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# \$600K donation pays for turf field at Fairfield

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Written by Sue Kiesewetter

**FAIRFIELD** — Receiver Jonathan Byrd is looking forward to Fairfield High School's first home football game Aug. 31.

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It will be the first time in the school's history that players walk onto a field that doesn't have to be mowed – something the senior never thought would be possible.

A partnership with Mercy Health Fairfield Hospital announced today, is allowing the district to install the artificial turf, leaving Middletown High School as the only Greater Miami Conference team still playing on grass.

"I didn't think we'd ever play on turf," said Byrd, who has been in Fairfield youth and high school football since second grade. "This is great not only for us but other who will be playing here."

Mercy made a \$600,000 donation and pledge to the district to pay for the artificial turf, approved Friday by the school board. The hospital will pay \$10,000 a month, beginning July 1, for the next 60 months.

"The quality of life in Fairfield and the surrounding community is defined by the strength of the school, the health system and the city," said Tom Urban, chief executive officer at the hospital. "I believe we have that here in Fairfield."

The money will be used to pay a lease to purchase agreement with Fifth Third Bank. The Motz Group LLC will design, construct and install the turf at the Fairfield Stadium, located at the intersection of Ohio 4, Nilles Road and Stadium Drive, at a cost of \$566,750.

"The pride and tradition that was here is coming back," said head football coach Jason Krause. "The vision we have ... is going to make our program top notch."

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Work is expected to begin July 2 and should take eight weeks to complete, said Mark Harden, athletic director.

Fairfield joins a growing number of schools playing on artificial turf, including Lakota, Colerain, Princeton, Winton Woods, Monroe, Hamilton and Mason. Many, like Lakota, Fairfield, and Mason, are being paid for through partnerships with hospitals as school dollars become scarcer and scarcer.

Fairfield Treasurer Nancy Lane emphasized that no tax dollars are being used on the project.

“All revenue and expenditures will be tracked in a separate account within the athletic fund,” she said. “This project is totally funded by private donations.”

Along with the installation of the turf, players will see a renovated field house.

Volunteers, players, coaches, parents, and others built and are installing, 40 new lockers. Walls were knocked out so that there will be only one locker area for the Indians to dress in along with a game day office area. Visitors will dress at the nearby intermediate school gymnasium.

A new floor will also be put in. Work on the renovation began last month and should be completed in early to mid-July, Harden said.

“At the end of the day, this is being done for one group – our students,” said Superintendent Paul Otten. “This is the beginning of a partnership into what is much more than a field turf project.”



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