

Eagles Loudest Fans Look Forward to Better Access at Messalonskee Fields

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During the Friday night football game at Messalonskee, you can find Carlton (Sonny) Mitchell, age 80 and a resident of a seniors' home in Sidney, sitting in his favorite spot just inside the bleachers to the left, as he cheers on the home team repeating "GO EAGLES!"

Jon Dubois, also of Sidney, drives his brother-in-law Sonny to the games with his family and indicates that Sonny is one of the Eagles' biggest fans. *"He can tell you about any game, statistics on who won, or what the score was."* Dubois graduated in 1967 from Williams High School, and is among many retirees in the community who remain connected through these athletic events, even though their own children graduated a decade or more ago. To them, being able to connect at these events is a big part of our community and connects multiple generations and neighbors together.

Sonny uses a walker and Dubois's wife also walks with a cane, so they are very eager to see plans move forward to renovate the Messalonskee High School facilities that will give those with limited mobility better access. Dubois states *"We need bleachers with a handicap accessible ramp and platform where you can walk right out, and there is a separated space up high just for those who need it with good views of the field."*



RSU18 has proposed a \$13.9 million bond investment to address a number of safety and access related issues which will be on a ballot during the November 7th town voting in Oakland, Sidney, Rome, Belgrade, and China. The Athletic Complex portion of the bond is \$3.9 million.

Dubois, who decades ago was part of parent group that put the first lights on the field, states *"This investment will eliminate the mud bowls we have had and make the upkeep of the field much easier. There's a lot of history there of people in the community that would like to see everything updated around this field. I think if it was there, more kids would want to utilize it."*

Along the hill there are always a row of community members placed strategically closest to the parking spaces which sit high above the field to watch the game. Included among them are students and their families that use wheelchairs. Paula Nadeau's husband has limited mobility and his son graduated from Messalonskee in 2017 playing three sports-- football, lacrosse and track. She states *"A Dad with mobility issues cannot get to the sidelines to congratulate his son after a victory or console him after a loss. Instead he has to stand on top of the hill watching the other parents while he waits for his son to come to him."*



Donna and Stacy McCurdy have a son who is now a sophomore and uses a wheelchair due to muscular dystrophy. They have another child who will be in high school next year. McCurdy states *"Getting there is always a challenge for our family. Accessibility just to get to the stands is pretty bad. To get to the field, it is all hill and all gravel as well, which is extremely difficult and requires a lot of muscle to maneuver. We usually sit right at the top of the hill off to the right side of the snack shack. But it would be nice to make it easier to get right down by the field where so many others are closer to the action. Or even in the stands where you can look up and down and see the entire field."*

According to the Messalonskee Middle and High School All Sports Boosters, the athletic complex renovations will address existing safety and ADA access issues as well as install a competition legal track, 4 sport synthetic turf field and update the existing lights, scoreboard and sound system. The project will quadruple the number of practice/playing hours of this facility opening it up to wider community recreational use.

For more information visit www.allsportsboosters.com