

**By TOMMY BRYAN, *sports editor***

Organizers have been encouraged by the early interest in the fledgling Lebanon Youth Football League (LYFL), a travel football venture for kids ages 5-12. Not to be confused with the City of Lebanon's Junior and Senior Pro Football operation for kids ages 7-12, this new gridiron league will be affiliated with the Tennessee Youth Football Alliance -- an organization that oversees over 200 youth teams and cheerleading squads in 22 Middle Tennessee communities.

"We want to give our Lebanon kids a chance to have successful reps against players of like size and experience," said LYFL president Mike Jones.

Jones a former NFL lineman with the Tennessee Ti-tans, said signups for players and cheerleaders have been steady each Saturday at Don Fox Park on the Baddour Parkway.

"Our Saturday's have gone well," Jones said, "we're averaging between 15 and 20 young people signing up. We expect a bit of a rush right before we start practice." Jones said there were heavy numbers so far in the 5-6 year old age group. Signups will continue in the park June 26, July 10 and 17, with practice scheduled to start Monday, July 19. The first week of practice is set for helmets and shorts.

"We're hoping we can have between 80 - 100 players signed up for our first season," Jones said, "that would stock four teams. We're looking at each team playing at least 10 games, including jamboree and post-season and we're looking at the possibility of eventually hosting an all-day 'bowl game' here in the city," Jones said.

Jones went on to say football families could look forward to tailgating and all the pageantry associated with game day road trips. Registration fee is \$125 per player, but that cost includes a new, custom fitted Schutt helmet.

"We're going to find the money necessary to allow every child who is interested to participate. Parents shouldn't let finances stand in the way of registering," Jones said.

## Response strong to new travel football league

Wednesday, June 23, 2010

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Jones was quick to point out that the LYFL was not out to undermine the already-established Junior / Senior Pro Football Leagues operated by the City of Lebanon's Recreation Department.

"I believe there is room for both organizations to exist," Jones said. "Maybe our 'games on Saturday' format fits some families while the Tuesday and Thursday schedule for Junior / Senior Pro is better for others," he said. "We've had tremendous interest in our cheerleading program and I expect that to continue -- bottom line, we want to get our local children involved in a big way."

Jones made reference to the possibility of obtaining grants from the National Football League and from USA Football. "We're working hard in those areas in addition to seeking local sponsors," Jone said.

Anyone with questions about the LYFL should call 260-8344 or visit the league website at [www.lebanonyouthfootball.com](http://www.lebanonyouthfootball.com)