

Trojan football, cheer should be a good fit

Written by Rocco Valluzzo
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For quite a few years Weston has benefited from having a variety of youth sports programs.

Besides introducing sports at a young age, the Weston Soccer Club, Weston Basketball Association, Weston Baseball Association and Weston Lacrosse Club as well as others have also served as feeder programs for Weston High. The newest program will do the same.

This fall will mark the inaugural season for Weston Trojan Football and Cheerleading (WTYFC).

“It makes a sense to have our own thing,” said Weston High head football coach Joe Lato, one of the program’s organizers. “We just don’t have a local program that connects the youth and high school teams, and it’s time that we do.”

Since 1998 many Weston youth football players and cheerleaders have participated in Aspetuck Wildcats Football and Cheerleading, which also includes Redding and Easton. Players from those towns eventually attend Joel Barlow High School.

A member of the Candlewood Valley League, Aspetuck plays its home games at Weston High but practices in Easton. By having its own youth football and cheerleading program, Weston will not only make it more convenient for parents, it will allow Lato to focus on safety as well as develop necessary skills and understanding of the sport.

WTYFC will also be the latest addition to the Fairfield County Football League (FCFL), which serves the youth football programs of Darien, Fairfield, New Canaan, Norwalk, Ridgefield, Westport and Wilton.

According to WTYFC Board President Steve Santa-Maria, the FCFL focuses on player safety as well as fielding balanced teams. All FCFL coaches are required to take concussion training and pass a test. It also teaches fundamentals at the younger levels.

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“That’s not just Weston’s philosophy, but one shared by the other towns as well,” he said. “We thought it was a good system and the right one for Weston youth players.”

About 50 players from Weston took part in Aspetuck Wildcats football last fall. Lato feels that number will increase with Weston having its own program that practices in town.

Football would field five teams in fourth through eighth grade. Each team would require about 20 players.

In addition, Weston will offer flag football for players in first through third grade. Those teams will start later in the season when school is in session and have games with Westport’s flag football teams for first through third grade, as part of the FCFL.

Due to safety reasons, fourth grade and up will feature tackle football. By then the players are moving faster and running into each other, according to Lato.

“Every year we’re getting more and more interest in Weston,” said Kelley Coleman, Weston High head cheerleading coach. “A lot of girls never cheered before. We want them to build the fundamentals and make it fun.”

Registration would be \$150 per player for flag football and \$350 for tackle. Cheerleading fees would be \$125 for mascots (first through third grade) \$225 for fourth and fifth grade and \$275 for sixth through eighth grade. Both have a family cap of \$600.

Unlike the Aspetuck Wildcats, which feature parent volunteer head coaches, WTYFC would include non-parent head coaches who would receive a small stipend. Such is more in keeping with the other youth sports programs in Weston.

“We’ve gotten a lot of positive response to the new youth program,” said WTYFC volunteer Karen DeMartine. “Everybody is excited about having one for football in Weston.”