

Stars and Stripes Fun Run and Walk Wednesday

Get patriotic and fit during the 37th annual Stars and Stripes Fun Run and Walk this Wednesday, July 4.

Organized by the Rotary Club of McMinnville, the event is a 5K and it begins at 7:30 a.m.

Sign-ups will take place the morning of the event. According to event chair Jay Bragg, the race now includes a 1-miler for children.

"New this year will be the inclusion of a 1 Mile Kids Fun Run for children age 10 and under," Bragg said. "Participants must be registered and accompanied by a parent or guardian."

Along with the Rotary Club, the race is sponsored by Middle Tennessee Dr Pepper Bottling Company, First National Bank of Middle Tennessee, and Security Federal Savings Bank in conjunction with the city of McMinnville Parks and Recreation Department as part of the annual Fourth of July activities.

Registration begins at 6:30 a.m. at the intersection of Main Street and West Court Square with the Fun Run and Walk starting at 7:30 a.m. at the intersection of Main Street and East Court Square.

The race is slated to end at approximately 9 a.m.



Registration begins at 6:30 a.m. this morning for the 37th annual Stars and Stripes Fun Run and Walk.

Sports Spotlight

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Input from coaches is also heard. Suggestions and complaints are taken under advisement by the league.

"I'll have coaches say, 'This umpire has a low strike zone or that umpire isn't in the right position.' I try to make it a point to watch those umpires to evaluate," said Beard. "We're never 100 percent satisfied, and likely will never be. There's always a human factor."

One proposal many coaches registered was changing the hiring practices to open up the talent pool of officials. Many

seasoned officials are traditionally paid by the game in most sports, but the city league currently employs umpires at an hourly rate.

Parks and Recreation director Scott McCord admits it would be better if the league could off-load the hiring process.

"One of our biggest struggles is we have to hire all our umpires. Would we like to contract? Yes, we'd love to," said McCord. "But by law, if we tell them where and when, they have to be city employees."

McCord acknowledged for the last several years the league has looked

into hiring an assigner who would take charge of umpires.

As of yet, no alternative has presented itself that is preferable to the current method.

Left to do it themselves, Beard combs over applications in search of quality candidates for the job. Prior experience is always preferred.

"We try to find people who have prior experience who have played the game and have a working knowledge of the rules, if we can't find somebody who doesn't already have experience in umpiring already," said Beard.

Ron Stewart was a

longtime presence behind the plate during the days of the Warren County Youth Baseball and Softball Association. With 44 years of experience calling baseball and softball all over the Southeast, he believes selflessness is necessary for any good umpire.

"You have to understand the kids. You have to be out there for the kids - not the parents, not the coaches, and not for the money," said Stewart, a 14-year umpire and

commissioner for WCYBA. "We want to see kids develop and have fun. I always went to the dugout before the game and asked the kids why they were there."

"Some kid would say, 'To win.' Another would say, 'Mom and dad made me.' And every single time at least one kid would say, 'To have fun.' They got it. We have to be out here to have fun."

Stewart saw himself as an overseer, both of kids and of coaches.

"We're out there to teach the kids to behave in terms of the sports and to listen to their coaches," said Stewart. "And I always told coaches, 'If I don't think you're teaching the kids, I'll let you know.'"

The city plans to work diligently to improve the perception of its umpiring among the league coaches. It is atop the city list, according to McCord.

"The quality of umpires has always been our first priority."

Blueprint Baseball falls Sunday, wins Saturday

BY JAMES CLARK
Editor for the Southern Standard
(McMinnville, Tennessee)

It came down to the bottom of the eighth, but Blueprint Baseball couldn't pull out a victory Sunday against the Tennessee Twisters.

Blueprint lost 5-4 on an eighth-inning double in 17U baseball action.

Blueprint features four players from the Warren County High School baseball team.

Ethan Smith finished 2-for-5 with a run scored from his leadoff position. Smith will be entering his senior season for the Pioneers this year.

Jack Keele pitched 1.1 innings and didn't allow a run. He finished with a strikeout and a walk in throwing 24 pitches.

Blueprint Baseball racked up 12 hits. Defensively, Blueprint didn't commit an error.

The loss Sunday follows an 8-5 win over Franklin Elite on Saturday. Blueprint scored four runs in the fifth inning to propel itself to victory.

Smith finished with four walks and a run scored for Blueprint.

Rising WCHS senior Will Cantrell went 1-for-2 with a walk and two runs scored. Brooks Helton, also a rising senior, finished 1-for-3 with an RBI.

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Soccer player's father kidnapped

NIZHNY NOVGOROD, RUSSIA (AP) — Nigeria captain John Obi Mikel says he was told four hours before his country's crucial World Cup game against Argentina that his father had been kidnapped back home and would be shot if the player reported it to authorities.

Mikel said in a statement on Tuesday from his management company that he hid the news from his teammates and coaches in Russia and "had to shut it out of my head and go and represent my country first."

Nigeria lost last week's game in St. Petersburg 2-1 after a late Argentina goal and was eliminated from the World Cup.

Mikel's father, Michael Mikel, was freed by Nigerian police in the southeastern state of Enugu on Monday.

John Obi Mikel says he learned of his dad's kidnapping through a telephone call just before the Argentina game, but didn't tell anyone

because he didn't want it to be a distraction for the team.

It's the second time his father has been kidnapped in Nigeria.

MOSCOW (AP) — The lack of a U.S. team caused a big viewership drop for World Cup telecasts.

The 48 group stage telecasts on Fox and FS1 averaged 2.06 million viewers, according to Nielsen Media Research. That is down 42 percent from the 3.54 million average on ESPN, ESPN2 and ABC four years ago and down 15 percent from the 2.42 million average on ESPN, ESPN2 and ABC eight years ago.

Excluding games involving the U.S. team in previous World Cups, the average declined 28 percent from the 2014 tournament in Brazil and was up 1 percent from the 2010 tournament in South Africa.

Ratings include only TV viewers and not those who viewed digital streams.

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