



NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL OF WESTCHESTER / PLAYA

A Look at the Youth Athletics Scene

By Chris Lynch, Neighborhood Council Board Member

Westchester Youth Lacrosse – A Growing Sport

Lacrosse is North America's oldest sport, started by Native Americans and is Canada's summer national sport. Primarily an East Coast sport, lacrosse has spread across the United States and over the past decade has grown extensively in the west. Winter lacrosse took Westchester by storm in 2008. With just a net and a pile of lacrosse sticks and balls set up at the park during the flag football season, players were lured in by tossing the ball around, shooting goals, and talking with our local LMU lacrosse team.

Then, by word of mouth (and a lot of phone calls), Westchester lacrosse was born. Local resident and business owner Mark Jongewaard, West LA Lacrosse Director Mitch Fenton and Westchester Parks and Rec Director Stephen Joyce were responsible for getting the sticks flying. With active involvement by many Westchester parents such as Dan Mohler, Phil Bonney, and Bill Priestley, the sport in Westchester has grown from 40 players on four teams in 2008-2009 to 145 players on nine teams in just its third season. Teams range from kindergarten through eighth-grade and include one girls team.

Utilizing our neighborhood to its fullest extent, Westchester teams are coached predominately by LMU lacrosse team players, adding to the high level of skill and training our teams have received. LMU player/coaches include Greg Sharron, Marc Napp, Johnny Gilbreath, Nick Roessler, Hayden Fulston, Karl Magnus, Michelle Yarger and Jenna Loomer. Westchester players learn quickly about facing-off, cradling, scooping, slashing, and playing positions such as middle, attack, or defense.

Westchester Winter Lacrosse season starts in December and culminates with playoffs in early March. This year, championship games will be held March 6 at LMU just prior to the LMU-Oregon State college match. The teams play in the West L.A. Lacrosse League of approximately 15 to 18 teams. The league has grown from 24 players in 2006-2007 to approximately 400 boys and 60 girls this season. Westchester boasts back-to-back championships in its first two seasons for both the third/fourth-grade and fifth/sixth-grade teams. LMU players run a successful summer camp at the park as well.

For more information, contact Steven Joyce at westchester_rec@yahoo.com

or visit the league online at www.WestchesterLacrosse.org.

Westchester Babe Ruth

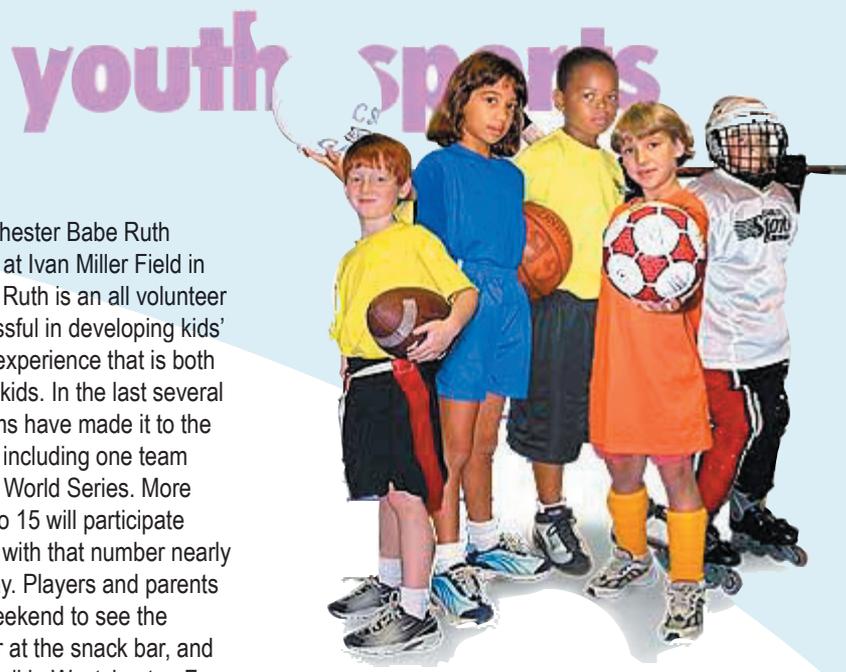
It's finally baseball season! Westchester Babe Ruth begins its 55th season this March at Ivan Miller Field in Playa del Rey. Westchester Babe Ruth is an all volunteer organization that has been successful in developing kids' baseball talents and fostering an experience that is both competitive and enjoyable for the kids. In the last several years, Westchester's All-Star teams have made it to the State and Regional Tournaments; including one team that placed third in the Babe Ruth World Series. More than 65 kids from the ages of 13 to 15 will participate during the first half of the season, with that number nearly doubling for the second half of play. Players and parents are encouraged to drop by any weekend to see the facility, enjoy a fresh grilled burger at the snack bar, and welcome the start of spring baseball in Westchester. For sponsorship information or to sign up for the second half of the season, please visit the league website at www.westchesterbaseball.com.

Del Rey American Little League

March 5 will mark the start of the 57th year for Del Rey American Little League (DRALL). As a division of Little League International, DRALL espouses the virtues of courage, character, and loyalty. The league delivers these lessons through youth baseball. DRALL works with 200 kids each season from the ages of 5 to 12. For more information, please visit www.drall.com.

Westchester Little League

Westchester Little League (WLL) has been providing youth baseball to the Westchester community for more than 50 years. WLL consists of approximately 220 players from the ages of 6 to 12 across four divisions, "A" (instructional), "AA" (developmental), "Minor" and "Major." WLL moved to Nielsen Field in 1984 and through the hard work of its parents and volunteers, Nielsen Field has become the "jewel" of Westchester. Through generous donations and sponsorship by Westchester businesses and individuals, many new improvements continue to be made, including this year's addition of a second field for the younger kids as well as a brand new state-of-the-art scoreboard, donated by the Jose Moreno family. WLL has won three consecutive District 37 All-Star Championships,



winning in 2008 (11-year-olds), 2009 (12-year-olds) and 2010 (11-year-olds). Also in 2010, WLL won the District 37 Minor Tournament of Champions. For more information about WLL, contact playball90045@yahoo.com or visit the league online at www.WestchesterLL.org.

AYSO Soccer

While AYSO soccer (Region 7) is often thought of as the fall sport for local children, many are learning that soccer goes well beyond the fall. All-Star season extends into January and February, and players for the All-Star teams are chosen by coaches to participate in All-Star play based upon their performance in games during the recreational season. All-Star play starts at the Under 10 level and continues through Under 14 for Boys and Girls. This year, AYSO Region 7 fielded seven teams that went to Regionals, and of those teams, three will be advancing to Sectionals – Girls U12 (Coach Ray Becerra), Girls U10 (Coach Scott Calderon) and Boys U14 (Coach Pallo Fabbri). So, if you see a kid in a soccer uniform, there is a good chance he or she is an All-Star player advancing to Sectionals. Soccer continues to grow in popularity, and registration for 2011 is just around the corner. Those who live in Region 7, which includes Playa del Rey, Playa Vista, Marina del Rey, Westchester and Inglewood, can check for registration dates and other information by visiting www.ayso7.org.

