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Rockville to get baseball team

Feb. 9, 2005
 Noelle Barton

Baseball is coming to Rockville. The city will be home to a team in the Cal Ripken Sr. Collegiate Baseball League, which is launching its first 40-game season in June.

The wooden-bat league will bring together some of Maryland's top amateur baseball teams and include the creation of the Rockville Express this year, Eileen McGuckian, a member of Rockville Community Baseball Inc., the nonprofit sponsoring the Express, told the City Council Monday evening.

The Express will play at Montgomery College's Knights Field in Rockville and compete against Youse's Maryland Orioles, the Silver Spring-Takoma Thunderbolts, the Maryland Redbirds, the College Park Maryland Bombers and the Bethesda Big Train. Its first home game will be June 11.

McGuckian said Rockville's team already has 21 of its 27 players, who will live with host families in the city during the two-month season. The team is still looking for host families, she said.

The league is open to college-eligible players age 22 years and

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younger.

The Express will be managed by the Rev. Jim Adams, retired from Rockville Presbyterian Church, with John Pflieger Jr., a past president of the Rockville Chamber of Commerce, in the role of president of the club.

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Tom Shaffer, baseball coach at Montgomery College, will be the head coach, with Bill Sizemore on staff as pitching coach.

The team Web site will be www.rockvilleexpress.org, although at press time Tuesday that address did not call up the team's homepage.

McGuckian said those interested in hosting a player or volunteering to help out with the team and its operations may call Pflieger at 301-279-6780.

Honoring Mattie

Rockville City Council whole-heartedly endorsed a request from residents of King Farm this week to name a park in the development after one of its own former residents, poet and peacemaker Matthew "Mattie" J.T. Stepanek.

Stepanek, who died at age 13 last June from complications relating to a rare form of muscular dystrophy, lived in King Farm with his mother, Jennifer.

King Farm resident Bob Balkam told the council Monday evening that Stepanek loved King Farm.

Moving to the community after living in a basement apartment, Stepanek marveled at the windows in his new home and would call to people from them to chat. He spent time in King Farm's parks and open spaces, playing with kids or traveling to the Giant to rent videos, Balkam said.

While Balkam and King Farm Citizens Assembly President Andy Gordon suggested naming the 28-acre park after Stepanek, Mayor Larry Giammo said there might be other, more intimate spaces within King Farm that would be more appropriate to name for the boy.

The city's Recreation and Parks Advisory Board will likely discuss the issue at its Feb. 24 meeting, and the issue could return to the City Council in early March for approval.

Town Center update

The City Council on Monday approved spending nearly \$800,000 on a contract with a Boston firm for "environmental graphics," such as signs, quotations etched in the sidewalk and other decorative features in the Town Square project.

The city leaders reduced an earlier plan that would have had the city spending more than \$1 million on the elements.

Mayor Larry Giammo voted against the expenditure, saying he opposed spending \$200,000 on a gateway feature into the Town Square project of two tall pylons that would be decorated with greenery in the summer and illuminated in the winter. Other members of the council liked that feature.

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