



TOWN OF VERNON

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Vernon Celebrates Opening of Miracle League Field at Northeast School

(VERNON, Connecticut) – The Town of Vernon and Vernon Public Schools on Wednesday celebrated the grand opening of the Vernon Miracle League Field at Northeast School.

Vernon Mayor Dan Champagne and Superintendent of Schools Dr. Joseph P. Macary were joined by Steve and Laurel Leibowitz of the Miracle League of Northern Connecticut, Chuck Brady of the Cal Ripken Foundation and dozens of athletes and local residents at a ribbon cutting and celebration.

The Vernon Town Council and Board of Education entered into a unique public-private partnership with the Miracle League of Northern Connecticut to create the fully accessible field at Vernon's Northeast School. Construction took place this summer.

The project cost was about \$1 million. The field was funded by private donations to the Miracle League Field committee. The town provided \$175,000 for expansion of the parking lot for the field, and provided in-kind services by town employees.

"This is a great day for Vernon, for Connecticut, and for the children who will enjoy this field for decades to come," Mayor Champagne said. "This project represents the good that government can achieve with community support."

Steve and Laurel Leibowitz approached town leaders about a year ago with their idea for a field. Mayor Champagne, Superintendent Macary and Town Administrator Michael Purcaro embraced the idea immediately.

"I thought it was a great idea," Mayor Champagne said. "We immediately went to work on a plan to make it happen and, a year later, here we are."

And while the field is built to be fully accessible to children who have disabilities, it will also be available for use by Northeast School students and others.

“Everything we do in the Vernon Public Schools is in the best interest of all children,” Dr. Macary said. “When this proposal came to me and to the board of education, I immediately thought of our equity stance. How do we make it equitable for all children, in spite of their abilities?”

The Vernon Miracle League Field has a synthetic short turf surface that is fully accessible to people who use wheelchairs or have other mobility issues. The field also has wheelchair-accessible dugouts and is completely flat and barrier free so that children with visual disabilities can participate. During play, each athlete has a buddy who assists them.

“We spent years searching for a place to build a field like this and I am just delighted that Mayor Champagne and Dr. Macary embraced our vision for creating a field that is truly for all children,” Steve Leibowitz said. “Every child deserves a chance to participate in and experience sports. We have achieved something very special here in Vernon.”

There are about 300 Miracle Fields across the U.S. and two others in Connecticut, in West Hartford and East Lyme. Northeast School was selected for the Miracle Field because it has extensive field space and its strategic location close to I-84.

Town Administrator Michael J. Purcaro said town staff from multiple apartments enthusiastically came together to make the project happen.

“Children and families from all over Connecticut are going to visit Vernon to play at the Miracle Field,” Town Administrator Michael Purcaro. “Those families will get to know what many of us already know – that Vernon is a welcoming community and a great place to live, work and play.”

About the Town of Vernon

The Town of Vernon is a celebrated place to live, work and visit. From its beautiful parks and lakes, to its vast trails and historic homes and buildings, Vernon is a resilient and thriving community that promotes the health and wellbeing of its residents and values the natural environment. With a resident population of more than 30,000 and occupying 18.03 square miles, Vernon combines a balanced appreciation of history, and a strong economic base for growth, both residential and commercial. Located 15 minutes east of the Connecticut capital of Hartford, and 25 miles from the City of Springfield, Massachusetts, the Town of Vernon is strategically located in “New England's Knowledge Corridor” with close proximity to some of the top colleges and universities in the country.

Designated a certified Sustainable Community, the Town of Vernon offers a wide range of benefits and services to its residents. The Town of Vernon is a full-service municipality that practices a management philosophy of continuous quality improvement. To learn more about the Town of Vernon, please call (860) 870-3670 or visit www.vernon-ct.gov.

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