

FIELD CONTRACTOR "BUILDS" THEIR COMMUNITY



▲ **Ted Mercer**, left, and his son, Troy, built and maintain a public ballfield in their hometown of Troy, OH with their own time and money.

Former Mercer Group, Inc., a regional athletic field contractor based in Troy, OH specializes in athletic field construction, renovation and maintenance of all types of athletic fields. Their clients consist of college, high school and parks and recreation sports fields.

Ted Mercer, owner of Mercer Group and a native of Troy, used to frequently drive by a park owned by the City of Troy located close to his office and warehouse. This site was the town dump in the 1950's and 1960's. Mercer couldn't help notice the dilapidated baseball backstop and the dirt field grown over with weeds. One day Mercer knew something had to be done.

So Mercer and his son, Troy, and a staff consisting of four went into action. Mercer approached Troy city officials in the fall of 2012 and asked permission to construct a youth baseball field. In return for Mercer Group installing and maintaining the field, the City of Troy would allow the field to be called "Mercer Group Field." The city park

board agreed, and thus the construction of the new field. All Mercer asked for was that the field be open to anyone who would want to use it.

"We wanted to give back and the city was tremendous in allowing us to do this," Mercer says.

Mercer's labor of love certainly didn't come easy. The journey toward a new field began in March 2013 with the leveling of the playing field. Parts of the field had to be raised more than 3 feet to provide a flat playing surface, which meant Mercer Group had to bring in more than 7,000 tons of dirt. One month later the dirt was graded and laser leveled to prepare for the topsoil over-lay. About 880 tons of topsoil was brought in. In late-summer 2012, the outfield was graded and seeded and the foul poles were installed. Over the winter, the outfield fence and backstop were installed. The outfield fence measures a uniform 225 feet from home plate, the exact same dimensions used at the Little League World Series' Lamade Stadium in Williamsport, PA.

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Around the same time Mercer Group Field was taking shape earlier this spring, the Cincinnati Reds were getting a new profile installed in their infield at the Great American Ballpark. Mercer, who knows Red's groundskeeper Doug Gallant and his assistant, Chad Lavender, asked if they could have a few truckloads of the Reds' old topdressing. Two loads of the infield mix were brought straight from Great American Ballpark to put atop Mercer Group Field.

Once completed Mercer Group has continued to do the maintenance of the field including, but not limited to, mowing, infield screening and lining, fertilization of turf, as well as general ball field maintenance. Mercer Group donated all the construction and the maintenance costs of the field. All improvements were paid for by the Mercer Group and donated to the City of Troy.

The ball field is designed for 12U and under baseball and all ages of women's softball. The field is used by the general public. Mercer Group has plans each year to make improvements to the field. It is truly a public/private partnership with Mercer Group and the government entity of the City of Troy Park Board.

"As city budgets get tighter and tighter, we believe you will see more projects like this in cities across the country," Mercer says. "It is truly heart-warming to see a park area once used very little, to now see kids, both boys and girls, playing baseball and softball. I could not be prouder of our company for giving back to our community." ■



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