

Ellsworth group donates land for sports complex in Box Elder

A new sports complex planned for Box Elder featuring baseball, softball and soccer fields will be the first of its kind not only in western South Dakota but in the entire state, according to the project developers.

The Black Hills Sports Complex will be located off North Ellsworth Road and 225th Street next to the newly built Vandenberg Elementary School on land donated by the South Dakota Ellsworth Development Authority.

One of the most unique features of the complex will be the all-turf fields that will allow competition in all types of weather.

"They will be a unique design in South Dakota," said Eric Grimm, president of the organization working to raise money for field construction. "They will be completely all turf. There will also be a park included and the plan is to eventually have indoor batting cages and a concession stand."

The fields have been a dream for many years for Grim and others in Box Elder. New Douglas High School baseball, softball and soccer teams are in need of a facility to practice and play. The fields would also benefit the little league organization, Bandit Ball.

"When we started this, I looked at all those guys and I told them, 'don't underestimate what you're doing,'" Grim said.

He said it's hard for others to understand what this means to the people working on this and especially the kids.

"I talked to kids, even the ones that already graduated, and it's like Christmas to them," Grim said. "Even the ones that won't get to play on it, it's going to be big for them to be able to know they were part of an organization that made that happen."

The land donated by the SDEDA is worth about \$500,000, and the staff time and work donated by KTM Design Solutions and Skull Construction is considerable, but no exact dollar figure could be put on it, said Grimm.

Still, the group has to raise about \$5 million before it can break ground and start construction. Grimm said they will kickoff their fundraising efforts at the end of September and hope to have a ground-breaking within two years.

"This is not possible without the donation of land from these guys, this conversation doesn't get started without that," Grim said of the Ellsworth Development Authority.

He added that the in-kind donations of time and employee effort from the two local companies are essential as well.

"When some organizations say they give back to their community, that's beyond giving back," Grim said. "That's stepping up and showing that they are part of us."

Grim said even though it will be in Box Elder, the impact will go well beyond the small city near Ellsworth Air Force Base.

"It's about doing something that's never been done before for this community," Grim said. "And it's not just about Box Elder, but for the entire Black Hills region. There's nothing like it in the region right now."

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