

Softball Committee Presentation at Business Meeting 9/11/19
Presented by Committee Member Rose Marie Ottman

Other Softball Committee Members: Brooke Laine, Carolyn MacRae, Cheryl Chambers, and Julie Gudaitis.

In the late 1990's, Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe spent considerable time and energy defining who we wanted to be when we "grew-up." What came out of that process was the formation of the Foundation, a new allocations process, and a dedication to setting aside significant savings to fund a legacy project that would make a difference in our community; and, without Soroptimist's leadership and financial backing, might not otherwise happen.

What is the project:

The Soroptimist Community Softball Field Renovation—Home of Girls Softball is a legacy project for our club. We have an opportunity to demonstrate to the young girls and women of this community that we value them and that they are worthy of our investment. It has been more than 45 years since any improvements have been made to the softball playing field at the South Tahoe Middle School, validating a definite need for renovation, and the expectation that if we do not invest in the project, the prospect of change is unlikely for many more years to come.

The Softball Committee is proposing that this project be constructed in multiple phases. Phase 1 would serve as our major project and could be accomplished with the current available funds of \$334,768.93. The Soroptimist Community Softball Field renovation project (or Phase 1) would upgrade the dilapidated conditions of the field making it more functional and greatly improving the conditions for play. The current softball field is actually "sinking" in the center, and our investment could provide the girls a literal "level playing field" to the boys' fields. The conceptual plans have been formulated in consultation with the local softball community to provide a facility that is needed and well-designed.

Phase 2 would likely include the addition of a score booth and equipment storage building, for an estimated construction cost of \$43K. Although this construction is necessary to complete the full renovation, softball practice and games can still occur without it on a usable field with better amenities. The costs for architectural drawings have been included in Phase 1, so that if other funding becomes available from SISLT or another organization, the project is ready to move forward without delay.

Phase 3 would include upgrades such as a restroom, ticket and concession building (with an estimated cost of \$250K), programable lighting, and additional parking. The expense and scope of Phase 3 would require multiple partnerships to share in the planning and cost.

These phases are the recreational vision for the Soroptimist Community Softball Field, but the only commitment Soroptimist would currently be making is to Phase 1 as our major project. SISLT members could choose our level of involvement in future phases, but the potential for ongoing creative community expression is available to us as a club for possible fundraising, social gatherings, or community events, since the field is essentially a public meeting space.

Why the project is necessary:

The girls' softball field and the boys' baseball field are located next to each other adjacent to the South Tahoe Middle School.

- The girls' softball infield is sinking and does not have an adequate clay content making it dusty, rutted and lacking support. The baseball field, in contrast, has supportive soil with a high clay content, and temporary fencing erected around the infield when not being used for play to prevent disturbance.
- The girls use a small broken scoreboard and have no area to warm up, while the boys have a large

sponsored scoreboard and a designated separate warm up area and batting cage.

- The softball field does not have covered dugouts for the girls, as does the baseball field, and has one third of the seating capacity for spectators (with some of the seating located in the parking lot).
- The fully enclosed baseball field allows entry fees to be charged at tournaments, which creates a revenue source for baseball. The softball field lacks this closed in fencing condition, and is unable to charge fees at tournaments.

The disparity between the facilities is so pronounced that when I interviewed the LTUSD field maintenance staff as they prepared the softball field for play, two different workers personally walked me over to the ST Babe Ruth baseball field to illustrate an example of a better field.

How softball renovations solve and meet the needs of our community:

The estimated total cost for Phase 1 is \$324,915. This includes:

- Architectural drawings, surveys, permits and site utilities;
- site clearing, grubbing, grading, erosion control and revegetation;
- renovation of the current parking to a drop-off area with ADA parking;
- paving a pathway to access South Tahoe Middle School parking lot;
- adding a player warm up area;
- building closed dugouts with benches;
- purchasing large spectator bleachers and scoreboard;
- erecting new fencing for backstop, dugouts, gates and current perimeter to allow fee collection at tournaments;
- adding site furnishings, for example a PA system, new bases, water fountains, and signage designating Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe as sponsor of renovation; and
- The budget includes a 10% construction contingency fee.

Budgeting estimates for the softball renovation project are figures based upon conceptual drawings. Actual costs will vary once a final set of architectural plans are completed. If the softball renovation project is approved by the club, a future committee will be looking at the actual architectural plans and bids provided to determine that we are receiving value and quality with competitive pricing.

The estimates were coordinated by design and construction professionals including Steve Noll of Design Workshop and Dave Galicia of GB Engineering (also high school varsity softball coach) based on proposed conceptual designs that were done via consultation with the local softball community.

Please read the full detailed budget in the proposal that will be provided for your review.

Who does project serve:

“If you build it, they will come” is a nice catch phrase from the movie “Field of Dreams,” but who would SISLT be building our field for? Current estimates include approximately 2,000 people benefiting directly from this project during the annual season of play. Additionally, there is potential for growth as the newer conditions will attract more participation in softball leagues and tournament play.

Organizations involved in field use include:

- South Tahoe Middle School PE classes
- South Tahoe High School Girls Varsity and Junior Varsity Softball in the spring
- High Sierra Girls’ Softball
- ASA [American Softball Association] Girls’ Club Softball

- ASA Adult Softball (Co-ed and Men's teams)
- ASA sponsored tournaments

Benefits to youth:

- 1) **Softball teaches what it means to be part of a team.** Learning to work with others and to set goals as a group empowers us to achieve more and facilitates the development of leadership skills. It can also inspire us to pay it forward through volunteerism or mentoring others to succeed. Women who help women help us all. One of the most recent examples is the impact the United States women's national soccer team has had on the discussion of equal pay for women. Right after the team won the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup the crowd in the stadium chanted a deafening "Equal Pay!"
- 2) **Softball teaches that it is okay to make mistakes.** Learning how to receive constructive criticism and learn from it helps us to evolve through hard work into our best selves.
- 3) **Softball teaches that sometimes you have to fight for it.** It's okay to get dirty and bruised. Confidence comes from staying optimistic and believing in yourself and sometimes believing in the power of the group. When up to bat it is you as an individual doing your best working for the team, but when you return to the field it is back to being stronger as the collective.
- 4) **Softball teaches healthy exercise habits to last a lifetime.** According to the American College of Sports Medicine, only 40% of children achieve the recommended daily physical activity levels. Continued physical activity later in life can reduce the risk of anxiety and depression, cancer, osteoporosis, obesity and cardiovascular issues

Ernst Young Global Vice Chair for Public Policy says, "For companies and countries that are serious about wanting to advance more women into leadership roles, you can't underestimate the role of sport in closing the gender gap." A 2015 study of 400 female C-suite executives found that 94% had played sports. According to *CEO Magazine*, "Sport offers so much more than just physical benefits. It keeps you mentally healthy, teaches basic social relationship skills, and forges commitment, determination and a competitive mindset."

Additional benefits to youth are outlined in the proposal document, so please read it carefully.

SISLT Benefits:

Comradery is a valued reason for being a Soroptimist referred to by members in the recent Foundation Advisory Committee survey. There are multiple possibilities of instilling greater comradery and facilitating our sense of purpose as individuals, as well as collectively, should we choose to create these opportunities via the Soroptimist Community Softball Field major project. In the FAC survey, 68% of our members want to not only contribute financially, but also to donate their time in a meaningful way. Team building and networking can happen spending time together, working in the snack shack to raise money for the club, assisting with softball tournaments, etc. In addition, we can see the interaction of the players we are supporting, and witness the direct impact of our efforts knowing our time and energy are making a difference in their lives.

The Soroptimist Community Softball Field will create a positive and recognized community presence for the club, highlighting our commitment to empower women and youth through a constructive, esteem-building, healthy activity. Our prominently displayed signage will remind players, spectators and passersby the role Soroptimist played in improving the facility and recreational experience.

If we want to attract younger members, we need to offer a service project that is hands-on, interactive with the population being served, and provides feedback that the volunteer time expended is making a difference. The softball major project could fulfill this narrative.

Construction of the Soroptimist Community Softball Field fulfills ALL the requirements of the Major Project mission statement.

- 1) **Enhances the lives of women and children.** Softball empowers women/girls and can improve self-esteem.

- 2) **Benefits the community.** Renovation of the softball field improves public recreation and is congruent with the “Tahoe Brand” cited in the *Lake Tahoe Basin Prosperity Plan* formed by multiple inter-state agencies.
- 3) **Uses sustainable strategies.** The organic material and asphalt that will be removed will be recycled and erosion control measures will be implemented.
- 4) **Is cost effective to maintain.** The land is owned and maintained by the Lake Tahoe Unified School District
- 5) **Is self-sustaining.** If Soroptimist only completes Phase 1 and no future changes occur, the field will be fully operational for play and a vast improvement to current conditions. The school district will continue to manage the property.
- 6) **Creates a permanent legacy for the club.** The Soroptimist Community Softball field will be recognized by its name, and signage, chosen to have the best visibility to the public. Creating a permanent legacy with this investment will continue to empower women and girls for generations to come.

If Soroptimist members vote to support the Soroptimist Community Softball Field, this project is a full hands-on deck volunteer commitment by the club. Our club will create an ongoing vision for a project that supports and empowers the young women in our community. The design, implementation, and oversight of this project is administered by club members. This would require setting up committees to manage the various tasks associated with the renovation.

Next steps after renovating the field:

Phase 1 would renovate the field, but future involvement is up to us and our own creativity. There are a number of different angles we could approach utilizing the field, such as for fundraising and community relations. For example, some ideas might include:

- 1) Raising money through snack shack sales;
- 2) Organizing a health and wellness day at the field;
- 3) Fundraising games: for example, city services playing each other, or our club vs SI Tahoe Sierra, or an exhibition softball game with UC Davis against UNR;
- 4) Developing a curriculum similar to “Girls on the Run” applied to softball with some kind of mentoring component;
- 5) Providing scholarships for women at Live Violence Free to play in the adult league or for youth to participate in High Sierra Softball; or
- 6) Hosting a family picnic night with lawn games.

We can track the success of our project through increased enrollment and field reservations, surveys administered to players and spectators, community feedback and future partnerships in recreation.

It is important to note that creating “brand recognition” for Soroptimist through softball does NOT preclude us from continuing to support our existing programs or volunteering for other worthy causes. The increased visibility and community recognition from softball, could improve our fundraising for non-softball-related Soroptimist projects.

If the Soroptimist Community Softball Field is approved as our major project, work could begin in spring of 2020 and potentially be available for play later that same season.

The Softball Committee requests that you read the full softball renovation proposal document that will be provided with your voting material, as it provides more detail than can be presented here.

There are 3 main reasons why we as a club should select this as our major project.

- 1) **It fulfills ALL the requirements of the Major Project mission statement**
- 2) **It creates a lasting Soroptimist legacy, and**
- 3) **If we don’t do this for our girls, who will?**