

Hopewell Valley News

HOPEWELL VALLEY: Turf field groundbreaking marked by \$25K donation

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Pictured at the July 5 turf field groundbreaking are: (from left) Charlotte Laracy (girls lacrosse), Laura Rodriguez (girls soccer), Casey Parret (Marching Black & Gold), Jen Didun (field hockey), Christian Dietz (boys soccer), "Murf" Butler (boys lacrosse), Sean Richards (football), Jim Caulfield (boys soccer) and Megan Hill (cheerleading). These CHS students are ready to shovel some dirt

The July 5 groundbreaking ceremony for a new turf athletic field at Hopewell Valley Central High School was marked by a major donation to the million-dollar project.

Robert Coleman and George Helmstetter, of the Hopewell Valley Gridiron Club, presented a \$25,000 check to Sheryl Stone, of the Hopewell Valley Recreation Foundation, which has raised the money for the field.

Unable to attend the ceremony were Gridiron Club members, Cynthia Wiley, Mike Foster and Dave Caldwell. Mr. Caldwell is head coach of the high school's football team.

"We are within \$20,000 of the \$1,000,000 we set out to raise last June (2011)," said Ms. Stone, a trustee of the Recreation Foundation, said after the Gridiron Club donation.

The groundbreaking ceremony was held on Bulldog Walk behind the high school's Performing Arts Center.

The new field — where students will play football, lacrosse, soccer and field hockey — will be located behind Central High School. It is expected to be complete by September.

In addition to the sports teams mentioned above, the high school's Marching Black and Gold (marching band and color guard) will use the field.

THE SHOVELS brought to the groundbreaking represented "the collaboration of the Recreation Foundation (made up of the recreational leaders in Hopewell Valley and committed business and community leaders), Hopewell Valley Regional School District, Hopewell Township professionals, board members and committee members, financial donors, and in-kind contributors," said Ms. Stone.

She added that the shovels "are being held in place by student athletes, who are the inspiration for our efforts and will enjoy this field for years to come."

Other recent \$25,000 donations were made by Chris Murphy, owner of The Front Porch gift shop in Pennington, and the Hopewell Valley Community Bank (HVCBank). Ms. Murphy and Pat Ryan, chairman of the board of the bank, and James Hyman, president and CEO of the bank, attended the groundbreaking.

Brian Barr, president of the Hopewell Valley Soccer Association, and Steve Faber, president of Hopewell Valley Lacrosse, whose organizations collectively have contributed \$250,000 to the project, also were on hand to celebrate the groundbreaking.

Singled out for special praise by Ms. Stone was local contractor Michael Ackerson, who has been working on the field for weeks.

"Mike has personally done the work you see behind you today and by the time the turf is laid will have donated more than \$400,000 of time, equipment, energy and expertise," Ms. Stone said.

"Whatever problems or challenges crop up, Mike seems to be able to find a solution by making a call or just taking on more work himself. With the township's support, Mike is able to work his regular job from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. and then come and work here until 9 p.m. and all weekend."

AND THEN, Ms. Stone said: "It is an honor to welcome George Conway, secretary/treasurer of Trap Rock Industries . . . and to thank Trap Rock for its donation of \$140,000 of stone and paving materials. Did I mention it is 7,500 tons of stone? Unfortunately 'Chip' Grundy, Hopewell Valley dad and father of the beautiful cheerleader on our fundraising brochure, is unable to be here today. He also happens to be president and CEO of IEW Construction Group, which will be providing trucking for all that stone."

Ms. Stone also thanked Pat Ryan, of HVCBank, for making it possible for Judy Manley to provide her "organizational acumen" and services to the Foundation during the campaign.

According to school district communications specialist, Alicia Brooks Waltman, the CHS Music and Theatre Parents Association also made a contribution to the fundraising effort to build the field.

Also on hand for the groundbreaking ceremony were Hopewell Township Mayor Michael Markulec, Township Committeeman Allen Cannon, township Administrator/Engineer and HoVal graduate Paul Pogorzelski, schools Superintendent Thomas Smith, Hopewell Valley Regional Board of Education President Lisa Wolff and others.