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## Construction expert Witz helps improve World Series and Taylor South facilities

When organizers of the Junior League World Series and the host Taylor South Little League have building questions, they turn to their own expert, Tim Witz.

The lifelong Taylor resident is not only the treasurer of both the World Series and the Little League, he's been the owner of Talan Construction Co. of Lincoln Park, a union commercial carpentry company, since 1990.

Last year, Witz oversaw construction of a new two-story clubhouse for the Taylor South Major field in Heritage Park and remodeled the umpire room in the World Series press box structure. He also participated in the renovation of the rest rooms at the press box.

And this year, just months before the 30th annual World Series got under way, Witz designed a new roof for the building that serves as the backdrop for all series games.

The new roof has what World Series Director Greg Bzura calls "the fourth floor" – access platforms for camera operators, which have been accessed from the third floor all week.

Flag poles were added so the flags of all 10 teams in the series could be displayed. They're accompanied by netting that allows more baseballs to return to the field – especially important during regular-season games.

The gutters were improved, eliminating the occasional puddles that formed near the dugouts due to poor drainage from the old roof.

Venting was added, allowing for some cooling of the often-heated third-floor press box.

The backstop netting was reattached using a unique lookout bracket system that holds the net in place in front of the fascia.

The attractive cupola at the center of the roof displays the words "Junior League World Series," but it also provides space for another camera to shoot unobstructed photos of the games.

Bzura said Witz did the work creatively and economically – with the World Series and Taylor South budgets in mind. Like other Little League volunteers, Witz donates his time and, as a contractor, searches for the best price on necessary supplies.

And the project came in under cost.

"Tim has brought professionalism, skilled trades and experience running a business to the league," Bzura said. "Also, because he runs a business, he knows the importance of controlling costs. Being treasure of the league for so long, sometimes he's intimidating when he objects to spending too much. He tries to run it like a business – to his credit."

Witz, who has been a coach and board member in Taylor South for 30 years and is a member of the City of Taylor Sports and Recreation Hall of Fame, said the "old roof was shot and needed replacing."

He volunteered his labor, working nights and weekends, with occasional assistance from his son Dennis and Bill Datson – both volunteers and Taylor South board members. The shingles, gutters and aluminum fascia were subcontracted to The Mill Connection, which did the work in one day. Volunteer electrical work was provided by Jeff Pizzo, son of Taylor South pioneer Sam Pizzo, for whom the fields are named.

Bzura and Witz thanked City of Taylor officials and staff for their contributions to the restrooms – perhaps the most needed and noticeable improvement based on public response. Steve Das and Phil Bzura, who run the series Home Run Derby, provided some volunteer plumbing work.

"Here's the real thing: On this field, in Taylor, we bring the world here," Witz said. "Why can't we do something that's neat?"

He said funds for the projects – including the \$125,000 lights installed on the field in 2008 – are raised by Taylor South and the World Series. Witz also took over the souvenir operations for the series three years ago.

"He runs that like a business, too," Bzura said. "It's reflected in sales... It's a professional operation."

Every improvement not only makes the World Series complex better, it improves the image of the 30-year-old World Series, Bzura said.

"It's taken us a long time to get recognized and now it's more important than ever that those who see us for the first time see a good product," he said. The comments we're getting are very enjoyable to hear. It's been that way for two or three years now. It's been that way for angle. It's very inspirational."



Tim Witz of Taylor stands outside the re-roofed Junior League World Series press box during the 30th series at Heritage Park.



Junior League World Series umpires appreciate the remodeled umpires room at the World Series headquarters.

