

# GOOD SPORTS

## New diamond best friend of RI girls softball

### Slowpitch leagues out to raise \$78,000 for new home

By Marc Nessler  
nessler@qconline.com

Pat Steger can't wait to get a sparkingly new diamond.

The same is true for Pat's daughter, Heidi, as well as Karen DeSmet, Deena Fuller and Andrea Vallejo. The thing is, they're all anticipating the same diamond.

It's not a ring, but the thought of a new diamond for the Rock Island Girls Softball League has an exciting ring to it, not only for them, but the other five male board members of the organization — Bill Sharp, John McEvoy, Jeff Amidon, Bill DeVrieze and Merrill Morris — as well.

"This is one of those cases where guys would like a diamond, too," chuckled Sharp, the league's president.

The slowpitch softball leagues — 26 teams for over 400 girls in divisions for ages 9 to 13 and 14 to 18 — had to leave their "home diamond" on 31st Avenue near the Centennial Expressway because of deteriorating conditions. "It was condemned by the city," said Pat Steger, a board member in charge of fundraising efforts. "The field was sinking, and the mosquitoes were always a problem. Plus, it was difficult to maintain."

**'We're hoping to have the new diamond ready for our tournaments in July.'**

Bill Sharp,  
RI Girls Softball president

The 31st Avenue diamond was built in 1972 at a development cost of \$19,000.

So, the organization turned to the Rock Island Park Board. An area at Hauberg Park, west of 24th Street and north of 17th Avenue, was set aside for the leagues' new home.

Like the gem, though, this diamond comes with a high price.

The cost projection for the new field is \$167,600, according to Sharp. That includes \$50,000 for topsoil that the organization hopes will be donated, and \$40,000 for lights, which would give the

### How you can help

► Buy an engraved granite brick for \$75, to be permanently displayed at the new Rock Island Girls Softball League field. Go to [www.rigsl.org](http://www.rigsl.org) for details.

► Participate in the RIGSL Trivia Night on Saturday, March 25, at the Rock Island VFW. Call Pat Steger, 787-5183, for details.

► Other donations can be sent to RIGSL, P.O. Box 3961, Rock Island, IL 61201.

leagues the same night-game opportunities that 31st Avenue had. The leagues play at other Rock Island sites — Douglas Park, Frances Willard, Campbell Complex and Hauberg's two diamonds south of 17th among them — however only Douglas has lights.

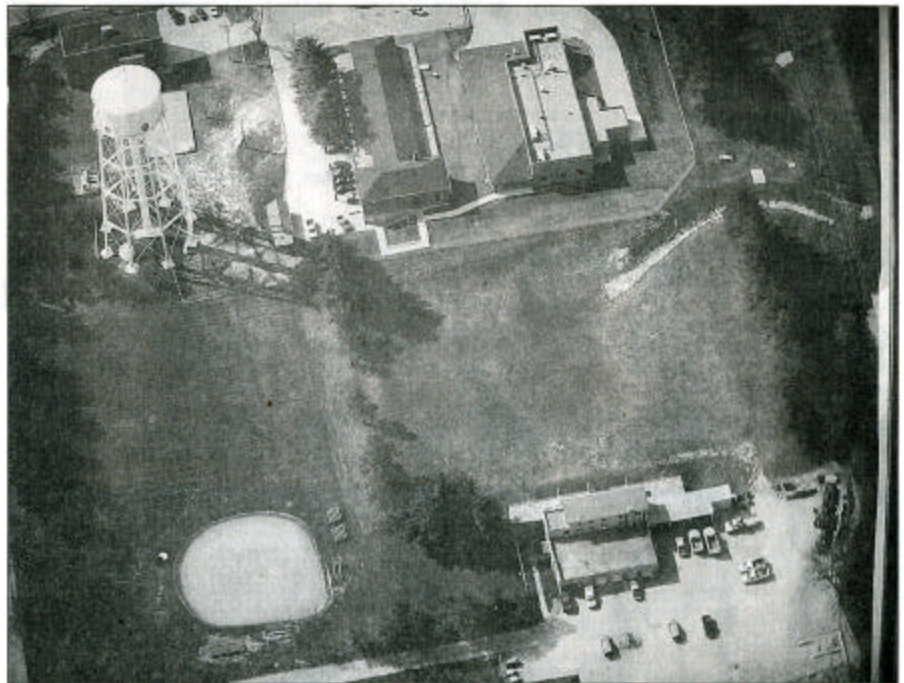
Sharp says it's not realistic to expect the new field to be ready for the start of 2006 league play in May. "We start off making better use of Douglas, and in June, we'll utilize diamonds at Lincoln Park and Sunset Park," he added. "We're hoping to have the new diamond ready for our tournaments in July."

Much depends on how quickly RIGSL raises funds. It has set its fundraising goal at \$78,000. "We already have 25 grand toward that goal," said the league president, "and that doesn't count proceeds of the taco dinner" that was held Wednesday at the Rock Island Evening Lions.

Providing a big boost was a \$10,000 donation from the Day Foundation. Sharp said the group still is awaiting word from other foundation funds sought. The league received \$500 from the Rock Island Noon Kiwanis and \$200 from the Rock Island Police Benevolent — both sponsors of teams in the leagues — and another \$1,600 from the Swing of the Quad Cities Haunted House.

Still in the plans, says Steger, are a Trivia Night on March 25 at the Rock Island VFW on 9th Street, and a Comedy Sportz Night. The league just completed a Younkers Community Day.

RIGSL also is selling commemorative gray granite tiles to be



Submitted

This is an aerial view of what will be the new home diamond of the Rock Island Girls Softball League. It will be at Hauberg Park, and will be just west of a diamond, at the lower left, that already exists there.



Submitted

The former main field of the Rock Island Girls Softball League was at 31st Avenue near the Centennial Expressway. With a severe slope from rightfield to home plate and a haven for nightly mosquitoes, the diamond was condemned by the city after the '05 season.

on display at the new diamond for contributions of \$75 or more. Information is available at [www.rigsl.org](http://www.rigsl.org).

"We're having a mailing to past players and families from which we hope to generate some brick sales," said Sharp. "We haven't set a goal on the

brick sales because we don't know what the response will be. We hope it goes well."

Another key to meeting the goal is that the league already had \$12,000 set aside for a new location.

"Years ago we thought we were going to move and it never

came about, either because the land didn't work out or the funding wasn't there," Sharp said.

"Now we have the perfect spot. It's just gorgeous."

Sounds like someone anxious to try a new diamond on for size.