



**Rev. William Lee, pitcher for the 1969 Brookvale Fighting Warriors championship team, throws out the opening pitch Saturday, April 17, for the 2021 Lancaster County Little League season.** Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi

“Brookvale taught us to be good people, good citizens. This is more than the 1969 team, more than baseball...it has to do with Brookvale.”

—Rev. William Lee, Brookvale High School alumnus



**Aidan McGuire is so excited about reaching base he wants to share a hug with first baseman Lydia Hudson during a tee-ball game on Lancaster Little League's opening day.** Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi



**Dr. Elton Smith accepts his championship ring. Dr. Smith was the principal at Brookvale High School the year the Fighting Warriors baseball team won the state championship. He went on to become the first Black school superintendent in Virginia.** Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi

## Opening day fanfare pays tribute to Brookvale

by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi

Last Saturday, in a park that was once reserved for only White players, Lancaster County celebrated the accomplishment of a Black baseball team.

It was a powerful ceremony, one that was more than five decades overdue.

Rev. William Lee said as a boy and teenager he would sit on a car hood and see the lights on the baseball field from a distance. During opening day ceremonies for Lancaster County Little League at Dream Fields in Kilmarnock, he was inside that park, on the mound for the first time, addressing hundreds as the guest speaker for a ceremony honoring his high school alma mater.

The 1969 Brookvale Fighting Warriors baseball team, which won a state championship on a field in Petersburg, was finally honored with the fanfare it deserved. The county supervisors and school board came together, along with the Dream Fields board, to celebrate its success. Each player received a championship ring. Rev. Lee threw out the opening pitch.

“What a day,” said Rev. Lee. In 1969, the world and Lancaster County was more divided. Simply, that was the way it was, he said, and he and his teammates accepted that. “But this county has been kind enough to say, ‘we’re going to bring this divide...that world between us, closer together.’”

Before the ceremony, the former players—along with some family members representing the



**At left, Lancaster County supervisor Bill Lee congratulates Jessie Davenport last Saturday before presenting him a championship ring at a ceremony honoring the 1969 Brookvale baseball team.** Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi

deceased—stood inside the Lancaster High School baseball team’s home dugout, arms draped over the chained link fence. They waited as the announcer called their names and positions then made their way to the pitcher’s mound. If not for a few wrinkles and slower steps, they looked like a team ready to take the field for play.

“Brookvale taught us to be good people, good citizens,” said Rev. Lee. “This is more than the

1969 team, more than baseball...it has to do with Brookvale.”

Rev. Lee said at the time, he and the other players didn’t really comprehend what the coaches and administrators sacrificed and did for them. The county didn’t provide equipment and the night before the championship game, Brookvale principal, Dr. Elton Smith, went to the local sporting goods store and purchased a ball and a bat. Rev. Lee displayed the ball, which held the fading names of teachers and players. After almost 52 years, he said, it was time to return that ball and walked it over to Dr. Smith. Dr. Smith, 94, became the first Black school superintendent in Virginia.

The year the team beat a school from New Kent, 11-5, in the state championship was the last year of segregated schools in the county. The next fall, the players and students at Brookvale attended Lancaster High School.

“In 1969, we won and lost,” said Rev. Lee. “We won the championship but we lost our school and our name.”

He encouraged the supervisors to find a way to put Brookvale’s name somewhere so that the county’s students know its history and the history of the Fighting Warriors.

Members of the 1969 championship team included first baseman Frank Carter, second baseman Dean Nickens, second baseman Donald Sanders, third base

OPENING DAY, continued on page A11



From left, machine pitch players **Lawter Marchetti** and **Jamie Mitchell** wait on the batter to hit the ball. Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi



Players, coaches and school administrators associated with the 1969 Brookvale High School championship baseball team were honored at last Saturday's opening day ceremonies at Dream Fields. The players were called onto the field one-by-one before being presented championship rings. Making his way to the field in the foreground is catcher **Wardell Carter**. Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi

"In 1969, we won and lost. We won the championship but we lost our school and our name."

—Rev. William Lee, Brookvale High School alumnus

## Opening day fanfare pays tribute to Brookvale championship team

continued from page A1

man Melvin Harris, catcher Wardell Carter, catcher Stanley Fauntleroy, shortstop Elwood Henderson, shortstop Ronald Smith, left fielder Wilbert Lee, centerfielder James Carter, right fielder Jessie Davenport, outfielder Bradell Thompson, outfielder Wardell Venev, outfielder Irvin Coleman, pitcher

Mozell Carter, pitcher Theodore Thomas, pitcher Stanley Gas-kins, pitcher Rev. William Lee, trainer Carroll Jones, assistant coach Walter Webb, assistant coach Richard Ruffin and coach Maurice Savoy.

### Opening day

After over a year of social distancing and limited interaction, 165 anxious and happy young ball players paraded onto the high school field at Dream Fields last Saturday for the opening day of Lancaster County Little

League's 2021 season. The 2020 spring season was canceled and the fields saw limited play in the field during an abbreviated fall season.

"We're happy to be back the

field," said league president Tif-fany Wolfe.

Saturday marked the first day of play on Dream Fields' new Jessie Ball duPont Softball Field, which will serve as the home

field for the Lancaster High School junior varsity and varsity softball teams.

The complex has undergone massive transformations over the last two years with the addition

of the field and a new parking lot configuration. The projects were part of a long-term comprehensive plan for the park and have been in the works for over a decade.



**Sara Forrester** sprints across the field with a big smile on her face when her machine pitch softball team is called to the field. Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi



The 1969 Brookvale High School baseball team players, coaches and the school principal were each presented this state championship ring last Saturday. Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi



**Jackson Rasmussen** (center) leads his tee-ball team on the field during the parade of players at last Saturday's opening day ceremony. It was obvious from the smiles and happy faces that the kids were happy to be back on the field. Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi



**Landon Jones** (left) and the rest of his tee-ball team sprint onto the field. Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi

# Celebrate Mom

## FREE PINK!

**Honor your Mom** on our **special Mother's Day page** with prime placement in the **Rappahannock Record**. Let **MOMS** know how special they are or give her a shout out just because!

Choose from two specially priced sizes. Your tribute can include a picture and wording of your choice.

Display your **BUSINESS SPECIALS** on the Mother's Day page! We can accommodate any size business ad.

**2x3 \$58**

**2x2 \$39**

**Thank Mom a Brunch!**

Treat her to a lavish buffet featuring all of her favorite treats... from fresh-baked breakfast pastries and desserts to made-to-order omelettes, fresh salads, assorted quiche, savory pasta bar and more.

**Mother's Day Brunch Buffet**  
Sunday, May 14 | 10am-3pm

\$35 adults • \$19 kids 12 & under  
Children 3 and under dine free

**PUBLISHES: May 6 • AD DEADLINE: May 3**

**CONTACT the Rappahannock Record 804.435.1701**

Jessica ext. 13  
JessicaBell@rapprecord.com

Susan ext. 15  
SusanGraves@rapprecord.com

Marilyn ext. 11  
Marilyn@rapprecord.com