

## **Local volunteer groups save Clarence taxpayers millions.**

One million dollars! It seems like a lot of money, doesn't it? And, in fact, it **still** is.

After seven months in office I thought it would be a good time to gaze across the country...to see how other towns the size of Clarence(within twenty miles+/- of a city the size of Buffalo) manage to pay for all that they do for their taxpayers.

One of the biggest discrepancies that I found was in youth sports, and the difference is striking. While Clarence spends just over \$500,000 on youth and recreation, other towns spend between three million to four million dollars to provide these same services. What is the difference? The primary driver is the cost of labor. In many cities, the town pays host to youth sports and picks up the entire tab. In Clarence, sports clubs provide thousands of hours of labor at no cost to the Town of Clarence.

The Clarence Soccer Club is the largest youth sports organization in the Town of Clarence with a membership of over eighteen hundred children. Founded over thirty years ago, the Clarence Soccer Club has grown in leaps and bounds. The sport of soccer has exploded across the country, and Clarence is certainly no exception. The club currently has over three hundred and fifty coaches, and parents are asked to donate at least one hour of their time to the club. In addition to soccer, kids in Clarence can play baseball or softball, football, cheerleading and lacrosse. The town does help with the maintenance of the fields, with Parks Superintendent Burkard logging yeoman's hours in the summer to keep all the fields in tip top shape.

In addition to the volunteer groups, the Clarence Rotary has been instrumental in helping youth sports proper and has provided facilities' that other towns would have had to pay for. One example is the snack bar at Memorial Park. The original structure was built by the Rotary back in the early days of the soccer club. In addition, the Rotary has donated money, scoreboards, and play equipment to virtually all the sports organizations at one time or another. They even renovated a bridge (across the Peanut Line) for bikers and hikers. Their selfless acts of kindness and thousands of hours of community service make this town better for all who live here.

Should you have any questions, email [dhartzell@clarence.ny.us](mailto:dhartzell@clarence.ny.us) or stop by...my door is always open!

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