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OBGC honors its past while looking to the future

by **Judith Hruz**
Editor

Sports is about skill, hard work and determination, and strong leadership.

It also involves a little bit of risk.

It is the risk that cultivates the work ethic, that tickles the itch for a challenge, that builds character.

The Olney Boys and Girls Club (OBGC) has built a stellar reputation in the five decades it has offered quality sports programs for young athletes.

Few people have not at least heard of OBGC.

Soon, more and more people will be able to take part in OBGC programs and activities as the organization challenges itself to branch out and grow its brand.

"We're taking the park to the next level," said Brad Scott, executive and athletic director of Olney Boys and Girls Club.

"There is so much opportunity here and people are so excited about it," said Scott, who took over the executive director role in July 2021 after at least six years of managing sports programs for the organization.

Scott emphasized, however, that youth sports will always be the organization's priority.

"It's what we're about at the end of the day," he said.

For years, OBGC has offered the popular Field of Screams Halloween "haunted house" on its park, Freeman Fields, at 4501 Olney-Laytonsville Road.

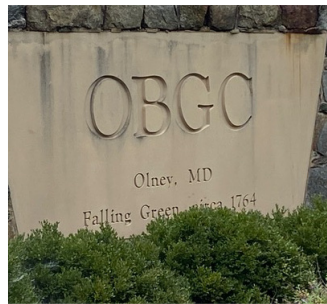
This year for the first time, OBGC will offer Winter City Lights, welcoming visitors to walk through one and a half miles of winter- and holiday-decorated attractions.

An ice-skating rink could be part of the winter festivities next year.

The organization is also "kicking around ideas" for an event of some type to celebrate Independence Day.

This past summer, the park was the home field for the new Cropdusters, a new addition to the Cal Ripken Collegiate Baseball League.

Tony Korson, the founder and president of the team, approached Scott about a year and a half before the season began looking for support for a new team.



Judith Hruz/The Greater Olney News

Brad Scott, executive director of the Olney Boys and Girls Club, and his Board of Directors have plans to expand the programs and services of the youth sports organization.

Scott said it was easy to agree. Having the collegiate baseball team on OBGC's campus would provide inspiration for OBGC's players and draw patrons to the facility.

"We can feel the sense of excitement building in community," Scott said just before the season began in June.

He said OBGC has top baseball teams on the youth level, so those young athletes being able to see excellent collegiate athletes will enhance their skills.

"It's a win for everyone," he said.

Scott and Korson approached Sen. Craig Zucker (D-Dist. 14) about funding for a stadium for the Cropdusters, which could be used for OBGC teams when the collegiate team is not using the facility.

Zucker and the District 14 lawmakers brought home \$1 million from Annapolis for OBGC to build a new stadium with dugouts, seating, lights and other field improvements.

"We are extremely excited about this amazing project and the positive impact it will have for our entire community," Zucker said in the spring.

The stadium is expected to be completed by next summer, Scott said.

OBGC also received \$1.5 million to build a multi-sport performance center on the campus.

The organization is hoping to acquire land adjacent to Freeman Fields that is owned by Montgomery County Parks to use for the performance

center.

MedStar Montgomery Medical Center will partner with OBGC on that project.

"The Board of Directors at OBGC are extremely excited about these two projects," board chair Jeremy Colville said about the stadium and performance center.

"The baseball stadium not only gives the Cropdusters a home field where our community can watch college-aged student athletes play an exciting brand of baseball, but it will also allow OBGC to enhance its baseball program and reach within the community," he said. "We will be able to host more events, especially when we get the stadium lights installed and the additional pavilion constructed. It is also the perfect segue into our vision to construct a Miracle League T-ball field so those children with special needs will be able to play just like any other kid and enjoy all that sports have to offer."

Colville said the sports performance center is an exciting project.

"Though in its initial stages, the collaboration between OBGC and MedStar will bring this project to life," he said. "We are excited to work with T.J. Senker, Dr. Carter Mitchell and the rest of the MedStar team to design and construct a facility that will allow OBGC to expand its scope of services and sports to the community. We will be able to grow the girls field hockey

programs, we will be able to finally start a volleyball program and indoor boys and girls lacrosse and soccer programs, as well as grow the boys and girls basketball programs.

"MedStar will be able to provide their scope of services that will include injury prevention programs, diet and nutrition programs and rehabilitation services right on campus. The benefit to the community and the region will be enormous."

Other programs and services, including partnering with other businesses on projects, are not out of question.

Scott is treasurer of the Olney Chamber of Commerce and hopes to continue reaching out to the community to make OBGC's Freeman Fields a destination for everyone.

"Most of Olney has to go out of the area for activities," Scott said. "We want to be a destination spot."

Scott applauded his board and staff for helping to make all of these plans happen and Colville agreed.

"Our Board of Director's is a phenomenal group of people who care deeply for the community and the children and families we serve," he said.

But Colville said none of it would be possible without Scott.

"He's the force behind making the vision a reality," he said.