

# Not enough coaches, kids for team

To the Editor:  
I read with interest the article by "The Jayhawker" in the June 21 *Oberlin Herald*. His question was, "Where is school baseball team?" I would like to comment.

When I was growing up in Oberlin in the 50s and 60s, we had the usual Little League teams each summer. There was PeeWee for boys in third, fourth, and fifth grade, Midgents for sixth, seventh, and eighth grade, a Legion team for high school age and even a town team for those too old to play Legion ball. This consisted mostly of young adults and those who were older but still able to play.

During the mid-60s when I was old enough to play Legion ball, we did not have a team because we could not find any adult willing to spend the time to coach or manage for us. It is a big job for no pay.

When my son was old enough to play K-18 and Legion ball, Gary Bartels and I coached and managed the K-18 boys for several summers. Elmer Zodrow took the reins of the Legion team for many years and did a great job for the kids. Since then, it has been a crashout each year to find someone to do it.

You asked about a high school team. The answer is that there are not enough young people to support a track team, golf team and baseball team all in the same time period. The sad part is that we just don't have the kids.

Baseball is truly the "American pastime," but you have to have the ability to play the game to really

enjoy it. You have to have coaches, managers and mainly young men who want to play. If you don't have the players, you don't have a team.

During my youth, we would start a game the day school was out and it would go all summer. It was in the field directly across the street from where I live now.

At that time, we had enough kids in one part of town to have two complete teams with some left over for substitutes. No one was ever turned away.

We played with bats (wooden) that had been broken and repaired, balls that were taped together since we had worn out the cover, and gloves that were held together with shoestrings. The neighborhood parents, mainly John Bearley and Harold Rehm, would mow the field so it was nice. There was no slow pitch to compete with us for players. There were no video games and dang few televisions to occupy our time. We had to make our own fun, and we did! We also had no swimming pool for a number of years.

We had one thing that you don't see now, and that is kids. There were numerous families with large broods of children. We don't have that now like we did then. If someone had company from out of town, they brought them along and they played.

Then came the one thing that for

me killed the Legion baseball program and made it impossible for Oberlin to field a competitive team. One of the local men talked the baseball team into playing softball for him.

He said they could still play baseball for us, but they wouldn't have to practice.

I'm all for playing the best team you can, but if you don't come to practice you don't play. When they did not get to play, they quit. This was the choice they made.

I agree that we should be able to have a Legion and K-18 team, but just wanting it won't make it happen. Our baseball program in Oberlin needs to go back to fundamentals and teach the game to be played at all levels, the way it should be played.

Young boys need to know how to hit a ball that is thrown to them. They need to know how to run the bases and they need to know how to field and throw. They need to know how to hit the cutoff man from the outfield and how to stop a runner from going that extra base. They need to be taught the basics at a younger age and to carry that forward to the next level.

While coaching K-18 ball, Gary and I had kids come up from Little League who had never tried to hit the ball. The coaches told them to stand there and try to get a walk. Pretty

sad, I would say.

A few years back I was involved in trying to get a complex of fields built for baseball and softball. We had equipment, people and machines lined up to do the work, but did not get to because a group of people wanted that ground for another purpose. This would have given Oberlin a complex of four fields that they could be proud of.

What we have now is abysmal: poor lighting, unsafe playing conditions and basically lousy fields. We got a good start a few years back but it didn't go far enough.

I hope this will help Mr. Merriott understand what has happened to Oberlin's baseball program. It is fixable, but it will take a lot of effort and cooperation to make it work.

John Stanley  
Oberlin

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# Postal Service spokesman defends newspaper rate hike

To the Editor:  
This letter is in response to your recent editorial, "Sharp increase in postage could deepen postal woes," in the May 31 issue of *The Oberlin Herald*.

There is no better time than this year, the 300th anniversary of the birth of Benjamin Franklin, to remind your readers of the U.S. Postal Service's rich tradition of connecting people to their community newspapers. Franklin was not only the nation's first postmaster general, but also a newspaper publisher. In fact, during the early days of the Post Office Department, newspaper publishers often served as postmasters, which helped them to gather and distribute news.

If Mr. Franklin were alive today, he might be scratching his head over the assertions made recently on your editorial page as he would understand the challenges faced by any postmaster general and the costs associated with getting the mail delivered every day.

Nobody likes to pay more for postage, and we don't like to announce proposed rate increases. But just like any other business, when the cost of doing business goes up we have to raise prices to cover those costs. As one of the nation's largest transportation and delivery organizations, the Postal Service is extremely sensitive to rising energy

costs. We have also experienced significant growth in health benefit payments. That is why proposed rate adjustments for 2007 include a rate increase to mail local newspapers to subscribers.

Despite what you may have heard, this increase is not designed to drive away community newspapers. Instead, it is required by law to cover associated costs.

For the past 20 years, rate increases for local newspapers (technically termed "In-County Periodicals") generally have not only been smaller than those of the other periodicals subclasses, but also lower than the overall rate increase for all domestic mail. In-county rates are much lower than any other postage rate. For instance, they are much lower than even a similar nonprofit newspaper mailed from the local office and delivered to the same address. In January of this year, there was even a 2.3 percent rate reduction for In-County publications, when virtually all other mail got a more than five percent rate increase.

There are some suggestions, we believe emanating from Washington, that next year's proposed increase for mailing newspapers could run as high as 30 percent. Let's look at this with real numbers.

The fact is the increase would only amount to a couple of pennies.

The new price for most community newspaper mailings would be 9 cents to 11 cents, depending on weight and where it is entered into the mail stream.

Sound like a good deal? It is, especially when you consider community newspapers often receive same-day service. Think about it, local newspapers often get Express Mail service (currently \$14.40 for a Flat Rate Envelope) for about a dime!

The very low rates that In-County publications pay have always been a bargain and will continue to be a bargain. We will always strive to keep these rates as low as possible because community newspapers serve a vital function in American society. That was true in Benjamin Franklin's day and is true today.

Azeezaly S. Jaffer, vice president  
Public Affairs and Communications  
U.S. Postal Service  
Washington

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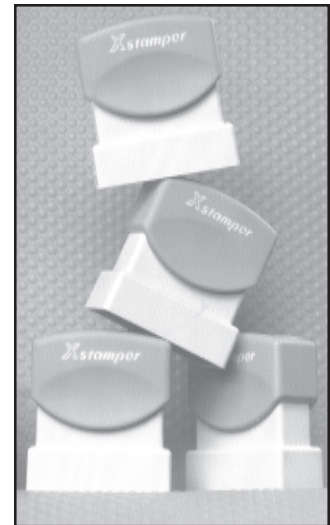
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