Richard Balzano is a graduate of North Haven High School and Providence College. He is the owner of RAB Associates in Branford, CT., a manufacturers rep agency of building materials and kitchen cabinets.

He began his coaching experience in Branford Little League in 1999; then becoming an AAU coach from 2001 to 2004 before moving on to coach American Legion from 2004 to 2016.He decided to retire in 2016 after 12 years. He is the only coach in Connecticut history to take four teams to the American Legion World Series. Balzano took over the Branford program as coach in 2005 and led Post 83 to a third-place finish in the American Legion World Series in Rapid City, South Dakota that year. Branford was one step away from playing for the national title, having been beaten by eventual champion Enid, Oklahoma, in the loser’s bracket final.

In an article in the New Haven Register dated July 21, 2016, Balzano said, “To win the whole thing was not a realistic thing. I had no idea there was a regional tournament or a Legion World Series. To play against so many incredible teams and to take a 6-4 lead in the 8th inning against Oklahoma with a 15-year-old pitcher on the mound (his son Jimmy).”

Two years later, with a number of the same players on the roster, Branford returned to the Legion World Series, winning a game in Bartlesville, Oklahoma. Among the stars of those two teams included Mike Olt, who later became the only Post 83 player to appear in a major league game.

In both 2010 and 2013, Branford failed to win a game in the World Series, played in Spokane, Washington, and Shelby, North Carolina, respectively. However, Balzano was a perfect four-for-four in both Connecticut and Northeast regional championship game appearances.

Branford also won or shared the Zone 2 title seven times in Balzano’s 12 years at the helm, including six consecutive times during a period from 2010 to 2015. His record in Zone 2 play was 250-59 (80.9 percent winning percentage), including an undefeated season in 2013 when his team finished 27-0 in zone play and 36-3 overall. His overall record, including Junior Legion, Senior Legion regular season games, tournaments and non-zone games since 2004 is 375-79.

The moment Balzano will always remember came with that 2007 team in the first round of the Legion World Series. Branford trailed Bellingham, Wash., 12-10, in the 13th inning and his son, Jimmy, blasted a 400-foot home run off a pitcher throwing 93 miles an hour to tie it.

“They brought in their closer, who pitched for Stanford and Jimmy hits the home run and we win it in the next inning, 13-12,” Balzano recalled. “Then we lost to eventual champion Columbia, Tenn.”

In his American Legion career, he won five American Legion state championships, four regional championships, four ALWS appearances and named Legion Coach of the Year five times.

He is the father of two sons, Richard and James and grandfather to one-year old Calla.