

# Somerville Elks Lodge #1068's 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Jack's Kids Softball Tournament

Saturday, July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2016



Play Ball! Yes, once again, on Saturday, July 9<sup>th</sup> at 8AM the first pitches will be heard throughout the fields of Somerset County honoring ALL of the Jack's Kids children and their families.

The heart of Jack's Kids is to ease the financial burden to families dealing with serious childhood illnesses and/or serious disabilities so they can focus on wrapping their family in the love and attention they need. Many of these children have spent most of their life in and out of hospitals. On Saturday, July 9<sup>th</sup> it will be all about FUN and honoring their strength and passion for life!



Jack's Kids is named in memory of Jack Gardner who had a prolific life throughout Somerset County. He grew up in North

Plainfield, where he was an outstanding athlete in Football, Basketball, and Baseball.

Jack was a detective in the Somerset County Prosecutor's Office for many years. Later he became Warden of the Somerset County Jail. He was also a member of the Somerville Elks Lodge #1068.

Jack was a treasure. His main virtue was his willingness to help people. Anyone who came to Jack for help was assured that he would come through. Throughout Somerset County he is noted for helping many people, especially the younger generation. He was kind, thoughtful and always gave of himself.

Jack's Kids began in 1992 when Pierce Frauenheim and Jack Gardner had a friend whose child was diagnosed with cancer at the age of two. They saw the emotional turmoil this was taking on the family and wanted to help in some way, so they asked the Somerville Elks to host a softball tournament to raise money specifically for this family. It was a huge success and is still their largest annual fundraiser to this day.



Unfortunately, the following fall, Jack Gardner passed away and to honor all he had done they named the second tournament after him. Over the years the name was shortened and today we have "Jack's Kids".

Jack's Kids has grown over the years and now helps over 30 families with their financial needs as they care for their children. They are a non-profit 501c3 organization under the Charitable Trust within the Somerville Elks Lodge. The volunteers that dedicate their time to this organization throughout the year truly are one of a kind. They pour their hearts into these families and truly believe their famous slogan..."It's All About The Kids!".

"These kids and their families are an inspiration to us all. We do this for them. We do it for the smiles we see on their faces and the joy they bring to us all." said Hank Werner, Jack's Kids Chairman. "These kids are the pure meaning of strength. Their struggles and sometimes pain are not the first thing you see. You

see innocence and love. They teach us every day what selflessness means and what it truly means to give back. They come and help as they get older and share in the excitement of each other's milestones.”.

This year their Honorary Chairman is New Jersey State Assemblyman, Jack Ciattarelli. “Honoring the memory of Jack Gardner by supporting this important annual fundraising event is a very special opportunity. An amazing group of volunteers dedicated to helping *families dealing with serious childhood illnesses and/or disabilities* makes it all possible. Whatever it is I can do to assist them is indeed an honor.” says Mr. Ciattarelli.



“Although this tournament is a wonderful way to share the day with these truly heroic families and kids, none of it would be possible without the outstanding and generous support from our Softball Teams who come every year, the

amazing umpires and other people who volunteer their time that day, the amazing restaurants who donate enough food to feed over 5000 people, and our sponsors and business owners who donate money and gifts.” Says Lisa Werner Treasurer. Lisa also coordinates the 54 teams and over 30 umpires for the day. “It is a daunting but very rewarding task. Without them we could not help Jack’s Kids and their families. It is hard enough watching your child hurt and not be able to help. To worry about finances on top of that is even worse. The bills build and we are here to help chip away at that. It’s the least we can do for them. ” Lisa said. “Every year we have a larger impact on these families as well as our community. We are blessed and honored to be a part of it.”.





The day starts at 8AM on the fields throughout Somerset County with the first pitches done at each field with Jack's Kids all present at the fields. The teams all play throughout the morning and into the afternoon while all the volunteers pick up food, set up the lodge and get ready for the day's events. The teams then return to the lodge for Opening Ceremonies at 2PM. Following the opening ceremonies, the winning teams are all presented with their trophies and we get a chance to meet all of these amazing children to whom the day is all about.

The Tour of Somerville will also have representatives there to present Jack's Kids a check as they were the beneficiary of this year's historic Tour of Somerville Cycling Series which is held every Memorial Day. "We were honored to find out they had chosen us this year!" Said Hank Werner. "It is a great to see one non-profit give to another."

More information on the day can be found on their website at [www.jackskids.org](http://www.jackskids.org). You can also volunteer your time and donate to this great cause! All of the Jack's Kids hope to see you there that day!