank since 1957; WW Lions since 1957; Craft Cleaners since 1962; Edinburg Hotel since 1967, Ellsworth's (formerly Princeton Jct. Package Store) since 1963 and Thorne's Pharmacy (later Junction Pharmacy) since 1963. In 1971 Wasco Builders became a sponsor. Other 1970s sponsors included: Will's Shell and RCA.

During the 1980s, there were seven major league and seven minor teams in Little League. With a few changes, the major league sponsors were: Craft Cleaners, WW Lions, Lucar Hardware, RCA, Ellsworth's, Harbourt Freight and 1st National Bank (now United Jersey Banks).

The minor league teams were sponsored by: Beverage Barn, Grover's Mill Co., Nassau Savings & Loan, Hamilton Supply Co., Lanwin Builders, 3 Seasons (a sporting goods store), and P&W News (delivery service).

According to Joe Glassmacher, LL president during 1983-84, 12 year old boys became the District All Star champions

in 1982. The WWLL girl's softball team won the District softball championship and were sent to regional play. Also, WWLL was the first to send 9-11 year olds to area regional tournaments.

The major role of the Ladies' Auxiliary since its founding in 1959 has been raising funds to help support the LL's needs. As mentioned earlier, the refreshment stand at the fields provided much of the income. Since 1987, the refreshment stand/snack bar has been upgraded. Concern about the quality of the well water at the field brought both Township water and a sewer hook-up. Various equipment was purchased: ice-maker; french fryer; soda fountain equipment to enable soda to be made, instead of using cans.

During the 1980s, LL players sold candy door-to-door to help raise funds for the games. This was replaced by raffle tickets which entitled the winner to a \$1,000 gift certificate from a travel agency. These certificates were donated on alternate years by Premier Travel and Princeton Travel, both of which were also team sponsors. In the 1990s, the raffle continues with three prizes: a certificate to the Menlo Park Mall, tickets to a Phillies game and dinner at the Peacock Inn.

This year various apparel with the WWLL logo has been designed and is available at the concession stand during the season, as well as by mail order.



1973: When Little Girls joined the Little League. Cartoon courtesy of Copley News Service, published in July 4, 1974 Chronicle.

Little League in the 1990s

In 1994, there are 74 teams, some of them long-time sponsors (see page to right).

Boys and girls from 6 to 12 years of age can be part of Little League. The 6 and 7 year olds play T-ball in the Pony League. Those 8 years old and older begin baseball in the Rookie League and are promoted to the Minor and Major leagues as their skills allow.

West Windsor's Little League is the only League in the district with a woman president, beginning with Nancy Guilbault in 1987, followed by Andrea Kelley in 1991-92 and Maggie Thiel, the present president.

Today there are nine different Coordinators at different levels which deal with sponsors, equipment, and maintenance of the various teams.

In addition to Ward Field, practice and games are played on four fields in the Conover Complex at Conover Rd. and South Post Rd., as well as fields at the new WW Community Park. The Conover Rd. fields are leased by WWT from the County. These fields are used jointly by WWT Rec. Dept. soccer teams and LL. These fields are not lighted.

T-ball is played at the Sarnoff field on Washington Road. (It is interesting to realize that the Sarnoff fields saw the first local baseball games long before LL began.)

Work on the Ward fields continues. By 1995, it is hoped to have lighting on the third field in place. The Minor league field was lighted in 1993; the Major league received new lights at that time.

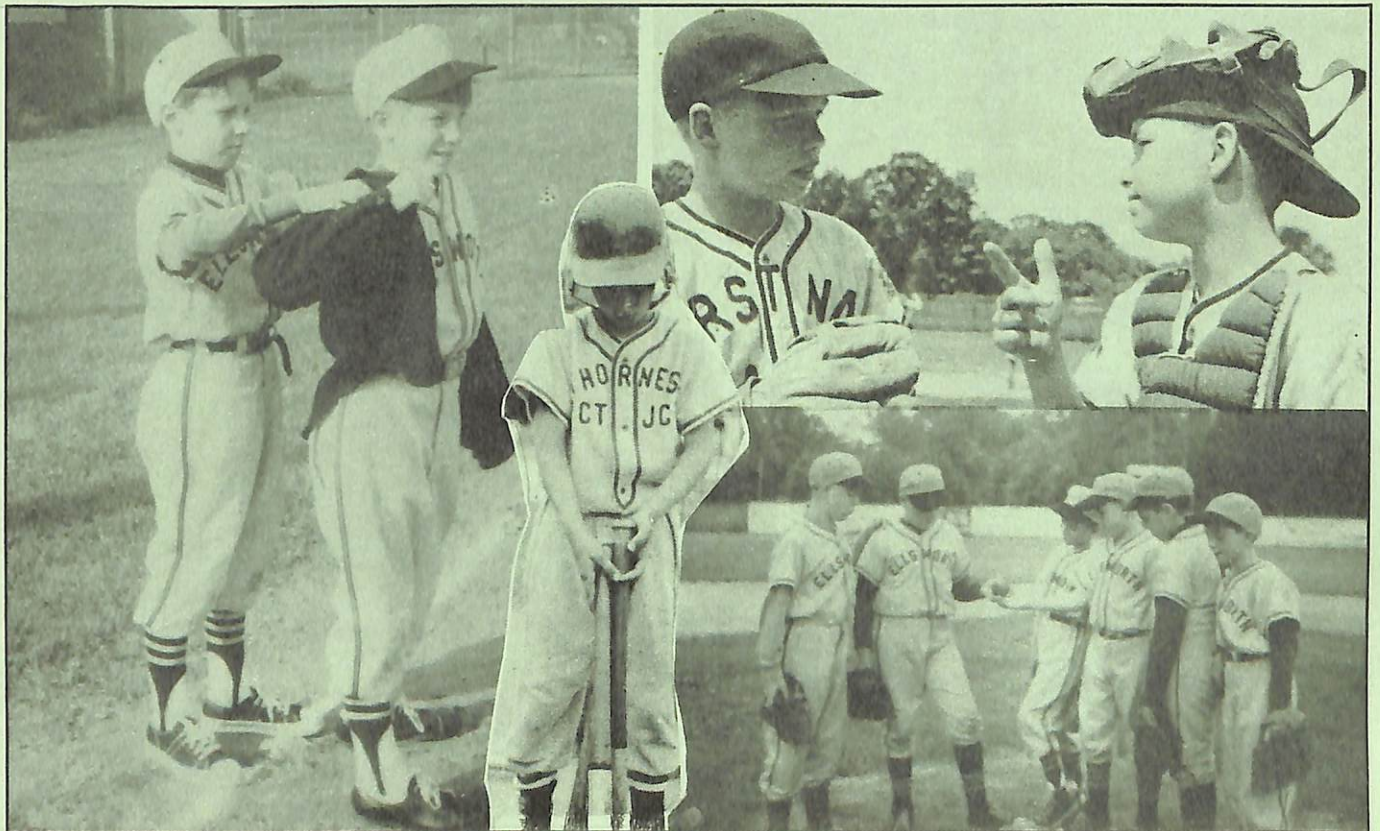
In 1994, about 100 games are scheduled to be played, beginning in April and ending in June. The Saturday before the end of the school term, trophies are handed out to winning teams and graduation ceremonies for players leaving the League are held.

The 1994 season has been dedicated to the memory and spirit of Christopher Ciuffani, who tragically lost his life in an automobile accident this winter.

The Future

As West Windsor grows so will Little League, to see that every 6 to 12 year old will have the opportunity to benefit from this unique experience.

There is much more that could be said about the thirty-some years LL has been in operation, but space does not permit. However, the overall impression given by those involved is one of deep devotion to and joy in the game and its players. They are all committed to making certain that all those involved will be able to experience the sense of self worth, excitement and satisfaction of learning teamwork, the skills of good sportsmanship and the fun of baseball. Ⓢ



1994 LITTLE LEAGUE TEAMS & SPONSORS



Major League - 10 boy's teams; 6 girl's teams

Minor League - 10 boy's teams; 4 girl's teams

AAA - 8 teams

Rookie - 12 boy's teams; 6 girl's teams

T-ball - 16 teams

Major League - Boy's

Ellsworth's Liquors
Lucar Hardware
Skaters Alliance (Pants Saloon)
South Brunswick Grand Slam
Dr. Timothy Tuttle
United Jersey Banks
Video Barn
West Windsor Lions Club
West Windsor PBA
Williams Builder

Major League - Girl's

Capuano Ristorante Italiano
Bob Jelenic (Journal Resigster Co.)
Howard Kravitz Insurance
Lucar Hardware
Sebastiano Nini, Inc.
West Windsor PBA

Minor League - Boy's

Aljon's
Benecard Services
Chicken Holiday
Gourmet Deli
Hamilton Supply
Hollyfield Farms
Premier Travel
Syska & Hennessy
The Chronicle
West Windsor PBA

Minor League - Girl's

Bumber Construction
H&H Gas and Electric Appliances
Jem Cleaners
Salon Facci

AAA Teams

Arm & Hammer
Bergman Engineering Associates
Garden State Land
Natelson's Clothing
Primex Panthers
The Bagel Hole
Toll Brothers
West Windsor Small Home Repair

Rookie League - Boy's

Coastal Copy
Dr. David Fenster
Ferrara Food Products
INtime Systems
Drs. Kessler, Morgenstern & Wisner
Dr. Gary S. Klein, DMD
Lick It
Dr. Andrew Lipka (Lipka's Lasers)
Lupo's Tax Dodgers
McLean Engineering
Perna's Flowers
Present Perfect

Rookie League - Girl's

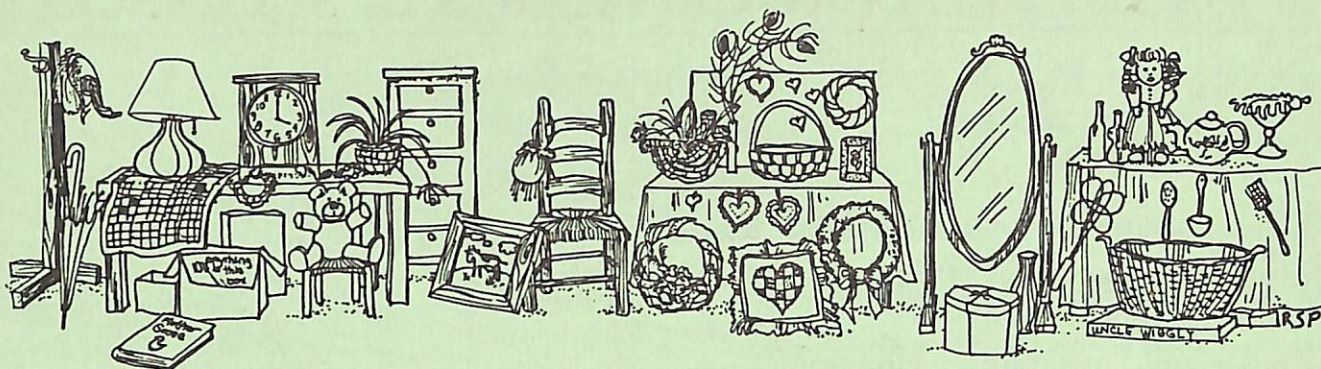
Dance Spectrums
Dr. H. Brown Elmes
Princeton Junction Video
The Mailroom
Dr. Joanne Reiffe-Fishbane
West Windsor Chiropractic Center

T-Ball

Air Control
Al's Sunoco
Bank of Princeton
Jim Brennan (Steamatic Sluggers)
Carnegie Bank
Dr. Joseph Caruso
Clifton Landscaping
Coldwell Banker Schlot
Imperial Schrade
J&J Painting
Michael Pirone (Rx Kids)
Jeff Pretat (White Sox)
Dr. Steven Rounds (Hit Kids)
Dr. Howard Spielman
Lee's Tae Kwon Do
Little Szechuan



FUND-RAISERS FOR 1994



The Auction planned to be held on May 14 has been postponed until the fall. We will hold a "silent" auction during the Cultural Fair at the West Windsor-Plainsboro High School on October 8th.

High-quality items that are easily transportable are sought for the Auction. Services, such as home-cooked meals, language or craft lessons, baby-sitting time, handicraft items made to order, garden work, etc. would be gratefully received. If you have items or services you would be willing to donate, please phone Luci DiPolvere at 586-2784. All donations are tax-deductible.

Flea Market: Again, a change of plans. Instead of holding our own flea market, we will take several spaces at the WWPHS Flea Market on Saturday, September 10th. Tax-

deductible donations are needed for this event also. Call Mary Schenck at 799-1278 if you have household goods, small appliances, small gift-type items, etc. you would like to donate.

By combining our fund-raising needs with high-traffic events, we hope to be able to raise more money for the Zaitz-Schenck House Restoration than we seem to be able to at the Zaitz-Schenck House itself.

Holiday House Tour: However, there will be no change in the Holiday House Tour. On Sunday, December 11, the Castle at Tamarack Farms, Bear Brook Rd., will be open for tours from 1 to 4 p.m. Help decorate the Castle during November and/or be a Room Guide on December 11. Call Joan Parry at 452-8598 if you would like to help.

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