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# sportsTURF

## Giving Back

# Makes An Impact

"The outfield had more peaks and valleys than the Asian economy, and the weeds were as plentiful as the thin, brown patches that passed for grass." Wow - what a description of an athletic field. But, this lead-in taken from *The Arizona Republic* newspaper is the introduction to a positive article - not a negative one.

The article is titled, "Community spirit wins turf war for benefit of kids in Chandler." The field described - in far from glowing terms - is located at the Chandler, Ariz., Boys & Girls Club. The positive side of the story is that this field was the focus of a massive renovation as the service project of the Sports Turf Managers Association of Arizona.

Mike Greene, the branch executive for the Chandler Boys & Girls Club was quoted as saying, "I've been here for seven years, and we've been talking about getting that field fixed up ever since I got here."

STMAAZ President Kris Kircher is the Chandler parks maintenance irrigation coordinator. One of his quotes in the article explains much about why the renovation wasn't happening: "We estimated it was going to cost \$100,000 to repair the broken (irrigation) line and fix up the field, and there just never seemed to be the money for it."

Trite as it may sound, where there's a will, there's a way. Unleash a bunch of dedicated individuals aimed at achieving a common goal, and anything is possible.

According to Kircher, response was overwhelming. Once the site was designated and the call for assistance issued in late January, more than 25 vendors kicked in with donations of various types of equipment and supplies to get the job done.

Individuals, sports turf managers

and local members of the community gathered at the field on Friday nights and Saturdays until early April. They rolled up their sleeves to pitch in and do whatever it took to transform the field to good, playable condition.

Most STMA affiliated chapters, and the groups in various stages of chapter formation, have made a commitment to give something back to one of their local communities in the form of a similar service-project outreach. The sites chosen for these service projects are always fields in need, often for a wide variety of reasons. They lack the funds necessary for renovation or repair - again, usually for a wide variety of reasons.

For vendors, donations of dollars, products, equipment, or equipment use could be compared to stripping profits off the bottom line. Nevertheless, they give. The field work is donated: freely and cheerfully given after the end of a long working day, or on a cherished day off. The professional sports turf managers know exactly what they're getting themselves into, and "just do it" anyway.

Another of Kircher's quotes from the *Arizona Republic* article sums up the motivation behind such ambitious projects and such dedication: "A lot of emphasis goes to Major League Baseball and colleges for having beautiful, safe fields," he said. "Our feeling is that everyone should have a safe, quality field to play on, from Little League on up."

Congratulations, Chandler Boys & Girls Club! We know you'll put that great field to good use.

Congratulations, STMAAZ! You've started the spring season with a wonderful glow of good feeling - and have given some great encouragement for others out there to get going on their own service projects.