Beat: Miscellaneous

Summer Kickoff Deerfield Park 2015 jamboree of family fun.

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USPA NEWS - Our children have been longing for winter´s end. They have been sitting in their school chairs aimlessly gazing at blackboards riddled with chalk, struck with spring fever and awaiting summer´s return. Today, June 20, 2015, is that day at Deerfield Park in Smithfield, Rhode Island.

Our children have been longing for winter´s end. They have been sitting in their school chairs aimlessly gazing at blackboards riddled with chalk, struck with spring fever and awaiting summer´s return. Today, June 20, 2015, is that day at Deerfield Park in Smithfield, Rhode Island. There was no shortage of family activities; with lacrosse on one end, basketball, baseball and a senior center on the other and in the middle trails to hike, playgrounds filled with children watched by alert parents and multiple war memorials commemorating some of our country's brave fallen military members.
As the fog and morning dew wore off the grass, a trickle of families were revealed on the groomed fields donned with Lacrosse nets.

Shortly after, all the Northern Rhode Island Lacrosse (NRI Lacrosse) teams began to assemble ready to face-off for fun at their season end Jamboree. This event was organized by NRI Lacrosse league treasurer Christine Zapata, her husband and league coach, Al Zapata, along with the support of league members and parents. For the Zapata´s, this event celebrates two generations of their efforts to build a nurturing environment for their children and yours. After years of playing this rigorous sport Al and Christine's sons, Matthew and Nathan, are now coaches and referees in the league their parents helped to build. These two young men are now carrying on the legacy of their parents. The games begin.

Nathan is referee for the first of the many games we captured.
Time for us to move on. Grills are lit. Smoke and the fragrance of your favorite barbecue foods linger in the air. These smells motivated us to begin exploring the other activities spread across Deerfield Park. We see little children swinging on swings, climbing stairs, slipping down slides, rocking on various shaped toys with parents eagerly sharing these few precious moments with them. Hold on! A faint familiar chime is heard entering the park. Oh sweet! I know what that is! When you were a child and the ice cream truck appeared did you get that nervous excited feeling of, "I have to get one!" and you anxiously hunt down your parents for the change in their pockets?

Today was no different for these highly motivated children as they lined up, with parent in tow to get their favorite ice cream. They are satisfied and we have plenty more to explore.

Strolling forward on the well paved paths, we spot flags surrounded by vibrant flowers set before engraved stones dedicated to fallen veterans. There are several of these memorials strewn throughout this park. This one honors the veterans that died in or during wartime. It quickly becomes apparent that this Smithfield community truly cares for those that protect our freedoms and our country. The second memorial we encounter has stone pillars and the name of a family´s son or daughter lost during one of our country's recent wars.

These pillars are paid for by the families, in memory of their lost loved one. The way this tribute was designed is heartwarming. We encountered one such mother that had just visited with her son´s pillar just before going to the baseball field to watch her grandson play.

Chants of encouragement are now heard from the basketball courts, so we venture to see what is happening. Pickup games are in the front court, while in the back is a father teaching his son how to play. There is a strong sense of community here. Now the cheering of ball players, parents, grandparents and coaches can be heard in the direction of the baseball field. This was a must see for me.

I grew up playing baseball, watching the Redsox and having extended conversations about professional baseball players stats and salaries. Rounding the parking lot bend we see two little league teams competing. Threshers versus Marauders were squaring off in today´s matchup. My position was behind the backstop. Focusing my camera lens beyond the chain link fence to capture the action of both pitcher and batter simultaneously. Here´s the windup, now the pitch and strike one. Then ball one, ball two“¦ Wait, it´s a hit into

short right field! He´s got a single. The next batter steps up to bat. The first pitch gets by the catcher and the runner steals second.

Excitement is rising as quickly as coaches are jumping off their seats with each pitch thrown. Oh boy, am I glad we stopped to watch part of this game. It brought back so many fond memories of the years I played. These kids are blessed. Our news team calls it a day. It is time to sort our photos, collect our data and formulate the three or four stories we will submit to our editor.

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