



Mayor's Message

March/April 2023

We're slowly but surely getting close to enjoying spring in New Jersey and residents of Oceanport are ready to experience all that our town offers in the way of outdoor activities. This spring is an especially auspicious one for enjoying the great outdoors because Maria Gatta Park and Blackberry Bay Park have more to offer than ever before. As most of you have probably noticed, play on the new artificial turf fields at Maria Gatta Park has already begun and kids of all ages from Oceanport (maybe even Buddy Brocklebank) have been on the fields playing football, lacrosse, soccer and field hockey on pretty much every day the weather was dry in January and February. These fields are now fully operational, fully equipped and are soon to be fully utilized. The investment the Borough made in converting these fields from an unsafe lunar landscape into state of the art turf fields was well worth it.

As noted in a previous missive, the Borough spent over \$3,000,000.00 to convert this site and the annual debt service is approximately \$220,000.00. Aside from the fact that our children needed playable fields, our council members were convinced that "if we build it, they will come" and the fields would pay for themselves. Well, we built it, and they are coming. Indeed, for the Spring season, the Borough is assured of rental revenue in the amount of approximately \$95,000.00. That's just for those four months, folks. The projected revenue derived from the rental of the fields at Maria Gatta Park will pay the annual debt serve AND pay for additional phases at the park or improvements to other parks in Oceanport. Councilmen Bill Deerin, Byan Keeshen and Mike O'Brien and Oceanport's Recreation Committee have done the Borough proud and their foresight and planning will benefit the residents of Oceanport for years to come.

Over at Blackberry Bay Park, five new pickleball courts have been installed at the old roller hockey rink and the Borough will be implementing a revised court reservation system for our tennis and pickleball courts to ensure that all the courts are being utilized to their fullest. The pickleball courts will be undergoing further improvements during the spring and summer, but they are ready for play. Our Recreation Committee and members of the Borough Council have also moved forward with preliminary plans designed to facilitate greater use of the dock at Blackberry Bay by making it more accessible to crew teams, kayakers and paddleboarders. Indeed, this may be the first step in resolving what will be done with the pool site. Given the pool area's location, the idea is to see if we can coordinate a redevelopment of the site that allows for greater use of the waterfront at Blackberry Bay Park by our residents. More to come on this topic in the very near future.

The Community Center Park has had a complete upgrade and the Shore Regional Little League will be celebrating Opening Day on April 22nd. This year's Opening Day is especially notable, however, because the baseball field is going to be dedicated to Oceanport's Mike MacStudy in recognition of all the volunteer time Mike put into our recreation baseball and softball programs from 1998 through 2020 as a coach and as President of the Oceanport Baseball Association. Mike coached scores of kids in baseball and softball and nobody spent more time than Mike MacStudy making sure the Community Center field (and the fields at Blackberry Bay and Wolf Hill) was ready and safe for the kids of Oceanport to play on. Mike coached all four of his kids (Michael, Mark, Maddie and Martin) from tee ball forward and, as



evidence of his complete love of baseball and Oceanport and his wife Molly's desire to keep him occupied and out of the house, he remained as President of the Oceanport Baseball Association five years after his youngest child graduated from the program. When Mike MacStudy throws out the first pitch on Opening Day, I am very happy to say that he will be on the mound at "Mike MacStudy Field," and I would hope that the sidelines are filled with friends, family and a good number of kids he coached over the years. This will be one of those small town days that everyone should experience.

The dedication of Mike MacStudy Field will be one of those "feel good days" that makes Oceanport a great place to live. Over the past few months, however, Oceanport has lost some people who made EVERY day a feel good day in Oceanport. We said goodbye to everybody's favorite bus driver and an absolutely fantastic woman, Barbara Bell, in January. Mrs. Bell had a profound, positive impact on all the kids who got to ride on the bus with her. Her smile was infectious and she was an important part of a LOT of people's lives in Oceanport. Karen Long, a long time resident and a very frequent and very vocal attendee at Borough Council meetings passed away in December. We also lost Tommy George, another individual whose smile, positive vibes and overall congeniality made everybody's day that much better. Tommy was a spectacular athlete and an even better person. Our hearts go out to the Bell, Long and George families. On behalf of the people of Oceanport, please know that Barbara, Karen and Tommy were part of the fabric of our community and that they will be greatly missed.