

Principal goes to bat at camp

By Diane Gale
staff writer

For most educators, summer break marks a vacation from students, but for Carl Childress, Scotch Elementary School principal, the warm breezes bring the baseball season and the training of youngsters.

As soon as school finishes, Childress' baseball clinic begins. Then the season starts, tournaments follow in August, and the school bell rings the next month. He rarely gets a break.

"I don't regret a minute of it," said Childress, a West Bloomfield resident.

He manages high school ballplayers in the North Farmington/West Bloomfield summer league. Before the season he directs a baseball camp for younger athletes, which begins in July, sponsored by the West Bloomfield Community Education program.

This year, Childress also will lead a baseball clinic for parents and coaches who want to learn more about teaching baseball.

The clinic, coordinated by community education,

'Everyone loses, and those who handle losing well aren't stressful, so they're more likely to win.'

—Carl Childress
principal and coach

take place at 7 p.m. Thursdays, beginning March 1, at the Community Education Center, on Maple between Orchard Lake Road and Middlebelt. It's a five-week program that costs \$20. For more information, call 851-7800.

Childress will teach the techniques of hitting, fielding, throwing, conditioning, coaching and practice organization.

CHILDRESS PASSES on a positive attitude to his teams, as well as adults and young ballplayers in the baseball clinics.

"Everyone loses, and those who handle losing well aren't stressful, so they're more likely to win," Childress said.

"If they go out there assured of their ability, then they'll do the best they can."

Childress and Fred Goldberg, athletic director for Southfield High School, apply his philosophy to children 9 and older who take part in the camp. They try to instill an attitude the kids can apply on the baseball diamond, as well in everyday life.

"I CAN TELL kids all day long what they can't do, and it won't help them a bit," said Childress, who has been in the teaching profession since 1962.

"Doing what they can do is what's important. It's throwing a ball today, signing a contract tomorrow and saving someone's life the next day."

Childress and Goldberg employ star high school athletes from the summer-league team to pass along pointers to youngsters participating in the baseball camp. These older athletes receive \$5 per hour.

Childress' son, Zac, and Goldberg's son, Richard, are among five high school players who help out.

The list reads like a "Who's Who" of local high school sports.

Todd Krumm, who earned a sports scholarship at Michigan State University, Bobby Butler and Eric Kahkonen also will work at the camp.

"IT'S NICE to have these kids see the older boys who are so well-mannered," Childress said. "It's refreshing for the kids to have a young man to look up to."

The future athletes also learn running, batting, throwing and catching styles.

The young players are taught specific techniques, like crouching, which is used after players catch the ball and position their body to efficiently throw to a base.

The younger the children are, the easier it is to teach them new concepts — and the less likely it is they've already developed bad habits that must be broken, Childress said.

Childress and Goldberg have averaged 150 participants annually during the three years they've run the clinic. The youngsters come from communities throughout Oakland County and sign up for two-week 800 sessions.

Working with students on a professional level at school doesn't hinder coaching baseball players. In fact, the two augment each other, Childress said.

"Our education background has taught us how to take apart what we know about baseball and give it back to the players. I've gained a great deal in that I'm in a place that leaves me not only as a principal, but as a human being."

"I respect me as a person. Since I know some of the kids who play with us better, it gives me an insight on how to help them and treat them as they should be treated."

BASEBALL HAS been a part of Childress' life since his youth. He earned an athletic scholarship to attend college. In 1959 he tried out for the Detroit Tigers but didn't make it. Now, he's doing his best to pass a legacy on to his son.

His coaching career began 10 years ago when Zac was 8. Childress "saw that his T-ball team needed better coaching," Childress decided he could do a better job and has coached each team his son has played on in the North Farmington-West Bloomfield league.

Two Childress-coached teams have won Babe Ruth state championships and one team won a Sandy Koufax title. Each year, his teams have qualified for the state playoffs.

"THIS IS THE greatest area for baseball in the state of Michigan. It's phenomenal the talent that we have."

"I have a pronounced respect for young people because they have a quality about them, and I try to treat them that way. I accept their suggestions and deal with it. That's how you learn to deal with anyone."

Childress said he would rather watch youth baseball than major league teams. That attitude comes in handy because he spends the summer watching, coaching and being with the young athletes.

His trips are determined by where the particular baseball tournaments happened to be held that year.

"Every trip I've been on has a motel with a baseball diamond next to it."

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Westland's March Special Events

RECREATION & VACATION SHOW
Turn your day dreams into reality or start thinking of that special vacation and the boat or van that would make it perfect.
Mon - Sun, March 5 - 11
Throughout Mall

WESTLAND'S FASHION STATEMENT
Westland's monthly fashion show features members of the League of Women's Voters. They will be modeling spring fashions highlighting patterns - A Safari Parade.
Wed, March 14
11 a.m. & 7 p.m., Central Court

BETT'S FINE ARTS SHOW
Show consists of hanging art done in oils, pastels, watercolor, mixed media and more.
Thur - Sun, March 15 - 18
Throughout Mall

LIFESTYLE SEMINAR
This month features "Expression in Color". Our guest speaker is Arlene Morgan, who will explain the importance of color in your wardrobe based on your skin tone. Color makes a difference. A complimentary continental breakfast will be served. The seminar is free but reservations are necessary - call 425-5001.
Tues, March 20, 10 a.m. - 11 a.m.
Auditorium located in the Emporium

ANTIQUE SHOW
The Bunch Antique Show will feature quality merchandise from jewelry to furniture.
Thur - Sun, March 22 - 25
Throughout Mall

MIMES
HAP will have two professional Mimes performing skits on health care. Information will be available after the performance.
Sat, March 31
1, 3, & 4 p.m., West Court

SNEAK PREVIEW OF APRIL EVENTS
From Night Fashion Show, Apr. 4
Accent on Homes, Apr. 5 - 8
Easter Display, Apr. 8 - 21
Health-O-Rama, Apr. 9 - 12
Fashion Show, Apr. 11
Money Management Seminar, Apr. 17
Children's Art Contest, Apr. 23 - 28
Actor's Trunk - Snow White, Apr. 24 - 28
Budweiser Olympic Art Exhibit, Apr. 30 - May 5

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