

CHAPMAN SPORTS COMPLEX

Woodlawn, Illinois

JULY 2012

PROJECT DESCRIPTION & STATE OF DEVELOPMENT

Organization: The Woodlawn Community Foundation was formed when a group of Woodlawn citizens came together and decided that the new millennium was time to pull together in a community wide effort to enrich the lives of our youth through an improved Little League program and facility. In January 2000, The Chapman Sports Complex Committee was formed to initiate the construction of new baseball/softball fields. The Woodlawn Community Foundation, a not-for-profit, 501 (c)(3) tax-exempt, charitable organization was subsequently formed to spearhead this project, as well as umbrella the Woodlawn Little League Program. The Foundation oversees all aspects of our summer ball program; including, but not limited to clinics, camps, coaching, scheduling, official selection, instructional programs, upkeep, concessions, and fundraising. The foundation is a very large group of dedicated individuals working toward one goal – which is and always has been – to provide our children with facilities that will promote positive life skills and a place for them to learn and grow in a safe environment for many years to come.

Inspiration: The Chapman Sports Complex is dedicated to the Catherine and William (Junior) Chapman. The Chapmans began the baseball program in Woodlawn many years ago and provided the love, guidance, teaching and support for young boys in baseball.

Junior coached the teams along with Catherine, his wife, providing training and instruction. He and Catherine drove the boys to the away games and seemed to always be there when the children needed someone. Later, Junior became a certified umpire and began umpiring the games as more children became involved and more teams were added. On a Sunday afternoon when the boys would go to the high school field for a pickup game, the Chapmans would walk across the street from their home; equipment in hand, and join in, always making the children feel important and special. They became parental extensions for several hundred young people over the years, providing not only training in sports but training in life as well.

Their love of children and the game of baseball are reflected in our program today. Now, many of the coaches, volunteer umpires, concession workers and parents once played under the direction of Junior and Catherine Chapman. We are honored to continue their work and are very thankful to them for providing us with the moral foundation to ensure that our children will always come first and that the program they started so long ago will continue, prosper and grow for many years to come.

History: The Woodlawn Little League program is rich in history and has provided numerous opportunities over the last 35 years for the youth of our community. In the mid-sixties, the Little League was a fledgling program for boys of all ages to participate on 1 traveling team. Programs for girls were added in the late 70's and the numbers have continued to grow by leaps and bounds since that time. In 1992, we served 135 boys and girls on 11 teams. In 1998, we fielded 18 teams with 218 children involved, but were forced to cut that back to 17 teams in the summer of 1999 because we could not schedule enough games on the two fields we had available to accommodate a larger program. Boys and girls age's 5 years to 16 years old participate in the summer program. With these numbers increasing and the field options at that time, scheduling and coordinating a successful season of summer ball had become quite daunting, leaving no open dates for rain outs, practices, clinics, and camps. This is when the Chapman Sports Complex was born and has become what it is today.



Just over 21.5 acres of ground located in the heart of our community was obtained by the Village of Woodlawn and granted to the Foundation to be the home of our “Fields of Dreams”. The Chapman Sports Complex began with the construction of three new fields (one 350’ baseball field and two 245’ softball fields). The design included a concession facility with handicap accessible restrooms and an observation/broadcasting booth in the center of the backstops along with a pavilion area. Netting has been placed over the entire

spectator area between backstops and between the fields to prevent foul balls from entering those areas. Each field has dirt infields designed to allow for maximum drainage. Two shelters have been relocated from the village park along with some playground equipment, and a walking trail has been developed winding around the entire complex. Over the past 8 years, the aforementioned plans have been completed thanks to tremendous dedication, volunteerism, and fund raising by a truly amazing community. Future goals include batting cages, possible soccer fields, and an enclosed play area for younger children to enjoy while their brothers and sisters are playing ball. It is our intention to make the complex a complete family gathering area and ultimately become self-supporting.

Involvement: No child is turned away from our program. We have many children that cannot afford the fee nor transportation to away games. This is taken care of for these kids with funds set aside to allow them to participate. Our community is small, 750 residents; however, we pull from the area around us because of the quality of our program and sports complex and the fact that kids get to play and participate. The facility is also used by both the Grade School and High School for some of their games and several tournaments have been hosted by our schools and little league. The facility is open to the public for use and has been utilized by the Veteran's program and children and adults with special needs.

Objectives: Foundation's Goals for the Chapman Sports Complex

- · To construct a first class recreational facility that provides lighted baseball and softball fields to meet the demands of the growing baseball program in our community now and into the future.
- · To improve the quality of youth baseball and softball by having adequate lighted and drained fields.
- · To expand and improve our baseball and softball programs by offering instructional camps and clinics that will improve skills, encourage teamwork and provide unforgettable experiences for our youth.
- · To ensure the growth of the softball program by offering enough teams to accommodate our girls.
- · To provide a safe, supervised environment that will address all aspects of the game of baseball.
- · To enrich the lives of all the residents in our community through the use and enjoyment of the complex.
- · To become self sufficient in maintaining the quality, attractiveness, and function of the facility for many years to come.

Project Need: In order to accomplish the list of goals and projects, WCF Board Members, Little League Board members, Coaches, businesses and members of our community have pulled together to focus on each project with fundraisers, in-kind donation of equipment and supplies and hours and hours of donated labor.

One of our ongoing projects is to complete the playground so our younger children will have a place to play and be safe while attending games with their family. We have the fencing and 2 small swing sets. One local boy scout took on a project of building a train

with engine, cars and caboose out of treated lumber to place on the playground for the kids. This project was amazing. We are still working on updates to the playground and will do that as money is obtained and to keep in compliance with playground requirements.

Another need was a walking trail for the community to use. Another boy scout jumped to the call and worked on the walking trail which encompasses the outside area of the ball field. This project was very beneficial to the ballpark. We are proud of our community and especially proud of the youth who choose to make a difference.

Other projects completed are 2 batting cages for 2 areas of practice for all teams. We have interest from others that use the ball fields and felt the need for the batting cages was one of the top priorities. Our current project is a brick walkway that will make bricks available for persons to purchase and engrave their name or saying on the brick to be placed in the walkway by the shelters. The bricks will vary in size and in cost. In the center of each side of the walkway will be a 20x20 stone that will reference the Chapman's who inspired this dream.

The facility is used for several events in the community including the Kyle Price Memorial held in the spring, our Gold Rush Festival held in the fall, Ag Farm Day for the High School FFA and FHA, Regional and Sectional baseball and softball games for our schools, Play day for special needs children and a stopover for the riders from Bicycle Illinois....to name a few.

Old and new photos are attached. Hopefully this will give a better idea of where we started and how far we have come in 10 + years that spans this project. We feel strongly that the "Field of Dreams" is a valuable asset to our community. "Our Kids are Our Future" and we strive to make a positive influence in their lives.

Thank you for considering our request.

Woodlawn Community Foundation

Sherry Williams

Sberry Williams, President

P O Box 311

Woodlawn, Illinois 62898

<http://csc.mvn.net>