

In Memory Wednesday May 7th. 1941 - Friday February 4th. 2022 -



Dave Lawrence

It is with deep sadness that we announce the passing of Dave Lawrence in Milton on February 4, 2022

Dave was a Bloordale Baseball volunteer for almost 30 years, and served as league president during a period of significant growth for our league. Dave's contribution to Bloordale paved the way for subsequent generations of youth baseball players. We continue to present the Dave Lawrence Volunteer of the Year trophy every year to volunteers who have similarly demonstrated outstanding commitment to our community.

As longtime friend and Bloordale Treasurer Brian Walsh noted, '*Dave Lawrence has touched so many people over his years at Bloordale Baseball with his dedication, hard work and good spirits. He leaves the world a better place and for those of us who knew him*'. Dave's contribution to Etobicoke baseball is wonderfully summarized in this 2010 article written after Dave received the Etobicoke Baseball Association Volunteer of Excellence award.

From Etobicoke baseball website:

“Many don’t even know who [Dave] is or what he looks like. But he has been working behind the scenes for you and me for nearly 30 years,” recounted Bloordale President Patrick McConnell from the meeting floor. “I could not even begin to count the hours he volunteers in our community each year.”

According to Lawrence, his volunteer run began circa 1983 when his eldest daughter Tracy began playing t-ball. That same year, Bloordale’s president Paul Marshall encouraged him to take a coaching position, a role Dave held over the next several years while following his younger daughter Meagan from t-ball to softball.

One of Dave’s early coaching mentors was Jim Horne of girls’ rep softball. “I’ll always remember Jim’s genuine kindness,” recalls Lawrence. “He is one of the finest guys I’ve known. He had great coaching knowledge. The kids loved playing for him, and he could get them to execute.” Perhaps the most enduring lesson Dave learned from Horne was the concept of having fun. And at no other time was this philosophy put to the test than when Dave fielded his infamous 0 – 12 girls’ softball team. Losing game after game, sometimes by the slimmest of margins, with that squad served to bring the players, coaches and parents closer together.

“I’ll never forget the banquet that year. We had 14 parents out for 12 kids, and every household gave me a bottle of wine. The gesture nearly brought me to tears.” And the next year that team won the pennant, and Dave, on that sweet high note, hung up his coach’s cap.

In 1986 Lawrence accepted his first executive position as Secretary of Bloordale Baseball. Soon after, he took on the role of Equipment Manager when his friend, the late Grant Jones (who had volunteered for at least 10 years), retired. “When Grant Jones passed away, Centennial Sports owner Bob Benderra helped us immensely with our equipment purchasing, the right quality and quantity, at the right pricing,” says Dave.

Throughout his various roles, Lawrence recruited players, convened, scheduled, umpired and campaigned for sponsors. And when Jim Kirk (no, not the captain of the USS Enterprise) resigned as President of Bloordale, Dave was elected in his place.

“Dave has done it all for the baseball community,” relates Patrick McConnell, “...whether patrolling the mall to hustle for sponsors during registration day, trying to boost the ranks of the ladies’ division with a wry smile and friendly cajoling of moms and older sisters, driving his car to diamond after diamond to load equipment boxes and change locks, scrounging for the best deal on baseball pants, or putting on a coach or umpire’s uniform, Dave has done it all at Bloordale.”

As President in the 1990’s, Lawrence is especially proud to say that Bloordale provided quality baseball to upwards of 900 kids from t-ball to bantam. And his job as a sales executive at Herbert A. Watts Ltd. allowed him ample time to promote the baseball organization’s many causes.

“I always enjoyed juggling all those balls in the air,” he recalls, “and when you’re running a league, you’re always thinking six months to a year in advance.” Some of that forward thinking meant lobbying Etobicoke Parks and Recreation to refurbish baseball diamonds with quality moonstone gravel to accommodate Bloordale’s burgeoning divisions, or booking appointments with dozens of area school principals to coordinate registration drives.

“I always promoted baseball by saying that all you need is a glove and, in house league, every kid gets a chance to play and have fun.” Part of that fun, for Lawrence, meant that rep players were encouraged to continue to play on their house teams.

“When you split up the house league and rep players, you end up draining the house league of many of its quality people, which I have stood against,” says Dave. And regardless of talent or success, if Lawrence found that people couldn’t get along in a sportsmanlike manner, he would not hesitate to relieve folks of their duties.

“I always took pride in doing my best to retain quality coaches. So much so, that I would phone players and parents after the season for feedback. You found out very quickly who your good coaches were,” recalls Dave.

Dave may not have known he was up for this award on his way into town today, just as many hard working volunteers often remain largely unknown and under-acknowledged. But perhaps that’s the way the truest hearts have always savoured it: like being surprised with 12 bottles of wine, and this year’s highest tribute from the Etobicoke Baseball Association, fittingly, going to Dave Lawrence. —Andrew Bradley