

# Highland Groveland Recreation Association **Where kids learn to be team players**

**I**t's cold outside, but not for long. It's time to fire up the Internet and register the kids for soccer, baseball and/or track programs offered this spring and summer by the Highland Groveland Recreation Association (HGRA).

According to HGRA president Dennis Merley, a youngster doesn't have to be an accomplished athlete to succeed in HGRA programs. They exist to introduce kids to activities in a positive environment without intense pressure to perform. Kids learn how to be a part of a team and make connections they can take with them to school in the fall. Meanwhile, parents get to socialize with neighbors and families while also making new friends.

"To have fun – that's the experience," said Merley. "This is where a lot of kids get their start in sports. A few may go on to do great things in high school and college. But most just come to learn, play and have fun, and that's OK. HGRA is here for everyone"

Merley said HGRA, a nonprofit, mostly volunteer organization, was created in 1957. At the time, the neighborhood didn't have a city-sponsored recreation program.

"Some forward thinkers got together and created their own organization that included football and hockey programs. Eventually, hockey morphed into baseball and football morphed into soccer. Track came along later when an experienced track coach moved into the neighborhood. She wanted to start a running program and HGRA picked it up. Track is now our fastest-growing program."

HGRA is funded primarily through \$80 registration fees; in 2018, more than 2,000 kids signed up. Some participants may qualify for scholarships to pay only \$15. HGRA also relies on voluntary donations and a growing sponsorship effort.



**Highland Groveland Recreation Association president Dennis Merley welcomes families looking for youth sports opportunities in baseball, track and soccer.**

Registration for track (April to June) and the baseball and soccer (May through July) opens on February 1. Go online, [www.HGRA.org](http://www.HGRA.org), and click on Register to start the simple process.

HGRA is about togetherness, said Merley. "What could be better on a beautiful, balmy summer evening than hanging out with friends and neighbors watching your kids have fun?"

**Highland Groveland Recreation Association**  
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