



## Stickball game held in South End neighborhood Sunday

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By **Elizabeth Roman, The Republican**

**SPRINGFIELD**- As he looked at the bricks strewn across the parking lot of the former Alfred G. Zanetti School on Howard Street, Gerald Daniele, of Springfield, remembered the place in its glory days.

"It was a great school. A lot of us grew up here and spent all of our time playing sports in the back lot or at the South End Community Center," he said.

Daniele was one of 15 or so men and women who came together for an annual stick ball game, normally held in the parking lot of the school. This year due to the **tornado damage**, which destroyed the school, the game was held in another parking lot near the school.

"I just didn't want the tradition to stop because of everything that happened with the tornadoes," said Rico C. Daniele, owner of Mom & Rico Daniele's Specialty Market, 899 Main St.

"I didn't want to cancel it, so we are doing the best we can," he said.

The event attracted players who have been coming to the games since the 1950s. Gerald Daniele, 75, served as the pitcher for the first round.

"I don't pitch like I used to, that's for sure," he said.



Springfield, 6/12/11, Staff Photo by David Molnar -- Despite the tornado damage all around them in the South End of Springfield people and local officials got together for a few pitches of the annual stick ball game organized by local businessman Rico Daniele. Here, Daniele, left, Springfield Mayor Domenic J. Sarno, center, catching as Joe Sibilia, 71, keeps his eye on the ball during the game. with the damaged the former Alfred G. Zanetti School in the background.



Springfield Mayor Domenic J. Sarno and State Rep. Cheryl A. Coakley- Rivera, D-Springfield, stopped by for a quick game.

"It all comes down to the resilience of the human spirit," Sarno said. "These are people who grew up here and who love this neighborhood and are going to stick together."

Joseph Sibilia, of Agawam, has been playing for more than 30 years. He said although the South End was devastated by the tornadoes, he thinks the city is doing a good job of cleaning things up.

"The mayor is doing a fantastic job of getting the city back on its feet," he said.

The parking lot where the game was held offered a clear view of Zanetti, the South End Community Center and other buildings damaged by the tornado.

Sarno said he has teams out doing the necessary clean up every day.

"It's amazing that no one in our city was killed and that we kept the number of injuries under 40 people. I'm choosing to look at this as a rebirth for downtown Springfield and we are going to come back stronger," he said.

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Springfield, 6/12/11, Staff Photo by David Molnar -- Despite the tornado damage all around them in the South End of Springfield people and local officials got together for a few pitches of the annual stick ball game organized by local businessman Rico Daniele. Here, Daniele's cousin Gerald Daniele, 75, pitches to batters with the damaged former Alfred G. Zanetti School in the background. Both Daniele's have played in this tournament for decades.