

On the ground in D.C., Maryland and Virginia

# Little League returns to Ward 1

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Banneker City Little League officially opens Sept. 11. (Photo: courtesy BCLL)

It's been about ten years since a real Little League baseball game took place in D.C.'s Ward 1, but that's all about to change.

The brand new [Banneker City Little League](#) held its first official practice Saturday at the Banneker baseball diamond near Howard University. The league is the brainchild of IT consultant Supreme Aquil, who had grown tired of coaching his 8-year-old son in the only far-flung leagues available to him, whether in the Georgetown-based Northwest Washington Little League or other leagues out in Prince George's County.

"We needed something closer to home," says Ward 1 resident and Howard alumnus Aquil. "It didn't make any sense that our kids weren't out on those (Ward 1) diamonds playing ball. They're playing everything else, football, soccer."

There are of course a large number of youth baseball programs offered by D.C.'s Department of Parks and Recreation, but those aren't the same thing as a proper Little League. Kids can't play against other Little League International-sanctioned teams, and can't enter into the league's regional or national all-star competitions.

The Banneker City league came about in a remarkably short period of time. An initial meeting of interested parents, sponsors and volunteers took place on June 2, and now Banneker is getting ready for opening day of its fall league on Sept. 11. Aquil hopes to field two T-ball teams made up of 5 and 6-year-olds, along with one AA machine-pitch team of 7 and 8-year-olds, to start, and then grow the league as seasons progress.

"A lot of the kids are first time players, and for some of them, this is their first time playing organized sports," say Aquil. "We'll get the young ones involved and we'll bring them along and go from there."

For Jean Homza, the 9:30 Club manager and community liaison who was one of the first to step forward to offer to sponsor the league and serve on its board, bringing Little League back to Ward 1 just made sense. "We've always wanted to sponsor a Little League team," Homza says. Plus, she admits, "we're all-ages, we want these kids coming to the 9:30 Club." Homza also has a more personal reason these days: Her niece recently moved to D.C., "so now I've got this 8-year-old in my life."

Thanks to sponsors like the 9:30 Club, Congressional Bank, Cooperative Solutions and Ben's Chili Bowl, Banneker City is able to offer this fall's inaugural league for free, and registration fees will only be about \$50 for the spring version, Aquil says.

It's also not too late to register for Banneker City's fall league. Aquil is still hoping to recruit three or four more players for the T-ball teams, and a couple more for the AA team. Find out more about the league [here](#).