

20 QUESTIONS

neighbors in need through this annual event. Big Train fans donated literally tons of baseball equipment to Manny Mota's Campos de Sueno (Field of Dreams) in the Dominican Republic.

Montgomery County is the special place it is today because of our wonderful nonprofit organizations. Each season, the Big Train showcases about four dozen local nonprofits. Each group is given 100 free tickets, provided a table at the ballpark entrance, and an opportunity to pitch their group to



the fans just before throwing out a first pitch before the game. For the last decade, our Big Train Nonprofits of the Night program has been supported by the Jim and Carol Trawick Foundation. From our very first season, the Big Train has donated family passes to local schools and community groups to support their fundraising. Homer and Bunt attend community events and Miracle League games and support the county's Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service each January and Community Service Week each October.

19. What is the connection between the Big Train and BCC Baseball?

If there had not been a BCC Baseball, there would not have been a Bethesda Big Train. That was my message every year when I would introduce BCC Baseball founder Denise Gorham to throw out a first pitch at BCC Baseball night at Povich Field. The conventional wisdom was that summer college baseball could not be successful in a busy place like Bethesda with all the entertainment options we have here. Summer college baseball tends to thrive in places like Chatham, MA, Edenton, NC and New Market, VA. Suburban Washington, DC was an unlikely place for summer college baseball to succeed. While I would warn our founding members and supporters about this, I told them that I thought we could make it work here because of the strong youth baseball program we had in BCC Baseball. The families of BCC Baseball were the market that gave us the confidence to defy conventional wisdom.



After 13 seasons, in May of 2012, our founders officially dissolved the Bethesda Community Base Ball Club and turned the assets over to BCC Baseball. After one international economic meltdown and five seasons of trying to lead the organization while holding a more than full-time job as Montgomery County Executive Ike Leggett's director of community partnerships, it was time for me to hand the Big Train over to an organization with the capacity to sustain it for decades to come. BCC Baseball was the obvious choice.

A note from Big Train founder Bruce Adams: I want to express my special appreciation to Bill Hickman. As our volunteer coordinator starting in our third season in 2001, Bill helped establish our Big Train culture of service. As our statistician keeping track of Big Train records and our Big Train alumni in professional baseball, Bill has been our keeper of memories. For this piece, Bill was indispensable. He is responsible for all the fun facts. I alone am responsible for any errors. Please email me at bruce@greaterwash.org with any corrections. If you have memories and/or photos of Cabin John Regional Park and especially Field #1 from the 1960s or 70s, please share them with me so I can share them with our Big Train fans.

BCC Baseball was founded by Denise Gorham in 1993 to give local youth an opportunity to play baseball at all levels and learn the value of sportsmanship. The soul of the organization is its recreational league where friends, neighbors, and classmates play together on teams coached and managed by parent volunteers. In addition to the 2,500 recreational players, BCC Baseball has 24 select teams, six travel teams, three high school showcase teams, and two collegiate teams. BCC Baseball shares the Big Train's commitment to improve youth fields. BCC Baseball has invested in excess of \$3 million in maintaining more than twenty school and parks fields. For more information about BCC Baseball, go to www.bccbaseball.com.

20. How can we get involved with the Big Train?

I think we struck a cord here right from the start. I still remember the young fan in that first season in 1999 with a prized foul ball in hand telling me excitedly: "This was the best day of my whole life." He's probably 30 years old now. I hope he still loves the game and remembers fondly his days at Povich Field. Maybe he has already brought his child or soon will to a Big Train game. Another fan told co-founder John Ourisman that first summer: "When I'm here at a Big Train game, I feel like I live in a small town." A father of one of the players on the inaugural team told me: "Mark Twain said every boy is entitled to a great summer. And, now, my boy has had his." On July 4, 2006, Marc Fisher of *The Washington Post* wrote a spectacularly inspiring piece that called Big Train baseball at Povich Field "the ultimate small-town fantasy."

So, I know you are asking, "how can I help?" Spread the word. We don't have a budget for publicity. Word of mouth is how people learn about our community jewel. Bring your friends. Join our email list. Buy a season pass. Become a part of Povich Field by buying a seat plaque to show your support of Big Train or honor a coach or parent or child. Look for Anne or Emily at the ballpark, and ask them about being a host family. Join our Booster Club. If you want to get involved, contact us at faninfo@bigtrain.org.

Big Train baseball was possible only because so many people stepped up and volunteered their time, talent, and treasure. Since our inaugural season in 1999, under the leadership of Bill Hickman who served as our volunteer coordinator from 2001 to 2011, more than one thousand volunteers have helped make Big Train baseball such a special experience for our fans. Many of our young volunteers received their Student Service Learning (SSL) hours for their work at Povich Field. I remember John Ourisman saying in the early years, "If the adults walked away, the middle-schoolers would run this place." Eighty-eight of these volunteers are included on the John Ourisman Big Train Volunteer Honor Roll in recognition of five or more years of volunteer service. Another 69 supporters have received the Randy Schools Big Train Outstanding Service Awards in recognition of extraordinary contributions to our Big Train community. The outstanding service award is named in honor of the remarkable Randy Schools who chaired our Big Train Booster Club since the inaugural season.



Growing up at Povich Field. Luke Schauer celebrating his fifth birthday in 2007 and pitching for the WCAC champion St. John's Cadets in 2018.