

## **AN OVERVIEW OF PIONEER CENTER'S PROPOSED TRACK AND T-BALL RENOVATIONS**

**Revised November 5, 2008**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

In the spring of 2008, Cass Stull, the Adaptive Physical Education teacher at Pioneer School, began to build a T-Ball team for her students. Pioneer School is a public educational facility for children with moderately to severely impaired mental and physical abilities, administered by the Ross County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities. Ms. Stull's goal was to get parents, guardians, and the community involved in the formation of this team. What happened was phenomenal. Whole families, extended family members, guardians, staff at Pioneer school, the friends and spouses of staff at Pioneer School all got involved. Churches and civic organizations, notably the Knights of Columbus, allowed the team to use their facilities to practice, and staff from other divisions of Pioneer Center volunteered to play in the games.

Each child had at least one "buddy" to help out as he or she hit the ball and ran (or used a wheelchair) around the bases. Lawn chairs lined the fields where supporters watched the games. Hot dogs and chips were sold to raise money for equipment and T-shirts.

All games were held in the evening, and staff who assisted did so on a completely volunteer basis.

At the end of last spring's season, approximately 50 people of all ages had been involved in some way. To a person, there was great excitement. Children without developmental disabilities became familiar and comfortable with children whose disabilities are severe. Children with developmental disabilities were excited to be a part of a sports activity, something that presents great challenges to those with mobility problems. Everyone felt good about being part of something bigger than themselves.

### **A NEW IDEA...**

As the new school year approached (2008-2009), the volunteers and Coach Stull began to think about our greatest impediment to maintaining a team: we needed our own "Field of Dreams." Pioneer school has been fortunate to have a gravel track, built in the early 1970's. Students still use the track to hone their running and walking skills that they use each year for Special Olympics, but it is old and has needed attention for quite a while. Students using wheelchairs were unable to navigate around the cinder track. **The question arose: "Could we renovate our**

**own track and also build a T-Ball field in the infield?”** From the beginning of discussion of this project in September, 2008, we have worked to build a workable plan.

### **WHAT IS THE PLAN?**

The financing of the renovations was the first concern the T-Ball Parents and Supporters Group faced. Organizers and the Ross County Board of MRDD quickly agreed on the major criterion. Pioneer Center, like all public schools and agencies, has been hit with budget reductions.

**Therefore, it was resolved by all parties that all renovations of the track will be funded entirely through donations.**

The other major criterion agreed to by all was that our field and track was to be open to the public for any number of activities. These activities could be part of Pioneer School’s program or other private or public programs.

### **PHASES OF RENOVATION/BUILDING:**

The actual renovation of our track and field involves several Phases:

#1—The Track and T-Ball field, which will include sidewalk access for those with disabilities;

#2—A fence to protect the area but still allow public access to it;

#3—A shelter house for the students and public to watch T-Ball and other events;

#4—Adaptive dug outs for teams and wheelchair accessible restroom.

### **DONATIONS:**

We are actively seeking donations for building our track and field project. Using the donations that Pioneer Center has already received to date, construction will begin on the track and field renovations as soon as possible. Organizers are planning fund raisers to be held throughout the school year.

We would like this project to involve local people assisting in as many of the phases as possible, with not only financial donations but donations of building materials and time. One of the goals of this project is to make our track and field available to other community groups and to be able to use it for other events we might want to organize of an outdoor nature.

As the community becomes aware of the benefits to Pioneer and the community of our project, we hope to receive other donations, big and small.

Plans are underway to honor those who donate in some way, possibly at the Shelter House (Phase #3). We thank you for any financial support you are able to give.

**All donations can be sent to:**

Pioneer Center  
11268 Co. Rd. 550  
Chillicothe, OH 45601

Checks should be made out to "Pioneer Center", with a notation of "track" made on the check. Feel free to contact Cass Stull at (740) 773-2165, [cstull@rossmrrd.com](mailto:cstull@rossmrrd.com), or Superintendent Rick Marriott at (740) 773-8044. [rmariott@rossmrrd.com](mailto:rmariott@rossmrrd.com) for more information.