

The history of the Greater West Melbourne Athletic Association dates back to the original football and cheer teams that first entered the field in 1971. It was started by a group of local men and women that worked hard together to organize and raise the funds needed to begin what is now an organization that families travel daily to be a part of. The idea started because of a change in 1969 to Melbourne's organized athletics rules about only allowing families that resided within the city limits to be allowed to participate. Necessity is the mother of all changes...and the need to have a place for the kids of West Melbourne started what has lasted almost 50 years now. Louis Daniels, Dale Byrd, and Jo Padgett were the members of the 1st GWMAA Board that set the framework for a growing sports organization and community. Those men and women worked with the community to fund raise and organize donated help to purchase the needed equipment and build a field that was suitable for the game and that they could be proud to play on.

GWMAA has since been a place where men and women start volunteering because they want to be a part of their own kids' exploration and success in sports and life...and then stay on many years after because they see the positive influences they have on every other child on the teams and in the community. We have many volunteers that have been part of the organization since the early years of it that still participate in any way they can, be it cooking on game days or helping organize fund raisers to pay for the equipment needed for every player. Some coaches have been on the sidelines for almost 30 years helping with the original intent of the organization, to implant firmly in the youth of the community, the ideals of good sportsmanship, honesty, loyalty, courage, respect for others and authority and the importance of teamwork; to promote the physical fitness, healthy habits and personal well-being; to provide an atmosphere that encourages mature responsible behavior. Those coaches are now coaching with former players that have come back with their own children because of our proud tradition of helping raise young athletes to be exceptional members of their community.

Our organization that started with 30 football players, 9 cheerleaders, and 5 coaches is now made up of 5 sports, football and cheer, baseball and softball, and basketball. GWMAA has grown to support the rapid expanse of our local population as West Melbourne continues to be a city families look to move to. We are an all-volunteer, non-profit organization that is currently comprised of over 300 background checked and approved volunteers and a youth sport participation rate of over 1000 athletes across the 5 sports per year. We have seen our sports complex grow from the 18 acre parcel that is now the WM Field of Dreams to the 100+ acre facility that is now the new Max K Rodes Park. Our athletes have gone on to earn college scholarships and some have continued to play professionally. Other athletes have become coaches, volunteering for youth, some successfully as high school coaches, and even running college programs.

GWMAA and its supporters have used effective fund raising and community ties to improve our facilities to provide the best experience and training facilities possible for our athletes and the community as a whole. At our previous park GWMAA worked to build new press boxes, pavilions, and two story concession stand/board room to support the needs of the organization. At the new Rodes Park we have built a several thousand square foot equipment building, covered cooking areas, and warm-up areas for players. We are also looking into installing shade structures at the baseball fields and more batting cages not only for our members but to be used all day by the public.

Despite our growth, the core of the organization remains the same...the young athletes, families, and volunteers that spend their time at the fields and supporting the organization both during the season and all the months of the off-seasons. Our large fund raiser early in the year that we partner with Melbourne Rotary Club typically draws 500 or more people to eat and dance and raise money to support the continued success of the organization while the Rotary Club provides scholarships to students headed off to college. Our coaches hold the players to high standards both on the field and off with regular discussions on succeeding in school being more important than succeeding on the field or court. We are committed to being a positive influence on the children that come into our organization and leave as responsible young adults ready to succeed not only on the field but in class and in the community.