

Klamath summer league Baseball

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The kids of Klamath are out on the baseball field as the Klamath Summer League gets into full swing.

The summer league is new this year as Ryan Ray, Yurok Councilman for the Requa District, has been able to get together enough gear and interest to kick off the new venture.

“I’ve been stockpiling the gear for about two years,” Ray said. “We have uniforms here and we have all of the equipment that we can thanks to the Little League in Crescent City. They were getting ready to buy all new gear so they let us come up and fill a truck up with the old stuff. That helped out. This also really wouldn’t be possible without the teams that we had come down to play in the Kids at Heart Tournament, and the eight local businesses that sponsored that tournament for us.”

Ray said the money raised by the annual Kids at Heart Tournament this year went towards creating the Klamath Summer League, and helps fill a need

“Sports is something our community has been missing for a long time and weather it’s on a baseball field or a basketball court this is where life long friendships are made,” Ray said.

“We are just trying to give the kids down here the same opportunities that everyone else has when it comes to sports.”

Currently the league holds games two days per week, with tee ball on Tuesdays at 6:30 p.m. for kids 4 to 6 years old, with a few older kids who are new to the sport mixed in.

“A lot of these kids haven’t played the game before, so right now we are just kind of teaching them the fundamentals of baseball, just to see the kids love the sport,” Ray said. “A lot of them didn’t really want to get out there, but once they did they didn’t want to stop.”

On Thursday’s kids 10 to 12 years old come out to the diamond in Klamath for their turn.

“Right now I believe that I have about 34 kids signed up between the two,” Ray said. “Right now the football season is starting up, and you have soccer going on. This gives the kids another option.”

Ray said that eventually the league may start adding more days to their schedule as interest for the kids continues to grow.

Without enough players for true teams throughout the summer, all the players who show up on any given day are split up for a semi-structured pick up game each week.

With so many new players, Ray said the coaches are mostly focused on the basics with the kids, especially the younger group.

“I try not to put too much into trying to correct their swing, or trying to correct their throw — just swing hard and throw hard and that will work,” Ray said. “I try not to confuse them too much. We are teaching them the basics of baseball, like where is first and where is second.”

Although the Klamath Summer League is still new, organizers are hoping to see it continue to grow in the future. Ray said the Yurok Tribe is currently in the process of applying for grant funding to improve the field in Klamath.

“Hopefully we get funded to give these kids the opportunity to play on a real field,” he said.

Ray said he is also hoping to generate enough interest and participation to form a tee ball team that would be able to practice in Klamath, then travel up to Crescent City to play in the Del Norte Little League.

“The Rec Department has been working with us for the last few years and it has been going pretty great,” Ray said. “We have a little community down here but I would say 80 percent of them play sports. You can target a lot of kids through sports.

“There is a lot of talent down here in Klamath,” he said. “We want to find that talent and hopefully we can teach them some things that will carry them on through high school and through college.”