

Miracle Field project receives first Major donation from foundation

by Georgia Boring

Plans to provide a place in Murrysville for all children to play baseball, regardless of their ability, took a large step toward realization with a donation of \$250,000 from the Buncher family Foundation.

At a meeting last Thursday at the Murrysville Community Chapter; Nick Dorsch, president of the Murrysville-Export Rotary Club, which has been working with the Municipality of Murrysville and the Miracle League of Western Pennsylvania to build a Miracle Field at Murrysville Community Park, made the announcement. Dorsch said the foundation will also contribute a matching \$250,000 when the project reaches its goal of \$1.7 million.

Noting that her father had owned farm in Murrysville Bernita Buncher, president of the foundation, said the gift is a way of giving back to the community. Stating that her family is blessed, with good health, she said she wants to help others less fortunate.

When completed, the 4.5 acres at Community Park will include a Miracle Field for baseball with wheelchair accessible dugouts, concession stand, restrooms and pavilions. A basketball court, bocce ball and shuffleboard, walking path with no more than a five percent grade, and a playground that will be fully accessible are also in the plans so the area will provide recreational opportunities for senior citizens and families. The playing field has been designed 20 percent larger than a little league field so adults can also use it.

This is the first major donation the project has received, but many lesser donations have been committed to the effort, not the least of which, the services of Astorino, the architectural design firm which has provided the plans for the complex.

At last Thursdays meeting, Harold Hicks, co-chairman of the project, said the local Rotary Club has pledged \$170,000 toward the project and is very near to reaching that amount. The club is spearheading the fundraising and the design of the project.

"We are just now kicking off" the major grant writing," said Hicks. He said before the announcement of the Buncher grant, \$87,000 had been committed.

Dorsch told the group they have set a goal to break ground this fall.

The Rotary is hopeful the Pittsburgh Pirates will also join the effort to construct the field. A representative of the Pirates was present at Thursday's meeting. Opportunities for donors range from \$250 sponsorships for an



Bernita Buncher talks with Friends to Friends members Michael Hunchar and Dawn Gipson as they hold a presentation check representing the first \$250,000 the Buncher Family Foundation is donating for the Miracle Field in Murrysville.

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Michael Hunchar presented Bernita Buncher with flowers in appreciation of the donation by the BuncherFamily Foundation for the Miracle Field.

individual child to play on a team, to naming rights for the field. Frank Aiello, district governor of the Rotary Club, was also on hand to give the support of all the clubs in the district.

George O'Donnell, who started the Friends to Friends organization so his son, who has cerebral palsy, and other special needs children could interact with others socially, commended the Rotary which he said has

"come up to the plate to do what they have."

O'Donnell, who serves as president of the Miracle League of Western Pennsylvania, said the children are looking for friendships. He said they just want to have fun.

"If you have it in your heart to come out and join us and have fun with the children, please do it," O'Donnell said.

Hicks reminded those present that it was Rotary Club members who each pledged \$500 to purchase the land that Haymaker Park, with its' ball fields, now occupies. He called the Miracle Field a new legacy for the club.