

March 19, 2024

Dear Community Partners,

‘Behold, the winter is past! The flowers have already appeared in the land; the time has arrived for pruning the vines, and the turtle dove sings from a dead oak branch....’ As I am writing it is the first day of spring. Daffodils are declaring, trees are budding and blooming, birds are chirping, all heralding the burst of a new season. We are surrounded with reasons to celebrate life. That which looked to be dead is alive. Hope and promise are available.

Another signal of springtime is baseball. About a year ago Paul and Amanda Mayes organized a MY TURN baseball game specifically for kids with special needs and disabilities. What a game it was! Those of us who were there experienced poignant excitement in the air from players and parents alike. Our eyes leaked tears as we cheered for smiling youngsters in wheelchairs, on walkers and others needing assistance in knowing which way to run partnered with assigned buddies whose job it was to get them around the bases. They all scored even though no score was kept. You see winning in this game was about playing on a real baseball field with your own real helmet, real glove, real bat, wearing a real MY TURN team t-shirt, hearing one’s own name called loudly over a real public address system and hearing a cheering crowd calling your name as you rounded the bases. That day, for a moment in time, a Haralson County ball field was one of the happiest places on earth. Well, mark your calendars because another MY TURN baseball game will be taking place on May 4th at 9:00 a.m. at the Haralson County Rec Department field. You don’t want to miss it. Help spread the word, and help get special needs kids registered at haralsoncounty.recdesk.com.

That first MY TURN ball game was the catalyst for the Haralson County community to come together to build a MY TURN adaptive sports field. An adaptive field is one that accommodates special needs by providing handicapped accessible bathrooms, dugouts, special turf that allows wheelchairs to run, level bases, etc. Many of you have contributed to this special field, and we cannot thank you enough. You see, this is not just about raising money. It is about getting everyone, countywide, to participate and give support to this special project. What an opportunity for the whole county to come together as a team! Bremen, Tallapoosa, Buchanan, Waco and Haralson County are all on board and working as a crew. I applaud Haralson County Commission Chairman Ronnie Ridley who has led the pack for the county to make the land and other county resources available while also providing his personal support. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman, for realizing that these kids need their own field. Why? Not only do they need the safety and accessibility of an adaptive field, but when they have to wait in line for the use of any field, their turn never comes. They have to play when no one else wants to, leaving them to watch normal kids always going first with the best stuff. And what if you are a fourteen-year-old wheelchair bound male whose mama needs to help you with your clothes in the bathroom? Think about it. This MY TURN field is going to become a reality, and it will be such a victory if everyone in the county will step up and take a supportive place. Meet me at the Haralson County Rec field on May 4th. There is no admission fee, but if you could bring \$1 or \$5 or \$25 or \$1000 to drop in a donation bucket you would make our day. Be ready for a memorable event, and bring some tissues and some hugs.

Please mark your calendars for a couple of other events. On March 29th: National Viet Nam Veterans Day, the Bremen Veterans Park will host a celebration for Viet Nam Veterans at 11:00 a.m. Gunnery Sgt. Keven Webb USMC Ret. will be the speaker. Please attend and bring your own chair if you can. All veterans deserve our honor.

The Bremen Police Department is partnering with Your Haven, the Place of Recovery, to sponsor a Drug Awareness Summit. On April 30th at 6:00 p.m. at West Central Technical College

we will gather to hear the stories of some who have been trapped in the bondage of addiction as well as experiences of their family members. Rural communities like Haralson County have long led the nation in a host of substance abuse statistics. In Haralson County, deaths from overdoses occur at three times the national average. Suicides and DUI deaths are about twice the national average. This event will allow us to encourage the recovery and support of some living with substance use disorders and their families. It will help us answer the common questions, "What are the signs?" and "What can I do to help?" Please come, offer your compassion and support and enjoy free food for all. Breaking free from substance use disorder is hard.

Life is hard in many places. Recently I heard a young woman from North Korea describing unspeakable oppression as she grew up in a nation with such villainous dictatorships that people were executed for making international phone calls. She watched her best friend's mother executed for watching a holiday movie. She watched her mom raped as her mom was trying to prevent the same from happening to her. People came to believe that birds and mice could hear them, as it seemed that the government could read their minds. They were targeted and victimized as they were vying and dying for freedom. Our National Day of Prayer observance will be Thursday, May 2nd at Sewell Mill at 12:00. Has there ever been a more needful time for us to pray for our country and for the world? Pastor Mark Stroud will be leading us in this time of prayer. Please join me to pray, and let's pack the house to call on Almighty God for His mercy, His forgiveness and His grace. And let us also give Him thanks.

Sharon Sewell