

Diamond Club restoring baseball field

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STUARTS DRAFT — A dugout here, light poles there, a few bleacher seats and an old baseball diamond behind the Stuarts Draft Volunteer Fire Department should be ready for its first ball game in years.

That's the dream of a group of 20 Stuarts Draft men who are members of the Diamond Club. They hope to have games being played on the field by the end of summer or by next spring at the latest.

But the act of restoring the field has brought back memories for some who played either Little League or high school baseball on the field and recall the days when it was the only ballfield in the community.

"A lot of people come by and tell stories about playing on the field," said Orvin Kiser Jr., who followed in his father's footsteps to restore what once was the Stuarts Draft High School baseball field.

The Diamond Club is planning to put in a dugout and a chain-link fence down the first base side of the field. The club also is selling outfield signs for \$700 to area businesses to raise money for the ball field's restoration.

Kiser estimated the club has spent nearly \$100,000 to restore the field and volunteers have donated 1,000 hours of labor for the project.

The club has used matching grants from the Augusta County Parks and Recreation Department for the restoration that includes a grass infield and an in-ground irrigation system to keep the grass green.

"The drought last summer killed the grass," said Duayne Burtner, Diamond Club president.

Burtner said he is learning about



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Orvin Kiser Jr. checks dugout plans with brick mason Bill Louderback, who is donating his time for the project.

the baseball fans in the community, or at least fans of the field.

"You would not believe how excited the community is about seeing this field done and having baseball on it," Burtner said.

This spring, youth league teams have used the field for practice, but Burtner said the goal is to make the field available for Babe Ruth League

games for ages 14 to 17. If lights are put in, Burtner said, a Stuarts Draft team could join the Rockingham County Baseball League of community teams in Rockingham and Augusta County.

Orvin Kiser Sr., Diamond Club founder, and now the supervisor representing Stuarts Draft, said when he heard about plans to convert the field into a storm water retention pond

nearly six years ago, he said the field needed to be restored.

Kiser resigned from the Diamond Club after being elected to the board of supervisors in 1995, but he still wants to see the baseball field restored.

Kiser played high school baseball on the field nearly 50 years ago and coached Little League teams there in the 1960s.