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World Series super fan says he wouldn't miss it!

For more than a decade, Norm Ricchiuti has scheduled his vacation from the U.S. Postal Service Bulk Mail Center in Allen Park so he could watch as many games as possible at the Junior League World Series.

To Ricchiuti, a lifelong Taylor resident, the tournament for the world's best teams of 13- and 14-year-old players represents everything that is right with baseball.

"Baseball at this level really appeals to me," Ricchiuti said. "The youthful enthusiasm and energy displayed on that field makes it a great event in August. This is baseball played at the highest level, distancing itself from all the talk of money you hear in other areas of sports – and I like that."

Ricchiuti is the son of the late Armando Ricchiuti, a native of Italy who owned Herman's Shoe Repair on Goddard Road until his death in 1983. Norm still lives a mile or so from World Series Field at Heritage Park and he makes the short trip to watch 15 or so of the 23 series games every year. He said he'll purchase a \$10 pass for the entire week, calling it a bargain.

Once at the field, Ricchiuti finds a seat on the top row near the center of the bleachers, along either base line. He said that provides him the best view of the entire field.

Throughout the week, he said, he looks forward to running into the familiar faces he sees annually, including series Director Greg Bzura, News-Herald photographer Dave Chapman and Ed Booth, one of the volunteer 50/50 ticket salesmen whose tag line is "Here we go, here we go."

Ricchiuti saw the new lights at World Series Field and said he has admired the way the field has improved over the years. He said recent improvements, such as wrought-iron fencing, brick pavers and new scoreboard, made the field "a more intimate and eye-appealing setting for baseball." He added that the upgrades at the park reflect the ongoing changes that have taken place throughout the city of Taylor.

Ricchiuti is not shy about making suggestions to World Series organizers. In the past, he has suggested some souvenir ideas and other improvements to the park. He would like to see seating and parking expanded and rest room facilities upgraded.

Some time during the week, Ricchiuti will buy a T-shirt containing the names of all the teams and players. In fact, some years he makes numerous trips to the souvenir tent to make sure he gets a shirt as soon as they're printed.

Asked about World Series memories, Ricchiuti said he witnessed what is now referred to as "the catch" during the 2007 series. Texas centerfielder Robert Aguero robbed Hawaii's Kahana Neal of a grand slam in the bottom of the second inning. Aguero caught the ball as it sailed over the fence and his momentum carried him nearly all the way over the fence. Yet, he righted himself and hung on for a long out in what was hailed as the most exciting outfield catch in series history.

Ricchiuti was so impressed that he purchased a series of photos from the photographer who captured the play.

Since he works for the Post Office, Ricchiuti said he also is happy to see that U.S. Postal Service on site selling commemorative cancellations from the World Series, other souvenirs and supplies.

Ricchiuti said he generally cheers for the teams from Latin America and other regions where baseball seems to be played so passionately.

By the end of this week, Ricchiuti will pull out one of his homemade signs that says hello to the worldwide television audience of ESPNU, which broadcasts the game live, and ESPN2, which broadcasts the games on a tape-delay basis.

Director Bzura said Ricchiuti is obviously somewhat of a super fan.

"We know Norm is a positive person who loves the World Series," Bzura said. "It's great that I can count on him being there every year."

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