



Great Kills Little League Challenger kids get nothing but treats for Halloween

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Staten Island Advance Sports Desk



Staten Island Advance/Derek Alvez

Matthew Blasi takes a cut during the game.

GREAT KILLS — The ghosts and goblins were out in full force at the Great Kills Little League when the Challenger division held its annual Halloween baseball game and party. The baseball program for special needs children, which was sponsored by the South Shore Kiwanis this year, runs spring, summer and fall each year.

The fall season always ends with a Halloween celebration like no other. Instead of bobbing for apples, the 30 children enjoyed darting around the bases or trying to belt homers on the Staten Island Foundation's Field of Dreams.

They played wearing full costumes rather than their regular uniforms provided by the Kiwanis group in honor

of Alex Inerra, a community-minded member who passed away two years ago. The entourage of "pirates," "princesses," "mummies" and more, then retired to the club house for refreshments, music and a picture slideshow, pumpkin painting and trophies with families and volunteers.

"This is always a fun day for the kids," said Susan Adone, one of the league directors who has run the program with her husband, Don "Doc" Adone, since 2004. "They love showing off their costumes and seeing them this happy brings so much joy to us all."

While Susan was taking care of the party details, Doc was his entertaining self on the mound pitching the softer ball and cheering each batter on as they finally connected with the plastic bats and ran to the beeping bases that the children love to jump on and squeak.

It is no wonder that Doc, who offers spirited leadership from the opening pitch to the culminating team cheer, was selected as the Great Kills Little League's Manager of the Year.

With Doc were several volunteers including the St. Clare's Robotics team from Great Kills. The grammar school and high school team members serve as coaches and buddies to keep the batting lineups and fielders in order.

"I encourage all my students to come and help every year," said Mary Lee, a teacher and robotics coach at St. Clare's whose group also donated all the pumpkins and goodie bags. "Our team was actually involved in helping develop the turf field in 2005, and my teams continue the tradition of being buddies. Some kids like Michelle Pagano and Shannon and Michael McAloon have been coming for many years. I want my students to feel like they are making a difference, but with this program, I feel like the children we come to help are the ones who are making a bigger difference in our lives."



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Players from the Great Kills Little League Challenger Division pose with volunteers at the annual Halloween party.

Also on hand were "catcher," Clem Imperato, another veteran volunteer, and Gene Kennish, a photographer who donates his time to take pictures of the children and create a slideshow of pictures for the party and the families. Members of the South Shore Kiwanis (Steve Argentine and Sam Palazzollo) were also present as was Olivia Devoti, Miss Richmond County Outstanding Teen, who helped at the field and the party.

As the children walked away from the party with trophies and pumpkins in hand, they were already discussing the upcoming Christmas party (Breakfast with Santa) at the league and even the spring season.

"As much as these kids like to play and be together, they also like to party!" smiled Doc, as he headed off to coach his regular T-ball team back on the same field that afternoon. "You gotta love them!"

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