



JOHN VILLELLA



John Villella of Ewing, New Jersey, passed away on February 6, 2025. Villella started in the Babe Ruth Program in the early '70s, serving as a coach. In 1989 he was elected Southern New Jersey District 1 Commissioner and held that post for nearly 35 years.

The organization, guidance, and management of youth baseball have undergone numerous transformations throughout the years. Nevertheless, one unwavering element was John Villella's position as the District One Commissioner. Leagues evolved, League Presidents shifted, and even the rules and regulations were modified. Yet through Villella's guidance, baseball in District One maintained a level of excellence that surpassed everything else.

Babe Ruth's Headquarters has been based in Mercer County since its inception and the tireless efforts of Villella to maintain a top-notch district did not go unnoticed. Whether it was a League President, a State Commissioner, a Regional Commissioner, or Babe Ruth League Headquarters, they knew they could call on Villella for help and support.

Under Villella's guidance, District One saw baseball grow each year. The all-tournament game at Arm & Hammer Park (formerly Waterfront Park), a cooperative effort with the Trenton Thunder, was an event close to Villella's heart. He was happy to be able to give the kids an opportunity to play a game there. For Villella, it was always about being able to do something for the kids."

Villella was committed to the leagues and the players in District One. His experience as a Babe Ruth parent, coach, and league administrator made it personal for him. Babe Ruth Headquarters had deep respect for Villella and his team because of their years of dedicated and tireless work

Alongside Villella was his wife, Joan. She not only allowed him the opportunity to pursue his passion, but she also contributed everything she could to improve the district.

In 1997, Villella was named the *Lefty Gomez Volunteer of the Year*, one of the highest honors for a Babe Ruth League volunteer.

Villella was invited to participate in the 2004 Babe Ruth League International Board of Directors Meeting to speak about being a successful District Commissioner.

Villella was an individual who liked to shun the spotlight and deflect credit to others. He was the epitome of the perfect Babe Ruth volunteer. He genuinely cared about the children's interests and generously donated his time and resources to ensure every child had an enjoyable, educational, and competitive experience. Villella gave the players the perseverance and perseverance abilities they needed to win the game of life.

