



**Synthetic Turf**<sup>SM</sup>  
COUNCIL

# Attracting Funding & Local Support for a Synthetic Turf Field



Published April 2012

# Table of Contents

1. Introduction letter from Rick Doyle, Synthetic Turf Council President
2. Step One: Define your purpose and goals
3. Step Two: Create a Committee
4. Step Three: Initiate Fundraising:
  - a. Public Grants
  - b. Private Grants
  - c. Private Fundraising/Sponsorships
  - d. Public/private partnerships
  - e. Professional fundraisers
  - f. Supplier/vendor financing
  - g. Organizing a public gathering
5. Step Four: Use Communication Tools
  - a. PowerPoint presentation for educating key decision makers
  - b. FAQ
  - c. Additional Resources
6. Case Studies

The ideas for non-traditional funding alternatives were excerpted from a presentation given by Bill Seymour, P.E., of Gale Associates, Inc. at the STC's Spring Membership Meeting in 2011.



# Synthetic Turf<sup>SM</sup>

## C O U N C I L

Dear Synthetic Turf Field Supporter,

We've spoken to numerous athletic directors, booster clubs, coaches and administrators nationwide who passionately want to bring a synthetic turf field to their school. They recognize that the durable, lush and safe grass-like surface allows more students to play and practice sports and increase their fitness levels. Able to be used in the rain or during the months when grass doesn't grow, synthetic turf fields also accommodate multiple sports and activities, conserve water and reduce maintenance costs.

Today's synthetic turf is designed to simulate the experience of practicing and playing on the best grass fields. Demand has grown to the point where more than 7,000 synthetic turf fields are currently being used in North America by high school and collegiate athletes involved in football, soccer, hockey, baseball, rugby, lacrosse and many other sports. About half of all NFL teams currently play their games on synthetic turf and, since 2003, over 70 FIFA U-17 and U-20 World Cup matches have been played on synthetic turf soccer fields.

However, raising funds for field has become more challenging in light of the economic conditions of the past few years. That's why the [Synthetic Turf Council](http://www.synthetic-turf-council.org) (STC) has created this packet to help you raise money and educate the community about the benefits of a synthetic turf sports field. It includes fundraising tips, advice demonstrating the viability of the project, educational materials and overall recommendations to help your group move forward with its dream of obtaining a synthetic turf field.

With our non-profit trade association's focus assisting buyers and end users with the selection, use, and maintenance of synthetic turf systems, we hope this information is of great benefit to you. If you have any additional questions, don't hesitate to contact me at [rick@syntheticturfcouncil.org](mailto:rick@syntheticturfcouncil.org) or 678-385-6720.

Cheers,

Rick Doyle, President  
Synthetic Turf Council  
400 Galleria Parkway, Suite 1500  
Atlanta, GA 30339

## Step One: Define Your Purpose and Goals

The key to a successful fundraising effort is to have clearly defined goals and a purpose that can be embraced by the community you serve. For example, if your new multi-purpose synthetic turf field will allow for the introduction of new activities – like soccer and lacrosse in addition to football, that means more students will have the chance to become active and develop the leadership and teamwork skills that arise from playing team sports. Tips include:

1. **Be specific in discussing the field's impact.** It is much stronger to say “over 500 students will benefit from the introduction of new sports and physical education classes on the field” or “thousands of children from community youth leagues will now have a place to play soccer year-round” than making vague statements about increased usage.
2. **Do your research.** Is your facility the only one in the area without a synthetic turf field? Can you show how more students will have chances to compete for college athletic scholarships with the addition of the playing surface? Quantify points of difference as much as possible, such as games missed or rescheduled due to weather, the costs of bussing students to alternate facilities or rentals when games can't be played at home. In addition, use pictures of the existing field conditions to illustrate why they may be unsatisfactory or unsafe.
3. **Demonstrate the viability of the project.** Funding sources want to see that you've thought of every step, right down to the specifications of how the field will be constructed and used. That's why the STC recommends partnering with an experienced design professional or consultant to truly bring your project to life and offer guidance. In some cases, you may benefit from an initial feasibility study as well. You may also want to investigate local ordinances, codes and permitting requirements that may impact the project and your timeline. Visit [www.syntheticurfCouncil.org](http://www.syntheticurfCouncil.org) to search for a qualified engineering and architectural professional in your community with sports field expertise.
4. **Develop realistic timelines.** Fundraising is no small task, so do not underestimate the time and effort it will take to build and complete a successful campaign. With the help of your consultant, estimate the time needed to raise the necessary funds and build the field.
5. **Obtain not-for-profit status.** Before initiating fundraising, set up a not-for-profit foundation to receive donations so they are tax deductible.

## Step Two: Create a Committee

Whether you are an athletic director, principal, active volunteer or a coach, chances are good that your schedule doesn't allow extra time for fundraising or organizing public gatherings. It takes a village to raise money for a synthetic turf field and a committee of community members should be formed who can help with this process. It is important to put the proper amount of ground work in before presenting to the School Board, whose approval is necessary to move forward. Recommendations include:

- Start by populating your fundraising committee with people who can leverage their specific expertise to advance the effort, like a local contractor, attorney, financial consultant, town planner, communications expert or fundraising professional. Be strategic about who to bring to this committee; technical experts should be selected for their ability to meet your anticipated needs.
- Add individuals such as parents who are typically the most enthusiastic about bringing synthetic turf to your school. In addition to the ones you have a relationship with, reach out to middle school and youth families. From the first fundraiser to the first game could be a long time, so make sure you approach parents whose children will ultimately benefit most from your synthetic turf field. Committee members can also include community leaders and school alumni.
- This group can range in size, usually no more than a dozen individuals; just make sure you select people who are willing to commit their time to this volunteer role.
- Clearly define roles, responsibilities and expectations, as well as leadership of the committee.
- Hold committee meetings on campus or at the home of a member at least once a month. As the project progresses, meetings will likely increase. Make sure everyone has time to participate.
- The earlier you form the committee the better. Ideally, the committee should be formed and design consultant selected before presenting to the Board of Education. This way, you'll have a larger support group.

## Step Three: Initiate Fundraising

While conventional municipal funding options were a popular way to raise money in the past, in today's economic environment it is much harder to secure that kind of support through town appropriations committees and meetings, capital projects and municipal bonds.

Instead, an increasing number of schools and organizations are exploring:

- Public grant programs
- Private grants
- Creative fundraising ideas/sponsorships
- Public/private partnerships
- Professional fundraisers
- Supplier/vendor financing

Learn more about each and additional options on the following pages.

## Public Grant Programs

A number of federal and state agencies exist that provide funding for community development projects like parks and athletic fields. Several prominent ones include:

- [Land and Water Conservation Fund](#) - Provides matching grants to States and local governments for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities (as well as funding for shared federal land acquisition and conservation strategies).
- [The Urban Parks and Recreation Recovery](#) (UPARR) Program – Awards matching grants and technical assistance to economically distressed urban communities, specifically direct Federal assistance to urban localities for rehabilitation of critically needed recreation facilities.
- [EPA Brown/Greenfield’s Program](#) – Allocates grants for brownfield land redeveloped for beneficial use to the community, such as athletic fields.
- [HUD – Community Development](#) - Provides communities with resources to address a wide range of unique community development needs.
- State and local grants – Often individual states and communities will offer grants that can be used for synthetic turf fields. For example, in Massachusetts, the MA PARCS Grants, School Building Assistance Bureau and Community Preservation Act have funded local parks and schools with synthetic turf fields while in New Jersey, the Burlington County Board of Chosen Freeholders has a Municipal Park Development Program that does the same.

## Private Grants

Sports federations are an excellent source of private grants, promoting the interests of the sport involved. Extremely competitive, your application should be as detailed and compelling as possible. Include specifications (preliminary design schematics) from a professional consultant demonstrating the viability of the project and justification for the funds. Priority is usually given to new facilities.

Keep in mind their decisions are motivated more by how you are enhancing the interests and values of their specific sport. So if you are approaching the U.S. Soccer organization for a grant, it is important to include plans for bringing the sport to an under-served sector of the population and demonstrate strong anticipated impact.

- [NFL Youth Football Fund](#)
- [U.S. Soccer Foundation](#)
- [Baseball Tomorrow Fund](#)
- [USA Track & Field Foundation](#)
- [U.S. Tennis Association](#)
- [National Hockey League Goals & Dreams Fund](#)

Funding to build a synthetic turf field is also available through other private endowments and foundations not tied to a particular sport. Consider researching options online using special attributes of your organization and location as key words.



## Private Fundraising/Sponsorships

Booster Clubs are a great place to start your private fundraising initiative. With recognized legal status, they become the revenue conduit for this effort. Once the field is constructed, your booster club can also generate recurring revenue by leasing the field to others, charging user fees, handling concessions and more. Some fundraising ideas that have worked for other schools and organizations include:

- Sell the naming rights to your field – This tactic can help you bring in major dollars. At one high school, former football players banded together to raise money and bought the naming rights to their high school field for \$100,000 so they could name it after their coach. High profile community members may be willing to buy the naming rights for a set period of time, anywhere between five to 10 years.
- Explore additional donor recognition opportunities – Donors, whether they are local businesses or individuals, appreciate having their support acknowledged. Consider selling unit pavers, seat backs, parking spaces, scoreboard panels, sideline turf ads inserted into the field, fence placards and other components of the field to local donors in return for permanent recognition.
- Reach out to community youth and adult sports leagues – The durability of synthetic turf allows it to be played on year long and in all types of weather. This affords you the opportunity to rent your field to community sports leagues. Make a deal with these groups. If they commit to donating a certain amount for the installation of the field, then you will allow them to play a certain amount of hours on it each year.
- Promote the field at Friday night football games – One of the best places to share your dream of bringing in a synthetic turf field is the school's weekly football game. Let the crowd know what you want to do, why you want to do it and how they can help. Then, every Friday night before home football and soccer games, provide status updates. Ask for donations to help the process and repeat this announcement at every game.
- Identify the 'heavy hitters' – It's important to reach out to influential people such as local sports celebrities and successful alumni in your community. These are the people who can donate more than \$1,000 to the project; also allow for larger contributions that exceed \$50,000 in certain cases. The number of people on this list, along with the amount they are able to donate will vary in each community. Reach out to these people with the following ideas:
  - **Host a unique fundraising event.** Bring your community's 'heavy hitters' together for special events where they'll have the chance to make donations. For example, a viewing party to watch a beloved pro or college football team may work for your community. Or you could invite people in for a wine tasting night. Guests pay for their ticket and then spend the evening with a wine connoisseur. At the end of the evening, they'll be given the

chance to make a donation for the field (at one high school, an event similar to this brought in \$10,000 in one night). Work with the Committee to decide what will work best for your community.

- **Host a community auction.** This has the potential to turn into a huge fundraising event. Reach out to community members asking them to donate to the auction – tickets to professional sporting events, a weekend at a vacation home, etc. One high school used this tactic and raised \$46,000.
- **Organize a Golf Tournament.** A popular fundraiser in many communities, participation in golf tournaments can often be viewed as a tax-deductable business expense. Revenue can be generated by registration fees, individual hole sponsorships and many other areas.

## Public/Private Partnerships

Industry experts feel that public-private partnerships represent a strong growth trend in funding synthetic turf fields. Because of the diversity of sports played and demand on field space, it can make sense for a public group and a private institution or business to share resources for their athletic facilities. An excellent example of this kind of partnership is Gaudet Middle School in Middletown, Rhode Island and Salve Regina University, located nearby in Newport, Rhode Island. While Gaudet had lots of real estate, their sports facilities were marginal. Meanwhile Salve, with a landlocked campus that didn't permit athletic field expansion, had strong resources. So the two forged a memo of understanding for facility sharing, the new field was built at Gaudet and its now in active use by students and faculty at both schools.

Typical partnership parameters include:

### **Schools**

- Cannot include public funds for related improvements
- Detail scheduling and field usage within the Memorandum of Understanding
- If the partnership is between a college and high school, design standards vary (i.e. goal posts, track and field events) so plan for adjustable goal post arms.

### **Businesses (For Profit)**

- RFP process by town for development proposals
- Developer designs, permits, builds, operates, and maintains
- Typical 50-year lease
- RFP defines town's interests, development standards, hours available and fee/rate structure
- Basis of award is "Best Value" to Town
- Town requires design consultant / legal advice to prepare RFP and oversee permitting and development

# Professional Fundraising

Considering that capital campaigns are complex and require items ranging from prospect research, preparation of case statements and volunteer recruitment and training to donor tracking and major gift expertise, a number of organizations are turning to professional fundraising consultants for assistance.

## **Tips for Selecting a Professional Fundraiser:**

- Contact other non-profit groups in your area for information and referrals (i.e. hospitals, colleges)
- Contact your local chapter of professional fundraiser associations
  - The Giving Institute, formerly the American Association of Fundraising Counsel, [www.aaafc.org](http://www.aaafc.org)
  - Association of Professional Fundraisers, [www.afpnet.org](http://www.afpnet.org)
- Review their credentials. Request a sample contract and discern how they would conduct your campaign.
- Determine what portion of the profits would go directly to your campaign and ask to see financial data from their other efforts. Note: Percentage-based compensation is frowned upon by most professional fundraisers because it is considered unethical

Once the fundraiser comes on board, they will still require tools, information and a base of operations in order to succeed. The board, booster club and staff still need to provide constant and active support.

## Additional Assistance

### **In-Kind Services**

In-Kind services can also be donated to your field. Local site contractors and material suppliers (e.g. Aggregates, Inc.); stone, concrete, earth work, clearing; top soil, asphalt and more. However, it can sometimes be difficult to coordinate these donations and your organization will still require public funding for design and permitting.

### **Vendor Financing**

Some vendors offer financing for synthetic turf fields. Terms vary and result in proprietary specifications. Designers and builders can also help facilitate funding.

## Organizing a Public Gathering

Bringing a synthetic turf field to your school can have endless benefits, but it will require a great deal of community support and effort. That's why it's important to get people together to discuss the benefits of synthetic turf, answer any concerns and determine the most effective ways to introduce synthetic turf to your area. Your committee should help implement these community gatherings. In the past, successful community get-togethers have helped schools raise over \$600,000 and allowed elementary and high schools across the country the chance to bring synthetic turf to their students.

This forum allows ideas to be shared. It also gets people excited about raising funds. Below are tips for initiating a public gathering with some specific examples that have worked well for schools and communities in the past.

### **Interested Parties:**

An effective public gathering should have the right people involved. When it comes to synthetic turf fields, these people are often school board members, parents, athletic directors, coaches, local professional athletes and celebrities, athletes from nearby schools that already have synthetic turf, and any other key decision makers within the community. Begin your outreach efforts with invitations via mail or e-mail if you are holding an official event or use flyers around the community. Often, word-of-mouth can be the best way to get people together.

### **Be Prepared:**

Use the communication resources mentioned in the next section of this packet, such as Synthetic Turf 360<sup>0</sup> or the FAQ sheet, as handouts for your event. Visit [www.syntheticurfCouncil.org](http://www.syntheticurfCouncil.org) to view the latest industry information and news stories.

It's important to know as much as possible about synthetic turf prior to organizing a public gathering. Talk with the synthetic turf providers you've been in contact with and your design consultant. The more information you can give people, the better.

### **Pick the Right Forum:**

Bringing people together in a place they feel comfortable is important. Depending on the purpose of the field, any of the following situations may be appropriate:

- **Host a fundraising party.** When Oak Hills High School in Cincinnati, Ohio needed to raise money for a synthetic turf field, they decided to bring together some influential community members to watch a Redskins football game. At halftime, the school's athletic director, along with parents and school board members, spoke to the group about the benefits of synthetic turf and asked if anyone would be willing to donate money for the cause. In just one night, they raised \$40,000.

Bringing people together in a laid-back setting can be a great way to approach the synthetic turf issue. Sporting events make the topic relevant and hosting it at a local restaurant or neighbor's home makes for a comfortable environment.

- **Town Meeting:** Town meetings can be a great place to share information about synthetic turf fields. With influential community members gathered in one place, you're likely to address the right people. Be sure you request time to speak. This can be done through your local town hall.
- **School Events:**
  - Homecoming pep rally
  - School board meeting
  - Halftime at a school sporting event
- **Follow Up:** Make copies of the enclosed attendance sheet and collect contact information from all attendees. As you gather more information on synthetic turf fields, pass it along to those who are interested. These are also the people your committee will reach out to for contributions. It's essential to stay in contact with members of the community throughout the fundraising process to keep them informed and aware of what is going on.



# Sample: Public Gathering Attendance Sheet

| Name | Phone Number | Email Address | Mailing Address |
|------|--------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 1.   |              |               |                 |
| 2.   |              |               |                 |
| 3.   |              |               |                 |
| 4.   |              |               |                 |
| 5.   |              |               |                 |
| 6.   |              |               |                 |
| 7.   |              |               |                 |
| 8.   |              |               |                 |
| 9.   |              |               |                 |
| 10.  |              |               |                 |
| 11.  |              |               |                 |
| 12.  |              |               |                 |
| 13.  |              |               |                 |
| 14.  |              |               |                 |
| 15.  |              |               |                 |
| 16.  |              |               |                 |
| 17.  |              |               |                 |
| 18.  |              |               |                 |
| 19.  |              |               |                 |
| 20.  |              |               |                 |



## Fundraising Deadlines

It's critical to set a goal for the completion of your fundraising efforts. This will ensure your volunteers and committee members are working hard for the cause and are doing everything they can to make it happen. If you have someone on your logistics committee who is in charge of funding, please coordinate with them.

- Breakdown how much money is needed and how your Reaching the Finish Line Committee can work together to raise it. Example:

- You need \$\_\_\_\_\_ for the project.
- Fundraising breakdown:

|                         |         |
|-------------------------|---------|
| Athletic Boosters       | \$_____ |
| Corporations            | \$_____ |
| Band/Other Boosters     | \$_____ |
| "Friends of the School" | \$_____ |
| 30 people x \$5,000     |         |
| 50 people x \$1,000     |         |
| TOTAL:                  | \$_____ |

- Develop a detailed timeline for the project. Below is an example of a very general schedule:

- Proposed Timeframe:

**Month, Year:** Gather a committee to develop a plan for the project. Include commitments from businesses and community members. Select your engineering consultant or landscape architect. Educate the community on the potential of this project and how it will affect the school district as a whole.

**Month, Year – Month, Year:** Get bids for the project.

**Month, Year – Month, Year:** Collect donations.

**Month, Year – Month, Year:** Install the synthetic turf at name of school.

**Month, Year:** Hold opening game/ribbon cutting ceremony to showcase the new field.

## Step Four: Use Communication Tools

The Synthetic Turf Council serves as an objective resource in assisting buyers and end users with the selection, use, and maintenance of synthetic turf systems in sports field, golf, and landscape applications. Our website, [www.syntheticurfCouncil.org](http://www.syntheticurfCouncil.org), contains numerous resources that should help your effort to secure a synthetic turf playing field.

We recommend that you review:

- [\*Synthetic Turf 360°, A Guide for Today's Synthetic Turf\*](#) - Created to showcase the numerous uses and benefits of synthetic turf, this downloadable piece can easily be printed and used as a handout as long as you **do not alter** this copyrighted STC document in any way.



- Curious about the terms used to describe synthetic turf products? Here is the STC's [Glossary of Terms and Definitions](#).
- The latest [Guidelines and Professional Standards](#)
- [STC Online Buyers' Guide](#)

Note: We recommend taking this template FAQ and adapting it to the needs of your organization. You can copy the information below to use as a handout or to share in on-going communication pieces.

## Synthetic Turf Frequently Asked Questions

As the popularity of synthetic turf escalates, so do questions about its usage. Here is the most recent information about synthetic turf. For more detailed resources, please visit Research & Latest Thinking at [www.syntheticurfCouncil.org](http://www.syntheticurfCouncil.org).

### **Q: Which sports can be played on synthetic turf?**

Synthetic turf sports fields for football, soccer, field hockey, baseball, tennis, lacrosse and rugby has traditionally represented the greatest percentage of the synthetic turf market. However, drought conditions and low water in many areas has prompted irrigation restrictions, which have dramatically increased the demand and regulation for synthetic grass in landscape, commercial, and golf applications.

### **Q: Why should your school raise money for a synthetic turf field?**

The need for a multi-use athletic field at *(name of school)* is tremendous. With multiple sports teams, bands and physical education classes using the facility, a synthetic turf field will allow for more usage and will also reduce water usage for our city. As more and more colleges, parks and high schools across the country install synthetic turf fields, isn't it time for *(name of school)* to consider what a synthetic turf sports field would mean to the school and the community?

### **Q: How will a synthetic turf field help your school?**

Synthetic turf fields allow for more playing time for a variety of teams and community groups. The marching band can now practice more regularly outside. More students will have access to recreation, which is critical to promoting youth fitness. The field can be used within hours of installation and can handle the wear and tear of a variety of sports.

### **Q: How does synthetic turf compare to natural grass on player injury rates?**

Made with resilient materials for safety, synthetic turf sports fields provide a uniform and consistent playing surface. Traction, rotation and slip resistance, surface abrasion and stability meet the rigorous requirements of the most respected sports leagues and federations. So it's no surprise that recent studies indicate that the injury risk of playing on synthetic turf is no greater than natural grass:

- Three 2010 long-term studies published by researchers from Norway and Sweden compared acute injuries on synthetic turf and natural grass. The studies examined the type, location and severity of injuries sustained by hundreds of players during thousands of hours of matches and

training over a four to five year period. Many types of acute injuries to men and women soccer players, particularly knee injury, ankle sprain, muscle strains, concussions, ACL tears, and fractures were evaluated. The researchers concluded that the injury risk of playing on artificial turf is no greater than playing on natural grass;

- An analysis by FIFA's Medical Assessment and Research Centre of the incidence and severity of injuries sustained on grass and synthetic turf during two FIFA U-17 World Championships. According to FIFA, "The research showed that there was very little difference in the incidence, nature and causes of injuries observed during games played on artificial turf compared with those played on grass."
- A 2004 NCAA study among schools nationwide comparing injury rates between natural and synthetic turf found that the injury rate during practice was 4.4% on natural turf, and 3.5% on synthetic turf.

**Q: How does the cost of a synthetic turf field compare to a natural turf field?**

Purchasing a synthetic turf field may seem expensive initially, but the field pays for itself over time, proving to be a highly cost-effective investment. Synthetic turf fields are typically utilized for about 3,000 hours of play per year, with no "rest" required, the equivalent of three to four well-maintained natural turf fields. In addition, synthetic turf maintenance costs are two to three times less than natural turf, since no mowing, irrigation or chemicals are needed. Because of its consistent availability, a synthetic turf field is also a reliable source of rental revenue for schools and communities.

According to Cory Jenner, a landscape architecture professional in Syracuse, N.Y., the cost of installing and maintaining a synthetic turf sports field over a 20-year period (including one replacement field) is over three times less expensive per event than the cost of a grass field over the same period of time. This is because many more events can be held on a synthetic turf sports field. "Financially speaking, artificial turf is more cost-effective over time," Jenner said. This cost per event advantage is validated by other authorities and field owners.

Synthetic turf fields often pay for themselves over the life of the field. Because synthetic turf can withstand so much wear and tear, renting your synthetic turf field to local sports team and organizations is a great way to defer costs. Many schools report that they bring in \$15,000-\$45,000 a year in rental fees from one field alone. It's also important to note the school will save tens of thousands of dollars on maintenance fees with a synthetic turf field since there will be no need for pesticides and water usage costs will decrease dramatically.

**Q: Which type of synthetic turf does your school need?**

If you have determined that synthetic turf is the way to go for your school, determine the type of

field needed based upon its desired usage. Visit [www.syntheticurfCouncil.org](http://www.syntheticurfCouncil.org) for more sources on selecting synthetic turf to help evaluate this decision and select the best provider for your needs. You should also consider consulting with one of the independent consultants or landscape engineers featured in the STC's membership listing.

**Q: Why has synthetic turf become so popular over the past few years?**

Today's synthetic turf is designed to simulate the experience of practicing and playing on a grass-like surface year round. Demand has grown to the point where more than 7,000 synthetic turf fields are currently being used in North America by a growing number of high school and collegiate athletes playing and practicing football, soccer, hockey, baseball, rugby, lacrosse and many other sports. About half of all NFL teams currently play their games on synthetic turf and, since 2003, over 70 FIFA U-17 and U-20 World Cup matches have been played on synthetic turf soccer fields.

**Q: How is the new generation of synthetic turf different from that of the past?**

Increasing demand for higher quality playing surfaces and intense competition for field accessibility has given rise to a new generation of synthetic turf systems that replicate the look and feel of lush, natural grass. While the first artificial turf systems used in the 1960's and 1970's were hard, significant advancements have been made during the past few decades. By the 1990's, player comfort and performance became the top priority and the first synthetic turf systems with sand and rubber infill were introduced. Today's synthetic turf, supported by many NFL franchises, UEFA, FIFA and other international sports federations, combines the playing characteristics, look and feel of natural turf, with the advantages of increased playability, safety, longer playing seasons and fewer canceled games.

**Q: What impact does synthetic turf have on playing time?**

Synthetic turf playing fields exponentially increase playing and practice time because they can be used daily and in all types of weather, without worry of damage. With proper maintenance, playability is enhanced since the fields remain uniform and consistent, season after season. In addition, while turf grass managers recommend against using a natural field for more than 20 – 24 hours per week or 680 – 816 hours per year for a three-season window, synthetic turf can be utilized around 3,000 hours per year with no "rest" required.

**Q: What goes underneath the synthetic turf?**

The turf must be laid on a suitable base, depending on its application. For sport usage, this may include a shock pad while in landscape applications, the turf can be laid on a flat, hard base. In children's playgrounds and sporting fields, a shock pad is recommended to meet Critical Fall Height legislation. The laid turf can be 'infilled' with a combination of sand and/or granular rubber, or other infill materials, to stabilize the system and create specific playing characteristics. It is important to

consult a professional about this process.

### **Q: Is synthetic turf safe?**

During the past few years, more than 75 independent, credible research and studies from groups such as the [U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission](#), [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#) and statewide governmental agencies such as the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, [New York State Department of Health](#) and the [California Environmental Protection Agency](#), have validated the safety of synthetic turf (many of which can be found at [www.syntheticurfCouncil.org](http://www.syntheticurfCouncil.org).) For 40 years, under EPA oversight and OSHA-regulated manufacturing, not one person has ever reported ill effects related to any materials associated with synthetic turf. Recent highlights include:

- In October 2010, the [California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment](#) completed its multi-year study of air quality above crumb rubber infilled synthetic turf, and bacteria in the turf, and reported that there were no public health concerns.
- In July 2010, the [Connecticut Department of Public Health](#) announced that a new study of the risks to children and adults playing on synthetic turf fields containing crumb rubber infill shows “no elevated health risks.”
- A December 2009 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency scoping study of the health risks from inhalation, ingestion, and dermal contact with synthetic turf and crumb rubber found every test result to be “below levels of concern.”
- The California EPA released a report dated July 2009 which indicated there is a negligible human health risk from inhaling the air above synthetic turf.
- Independent tests conducted by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and New York State Department of Health, released in May 2009, proved there were no significant health concerns at synthetic turf fields.
- In July 2008, a U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission staff report approved the use of synthetic turf by children and people of all ages.

### **Q: How does synthetic turf impact the environment?**

Synthetic turf has a measurable, positive impact on the environment. Depending on the region of the country, a typical grass sports field can use between 500,000 to a million gallons of water or more each year. During 2011, approximately six billion gallons of water were conserved through its use. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the average American family of four uses 400 gallons of water a day. Therefore, a savings of six billion gallons of water equates to the annual water usage of over 45,000 average American families of four.

Tax credits and rebates are being offered to residential and corporate users by an increasing number of local governments in light of the tremendous impact on water conservation. The Southern Nevada Water Authority estimates that every square foot of natural grass replaced saves 55 gallons of water per year. If an average lawn is 1,800 square feet, then Las Vegas homeowners with synthetic turf could save 99,000 gallons of water each year or about \$400 annually. In Atlanta, homeowners could save \$715 a year, not including much higher sewer charges.

The estimated amount of synthetic turf currently installed has eliminated the need for millions of pounds of harmful pesticides and fertilizers, which has significant health and environmental implications. For example, according to the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources, polluted storm water runoff is the number one cause of water pollution in their state, with common examples including over fertilizing lawns and excessive pesticide use.

In addition, synthetic turf helps reduce noxious emissions (the EPA reports that a push mower emits as much pollution in one hour as 11 cars and a riding mower emits as much as 34 cars) and reduces grass clippings, which the EPA states are the third largest component of municipal solid waste in landfills.

## Fundraising Case Studies

### Ridgeland High School – Rossville, Georgia



Ridgeland is one of two high schools in the low-to-moderate income and mostly rural area of Rossville, GA. The school lies in the shadow of Lookout Mountain. A failing drainage system coupled with runoff from the mountain rendered the school's field into a mud pit by the second half of the football season. The championship winning team was forced to practice and compete at neighboring schools. While the Walker County School Board recognized the need for a new field, they faced a dilemma – how to fund a field for Ridgeland without providing

similar monies to the area's other high school. The board had the vision to see how the installation of a synthetic turf field could benefit the entire community beyond just high school athletics. However, they wanted to educate the community about turf and gather support.

Ridgeland's football coach was tapped to rally the community's favor for the project. The coach produced a power point presentation that described the problems with the current field including the drainage issue and how natural grass requires recovery time which limits its usability. Key community leaders and business owners were invited to a town hall meeting to learn about the school's needs. The coach also met with leading charitable organizations such as Lions and Rotary Clubs. His presentation emphasized the benefits the entire community would enjoy as a result of the installation of the field.

A major donor stepped forward to support the initiative and an additional \$100,000 was raised from the community. These contributions allowed Ridgeland's athletic department to fund the majority of the project. Today, the entire community of Rossville enjoys the synthetic turf field at Ridgeland High School.



## Notre Dame Academy - Park Hills, KY



In its 100 year history, the student athletes of the Notre Dame Academy (NDA) had never played a home game until their dream of installing a synthetic turf field became a reality. Until then, they relied on the generosity of nearby schools to practice when fields weren't being used. Dedicated parents and coaches transported the students to borrowed fields for every single practice. In some cases, NDA athletes used abandoned fields or empty playgrounds. These areas often needed the grass cut, dirt infill or rocks

and other debris to be removed before they were deemed safe and playable surfaces.

The donation of a land by the Sisters of Notre Dame set the school's plan for their very own field in motion. Although the field was a welcome gift, the administrators at NDA knew the surface would need to be synthetic turf in order to accommodate the intense use by physical education classes and numerous team sports.

In 2007, the "Making a Difference" capital campaign was launched with the goal of raising \$12 million. The campaign goal included \$3 million for an outdoor athletic complex. The complex would include a synthetic turf soccer field, fencing, spectator seating, a press box and track and field equipment. By 2010, with the support of numerous generous donors to the capital campaign, most of the field was complete with the exception of the track and spectator seating.

In 2011, a special committee was formed to specifically focus on raising funds to complete the track. It was estimated that the first phase of the project would cost \$600,000. An anonymous donor gave a matching contribution of \$100,000. Faculty, staff, students' families, alumni and members of the community were challenged to contribute gifts to total \$100,000 and match the donation. The remaining \$400,000 was generously donated by the Buenger Foundation.

## The Cotting School - Lexington, MA



The word challenge is all too familiar to the students of the Cotting School. Each of the 120 students of this Lexington, MA school has a complex medical condition and is working to overcome a broad spectrum of learning and communication disabilities as well physical challenges. Children and young adults ages 3-22 years of age travel to the campus from 74 cities in Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire. Founded in 1893 in Boston, the school relocated to a 14-acre campus in Lexington and constructed a fully accessible building. The grounds included a grass

playing field and a playground with wood mulch infill. Both outdoor play-spaces presented difficulties for students who use wheelchairs, walkers or other assistive mobility devices. These students were then left to play soccer, track or baseball on the asphalt parking lot.

Students, faculty, staff and alumni dreamed of a synthetic turf field and playground surface that was fully accessible to all of its students. To achieve this dream, \$350,000 would need to be raised. For about eight years, they had been sharing their dream of outdoor athletic accessibility with just about anyone that would listen. A brochure was created to define the scope of the project and inspire donors with the school's mission to empower their students to achieve the greatest level of learning and independence possible. School officials invited the heads of foundations to their campus but were repeatedly turned down for funding.

"Some organizations we approached looked at the size of our school, 120 students, as an indication that their donation would not make a big impact," said Elizabeth Peters, Director of Advancement. "But no other school in this area does what we do."

However, a landscape architect and environmental specialist agreed to offer their services pro bono. Meanwhile, Cotting's adaptive physical education teacher, physical therapist, and president tested numerous fields and playgrounds with various types of wheelchairs and assistive devices for accessibility.

After four years, the permitting process was complete and the Cotting School was given the green light to begin official fundraising. A longtime athletic supporter came forward and offered a \$100,000 challenge gift. While making plans to host several fundraising events, a matching gift was generously presented by a student's family. This left \$150,000 to be raised by parents, alumni and the community at large. The need for help spread through word of mouth and donations of all sizes began to trickle in. Throughout the fundraising process, the Cotting School's Board of Directors offered guidance and unwavering support. Students now enjoy a synthetic turf playing field and fully accessible playground thanks to the generosity of their supporters, parents and many individuals and organizations from the communities in which they live.

## Vernon Hills High School - Vernon Hills, IL

The quest to secure a new synthetic turf field for the athletes of Vernon Hills High School is a powerful example of community partnerships. Located just 38 miles northwest of Chicago, the school opened its doors in 2000. The construction of the school included an athletic stadium with a grass field, which is used primarily by the football team, girls' and boys' soccer teams as well as girls' and boys' lacrosse teams. School officials have faced many challenges in maintaining the grass field for these teams. A lack of drainage often creates a muddy mess for athletes and interferes with practices and games. Repair and recovery of the grass field also presented problems when it conflicted with a teams' need for the field.

Over the last year, school officials and supporters formed [Project Turf](#), an official fundraising campaign to secure a new synthetic turf field for Vernon Hills High School. Project Turf is directed by the efforts of a well-known community leader and a supportive committee. A link was added to the school's web site to provide information about the campaign and how individuals and businesses can contribute.

The fundraising efforts have been very successful due to the cooperation several community entities. Replacement of the field coincides with the school district's capital plan which was scheduled for replacement in 2012. Therefore, the school district contributed \$300,000 to Project Turf. The park district donated \$100,000 in exchange for use of the field on 24 Sundays throughout the year. Environmental officials from the Village of Vernon Hills are contributing in-kind with guidance on drainage issues.

Luckily, the student athletes of Vernon Hills High School are also supported by the Cougars Athletic Boosters comprised of parents, alumni and other community members. Since the school's inception, the Boosters have been active fundraisers for the athletic programs. Boosters direct the sales of concessions and spirit wear as well as volunteer activities. Local restaurants hosted special nights and donated a portion of total sales to Project Turf efforts. A total of \$290,000 has been raised through private fundraising. The campaign will continue until Project Turf is completed.



Synthetic Turf Council  
400 Galleria Parkway, Suite 1500  
Atlanta, GA 30339  
Phone: 678.385.6720 | Fax: 678.385.6501  
[www.syntheticurfCouncil.org](http://www.syntheticurfCouncil.org)

Online Buyer's Guide and Member Directory  
[www.stc.officialbuyersguide.net](http://www.stc.officialbuyersguide.net)