

CHARLES PATRICK TONER
“BUSTER”
LIFETIME COMMUNITY SERVICE 2011

Charles Patrick Toner, better known as “Buster,” was born September 22nd, 1934 in a house in Dawn Estates off Meridian Avenue. He was delivered by Dr. Clary who, after one look, said “he looks like a Buster!” His father died when he was 5 years old and his mother, like so many Irish immigrants, worked in the hospital and raised three children. She rented four or five houses before she finally bought her own home. As his good friend, Cal Cunningham used to say, “We grew up poor but didn’t know it.” Buster was in the first kindergarten class in Kings Park in 1939 and graduated from high school in 1952. He was a star basketball player in high school even though he was “height challenged” at about 5’7” and was a member of a County championship squad.

Buster worked many odd jobs all through high school, including clam digging, to help his mother. After graduation, he went to work in the hospital and lived in the hospital firehouse. He worked the night shift. During the day, he worked and learned the carpentry trade for a few years and then went to work for a construction owner doing mason work. He did hospital work at night and construction work during the day for 10 years. He then started his own mason business and still worked nights at the hospital.

He was married in 1955 and raised four children in town. He started working for the Town of Smithtown and eventually became the Smithtown Parks Department Commissioner. This is where his upbringing and his history as a hard worker began to reap benefits for the Town. He led by example. No one worked harder than Buster and he instilled in all of his workers the same work ethic that he had. Buster helped build the Smithtown Parks Department into one of the best-run, most efficient government departments anywhere. Starting with less than 15 full-time employees, there were over 60 full-time employees and a dozen part-time laborers by the time that Buster retired from the Parks Department in 1990.

His crew knew that their boss would expect nothing less than their best at all times. Buster insisted on quality and performance. His legacy is a system of parks that were well-maintained and that remain neighborhood jewels to this day. While he was Commissioner, he naturally got around to all areas of our town. He never forgot his roots in Kings Park and he was always ready to help out whenever and wherever there was a need. Many people were beneficiaries of Buster’s efforts and, even in retirement, he remains committed to the needs of his hometown – Kings Park.

THANKS BUSTER FOR YOUR YEARS OF SERVICE!