



# Ⓞ Little League Baseball: A Rockland County Tradition



By Robert Charles Jowaiszas

What began in 1939 with Carl Stotz in Williamsport, Pennsylvania quickly became one of America’s most meaningful youth programs—and eventually, a worldwide tradition. By the late 1940s, Little League had spread across the country, fueled by post-war growth, and towns like those in Rockland County, New York were quick to embrace the idea of organized youth sports as a way to bring families together.

The 1950s marked a turning point, as Little League expanded beyond U.S. borders into Canada, Latin America, and Asia. By the 1960s, teams from countries like Japan and Mexico were competing at the highest levels. The Little League

World Series, held each August in South

Williamsport, Pennsylvania, became a global showcase where young players from around the world competed on the same field.

Today, more than 80 countries participate, turning what started as a neighborhood pastime into an international tradition built on

sportsmanship and respect. Back home in Rockland, Little League has been a community staple since the early 1950s. Towns like Nyack,

Pearl River, New City, and Haverstraw were among the first to organize structured leagues.

Fields like Germonds Park, Zukor Park, Dexter Park, and Veterans Memorial Park became the heart of youth baseball.

Families would gather for Opening Day, cheering as generations of kids stepped up to the plate, their cleats digging into the dirt, gloves poised, and hearts racing. And then there are the parents—the ones who cheer so loudly that even the umpire flinches. “Hey Tommy, watch the ball!”

echoes across the field, followed by a collective gasp when someone accidentally calls a ball a strike. One dad yells, “Swing, Jimmy, swing!” just as the kid swings too early, missing completely—and the crowd roars in sympathy.

It’s chaotic, it’s fun, and it’s Rockland Little League.

The story of Rockland Little League is one of people as much as the game. In Pearl River, early organizers like George Hadelor and Bill Timmerman laid the foundation, joined by Art Hopper, Alfred Bocket, Ken Munkelt, and Brit Patterson. Later, volunteers like John Castelli and John C. Taylor improved fields and designed lighting that still illuminates games today.

Modern league leaders, including Michael Cohen, Jeff Lee, and John Welch, guide programs across

Clarkstown and beyond, while coaches like

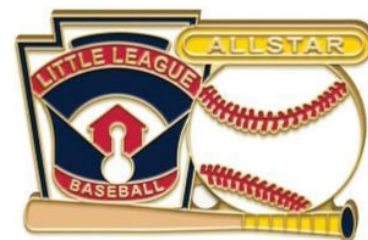
Theresa O’Brien, Lou Ragonesi, and Mike Herskowitz have led teams to championship success. Local officials, from George Hoehmann to Patrick Carroll, have supported field projects, ensuring the tradition continues. And then there

are the players who rose through the system—John Flaherty, Chris O’Grady, and Patrick

Kivlehan—reminding everyone that these fields can be the starting point for dreams realized. All the while, parents debate loudly over every call—“That’s not a strike!”—and cheer with dramatic

flair when their kid makes a routine catch. “Look at Tommy fly to first! Go Tommy!” someone bellows, sounding like the crowd at a major

league park, and everyone laughs because yes, it’s only Little League—but that energy is priceless.



Today, the county's leagues run on a familiar rhythm. Registration opens in the winter months, practices begin as early as March, and Opening Day in April marks the moment when the community comes together. And when the season unfolds, you can hear it: the soft thump of a ball in a mitt, the pop of a fastball against a glove, the roar of a kid rounding first with the wind at his back. "And here's young Tommy Davis, bat in hand... the pitcher winds, the ball's released... line drive! Straight to center! Tommy's heading for second... safe! What a moment!" Meanwhile, a parent in the front row yells, "Run, Tommy, run!" just as Tommy slides safely, nearly colliding with his cheering younger brother. Everyone laughs, including the umpire, because little dramas make the day memorable. The games continue through late spring, with tournaments and playoffs stretching into summer, each inning carrying the laughter, effort, and pride of families and volunteers alike.

From a sandlot in Pennsylvania to fields across Rockland County and beyond, Little League Baseball has never lost its original purpose: teaching kids teamwork, discipline, and love for the game. And in Rockland, the tradition endures every spring—on the fields, in the dugouts, and with every pitch, swing, and catch. You can hear the announcer's voice in your mind, calling the plays with patience and warmth: "And here's the pitch... swung on and missed... the catcher throws to second... what a play! The crowd cheers, parents yell from the stands, a little sibling is waving frantically, and little hearts swell with pride. That's Little League in Rockland County, folks. Pure, unfiltered, alive, and maybe just a little bit noisy."

#### More Information: How to Join, Volunteer, or Donate

For families, volunteers, or local businesses wanting to get involved, here are the official league websites with registration, schedules, and donation info:

Clarkstown Little League: <https://www.clarkstown.gov/recreation/sports-leagues/>

Pearl River Little League: <https://www.prll.org/>

Nyack-Valley Cottage Little League: <https://www.nvccll.org/>

Haverstraw Little League: <https://www.haverstrawlittleleague.com/>

Rockland County Challenger Little League: <https://www.sportsengine.com/org/rockland-countychallenger-little-league>

#### 2026 Season Start & Key Dates (Rockland County)

League / Program

Season Start /

Opening Day

Notes

New City Little League

Saturday, April 11,  
2026

Opening Day Ceremonies start at 10:30 a.m. at Zukor

Park. ([newcityll.org](http://newcityll.org))

West Nyack Little  
League (Clarkstown)

Saturday, April 11,  
2026

Germonds Park ceremony at 9:00 a.m. per town rec  
schedule. ([rocklandtimes.com](http://rocklandtimes.com))

Nanuet Little League  
(Clarkstown)

Saturday, April 11,  
2026

Parade and opening ceremony at Lake Nanuet Park  
at 11:00 a.m. ([rocklandtimes.com](http://rocklandtimes.com))

Pearl River Little League  
Games begin

Tuesday, April 7,  
2026

Opening Day Ceremony on Sunday, April 19, 2026 at  
10:00 a.m. at Central Field. ([prll.org](http://prll.org))

League / Program

Season Start /

Opening Day

Notes

Nyack-Valley Cottage

Congers Little League

Early April  
practices

Regular season generally runs April 1–June 30, 2026  
with practices and games beginning in early April.

([nvccll.org](http://nvccll.org))

District/Metro Region

Tournaments

August 8–14, 2026

Little League tournament play leading into the World  
Series. ([littleleague.org](http://littleleague.org))

