Babe Ruth World Series starts run in Abbeville

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ABBEVILLE — The Babe Ruth World Series for 13- to 15-year-old boys begins here today, featuring the top 10 teams in the nation in a weeklong event with a $1.5 million economic impact for this city of 12,000 residents.

Vermilion Youth Inc. director Tommy Picard said A.A. Comeaux Park's status as a world-class youth baseball facility continues to grow with the support of city and parish governments.

"The parish sales tax went up almost 30 percent for the month last time we had the series here a few years ago," Picard said. "We are anticipating a big turnout. People know they will be taken care of in Abbeville."

Teams from Norwalk, Conn.; Shoreview, Minn.; San Luis Obispo, Calif.; Appleton, Wis.; Sunnyside, Wash.; Idaho Falls, Idaho; Prince Georges County, Md.; Abbeville and the east and west banks of the Mississippi River in New Orleans are vying for bragging rights in games that start at 1 p.m. Saturday.

A breakfast for coaches and other VIPs is slated for 8 a.m. today at the River Front Restaurant, after which officials will meet at Ralph Sellers field to go over the schedule of events.

A social for players and family members from all teams is scheduled from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Magdalen Square in the historic downtown district, where merchants have painted storefront windows to welcome tournament teams.

The Abbeville Main Street program led by Charlene Beckett will host a Sac a Papier or brown bag lunch, followed by a 7 p.m. Banquet of Champions at J.H. Williams Middle School.

Saturday's events include a 10 a.m. parade downtown, opening ceremonies at noon at the ball park and the first round of games, which continue through Aug. 27 or Aug. 28 if a deciding game is needed.

Greater Abbeville-Vermilion Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Rebecca Shirley said the tournament is a major economic shot in the arm. "These visitors will be staying here, eating in our great restaurants, shopping in our stores and hopefully going back home and telling all their friends and family about Vermilion Parish," she said.

The guest speaker at today's banquet is scheduled to be former major league pitcher Ken Brett, brother of Hall of Fame player George Brett of Kansas City Royals fame.