

## **Tumwater soccer fields take steps toward becoming reality**

### **Complex could open next year, organizers seek community help**

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Eight years have passed, but a nonprofit group continues to move close to its goal of opening a soccer complex for children south of Tumwater.

The Blackhills Community Soccer Complex is expected to open for play in 2010 at the earliest, but organizers say they need residents' help more than ever now that the project is reaching the costly construction phase. The complex is on 93rd Avenue Southwest, a short distance west of Interstate 5.

Dee Ragsdale, the group's treasurer, said the project, which is estimated to cost \$10 million, will be completed with donations, grants and "elbow grease and hard labor." "Everybody is just pitching in," she said. "That's the beauty of this."

The complex will feature 10 grass soccer fields, two of which will be converted to all-weather turf at a later date, as well as a trail, about 300 parking stalls, a concessions stand, restrooms and bleachers. The group will operate and maintain the complex with revenue generated from the field rentals. It purchased the property in 2003. Fundraising began two years earlier.

The group says it has received more than \$900,000 in in-kind contributions and volunteer time between 2001 and 2007. As of 2007, it has raised more than \$300,000 in fundraising, according to its annual report. Still, it said, more donations, in-kind contributions and donations are needed.

Combat engineers from Fort Lewis graded the 40-acre site in 2006 to train for their deployment to Afghanistan. Hundreds of volunteers picked up truckloads of sticks and rocks a year later.

Many businesses have pitched in. Lakeside Industries and Wilder Construction loaned graders. Wilco Agriliance of Chehalis donated grass seed and fertilizer. The Olympia Rotary Club contributed \$1,500 to the seeding.

Goals for this year include seeking the remaining fields and installing power for field lights.

Bob Marra, manager of the Deschutes Youth Soccer Association, said there's a high demand for youth soccer fields in the area even with the near-completion of the Regional Athletic Complex east of Lacey.

Four of that complex's six regulation-sized soccer fields are available for play; the remaining two fields will be ready in late July or early August, said Jim Sheler, Lacey's parks and recreation director.

Marra said that's a small complex compared with those in other communities, including Arlington, Bellingham and the Tri-Cities.

Marra's organization consists of soccer clubs that each have hundreds of children up to age 19.

"The demand is only getting bigger, and the shortage of fields is becoming critical for teams," Marra said.

Ragsdale said the developing complex will boost the area's economy by attracting soccer teams from around the region.

"Talk about economic stimulus. That's what this is. Hotels fill up. Restaurants fill up," she said.

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