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HOPEWELL SUN

Turf's Up! at Hopewell Valley High School

Turf's Up! is an exciting, pioneering program to install an all-purpose artificial turf surface on an existing field at Hopewell Valley Central High School. It's exciting because it will tremendously improve the high school teams' ability to practice and compete in inclement weather by providing a world-class sports surface that's guaranteed for a minimum of ten years. It's pioneering since it's a three-way partnership between Hopewell Valley School District, Hopewell Valley Recreation Foundation and AstroTurf, the premier provider of artificial turf. The Recreation Foundation has made tremendous progress in the fundraising program, and, with continued community support, the turf field could be a reality this coming Spring.

Installing AstroTurf will do four things immediately: 1) make more practices more productive since they won't be regularly cancelled or held indoors due to weather; 2) allow more games to take place when scheduled rather than have them moved, cancelled or re-scheduled due to weather, 3) provide the high school teams with an equal basis of competition since all post-season playoffs and championships are played on artificial turf fields, and 4) provide increase economic benefit to our community.

Currently, the high school fall and spring athletic teams lose an enormous amount of practice time due to weather issues with the school's fields. During the 2010-2011 school year, among other situations, the Varsity Football Team had to play their home opener away because their field was unusable due to drought. Conversely, the Boys Varsity Lacrosse team could only have one practice on their field before their first scrimmage due to rain and wet fields. Numerous times, including the week of October 31-November 4, the high school had to pay to rent a turf field and provide buses to enable their teams to practice for play-off games. Earlier this Fall, the Varsity Soccer Field was closed for several days due to a sink hole.

All too often, home games for Hopewell Valley High School athletes must be re-scheduled or relocated to the opponents fields because of rain. Unfortunately, due to the high clay content, the school fields drain and dry very slowly, which creates regular scheduling and location challenges. An overwhelming majority of high schools in our region have at least one artificial turf field, which provides them more productive practice times, and, since Regional and Sectional Play-Offs are almost all played on artificial turf fields, our athletes compete at a disadvantage since the playing qualities of grass versus artificial turf are significantly different.

Finally, an artificial turf field will bring substantial economic benefit to our community. Hopewell Valley Soccer's Tournament, both the Girls and Boys Hopewell Valley Lacrosse Tournaments, and, very probably, a marching band competition, all possible with the implementation of the Astroturf field will provide approximately \$185,000 in annual local economic impact. Parents and athletes participating in these events spend money when they're here by purchasing food, beverages, gas, etc.

What does this mean for taxpayers of Hopewell Valley? The Recreation Foundation is currently fundraising for this gift to the school district. In addition, the District will benefit from reduced maintenance costs on that field – no grass cutting, lining or fertilizing.

Our local student-athletes and band members deserve the same advantages currently held by their competition. Our local businesses ought to have the increased revenue available through events currently being held at other venues due to our lack of an artificial turf field. Several thousand youth and high school athletes and a number of local businesses will benefit for many years through this initiative. Those beneficiaries, youth and adult, are a large majority of our Hopewell Valley community. Let's all pitch in to finalize Turf's Up! and build our field of dreams for our students. For more information, go to the Recreation Foundation's website, www.hvrecfoundation.org.