



Township of Belleville *New Jersey*

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Soaring Spirits, Heavy Hearts as Belleville Gathers to Celebrate Youth Sports

BELLEVILLE, NJ – April 18, 2023 – For the residents of Belleville, Saturday morning was a time to celebrate the young athletes of our township and honor a beloved member of our community who was committed to caring for them.

There were soaring spirits and heavy hearts as Belleville came together for three signature events, all in one day.

The festivities started as Mayor Michael Melham and members of the Township Council were joined by an estimated 150 residents to cut the ceremonial ribbon on the new track at the Municipal Stadium Complex on Passaic Avenue.

The new eight-lane competitive track has been in the works for many years; it is part of a \$5.5 million project to enhance and enlarge the athletic facilities in the township.

The blue track is resplendent with its distinctive gold lane stripping to mark the colors of Belleville High School. It didn't take long for eager residents of all ages to give it a try.

"This new track will not only allow the high school track teams to host major meets, but it will serve as a valuable resource for Belleville residents who want to get out and get their exercise on a professional-grade track," Melham said.

Later, Belleville marked a beloved annual rite of spring.

The familiar sound of bat meeting ball filled the air as the Belleville Recreation Baseball and Softball programs celebrated their opening days.

The young players were announced, and all those coaches, managers and parents who volunteer to help run the program were recognized for their invaluable help.

In between the two events, Belleville paid tribute to a man who did so much for the recreation programs and the young athletes they serve.

A small road that divides the sports complex was named in honor of the late Danny Rafferty, a familiar face in the town's athletic community who passed away in January.

“Danny epitomized civic pride through his dedication to the young athletes of this town,” Melham said. “His legacy lives on, especially on days like this when we cut the ribbon on a track facility and launch the new baseball and softball seasons.”

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