

## Little League to mark opening day with parade and block party

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Tiburon Peninsula Little League will celebrate the start of its 2022 season with a March 18 parade and block party on Main Street featuring a fundraising bar and silent auction for adults, games for kids and more.

The event, approved by the

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Town Council on Feb. 16, will start at 4 p.m. with the league's players and families gathering at the southern end of Old Rail Trail, across from the Belvedere-Tiburon Library, and marching down the Tiburon Boulevard sidewalk to Main Street. The block party will run 5:30-8 p.m. on lower Main Street, with music, food service from local restaurants, a booth selling league-branded shirts and caps and a fundraising wine and beer bar.

The council voted 4-1 to approve the required special-event permit and Main Street closure, with Noah Griffin dissenting, saying he had concerns about fundraising for Little League with alcohol sales.

The league's 2022 spring season kicks off the next day, March 19, with a full slate of games from about 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. at the Strawberry Recreation District playing field.

The organization, which serves kids who live or go to school in Tiburon, Belvedere and Strawberry, offers seven leagues, from T-ball for children ages 5-6 through Juniors for children up to age 14. The Majors, generally for kids ages 11-12, is the most competitive league and, at the all-star level, has a chance to advance to the Little League World Series.

The league expects to field 30 teams with 300 local kids this year. Most games are played on the Strawberry field, though some use fields at Bel Aire Elementary School and at the former Granada School campus in East Corte Madera. The season runs through May, with the playoffs potentially continuing into July.

The league held opening day parades in 2015 and 2016, with players and their families marching down Tiburon Boulevard and

eventually ending up in Belvedere Community Park for a barbecue celebration.

In 2019, the Tiburon Peninsula Chamber of Commerce celebrated the league toward the end of its season at one of its Summer on Main Street festival events. There was a DJ, carnival games for kids and an appearance by the league's mascot, Tibby.

Tiburon Peninsula Little League President Kevin Kissling said he wasn't sure why parades weren't held in the interim years, 2017 and 2018, noting that it often depends on who is in charge of the league and what they're willing to organize. The league's 2020 season was canceled due to the pandemic, and last year's was an abbreviated season that took place with restrictions in place — with Tiburon's Little League All-Stars winning the District 3 championship.

"I'm really excited about this event," Kissling, also a coach, told the council. "It's a chance to bring our families together and get the kids really excited."

For the block party, lower Main Street will be closed to vehicle traffic with barricades at both ends. The bay side of the street will be kept clear to ensure fire truck access in case of an emergency — a new standard for any future Main Street closures, said DeAnn Biss, the executive director of the Tiburon Peninsula Chamber of Commerce, which worked with the league on the plan.

The league plans to set up its silent auction and gear booths in Fountain Plaza, with a band stationed about halfway up Main Street. High-top tables will be scattered along the interior side of the street, and there will be a pitching game for kids in front of the welcome center at 46B Main St.

The fundraising bar will be set up on the patio of what was formerly Servino's

Ristorante at 1 Main St.; Servino's recently relocated to Ark Row, and farm-to-table restaurant Malibu Farm is expected to move in sometime this year or next. The table will be clear of the sidewalk.

The council received a letter ahead of the meeting from Alcohol Justice, a San Rafael-based industry watchdog that promotes evidence-based public-health policies and organizes campaigns against alcohol and other drug industries' harmful practices.

In the letter, the organization's executive director, Cruz Avila, and public affairs director, Tiburon resident Michael Scippa, cautioned the council against incorporating an on-the-street bar at the Little League event.

"Much as we, as parents, would like to believe that our ability to model 'healthy' alcohol use creates a protective effect against disordered alcohol use in our children, the research does not support that," the letter said. "Parental modeling of alcohol use, particularly parental modeling of heavy drinking, substantially influences children's intentions to drink."

The organization recommended alcohol sales take place in enclosed tents with carding and an enforced policy preventing drinks from being taken onto the street.

In an interview, Scippa said it was "absurd" to frame events like the Little League block party around the consumption of alcohol.

"The research is clear. The more young people are exposed to alcohol consumption and to alcohol branding, the sooner they'll drink and the more they'll drink," he said. "We're perpetuating a culture that comes back to harm us when we embed alcohol in every event."

Kissling told the council the bar is a

"pretty significant" part of the league's fundraising. He said everyone buying wine or beer at the event will be asked to show ID, no kids will be working the bar and the kids' games will be stationed at the opposite end of the street.

He said it's not unusual to have alcohol at community gatherings like the block party, "as it would be in the restaurants and the home."

Event organizer Kelly Graziadei, whose children play in Little League, pointed out Foundation for Reed Schools' family-friendly Run for Reed fundraising event also includes alcohol.

The Town Council in 2013 granted a special-event permit for the first-ever Tiburon Half-Marathon and 5K race but barred the serving of beer after the event, which was cosponsored by Belvedere-Tiburon Recreation, also known as The Ranch.

Griffin noted he is a recovering alcoholic who has been sober for 43 years. He urged the league "to take a serious, hard look" at whether to have the bar.

"Kids may not do what you tell them, but they always do what you do," he said.

Councilmember Alice Fredericks also opposed the league's decision to feature a fundraising bar at an event to celebrate children's sports, but in the end said she wouldn't block the event from going forward, noting overall the parade and block party are a "wonderful activity."

Councilmember Holli Thier said she was reassured knowing the bar would be separated from where the kids' activities are.

"I think it's a fantastic event," she said.

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