

Sheridan, Grant County giving Yellowjackets good foundation

by [Wayne Bryan](#) | April 7, 2011 at 6:00 a.m.

SHERIDAN — The people and businesses of Sheridan and Grant County are showing their support for school athletics by contributing to a fund to install an artificial playing surface at Yellowjacket Stadium at Sheridan High School.

The fundraising campaign is looking to raise the largest amount ever collected from private sources by the Sheridan School District.

“It is \$261,000, and it’s going well,” said Mark Perkins, athletic director for the school district. “We are not at our goal yet, and we need all of it, but it has been all positive so far.” Perkins said if the rest of the funds are raised quickly, groundwork for the project could start as soon as early in May.

“I hope we can get started as soon as the soccer season is over,” Perkins said.

The total cost of the artificial turf is estimated to be \$661,000, although bids on the project will not be taken until the money is raised. On March 14, the Sheridan School Board committed \$400,000 of school construction bonds for the project, if the remainder of the funds is raised by donations and sponsorships.

Perkins said the community has responded.

“All the money we have raised is from our community,” he said. “We have money from the businesses in town and from individuals, with no big corporate sponsors.”

To encourage gifts to the campaign, seven levels of giving were created, Perkins said. There are 36 logo panels on the turf called “legacy panels” that will run along the sidelines on both the home and visitors side of the field.

“Those sponsors giving at the top level of \$25,000 or more will have two panels,” Perkins said, “one on the home side and one on the visitors side.”

The second level is for gifts of at least \$12,500. Contributors at that level will have one panel on the home side. Those giving \$7,500 will receive a panel on the visitors side. Each panel will measure 7 feet by 10 feet, Perkins said. The panels will remain for 10 years or more.

Those making gifts on other levels of giving will receive special recognition. The Blue Level will be for donors who give gifts of at least \$5,000, and the Yellow will be for those giving at the \$2,500 level. The Coaches Level will be for gifts of \$1,000 or more, and the Friends Level will honor those giving under \$1,000.

Those who make gifts will be recognized at the dedication of the field during halftime of the first home game this fall, Perkins said.

“It will give the community a chance to be a part of it all,” Perkins said. “They have really gotten behind this campaign.”

Louis Campbell, head football coach for the Sheridan Yellowjackets, said the players are aware of the support the community is showing to the school district’s athletic teams with this campaign.

“Getting the synthetic turf for the stadium is important to the success of this program and the team,” he said. “It makes a statement to the players about the kind of support they have from the community.”

Perkins said the turf will be safer for the players and should reduce injuries. The turf will also end the problems encountered when fall rains hit a field that is used almost every day of the week.

Two years ago, every game was played in a quagmire,” he said. “We totally redid the field six years ago at a cost of \$225,000. We started all over from the ground up, and it is in bad shape again.”

During football season, the field is used by the varsity, junior varsity, junior high school and 7th-8th-grade teams every week.

“There used to be peewee Saturdays, but they had to be moved, and the band now has to practice in the parking lot,” Perkins said. “All of that could return to the football field with the new turf.”

The field can also be used by the soccer team and by the community on the weekends when not being used by the school’s athletic program.

“Now we have to try and keep people off the field because of the shape it is in,” Perkins said. “When we have the new turf, people can throw a frisbee around again.”

The coaches were repainting the field every night, and they will not have to be doing that on the artificial surface. Coach Campbell said his coaches are now spending a lot of time and money preparing the field. Maintenance of the field costs \$30,000 annually. Perkins said that amount will be greatly reduced with the new artificial surface.

“The surface would have to be replaced every 10 to 12 years, but it will cost only about half as much,” Perkins said. “So if you can save \$30,000 a year for 10 years, that will pay for the new surface.”

The athletic director said a citizens committee is leading the fundraising with the help of a consultant, Tim Cowan of Athletic Surfaces Plus.

“Tim will be the project manager and is coordinating the fundraising,” Perkins said. “He has done this for the installation of 14 or so fields in the last two to three years, including the fields at Lake Hamilton High School and at Central High School in Little Rock.”

Campbell said that if Sheridan can get the turf installed in time for the first game of the year, the team will play most of its games on an artificial surface. Perkins said all but three of the 6-A South conference teams play on artificial turf.

“This will also save uniforms,” he said. “We play with white pants, and in white jerseys some of the time, and we use a lot of bleach, and you know what that does to clothes, so it will save on uniforms.”

Perkins said the surface of Yellowjacket Stadium will be traditional, unlike some colleges that have gone to school colors or even stripes, as planned for the new field at the University of Central Arkansas in Conway.

“Yeah, it will be green,” Perkins said with a laugh. “That blue [field] at Boise [State University in Idaho] gives me a headache, so it is going to be a traditional green.”

Contributions for the artificial turf are being taken by the Sheridan Yellowjackets Foundation.