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## Western Carolina helped make fields possible

*By Pat Fitzsimmons*

I have read with great interest recent articles about the new Northwood Little League ball fields, and I am glad to see the public is being made aware of a great community addition. We at Northwood are extremely proud of these new fields as we celebrate our 40-year anniversary as a Little League organization here in Greenville, and we are proud to achieve this milestone on our new fields at Corey Burns Park.

I fear, however, these articles and headlines focus solely on the single, short-term inconvenience of a smell that is sometimes present, and give too little credit to the much greater message we all should be proud of. That greater message is one of a significant contribution on the part of several organizations to make this a success.

Our Northwood Little League community raised over \$150,000 in cash donations and an additional \$100,000 in business donations and support to make this happen -- all done in 5 years. It is only through a partnership with the County Recreation District, Western Carolina Regional Sewer Authority, and our Northwood Little League community that this park came to be.

I do, however, understand the inconvenience of a foul odor every now and then. And we sometimes experience this at our new fields because the treatment plant will not be shut down for another few months. We will have to play this season under this burden -- if you can call it that. However, it is my intent to give credit where credit is due, and there would have been no Northwood Little League or Corey Burns Park had it not been for the generosity and forward thinking of Western Carolina Regional Sewer Authority.

Western Carolina donated to the county the 25 acres of land our baseball and softball fields are built on. We have 5 new baseball and softball fields with lights and a concession stand that we will watch the next generation of Little Leaguers in our community play on. We offer great thanks from the families, and especially the children, who now have their own playing fields, a first since 2003.

So let us say officially "thank you" to Western Carolina for its support. Furthermore, the periodic smell should soon go away as the plant is closed this fall, and we will play baseball and softball for another 40 years in our community -- without the minor inconvenience.

And let me offer a few other success stories in our area, for our fields are just one of several projects completed through the decades-long partnership between the Greenville County Recreation District and Western Carolina Regional Sewer Authority:

- Pelham Mill Park: This historic site is home to one of Greenville's earliest textile mills. The original dam, constructed in the 19th century, is a focal point and draws visitors to a scenic view of the Enoree River shoals. The proposed park, which includes adjoining property owned by the Western Carolina, will be a great site for picnics and recreation.
- The Pavilion: The 16-acre site on Western Carolina property was offered to the Greenville County Recreation District in the late 1980s. This multi-purpose indoor recreation complex was recently expanded by eight acres. The facility offers the Upstate's only ice skating rink, tennis courts, soccer fields, a historic miniature children's train, and various programs ranging from summer day camps to

special seasonal events.

- **Brushy Creek Athletic Complex:** This state-of-the-arts three-field athletic complex is home to thousands of Upstate soccer enthusiasts during the spring and fall seasons. Western Carolina conveyed the land to the Greenville County Recreation District in the late 1980s.
- **Lake Conestee Nature Park:** Western Carolina's recently crafted partnership with the GCRD will significantly expand the trail system at the existing 300-acre Lake Conestee Nature Park. The park is operated by the Greenville County Recreation District.

All of us have kids on these fields and in these parks every day, and few of us know how they came to be. We at Northwood Little League are tremendously proud of what we have accomplished and what we have contributed to our community. We are thankful for the friendships we have developed over the years and for the contribution sports have made to our community.

These projects are not without sacrifice and effort, but they seem surely worth it. We should all stop periodically and thank those other folks who unselfishly stepped forward and helped when asked. I sat in every meeting and I did a great deal of the asking, and their generosity to this day warms my heart.

So I say this: the Recreation District and Western Carolina Regional Sewer Authority know this is their community, too. And apart from the smell and the minor inconvenience, we say thanks to all who helped -- particularly Western Carolina.

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