



Homewood Rotary and its foundation are making a difference.

Join us for our meetings in person at Tuscan Gardens (or via zoom) each Wednesday. If you'd like to inquire about joining our club and giving back to your local community contact Mary Hollie via e-mail at mhollie@glenwoodacademy.org



Homewood Baseball Academy expects to start training facility

BY ANGELA DENK
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Local ball players rejoice: spring training is closer to beginning.

On Jan. 13, the Homewood Planning and Zoning Commission voted unanimously to recommend a special use permit to Crete resident Karl Hearn to open Homewood Baseball Academy, a 3,000-square-foot indoor baseball training facility, in the business strip behind Home Depot.

The Homewood village board was expected to approve the business at its Jan. 25 meeting.

Located at 17829 Bretz Drive, the facility has three individual cages and staff instructors who focus on batting, pitching and fielding.

"Growing up, I didn't have a lot of places to play," Hearn said when he addressed commission members, "so I'm hoping to give that to kids now."

Along with Hearn, who played baseball as a student at Homewood-Flossmoor High School, the business is staffed by two to three other employees. Coaches and parents

will be welcome to accompany their players and instruct them as well. Hearn said his hope is for local athletes from age 5 through college to use the batting cages as a place to supplement their training year-round.

Homewood Baseball Academy will be open seven days a week by appointment, with hours beginning as early as 8 a.m. and ending by 9 p.m. to allow working parents and students opportunities to schedule time in the cages.

Although the business will operate independently of the Homewood Baseball and Softball organization, Hearn said his children have participated in the program, and he hopes for collaboration between the two entities.

Hearn said the grand opening is tentatively scheduled for the second week in February, and he hopes to be able to run introductory "camp" days to introduce local athletes to the academy. The business currently operates a Facebook page and an Instagram account where details on the opening will be announced. Interested parties can also call 708-914-4430 for information on rates and scheduling.

Despite pandemic, Lions Club pool numbers were good

BY MARILYN THOMAS
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In 2020, the Homewood-Flossmoor Park District didn't open the Lions Club pool for the summer season due to the COVID-19 pandemic. When the pool did reopen in summer 2021, the turnout was good.

At the Jan. 4 park board meeting, commissioners heard from Amanda Gaus, recreation supervisor, who said although the pool, at 1041 Ridge Road in Homewood, was open for only 63 days, it was "another successful and safe summer." The pool was open June 5 through Aug. 22. It was forced to close seven days due to weather conditions and had 14 days of restricted hours due to weather conditions.

Gaus reported "a total of 1,395 memberships were sold for the 2021 season, which was right in line with the 2019 season." She reported revenue of \$71,635 for 2021, and that the busiest attendance hours were between 2 and 4 p.m.

The park board changed its pay structure to \$50 individual resident passes for the season from its previous varied pricing based on family enrollment. Swimmers could also pay \$10 for day-of attendance.

The park board did offer a 10% discount to anyone who took swim lessons or aero-

bics classes. The staff offered swim lessons to 338 swimmers, but was forced to reduce the number of classes due to staffing shortages.

"Due to Illinois Department of Public Health mitigations and staffing demands, pool parties and private rentals were eliminated," Gaus said.

One suggestion Gaus presented for the 2022 season is staffing changes.

"Staffing was a significant challenge during the 2021 pool season. Pool hours were shortened due to a lifeguard shortage. Additionally, with minimum wage rising and with competition from all industries with employee shortages, staying competitive with an increase hourly rate for a lifeguard is needed," Gaus wrote. "With many part-time employees of the park district moving to a \$14 per hour wage, a recommendation of \$15.50 per hour for lifeguards during the 2022 pool season would help to secure staff who are required to have a certification to work as a guard."

Another suggestion in Gaus' report was keeping pool hours consistent with 2021 "while reintroducing the use of the water slide, daytime pool rentals during open swim and adding additional swim lessons during weekday morning, evening and weekends."



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