



THE PLAIN DEALER

SAM FULWOOD III



A father-son tie in rite of summer

T. J. McCallum sat on the top row of bleachers, watching with fatherly pride.

His 8-year-old son Danny, standing in the on-deck circle and waiting for a turn at bat, was doing what his old man had done years before the boy was born.

"I loved playing baseball as a kid," T.J. said. "My son likes it too, but nothing like when I was growing up in Chicago. I played baseball from the time I was 3 until I was 30."

T.J., 38, gave up playing adult-league softball as a concession to fatherhood and maturity.

"When I grew up, everyone knew everyone," T.J. said. "There wasn't anything like tryouts for Little League. We just got a group of friends together and made a team."

That's how they did it back in the middle of the 20th century. Now overworked and overbooked parents must arrange play dates for their kids, who live time-managed lives. The clock rules, even when it comes to the no-clock sport of baseball.

So on a bright Sunday with the temperatures rising to short-sleeve length, T.J. joined some 200 other fathers (and some mothers) in ushering their boys (and some girls) into another summer of baseball.

They met on the playground behind Lomond School in Shaker Heights in a mass evaluation of players for the city baseball league.

The kids took turns being timed in a 60-foot dash. They tried their arms at pitching. Next was fielding grounders and pop flies. And finally, where I met T.J. and Danny, they tested their eyes at hitting.

Wearing a tie-dyed shirt in a blaze of psychedelic colors, Danny swung and missed his first pitch. Then he settled down to make contact with the next four, including an impressive line drive past the old man/coach guarding third base.

"Stay with it, kiddo," T.J. said from the stands.

Danny looked back at his father and slapped yet another ball for a base hit.

Finished with that part of the tryout, father and son beamed at each other.

"Good hitting, Danny," T.J. said.

"I think I did good," Danny said. "I'll make a team."

Of course he will. Every kid plays. A tryout isn't a reason to exclude anyone.

Sunday's order of business was purely organizational, a meeting to sort out the kids by ability and to make sure that an overzealous coach can't stack his team with all the future Hall of Famers.

But that's not all.

While it looked like kids just running, catching and hitting, something far more important occurred on that baseball field. The annual organizing of baseball teams is a rite, the passing of knowledge and skill from one generation to the next.

For T.J. and Danny, the hand-off went smoothly, evident by the way they chatted during the walk to their car after the tryout. It was a portrait of a father-son connection, framed by the lines on a baseball diamond.

Sure, not every kid who plays summer baseball will live up to his father's expectations, either on or off the field. And not every father, unfortunately, is around enough to provide the kind of guidance a son needs, both on and off the field.

But I'm willing to bet a ballpark hot dog that T.J. and Danny are going to have a great summer together.

"Baseball is my thing," Danny said. "I like running around and I've got a lot of energy. Baseball is a good way to get it all out and have my dad watch."

City alters high-school policing tactics

Recent violence spurs changes

EBONY REED
Plain Dealer Reporter

Cleveland Mayor Jane Campbell announced on Monday that she has responded to recent vio-

lence in the city's high schools by reorganizing the supervision of 20 police officers in the schools.

Officers who work in the schools will now report to district commanders, Campbell

said on the steps of City Hall, flanked by police, school and neighborhood leaders. Previously, the officers reported downtown to the Justice Center before heading to the schools.

Now when officers are absent, district commanders can quickly send a replacement to the

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schools, Campbell said, acknowledging that hasn't always happened in the past. District commanders also will be able to

respond faster to incidents at the schools and send additional officers when they are needed, she said.

In addition, more police will be visible around schools during dismissal, Campbell said.

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DALE OMORI | THE PLAIN DEALER

A newly transplanted tomato plant is illuminated by the mid-morning sun at Fitch's Farm Market in Avon. Locally, farmers are taking advantage of April's dry weather to plant crops early.

Farmers' response to recent dry spell is sow, sow

GRANT SEGALL
Plain Dealer Reporter

A rare dry spell in April has given many local crops an early start.

"We're probably at least a week ahead," said Richard Fitch of Avon.

By last weekend, Fitch had

planted corn, beans, peas and onions, and transplanted tomatoes from the greenhouse.

"Guys are taking advantage of this good weather," said Les Ober of the Ohio State University agricultural extension service in Geauga County. Many of his farmers have planted oats already and expect to plant corn

in about a week — quite early for this hilly, chilly county.

A long winter with record snowfalls hurt winter wheat and cut maple syrup by about a third in Geauga. But it left behind damp soil and brimming reservoirs, so few farmers miss the normal April showers yet.

"You can't till when it's wet,"

said farmer Gary Preston of Pittsfield Township.

Most farmers like dry weather for planting, then wet weather for growing.

"Right now, it's ideal," said the extension's Mike Miller of Medina County.

But the month's strong sun and wind have dried out the

sandy ridges of Lake County a little too much, said Larry Klco of Rainbow Farms, North Perry. Besides, it's still too cold there to plant produce.

"We've had frost every morning," said Klco.

As usual, farmers are worried about blights and rising costs.

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School-bus driver gets help at DUI sentencing

Prosecutor calls Hudson man's act 'out of character'

KAREN FARKAS
Plain Dealer Reporter

CUYAHOGA FALLS — Norbert Olzmann was drunk when he drove a school bus with 51 children but found support from two unlikely sources at his sentencing Monday — the judge and prosecutor.

The 61-year-old Hudson man is intelligent, had one prior speeding ticket and drank because he learned he had a severe medical condition, according to information presented in Cuyahoga Falls Municipal Court.

"It was out of character and inexcusable," said Hudson City Prosecutor Jason Hickman.



Olzmann

Many parents and children continue to support Olzmann, who was fired.

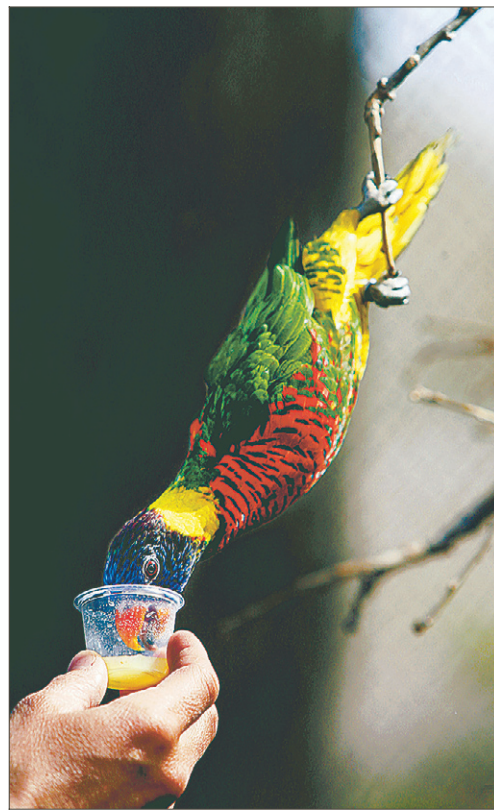
Hickman said Olzmann formerly lived in Houston, where he was an engineer at NASA.

Olzmann had pleaded guilty to endangering children and operating a vehicle under the influence of alcohol.

Judge Kim Hoover sentenced him to a 10-day classroom treatment program, fined him \$1,000 and suspended his license for a year.

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HANGING AROUND FOR A SIP



LYNNISCHAY | THE PLAIN DEALER

A rainbow lorikeet goes way out on a limb for a drink of nectar in the Australian Outback section of the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo. Lorikeets are a common bird in Australia; there are more than 100 types of the bird. Zoo visitors can purchase the nectar for \$1 a cup to feed the lorikeets, sometimes called lories, in an enclosed area where birds and people mingle.

Charity plans show to ease donor drought

SUSAN RUIZ PATTON
Plain Dealer Reporter

In an economy in which corporate donations are shrinking and the demand for them is high, even small charitable groups are being forced to take chances to raise big money — fast.

In its first shot at a big-time money maker, New Life Community will use prestigious Severance Hall this year for a high-end concert. The one-night affair has the potential to add \$100,000 to the charity's \$900,000 budget.

The concert will tie in with a college football event that brought thousands to downtown Cleveland the last time it was here.

New Life, an interfaith charity that helps homeless and jobless families get back on their feet, found late last year that support from its loyal donors was not going to be as strong as it once was.

The anticipated shortfall was 10 to 15 percent, said spokesman Marc Nathanson.

"If United Way can't make it, how can the little guys make it?" said Nathanson.

Individuals were tapped out, while corporate donors and charitable foundations had less to give than in prior years. To complicate matters, many donors made generous gifts to other charities for tsunami relief work.

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INSIDE

Saving Souls: Inner-city pastor A.J. Thompson blames the church for not connecting with young African-American males. So he has developed a unique outreach program.

Phillip Morris, B9